

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 on 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

the West Face solely from photographs he had seen in the Ranger Station. Hogan convinced him that the Owen-Spalding or Exum routes were more within his abilities and recommended that he try to find a climbing partner.

That afternoon Knofler returned to the Ranger Station and explained that he had been unable to find a climbing partner. Hogan then recommended the Southwest Couloir (Grade II, F3) on the Middle Teton and explained the route, approach, and camping areas. Knofler registered to climb that route on July 3 and return the same day.

On July 3, Knofler hiked to the South-Middle saddle with two other climbers, Mike and Terry Howard. The other climbers pointed out the Southwest Couloir to Knofler and warned him not to climb the other couloirs because they were much steeper. They then parted and Knofler started up the South Teton; the other two headed up the Southwest Couloir on the Middle Teton.

Knofler never checked in from his climb. When his car was found to be gone (it was parked in a different lot than he had indicated on his registration), the climbing rangers assumed that he had returned but failed to sign in.

Knofler's lifeless body was spotted on July 13 in the Ellingwood Couloir by another climbing party, which then reported it to a climbing ranger on the Garnet Canyon trail. The body was recovered by the Jenny Lake rescue team that day.

Knofler's pack and one crampon were found higher up in the Ellingwood Couloir. His ice ax was strapped to the outside of his pack; his crampons had been torn from the straps on top of his pack. Knofler was clad in normal mountaineering clothing. A chipped and cracked Bell toptex climbing helmet was on his head. His pack contained normal day-use equipment but no flashlight. He had fallen at least 500 feet, perhaps more.

Evidently, after attempting or climbing the South Teton, Knofler then attempted to climb the Middle Teton, perhaps the same day. He probably reached the summit and left the Southwest Couloir to descend, either accidentally because of darkness, or to reach what looked like a shortcut back to his camp. While downclimbing he slipped and fell to his death. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

Analysis

An investigation of Knofler's background revealed that on a previous occasion, Knofler had fallen while solo climbing in the Swiss Alps and had sustained serious head injuries which required a long period of recuperation in the hospital. This must have instilled some sense of caution in him, since he wore a hard hat in the Tetons. However, despite all the information given him, he still climbed a route that he was cautioned against. Why he made this choice will never be known. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

FALLING ROCK

Wyoming, Tetons

On July 12, 1981, Lori Rose and Climbing Ranger Randy Harrington climbed Sentinel Turret in Death Canyon. At the beginning of the second pitch, a large (approximately 10" X 4") rock came hurtling down from above and hit Harrington on the head. He was tied in at the time and was uninjured, except for a mild headache. The outer surface of his Bell toptex climbing helmet was punctured and the foam beneath crushed. They completed the climb without further incident. (Source: Craig Patterson, Grand Teton National Park)