

**FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED****New York, Shawangunks**

A boy (9) was climbing on the practice rocks when he fell four to five meters to the ground, dislocating his elbow and shoulder. (Source: Brad Snyder)

*(Editor's Note: This is the youngest climber reported in ANAM thus far.)*

**FALL ON SNOW, BELAY FAILURE, NO HARD HATS****Oregon, Mount Hood**

At 0230 on June 14, 1983, a group of climbers left their base camp at 2590 meters on the Eliot Glacier and began their ascent of Mount Hood via the Eliot Glacier Headwall. The party consisted of Bernie Colasurdo (26), Mike Colasurdo (25), Dan Hansen (25), Daniel Ravin (32), and Harry Herdman (24). Each of the climbers had several years climbing experience, although Ravin had much less experience than any of the other four. The group was well prepared with food, water, clothing and equipment, but neither Herdman or Ravin had head protection. No one in the party had climbed the route before. The weather was fair, but the freezing level, near 2896 meters at the start of the climb, rose rapidly to 3658 meters, causing very soft snow conditions. The group roped up before they climbed past the left side of Anderson Rock. Hansen and B. Colasurdo made up one rope, and M. Colasurdo, Herdman and Ravin made up the second. M. Colasurdo and Herdman placed Ravin in the middle of their rope because he was the least experienced of the climbers.

The party encountered no problem with rockfall, but the steps they kicked into the soft snow slid out easily. Only with their ice ax shafts pushed completely into the snow were they able to gain some protection. Their ice screws and pickets were useless. While climbing just above Anderson Rock, B. Colasurdo took a 12-meter fall, but was able to self-arrest using the adz of his ax. The rope teams alternated leads and belayed continually as they moved up the headwall. M. Colasurdo led to the uppermost rock band which crops out along the summit ridge at the top of the Eliot Headwall, about 3262 meters. From a position approximately six meters up on the rock, M. Colasurdo established a sitting belay. Ravin slipped twice while climbing up to him, but Colasurdo was able to stop him after very short falls. After Ravin reached the rock, Herdman smoothly climbed up and established himself with the pick of his ax stuck into a layer of ice on the rock. However, after Herdman had momentarily stabilized himself, the pick of his ax pulled out of the ice and he pivoted off into a fall. The fall was stopped for about a second, during which time he was able to assume a self-arrest position. But M. Colasurdo and Ravin both lost their holds on the rock, and all three fell down the 55-degree slope. Their fall was stopped when the rope caught on a rock approximately 92 meters below the rock band.

Following the fall, Herdman regained mobility in about 15 minutes and began moving between Colasurdo and Ravin providing assistance. Hansen and B. Colasurdo, uninvolved in the accident, rappelled from the scene and went for help. M. Colasurdo described his own condition to Herdman as "hurt bad, but OK." Ravin was seriously injured, immobile, and in great pain. The injured climber's situation

was complicated by deteriorating weather conditions, and snowfall began within 90 minutes following the accident.

M. Colasurdo and Herdman attempted to aid and comfort Ravin, but at 1500 he died as a result of his multiple injuries. They then considered their own conditions and realized they would both have to move down the mountain to expedite their rescue. It took Herdman about 30 minutes to untangle their rope, after which they began their descent. Herdman first lowered Colasurdo one rope length from the site and then carefully worked his way down to Colasurdo's new position. At this point, however, Herdman was showing signs of serious hypothermia, and they made the decision to rope up and climb down with Colasurdo leading. They arrived at the base of Horseshoe Rock at 3109 meters around 1920.

At 1930 they saw the first rescue team moving across Eliot Glacier. At 2030 the rescuers saw the injured climbers, both of whom were becoming dangerously hypothermic. They began to doubt whether the rescue team would be able to reach them quickly enough to save them. They attempted to dig a snow cave, but soon realized they did not have the strength to build an adequate shelter. Then they considered continuing their descent but were not certain how to negotiate the bergschrund directly below them. Herdman's speech was slurring, and he was convulsing with shivers; Colasurdo was shaking badly. They both felt they were losing mental clarity. Colasurdo believed their condition was desperate enough that they should chance the bergschrund, but Herdman did not feel this was a viable alternative. In the midst of their discussion—probably around 2145—rescuers Brian and Bruce Hukari and Jeff Youngblood arrived.

