

Since Woodmency did not have a radio, Pearson continued; Woodmency climbed to Krack and provided medical care, extra clothes and assurance until the rescue was complete.

At 1330, Pearson reached the Jenny Lake Ranger Station and reported the accident. Rescue Coordinator Ed Thompson ordered the contract Hughes 500D helicopter from Fort Washakie and assembled a rescue team of Rangers Barb Eastman, Chuck Harris, Peter Hollis, Leo Larson, Anne Macquarie, and Steve Rickert. The helicopter arrived, piloted by Rick Farnsworth, and began ferrying rescuers to Mount Owen.

Farnsworth, a former military pilot and instructor, was able to drop the rescuers on an incredible rock promontory directly next to the couloir and only 130 meters below the victim. This superb mountain flying, which resulted in a great saving of time, probably prevented the victim from spending the night on the mountain. The alternative would have been to climb up from the great glacier.

Upon reaching Krack, the rescuers further splinted his injuries, provided IV therapy and began the evacuation. One technical 100-meter lowering brought Krack to a ledge system roughly level with the helispot. A traverse was then made to the promontory where Farnsworth was again able to touch down on the rock which resembled half a boxcar suspended 300 meters above the Teton Glacier.

Krack was flown to Lupine Meadows, where he was further stabilized, and then transported to St. John's Hospital in Jackson. (Source: Ed Thompson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

### Analysis

The Koven route saw at least three falls during the summer of 1982. All of them resulted in some injury; Krack's was the worst. In all three cases, the climbers involved reported that they had slipped and attempted to self-arrest but were unable to stop themselves. On steep snow slopes, and any snow slopes that end in rocks or cliffs, it is imperative that climbers be able to initiate a quick, *effective* self-arrest or, better yet, set an ice ax "self-belay" that precludes a fall. It is also important that climbers be able to evaluate snow conditions, since arrests are often next to impossible in rotten or granular snow or on hard ice. The fact that these climbers were unroped is irrelevant as a safety factor since the route is almost always climbed in this manner. Furthermore, given the snow conditions, it is quite probable that Pearson would merely have been pulled off the route had the pair been roped up. (Source: Ed Thompson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

*(Editor's Note: In a letter to the U.S. editor, Ranger Craig Patterson said the following: "Of the accidents reported this year, half of them were due to falls and failure of self-arrest on snow. I'm concerned that, with the present intense interest in hard rock climbs and steep ice climbs, beginning and intermediate mountaineers may be neglecting their basic skills in steep snow travel.")*

### FALLING ROCK, STRANDED, INEXPERIENCE, DARKNESS Wyoming, Devils Tower

At 0800 August 19, 1982, three climbers, Bob Larr (32), Roger Raspen (37) and Steve Crawford (18) arrived at the base of the Durrance II route on Devils Tower. They had arrived the day before and had begun the same climb around 1400 but

decided, around 1700, to rappel off due to the increasing incidence of lightning in the area.

They decided that, rather than try a different route, they would complete the Durrance II route and then move on to another. They were still somewhat weary following their nonstop drive from Pennsylvania. At 0800, there were two parties ahead of them. The party of three, immediately ahead of them, was exceptionally slow. It took them well over two hours to get all three members to the top of the first pitch (the Leaning Column). Around noon, they decided that they would have to begin the route later in the afternoon when it was once again in shadows. They then rappelled directly down from the route and left their ropes in place to facilitate the scramble back up to the start of the route.

Since they had self-registered at the Ranger building at 0100, Larr informed the ranger that they were leaving their ropes in place on the lower-angle rocks above the boulder field and that the party above them was taking an inordinate amount of time to proceed on the easiest route on the Tower. The ranger suggested that they do TAD but, since they were down for lunch, they would have had to retrieve their equipment from the Durrance before proceeding.

While eating lunch, they watched the other group's progress and, about 1300, decided to go back up. They were climbing by 1400 and had completed the first pitch in 25 minutes. At this point, it was obvious that they would soon catch up with the party above. Despite slowing down for photographs, among other things, they reached them at the top of the fourth pitch. At this point, they had been on the route eight hours. As their lead climber began the fourth pitch (leading to the Jump Traverse), Larr spoke with the third man on the rope and asked how they planned to rappel, since the normal descent required two 45-meter ropes. He replied that they had another rope in their haul sack. They had, in fact, been using one rope for three climbers, throwing it down to the third climber. Larr believed the second rope was 55 meters of Goldline.

