

Analysis

Ormsby apparently had logged just enough experience to foster a dangerous level of confidence yet not enough experience or instruction to recognize the hazards and possible consequences of an unprotected mistake. "Rock scrambling" by Park visitors with little or no experience seems often to go too far before realizing their tenuous position. They are then forced to fatal or near-fatal commitments. (Source: Charlie Logan, Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, FALLING ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Notchtop Mountain

On July 1, 1984, after completing a successful ascent of the Spiral Route on Notchtop Mountain, Charles Sperry (20) and Lee Jamieson (19) unroped and began an unprotected traverse of the summit ridge (a narrow ledge system) to the top of the descent gully. About 0900 Jamieson was either hit by falling rock or his hand-hold failed, causing him to fall over 100 meters down the near-vertical gully wall sustaining fatal injuries in the fall. Rangers responded and carried out a helicopter recovery from the scene. (Source: Charlie Logan, Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

Analysis

It is not known for certain whether a hand-hold failed or Jamieson was hit from above. In either case, on that particular section of the traverse, it may have been better to protect the narrow and unforgiving ledge system. Many climbers, including Park Rangers, have successfully negotiated the traverse unroped with no error and, therefore, no problem. In retrospect the potential is unfortunately all too clear. The traverse should be protected if one would prefer a second chance. (Source: Charlie Logan, Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, FALLING ROCK Colorado, Mount Aeolus

On July 6, 1984, Joseph Stolla (37), an experienced climber and an attorney from Englewood, Colorado, fell to his death from Mount Aeolus when a large block of rock broke off. A month later, a hiker named Paul Rockwood (20) from California fell 200 meters to his death from the precipitous South Ridge. (Source: Peggy Parr, El Paso County Search and Rescue)

Analysis

The climbing victim, about whom we have few details, was experienced and using appropriate equipment when the accident occurred. The hiking victim had left his companion, continuing up a technical route on the 4300 meter mountain wearing tennis shoes and having left behind his pack containing warm clothes. There was a hail storm of several centimeters while he was likely near the summit.

The Chicago Basin, which is a rugged area, is accessible to everyone because of the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. Experienced climbers call Chicago Basin "a Disneyland of tourists with a false sense of security." The mountain contains many places with extreme exposure, and is composed of eroding rock. (Source: Peggy Parr, El Paso County Search and Rescue)