

FALL ON ROCK, INEXPERIENCE, FAILURE OF PITON, INADEQUATE BELAY, NO HARD HAT

Wisconsin, Devil's Lake State Park

On June 30, 1981, Tom Tabbert (20) fell from a route between Moldy Buttress and D'Arcy's Buttress, sustaining injuries to his left ring finger, lower back, and head. He said he fell because one of his "pins" had popped loose. An EMT on the scene stated that both climbers were new to the sport and that their climbing rope was wrapped around a tree and the belayer's waist when the fall occurred. The rope slipped up the tree and thus up to the belayer's armpits; after this the belayer let go. (Source: Terry Tyler, Devil's Lake State Park)

FALL ON ROCK

Wisconsin, Devil's Lake State Park

On November 7, 1981, about 11:30 a.m., Jeff Oimoen (25) came to Park Headquarters and asked for help. He said he was climbing on the South Shore and fell. He had severe burns on all of his fingers and his hands. His hands were bandaged and he was transported to the hospital. (Source: J. Buchholz, Devil's Lake State Park)

Analysis

There are not enough details to know whether Oimoen was ascending or rappelling. Devil's Lake State Park has only been reporting accidents for the past few years, as it is a fairly recently "discovered" climbing area. The Superintendent reports the following:

"For some reason—we wish we knew what it was—1981 was a quiet year for climbing accidents at Devil's Lake State Park. I have attached reports of the only three accidents that occurred in which we were involved in a rescue.

"We had made conscious efforts to hold down the accident rate this year. We met with several climbing groups, we provided rescue equipment in the climbing areas, and we attempted to stress safety in the minds of climbers. Perhaps these efforts caused the low accident rate." (Source: J. Williamson and Craig Karr, Superintendent, Devil's Lake State Park)

FALL ON ICE, CLIMBING UNROPED

Wyoming, Tetons

On January 18, 1981, Harry Frishman (38) and Mark Whitten signed out at the Moose Visitor Center for a climb of the Black Ice Gully on the Middle Teton. They hiked to the Lower Saddle and spent the night inside the Exum Guide's hut.

On January 19, they decided to climb the Northwest Couloir route on the Middle Teton. This route is described in Leigh Ortenburger's *A Climber's Guide to the Teton Range* as "a difficult high-angle snow and ice climb." It is rated at Grade II, F6. Both Frishman and Whitten had extensive mountaineering experience. Frishman worked as a guide for the Exum Mountain Guide Service. That morning they left the Lower Saddle and began ascending the Northwest Couloir. They decided to climb unroped, although they carried a rope with them. They also had crampons and ice-climbing tools but no hard hats.

Around 11:15 a.m., Whitten successfully reached the top of the couloir, with Frishman

close behind. A few feet from the top, Frishman slipped. He was unable to self-arrest on the steep ice and fell approximately 2,000 feet to his death. Whitten was unable to reach Frishman, so he ran out to the Moose Visitor Center for help. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

Analysis

At 3:08 p.m. on January 19, Whitten arrived at Moose Visitor Center to report a climbing accident on the Middle Teton. Rangers Dabney and Patterson interviewed Whitten and then prepared for a rescue.

At 4:00 p.m. Dabney and Patterson left Beaver Creek in a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter piloted by Roger Kjerstad. They located Frishman's body from the air and landed nearby. The body was at the 10,700-foot level on the snowfield northwest of the Middle Teton. A line of bloodspots and scuffmarks in the snow indicated the path of the body as it descended the righthand (south) fork of the Northwest Couloir and came to its present position. There were no life signs. Frishman was wearing a sit harness. His Lowe Hummingbird Hammer and Chouinard Alpine Hammer were in good condition. The Hummingbird hammer was attached by a sling to his sit harness; the Alpine hammer was attached to a sling around his neck and shoulder. One Chouinard crampon was loose but attached to his right ankle by its strap; the other crampon was missing. The tines on the right crampon were all in good condition. There were no obvious injuries besides the massive trauma to his head.

At 3:10 p.m. on January 19, Patterson interviewed Whitten at the Moose Visitor Center.

Whitten stated in essence that he and Frishman had bivouacked at the Exum Guide's hut on the lower saddle the previous night and began climbing the Northwest Couloir of the Middle Teton in the morning. They were climbing unroped with crampons and ice tools. At 11:15 a.m. Whitten reached the top of the couloir, with Frishman close behind. Whitten began taking pictures of Frishman ascending the couloir below him. When Frishman was only a "few" feet away, he slipped, possibly because a piece of brittle ice broke away around his crampon. Frishman slid and tried to self-arrest, but the ice was too hard and steep. Frishman flipped over backwards and slid out of sight down the couloir, banging his head on some rocks.

Whitten downclimbed several gullies, following a trail of hair and blood. He recovered a crampon and a glove. He got to within about "300 feet above" Frishman but was blocked from further descent by cliffs. He could see Frishman, and he "hollered," but saw no movement and heard no response.

Whitten climbed back up and descended the north ridge, reaching the Exum hut at approximately 1:00 p.m. He then ran out and drove to the Moose Visitor Center. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE, INEXPERIENCE

Wyoming, Tetons

Michael Knofler (45) was a West German of intermediate climbing ability and experience. On the morning of July 2, 1981, he came into the Jenny Lake Ranger Station to sign out for a climb of the West Face of the Grand Teton. As Climbing Ranger Hogan talked with him, it became apparent that Knofler had no idea of the difficulties involved and had decided on