

ment. Subtle changes of the incline entice many climbers to use unsuitable equipment or techniques higher in the couloir. Sweeping up at a modest 33 degrees at 2100 meters, the slope reaches 40 degrees at 2360 meters, 44 degrees at 2500 meters, then just over 50 degrees at 2700 meters. By mid summer the last few pitches are normally ice. Objective hazards include frequent rock fall and wet snow avalanches.

Case histories show a variety of subjective and objective causes of accidents, with no single cause predominating. Given the rate of accidents for this particular route, it is very difficult to recommend it with a clear conscience except under ideal conditions. The nearby Perren route provides a much safer alternative to the icefields and hut site. Information about conditions and access via the Perren route should be obtained from Park Officers prior to climbing in this area. (Source: Clair Israelson, Banff National Park)

FALL ON SNOW, AVALANCHE, FATIGUE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Stanley Peak

On July 23, 1983, three climbers were unable to make the summit of Stanley Peak via a route on the north face and turned back around noon. During the descent of a gully on the lower north face, Bob (50) slipped on wet snow. He arrested his fall but pulled M. and F. off. These two men slid past Bob in a small wet snow avalanche and yanked Bob out of his arrest. The three men then fell approximately 150 meters down the gully which included going over a small cliff band. Bob suffered a fractured leg and gashes to his head. M. descended for help, reaching the highway around 0700 the next morning. The party was discovered overdue by the new voluntary registration system during the night of July 23, and M. was met at the trailhead by Kootenay Wardens checking the overdue. Bob and F. were slung off the face by 0830 by a crew dispatched from Banff. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park)

Analysis

Bob had 30 years of moderate mountaineering experience. Although it was not specifically stated in the report, it is likely that fatigue was the reason the party turned around on the climb, and it is also likely that it contributed to the slip on the relatively easy snow slope. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, PARTY SEPARATED, INEXPERIENCE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Rundle

On the evening of August 3, 1983, two strangers, Hugh (26) and Dan, met at a campsite near Banff and arranged to scramble up Mount Rundle together the next day. The easy route follows an excellent trail to treeline and then a scramble route up talus and slabs for several thousand meters to the summit.

The two men set out early on August 4. Eventually it was apparent that Hugh was holding Dan back to a slow pace, so at treeline they separated. Dan was able to scramble to the summit within a couple of hours and descended via a different route following a major gully system which intersects the main trail at treeline.

He did not see Hugh after leaving him behind, and expected he had given up the scramble in the heat. Hugh had said he would likely not bother trying to reach the

peak. Dan returned to the camp and became concerned when Hugh did not return. In the evening, Dan reported Hugh missing to the Banff Rescue Service.

An intensive helicopter search was immediately begun. Terrain around the trail is very complex and contains a number of dangerous canyon traps. Three ground teams of Wardens were deployed and just prior to dusk, one party located Hugh's body. He had apparently followed Dan part way up the open slopes. The route parallels steep cliffs enclosing the gully Dan had descended. It is not known why Hugh slipped, but he had fallen down a 60 to 90 meter cliff. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park)

Analysis

Although this is not a climbing accident, it warrants some attention. When these two met, they struck a very informal arrangement to go up the mountain together. Neither knew the other's abilities. The peak seems easy enough to a scrambler with moderate ability, so it also seemed fairly reasonable to split up when they discovered their different levels. However, no firm arrangements were discussed when they separated. A high number of searches result simply from parties splitting up while not coming to reasonable understandings about who is going to do what. Dan might have watched out for the other man if he expected Hugh was going to be following slowly behind up the upper slopes. It is even possible Hugh saw Dan in the gully and fell when trying to take a short-cut to meet him. Although Dan had no strict responsibility for Hugh, he regretted that his going on may have brought the less experienced Hugh to disaster. In most cases, the more experienced should look out for the less so. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, WEATHER, EXPOSURE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On the morning of August 9, 1983, two climbers started up the east ridge of Mount Temple. M.A. (30) had recently moved to Canada from Japan, and a female friend, M.Y. (31), was on a climbing holiday from Japan. Both climbers had mountaineering experience in Europe, the Himalayas and Japan. They had spent the previous day preparing for the climb and carried a full complement of gear and bivouac equipment.

By the end of the first day they were just below the prominent Big Step where they spent a comfortable night. The next day they continued on up to the start of the Black Towers, but set up camp when the weather deteriorated. A violent storm raged most of the night, but by morning the rain had slowed to a drizzle so they began to work their way through the towers. Progress was extremely slow in the wet, cold conditions. At 1800, M.A. was doing an off-balance traverse move when his hand holds broke loose. He pitched backwards and fell 25 meters into the near vertical chimney, breaking his leg and suffering internal injuries. M.Y. held his fall, and then managed to pull him up onto a downsloping ledge and cover him with bivouac gear. He was complaining of the cold and beginning to lose consciousness when she left to bring help.

Frightened and alone, M.Y. continued along the towers until dark, spending a third night on the mountain, now without food. She continued climbing the towers on the fourth day showing courage and tenacity to overcome the steep, crumbling rock.