

FALL ON ROCK, FALLING ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS, SEVERED ROPE, NO BELAY

Wyoming, Tetons

On August 22, 1980, Jeffrey Burns (24) and Terence Burns (22) were attempting a climb of the north ridge of Teewinot. J. Burns led the first pitch and called to T. Burns to climb up. At 12:30 p.m. T. Burns was making a move on a three-foot-square block when it came loose and he fell. The block cut one of the two 9-mm ropes being used and T. Burns plunged 30 feet into the moat at the edge of the gully below. Shortly thereafter, he felt the remaining rope pull taut and discovered that J. Burns had fallen 200 feet into the gully a rope length below.

T. Burns then climbed down to his brother, determined that he was dead, and climbed back to the valley to report the accident. The Jenny Lake Ranger Station was notified at 2:30 p.m. and four rangers were dispatched at 3:40 p.m. in the Forest Service contract helicopter.

The rescuers arrived at the accident scene at 5:20 p.m. after climbing 1,600 feet from a landing site in the bowl at the base of the Crooked Thumb couloir. The body was lowered 200 feet on snow to a site suitable for sling loading under the helicopter. The victim reached Lupine Meadows at 6:40 p.m. and the rescue team was flown out by 10 p.m.

An interview with T. Burns on August 23 revealed that J. Burns apparently had not set up a belay and was continuing to climb, even though he had yelled to T. Burns to begin climbing. (Source: Bob Irvine, Grand Teton National Park)

Analysis

Another set of accidents where falling rock was involved. Note the number of these this year. The Burns case illustrates that climbing contiguously while roped oftentimes has the same effect as climbing unroped—which is to say no effect at all. (Source: J. Williamson)

FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, STRANDED, BAD WEATHER, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Wyoming, Tetons

On August 21, 1980, Jim Detterline (24) and Paul Bolick (28) signed out at the Jenny Lake Ranger Station to climb the north face route of the Grand Teton. This is a long and committing route, rated at Grade IV, F7. There had been a storm on the mountain the previous week which left the upper half of the north and west faces in an icy condition; a fact of which the climbing party was informed at signout time. On August 22, Detterline carried most of the equipment to a camp on the Teton Glacier below the north face. He then returned two miles to Surprise Lake to await Bolick. In spite of headlamps and a full moon, the pair became lost trying to find the glacier that evening and had an uncomfortable bivouac that night just below the east ridge of the Grand Teton. The next day, August 23, they decided to rest instead of beginning to climb. They had allowed themselves an extra day to make the climb in one day before they were due back on August 24.

On August 24 at 6:30 a.m., the two began the climb, progressing only as far as the first ledge by nightfall. The weather had been good, but they found the climbing more difficult than they had expected. Instead of turning back at noon when they knew they could not possibly complete the last three fourths of the climb, and certainly the most difficult section,

that day, they continued on to the first ledge. Although they were then due back at Jenny Lake, they bivouacked there that night.

On August 25, 1980, instead of descending, they again began ascending the route, getting only as far as the second ledge (300 feet), where a storm hit at 3:30 p.m. Another party near them on the face descended the whole route during the storm. Bolick and Detterline, however, sought refuge in a large crack and waited for help. The storm left the upper half of the mountain covered with black ice.

All day Tuesday, August 26, they waited for help. Because of the storm, the Grand Teton was covered with a bank of fog, so two rescue parties ascended the mountain to find the, by then, overdue party. Park Rangers Tom Kimbrough and Ann Macquarie ascended the probable descent route, the Owen-Spalding, and traversed out and around to the ice-covered second ledge. At the same time, Rangers Jim Dorward and Steve Rickert hiked up to the Teton Glacier. The fog lifted at noontime, and Rickert and Dorward made visual and voice contact with the stranded party at 2 p.m. Communication was difficult, but the impression received was that one climber was injured and a rescue was needed. The words "help" and "rescue" were distinctly heard.

At 2:30 p.m., a helicopter was ordered from Yellowstone National Park. The rescue team was mobilized, and at 11:30 p.m., after the arrival of the helicopter, two teams of climbers were flown to a precarious landing spot on the top of the Underhill ridge on the south side of the Grand Teton. Rangers Bob Irvine, Renny Jackson, Tim Hogan, Peter Hollis, Leo Larson and Barb Eastman climbed up another 1,000 feet to the east ridge overlooking the stranded party. Bad winds precluded any more landings high on the peak. A sling load of special rescue equipment was airlifted to the east ridge at 7:50 p.m. Black ice and nightfall made a descent to the pair that evening too dangerous for both rescuers and the rescued party, so anchors were set and preparations made for a descent at first light. Scott Air Base was contacted that night for a possible air lift by winch from the east ridge when the injured climber would be hoisted up.

At first light on August 27, Ranger Jackson was lowered about 500 feet down the icy north face past overhanging and loose rock to the victims, reaching them at 8:55 a.m. He reported that there were no injuries. Jackson secured them to a haul rope and a belay rope. At 10 a.m. the upper team began the slow winching process of pulling the three up the 500-foot face by hand. Lightning and blizzard conditions caused frequent delays. The party reached the east ridge about 3 p.m. An attempt to sling load the gear off the peak that afternoon failed because of high winds. The rescue team rappelled down to the top of the Underhill ridge, where they spent the night. The next morning, they rappelled down the Underhill ridge, traversed the Black Dike to the Lower Saddle area where they were flown out by helicopter to Lupine Meadows. The mission was accomplished by 1 p.m., August 28. (Source: Ralph Tingey, Grand Teton National Park)

(Ed. Note: The description of this accident provides its own analysis. What is understated is the skill, stamina, and judgment involved in the \$11,000 rescue effort.)