Throughout the late afternoon and early evening the 304th ARRS helicopters shuttled rescuers to the 2439-meter level on the mountain. The team then proceeded toward the injured climbers. Over 25 rescue personnel, including members of the 304th ARRS, Hood River Crag Rats, Alpinees, and Portland Unit of Mountain Rescue, spent the night on the mountain. Because the weather conditions had changed to freezing rain and snow, with winds gusting to 60 knots, no evacuation attempt was made during the night. The rescuers on the immediate scene administered medical treatment and placed themselves in sleeping bags with Colasurdo and Herdman to counter their hypothermia.

At dawn, the weather cleared, and all of the rescue teams were able to assemble on the scene. Because it seemed Colasurdo was the most seriously injured, he was evacuated first to a point on the snow dome below Anderson Rock. He was placed into a 304th ARRS helicopter at this point and flown to a Portland hospital. Herdman was then evacuated in the same manner, and all rescue personnel were off the mountain by 1600 on June 15.

Because of the soft snow conditions, the recovery operation for Ravin was delayed. The final recovery was made by the 304th ARRS and the Hood River Crag Rats when the weather cleared on June 21.

Injuries sustained by M. Colasurdo included a right tibial plateau fracture, several broken ribs, a contused left forearm and elbow, lacerations of the arms, and torn ligaments in the left ankle and right knee. Herdman's injuries included a myocardial contusion, a pericardial effusion, frostbite on the right foot, and a cracked sternum. Ravin's injuries included a broken right hip, a broken right tibia and fibula, broken ribs and clavicles, and head and chest injuries including a skull fracture and pneumothorax. (Source: W. Jerry Bryan, Hood River Crag Rats)

## Analysis

While the climbing group was generally experienced and well prepared, the soft snow conditions on Eliot Headwall obviously resulted in several slips and subsequent falls throughout the climb. The warm weather may also have resulted in poor ice conditions on the rock band. Eliot Glacier Headwall is a high-angle ice climb and is in very poor condition when the snow is soft. Head protection is suggested for the route because it is continually exposed to rockfall.

The failure of the belay from the rock band remains unexplained, although two ideas are reasonable. The rock on Mount Hood is often poorly indurated and frequently does not provide an adequate anchor point for a belayer. This may have been one contributing factor to the accident. A second idea has been postulated by the victims: They have suggested that they may have felt a false sense of security when they reached the rock band, thus relaxing their guard momentarily.

The injured climbers' decision to move themselves down the mountain, despite their injuries, greatly facilitated their rescue and played an essential role in saving their lives. Had they remained on the scene with Ravin, their evacuation would have been very technical and required much more time. (Source: W. Jerry Bryan, Hood River Crag Rats)

*(Editor's Note: No other reports from Oregon were available at press time.)*

## RAPPEL FAILURE, CLIMBING ALONE, INEXPERIENCE Texas, Mount Bonnell

On January 15, 1983, Bruce Spiegelberg (22) fell eight meters while rappelling on Mount Bonnell. "I was looking up, and it happened just like that," Spiegelberg said from his bed in Brackenridge Hospital. "It was probably a piece of glass, because the rope looked like a knife cut through it."

Spiegelberg fell eight meters while rappelling down the mountain, landing in sandy gravel. He said it was fortunate that he did not land on a nearby rock, which would have inflicted more serious injury. He sustained a fractured back and pelvis, which his doctors think can be mended through therapy.

"I was pretty lucky," Spiegelberg said. "If I had been higher up, I might have gotten seriously hurt."

He said he was attracted to the sport because of the thrill and because he likes heights. A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, he said he had learned rappelling from a friend about nine months ago.

"The climbing around here is pretty good, but I don't think it's high enough," he said. (Source: *Austin-American-Statesman*, January 16, 1983)

## RAPPEL FAILURE, FAILURE TO TEST ANCHOR, INEXPERIENCE Utah, Wasatch Range

On February 23, 1983, Kurt Fashimpuar (18) fell fifteen meters onto a scree slope when his two-and-a-half-centimeter webbing sling anchor broke just as he was about