

wide where it was plugged at the bottom. Feldman found Blight and called up saying he thought he was dead. By this time Ed Carney and five others were ascending to the site from the Emmons Flats (3000 meters).

About 1945, Carney's party arrived at the site. Feldman and Blight were still both in the crevasse. Chan-Sew was in a sleeping bag. There were 14 people on the surface able to help with the ropes. At 2000 the park was notified by Schurman radio. Carney took command of the operation. The Z pulley system was abandoned, for there were enough people to straight pull now. Another rope was lowered to Feldman. Feldman clipped it to Blight's chest harness. Blight was pulled to where he hit the corniced roof of the crevasse. Feldman was then pulled to the same location. Then, with a combination of the ropes being pulled and Feldman working Blight from under the lip, they were both brought to the surface. It was about 2100. This raising operation was lengthy.

At the site Kirschner, a third-year medical student, checked vital signs. He checked for pulse, heart beat and respiration and found none. He said there had been bleeding from Blight's eyes, nose and mouth, and when he checked for a carotid pulse he thought the trachea was crushed. Kirschner said he knew Blight was dead.

A trench was dug to leave the body. Night was approaching and the safety of the other climbers and moving Chan-Sew was paramount. The party roped up and started for Camp Schurman about 2135.

At 2120, Ranger E. Wilson called Camp Schurman by radio. Wilson told the climbers how to open the loft to all the rescue supplies and equipment. (Source: Edward Wilson, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

### **Analysis**

All members of the party had been through The Mountaineers' "Scramble" and "Basic Climbing" courses. All had been trained in self-arrest and crevasse evacuation. Maria Chan-Sew reported that she had been climbing for seven months to complete the courses, and that she considers herself a beginning climber. Blight was described by his wife as being a cautious climber and a methodical person who liked to do things right, and that he had put a lot of time and effort into studying climbing. He was classified as an intermediate climber by The Mountaineers, and was strong and healthy. B. Beineke's mountaineering background began with the Mazamas in Oregon, and includes having been a member of Salem Mountain Rescue and two previous ascents of Mount Rainier.

Practice sessions in crevasse rescue, as with any simulation, do not include the total matrix of variables which happen in reality. When an accident of this type occurs, it is often in easier terrain than one might expect, and simple procedures quickly become complicated, especially when basic practices are not being used and there is a shortage of essential equipment. The circumstances in this particular accident are certainly not unique. The reader is referred, for example, to the report on the crevasse accident which happened in June on Mount McKinley. (Source: J. Williamson)

### **FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED, INEXPERIENCE**

#### **Washington, Ricksecker Point Cliff**

About 1300 on June 11, 1983, Lts. Harold Spiess (26) and Paul Magaudda (26) arrived at the Nisqually gate of Mount Rainier National Park. They were roommates,

and both were pilots with the U. S. Air Force 318th Fighter Interceptor squadron at McChord AFB. They had come to the park to climb, but had not yet decided on a particular place to do so. Shortly after entering the park, they stopped at the Cougar Rock campground and talked to seasonal Park Technician Sanders about climbing Mount Rainier at some future time; there was no mention of any anticipated climbing that day.

After leaving the Cougar Rock campground, the pair drove across the road to the Cougar Rock picnic area. They had seen a prominent southwesterly-facing cliff below Ricksecker Point and decided to climb it. They went on a "social" trail to the bank of the Nisqually River, and then traveled upstream for about 90 meters. They found a downed tree and crossed the river on it. After discussing their climbing route, reviewing handholds, footing and safety techniques, they entered the woods and went a few hundred yards to the base of a talus pile below the Ricksecker Point Cliff.

The pair climbed up the talus slope and then up an area of 5.1 or 5.2 difficulty. As travel beyond this point appeared more difficult, they began to traverse a ledge in a northwesterly direction with Spiess in the lead. Magaudda said that the rock was dry, but moss covered. They found that this ledge did not lead to an easier route, so the pair turned around to retrace their steps. Magaudda was now in the lead. Magaudda stated that he heard Spiess say, "This looks like a good route," or words to that effect, and turned around to find that Spiess had climbed three to four meters above the ledge. Spiess then said something like, "I think I am going to need some help getting back down again." Magaudda told him to be careful in descending and began to walk back along the ledge watching his own footing. He then heard Spiess say, "Oh!" and looked up to see him sliding on his stomach. Spiess then fell over backwards and fell about 75 vertical meters to the talus slope below, striking several ledges en route.

