

Analysis

The report does not indicate whether the party was using ropes. In chutes, a rope may not be necessary but could be useful if people are fatigued and in keeping the party close together. In chutes, staying close together is the recommended practice. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL INTO CREVASSE

Washington, Mount Rainier

On Sunday morning, August 22, 1982, Daryl Beazer, Jim Ellefson and Philip Eslinger (20) left Paradise for Camp Muir and a summit climb the following day. On Monday morning early, they left Camp Muir en route to the summit. About 0500 while at a rest stop, Eslinger was accidentally pulled off balance and fell into a large crevasse at about 4200 meters. He fell approximately 15 meters, until he hit and stopped on top of a "false bottom" in the crevasse. RMI Guide Peter Whittaker, who was leading a climb to the summit, happened along; he extricated Eslinger, sledged him to the top of Disappointment Cleaver and waited for a NPS helicopter rescue. About 1130, Rangers Wilcox, Olson and Philips left Kautz Creek in a Chinook Army helicopter and flew to the top of Disappointment Cleaver. Eslinger was loaded into the helicopter and flown to Kautz Creek. He was then transported to Longmire where his right ankle was splinted for a possible boot-top fracture and transported to a Seattle hospital for further medical treatment. (Source: Bundy Philips, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

Analysis

Shortly before 0500, the Beazer party coiled in their climbing rope to meet a party of friends who had stopped to rest near a large crevasse at 4300 meters on the Disappointment Cleaver route. The two groups were on different ropes but were just traveling together. Eslinger told Philips that Beaver was the "first" on his rope and that he had coiled most of the coils in their 50-meter rope. Eslinger, who was in the middle of the rope, took a few coils of rope between him and Beazer. The "third" on the route, Ellefson, took all of the coils between him and Eslinger. The order of the second rope was Beazer, Eslinger and Ellefson. There were approximately 20 meters of rope separating the three party members. Eslinger told Philips that he was unintentionally standing on the short section of rope which separated him and Beazer; when Beazer took off and began climbing again, he created tension on the rope and pulled Eslinger off balance. Apparently Beazer was going to walk until he felt tension on the rope, then either flake the rope out or drop it. When he did this, he caused a kind of "pulling the table cloth out from under the place setting" trick that pulled Eslinger off balance. Eslinger said he also fumbled and that one of his crampons caught in the straps of the other boot, causing him to further lose his balance.

Eslinger said he then fell sideways down a short section of ice at the steep angle. He attempted to self-arrest his fall but accidentally dug his front points into the hard ice which caused him to flip over backwards. He was sliding down the steep section of ice on his stomach (about four meters) when he flipped over backwards. He free fell 12 meters and landed on the false bottom. Beazer said later that the fall nearly pulled him and Ellefson off balance and into the crevasse. (Source: Bundy Philips, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)