

4:30 a.m. and climbed the upper Cowlitz Glacier to the beginning of Gibraltar Rock. The party was not roped up nor was anyone wearing crampons. Warren explained that the footing was very stable, due to the soft, deep snow, and that there was no reason for anyone to fall. MacDonald was much slower than the other two, so they had to wait for him at the ledge. They continued up the ledge, then up the chute and toward the summit to an elevation of 13,000 feet, all the while without crampons and unroped. At 10:45 a.m. they decided to turn around because of the slow going in the deep snow. They decided to descend the Gibraltar Chute because they felt it would be safer and faster than the ledges. The group began descending, unroped and without crampons, doing the plunge step in the soft snow; the footing was apparently good. MacDonald was hesitant about the plunge step and seemed to be doing it improperly. A short distance down the chute, Warren and Barns glissaded down a 30-foot section. Warren did a standing glissade while Barns did a controlled glissade in self-arrest position. MacDonald climbed off some rocks and sat down to start his glissade. He rolled over on his stomach and started sliding down; then he rolled onto his back and began sliding out of control. Warren stated that it did not appear to him that MacDonald ever really self-arrested. He hit rocks on the side of the chute and started tumbling and rolling. He went out of sight down the chute. Warren and Barns continued plunge stepping down the chute and, at 11:45 a.m., found MacDonald at about 10,800 feet.

Warren and Barns had moderate climbing experience, having climbed Mounts Rainier and Baker and several other Northwestern peaks. Warren felt that they had done nothing wrong by climbing unroped and without crampons and by glissading down the steep chute.

At 1:30 p.m. on February 9, Kirschner contacted MacDonald at Harborview Hospital and obtained his version of the incident. MacDonald had signed out with Brooks on February 5 with the intention of doing some climbing around or above Camp Muir if he could join a party. He was not specifically considering going to the summit; but if the opportunity arose, he would try for it. He spent the night of the 5th camped at Pebble Creek; on the 6th, he met Barns and Warren. They discussed their plans and decided to join forces and climb together. After a night at Camp Muir, they left and began climbing to Gibraltar Ledge. Because of the good footing in the soft snow, MacDonald was comfortable about not being roped up or having crampons on during the entire ascent. Coming down, however, he was concerned about the steepness and the harder snow conditions in the chute. He told Warren and Barns that he thought they should have their crampons on and possibly be roped up. Warren told MacDonald that they might be able to glissade down the chute, in which case they would not want crampons on. MacDonald told Kirschner that because he was the addition to the climbing party, he did not feel that he should push the issue, so he reluctantly agreed to go down. When they reached a narrow spot in the chute, Barns and Warren did a glissade down 30 feet (described earlier). MacDonald was even more apprehensive about this section, but since the other two were below him and had the rope, he felt he had to get down to them first and then demand that they put their crampons on and rope up.

In retrospect, all three climbers agreed that they probably should have roped up and put crampons on in order to come down the chute safely. I feel that poor judgment was shown in trying to glissade down the steep chute and that the party should have been roped up for the entire climb. (Source: Rick Kirschner, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **FALL ON SNOW, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier**

Around 7:00 a.m. on March 12, 1981, Eric Simonson, a Rainier Mountaineering, Inc.

(RMI) guide, radioed from Camp Muir to Park Ranger Gerry Tays that an independent climber had injured his ankle. Tays advised Simonson of the combination of the ranger shelter so that he could get needed first aid gear. Simonson and his party left Camp Muir at 8:50 a.m. and lowered Don R. Tomlinson (24) to Paradise in a banana boat, arriving at Paradise at 12:10 p.m. Park Ranger Gary D. Olson respainted Tomlinson's ankle and Tomlinson was transported from the park by Thomas Enochs. Tomlinson gave the following account of his climb and accident.

Tomlinson and Enochs left Paradise on Tuesday morning, March 10, 1981, and hiked to Camp Muir. They spent March 11 resting at Camp Muir and at 1:30 p.m. on March 12 they left for the summit via Gibraltar Ledge. They climbed to about 12,500 feet and turned around due to unfavorable snow conditions. While glissading down the northeast side of Cowlitz Cleaver, Tomlinson caught his right crampon and twisted his ankle. Tomlinson and Enochs continued to slide down the snow until they reached an area level with Camp Muir. Enochs then went to the RMI cook shack to seek help in getting Tomlinson off the mountain. (Source: Gary Olson, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

### **Analysis**

The question of crampons being worn while glissading comes up once again. The single biggest variable determining the level of success is the ability of the glissader. (Source: J. Williamson)

## **FALL ON SNOW AND ROCK, BAD WEATHER, AND "UNKNOWN"**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier**

At noon on May 23, 1981, Bruce A. Mooney (20) and Douglas D. Fowler (21) checked out from the White River Ranger Station to climb Liberty Ridge. They hiked into their high camp at 7,400 feet on Curtis Ridge. About noon on May 24, Mooney and Fowler started up the Carbon Glacier toward Liberty Ridge in the rain. They were last seen alive by the McLean party about 4:00 p.m. on May 24, at about 9,400 feet on the Carbon Glacier near the base of Liberty Ridge.

Preliminary investigation leads me (Ranger Edward A. Wilson) to believe that while trying to ascend the upper Liberty Ridge, about 12,500 feet, one or both of them took a fall of approximately 2,000 feet (the reason for the fall is unknown).

At 12:20 p.m. on May 28, the two bodies were spotted from a helicopter approximately 10,000 feet up on the Liberty Wall. By 6:25 p.m., the bodies and the two NPS rescue team climbers were picked up from the Liberty Wall by a penetrator cable hanging from a Chinook helicopter.

The following is taken from statements made by Don Mooney and Gary Fowler, the victims' fathers, and by the last people to see and talk to Mooney and Fowler.

Mooney was employed by Nurseries, Inc., in Tacoma and was described as a good worker. He was also described as young, healthy, in excellent condition and as being in a very good mood prior to leaving for the climb.

Fowler, also of Tacoma, was a junior at college and was having no trouble in school. He was also described as being in excellent physical and mental health.

The two young men had been climbing together for the past five or six years. Together, they had attempted Mount Rainier ten or twelve times and had made the top six or eight times. Along with Mooney's father, they had been trained in mountaineering by The Moun-