Larr's group eventually arrived at the Meadows, seeking the easiest scramble route up. Here, they passed the other group as they continued to lead climb the Class 3 section. Larr's group reached the summit at 1830 and stayed about half an hour. They had difficulty locating the first set of rappel bolts. By this time, the slower group had come up to the summit and had found the bolts.

Larr decided that, if his group rappelled behind them, they would be benighted, because they wouldn't be able to pass them below on any of the small stances. So, Larr set up a rappel down the Class 3 section where other parties had apparently rappelled, since there were some slings in place which Larr replaced with two of his own. They were rappelling an inside corner with about a one-meter slot between the faces. Two of them rappelled without incident. The third climber, who was about six meters above them, momentarily lost his balance. His foot slipped into the corner and he swung into the right wall but with no force since he was descending slowly under control. Larr reached up instinctively to steady him as his feet were about at Larr's head level. A barrage of rocks then tumbled out of the bottom of the slot. One boulder, about 58 cm × 58 cm × 30 cm, crushed Larr's right foot, breaking it severely. He thought at first that the rappelling climber might have kicked the rock loose when he lost his balance but was told later that it had whistled past the other climber's head inside the slot. Apparently, when he swung into the wall, the rope dislodged the rocks at the top of the slot. At this point, they noticed

that the other party's first rappelling member had not yet gotten to the next set of bolts. They hurried over to them (at the far end of the Meadows) and proceeded to rappel. While the three of them stood on the next rappel stance, they noticed that the other party was having trouble getting to the set of bolts they had just used, despite the fact that they had pointed out the bolts' location to the one climber already on rappel. Larr does not know why but thinks he planned on rappelling past these pins to the ones they were already on. His rope left him about six meters above them. He asked if Larr's group could leave their ropes in place for them to rappel down with. Since the rappels below the Meadows end on the top of columns, there was just enough room for three people, let alone six. In addition, Larr was concerned about the severity of his injury and didn't want to be slowed up any more.

By now, it was between 2030 and 2100. Larr suggested that the other group rappel the Durrance route, because at least they were familiar with it and knew where the bolts were. Also, in the dark, it would be safer than three 45-meter rappels, particularly since they didn't know where the bolts were. (Larr's group had watched the first party descend much earlier in the day and had seen them use all of the bolts except the ones from the summit; these were out of their line of sight.)

As Larr's group began the last rappel, they heard someone at the foot of the tower. They called down and learned that it was a climber out for a moonlight walk. They asked him to get aid—an ambulance for Larr and the rangers for the party above, who had jammed their ropes rappelling the Durrance route. They eventually reached the ground and called up to the other group on the belay stance above the Durrance Crack, telling them to make sure they were all clipped into a bolt and that aid was on the way. They crossed the boulder field and met the rangers and the ambulance crew with a gurney at the footpath about 2200. Larr was later told by his friends, who returned to help, that the rangers climbed to the top of the Durrance Crack with headlamps and got the other group down around 0100. (Source: Robert Larr, letter to U.S. editor.)

### **Analysis**

In retrospect, I don't think that there were any precautions that could have prevented this accident, short of climbing another route. Even when we got off the normal rappel route, we picked a descent route that had obviously been used before.

The climb is 5.6 (in the opinion of some, the Durrance Crack pitch is 5.7) and certainly doesn't require a ten-hour ascent. At the point when our group caught up to the other party, I seriously considered asking them to let us pass. But, by then, their leader was on the pitch (5.4) below the Meadows and, although they had held us up all day, we had not been climbing right behind them until then. If faced with the same situation again, I would move to a different climb. I thought that we were acting sensibly by first climbing the easier route, in light of our long drive and unfamiliarity with the Tower. We could just as easily have managed TAD as Durrance.

I think that the rangers at Devils Tower were highly responsive and concerned in helping me and, from what my climbing partners told me, quite skilled and courageous in helping the other party. (Source: Robert Larr, letter to U.S. editor)