He then continued to tumble down the approximately 25-degree talus slope for an estimated additional 150 lateral meters. He came to rest against a bush, with his feet raised about one foot on the bush and his head and back against the rocky talus slope.

Magaudda thinks it took him about five minutes to reach his friend. He says that upon his arrival, Spiess was breathing, was making a gurgling sound, and that his eyes were open and moving. Due to the blood on Spiess's blue jeans and the deformity of his legs, Magaudda believed at least one of them was broken. Magaudda used his own shirt to attempt to compress the wounds on Spiess' head, but did not move him otherwise. According to Magaudda, Spiess did not speak to him at the point at which he came to rest.

Magaudda said he thought it took him about five minutes to reach the Longmire-Paradise road and an additional estimated five minutes to come to the Longmire Museum to ask for help for his friend. He arrived at the museum at 1545. (Due to the difficulty of the terrain and the distance traveled on foot and by car, it appears that it reasonably would have taken about 25 minutes to make such a trip and the time of the accident has thus been fixed about 1520.)

I was called on the radio and came to the Longmire Museum at 1547. Magaudda explained that his friend was hurt "near Eagle Peak," but could not name the exact location. I then accompanied him to the accident scene, arriving there about 1630. I found that Spiess had no vital signs, and at 1632 I so informed the park com-

munication center. I then sat down with Magaudda to console him and to await the park rescue team, who arrived at 1700. (Source: Gene Casey, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

### **Analysis**

Both men were equipped with small packs containing water, food, and clothing. Neither was equipped with standard climbing gear such as pitons, ropes, carabiners or hard hats. Lt. Magaudda was wearing vibram-soled hiking/climbing boots. Spiess was wearing military-issue flying boots with a lightly patterned sole.

Magaudda said he had done rock climbing in high school and college, and had made climbs of 5.8 and 5.9 difficulty. He said that Spiess had no previous rock climbing experience. Their objective, according to Magaudda, was to find a route on the Ricksecker Point Cliff of only fourth-class difficulty so they could climb unroped. (Source: Gene Casey, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **AVALANCHE**

### **Washington, Mount Shuksan**

On June 26, 1983, Peter Travis (19) and John Nelson (20) were killed when an avalanche on Price Glacier, on the north flank of Mount Shuksan, swept them down an avalanche chute and over a cliff.

John Trombold, one of five other men in the climbing group, said the accident took place around the 2100-meter level of the mountain.

"It was misting and we decided to turn back because of the avalanche danger, and it generally wasn't very pleasant on the mountain," Trombold said.

In three roped teams, the group began the descent. Suddenly, an avalanche thundered down the mountain as they traveled alongside an avalanche chute that was only about five meters wide, Trombold said.

"I turned around just in time to see a wave of snow come over the ridge and hit John and Peter," Trombold said. "It knocked them down and carried them 300 or 400 meters, then over the cliff."

Trombold said he and some of the other climbers watched, unable to do anything, as the two men were swept to their deaths. The avalanche was not particularly large, but it was moving quickly and made a lot of noise, he said.

"Peter was sort of swimming in the center," he said. "John was farther behind. They were both spinning and it washed them down and then over a cliff."

The two would have survived if they had not tumbled over the cliff, Trombold said. "It was just the damned cliff." (Source: *Seattle Times*, June 28, 1983)

### **Analysis**

Mount Shuksan has been the location of several accidents over the years. In this case, National Park rangers noted that Mount Shuksan is an avalanche-prone mountain, even in summer, and that the new snow probably didn't bond with older, icier snows. These climbers were described as experienced and "well versed" in different types of terrain. Their decision to turn back was obviously appropriate for the conditions.

This mountain is viewed by many experienced climbers as one that is more difficult