

LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS, INEXPERIENCE

Washington, Mt. Rainier

About 10:30 a.m. on July 31, 1980, Donald Morgan (48) who was leading one of two roped teams descending the Emmons Glacier, lost control of his sitting glissade when he dropped his right leg; this caused his crampon to catch in such a way that it forced his leg under his body. As a result, he sustained an open fracture of the tibia just above the ankle. The group consisted of nine members, of whom only five members of the lower rope team descended to Camp Schurman to report the injury. Morgan's leg was splinted with two pickets and he was put into two sleeping bags. By 5:30 p.m., the weather had deteriorated and Morgan was becoming hypothermic. A helicopter evacuation was called for and completed by 8:40 p.m. The evacuation was complicated by 100 mph-winds (caused by prop wash) creating a -15°F wind chill factor, the need to raise the litter vertically through the hatch, and a winch that wasn't working properly. (Source: Mark Eidemillar, Mt. Rainier National Park)

Analysis

According to the sign-out registration, Morgan's previous experience consisted of hiking to Camp Muir three times. Glissading with crampons on, even for an experienced person, is a delicate exercise. The temptation to drop a foot for use as a rudder can be great and, for the beginner, an involuntary reaction. Glissading requires practice. For the uninitiated, it would be better to walk down. In general, removing crampons before glissading is advisable. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL THROUGH ICE BRIDGE

Washington, Mt. Olympus

On August 15, 1980, Peter McKay (29) broke through an ice bridge while descending from Mt. Olympus. He punctured his left leg in the area of the knee. By the next day he was unable to walk until late in the afternoon. He was able to make it out on his own. (Source: Mike Hamblen, Olympic National Park)

Analysis

This accident is included to show the variety of moat, crevasse, and bridge problems this year. Also, crampons complicated matters once again. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALLING ROCK, NO HARD HAT, INEXPERIENCE

Washington, Mt. Rainier

On August 19, 1980, Doug Perry (26) was hit on the head by a large rock at 11,500 feet while descending Disappointment Cleaver. His injury was serious and he required a helicopter evacuation.

At the time of the accident, Perry and his partner, Gerald Riendeau (26) were off route 10-15 feet at a point where the normal route leaves the snow and goes onto the rock because they saw a good spot to fill their water bottles and get a drink. Riendeau saw the eight-inch rock coming down toward them and yelled to Perry, who looked up and began standing at the same time. The rock hit him on the right side of the head.

Riendeau could get no verbal response from Perry but thought Perry understood him when he said not to move while he went for help. He did not tie Perry in when he left for