

that I was competent to attempt this climb because I am competent at other strenuous physical activities.

After a few weeks of healing, I went out on a practice session with Dr. Stephen Perry, a climber who is on the faculty of the University of South Carolina. He taught me basic balance techniques while rappelling, a much safer belaying rigging, had me wear a helmet, taught me to traverse left and right, talked me through my absolute dread of rappelling, and had me rappel first a meter, then two meters, then six meters over and over again. Here is what I learned: (1) I now know my limits as a rank beginner; (2) I know what the right friction feels like on the safety line; (3) I will never climb with people who are drinking again; (4) I understand about being responsible for my own safety; (5) I bought a helmet. (Source: Elizabeth Crossscope)

(Editor's Note: From the mouths of babes—and rank beginning climbers—came the most succinct words of wisdom. Thanks, Ms. Crossscope.)

FALLING ROCK, FAILURE TO HEAR WARNING, INEXPERIENCE WITH AREA, POOR POSITION, NO HARD HAT

Oregon, Smith Rocks

On April 5, 1986, there were three climbing groups on the same area in Smith Rocks. Party 1 (consisting of two), while climbing the upper section of Lycopodophyta, crossed a section of rotten rock. Party 1 warned the people of Party 3 (a Mazama advanced climbing group of five) that the route was full of rotten rock and rock falls are highly possible. Party 3 was on the Bookworm (two routes over from Lycopodophyta). Both the Bookworm and Lycopodophyta (as well as most climbs in this popular section of Smith Rocks) are just off a climber's/hiker's path. Party 2 (Debbie Tribe [28] and four others) approached the base of the climbs. Party 3 warned Party 2 that Party 1 is climbing above them and rock has fallen and that there is still potential of further rock fall. Party 2, unhelmeted, stays at the base of Lycopodophyta. Later Tribe said that she did not know of the warnings given to her party about the potential rock fall.

Party 1 completes the climb which tops out on pea gravel. Party 1 moves back ten meters onto solid rock to coil the ropes. As a rope is coiled, it dislodges a baseball sized rock which begins to roll toward the top of Lycopodophyta. Richard yells, "Rock." John runs after it, and just misses catching it as it goes over the edge. John yells, "Rock." Richard's yell was not heard, John's yell was heard a second before the rock just missed an unprotected head and hit Debbie Tribe in the lower left back and left elbow. The rock had at least a 40 meter unobstructed fall to Debbie's back.

Party 1 hears the leader of Party 3 claim that there is an injured person. John begins to panic. When Party 1 reached the rappel point, John settles down. Richard rappels first. As Richard rappels, a person in Party 3 yells to him, "You could have killed someone." It was heard as, "You've killed someone." John did not hear the comment made by the person in Party 3.

When Richard reached the bottom, it was learned that the victim, Debbie, walked out under her own power. (Source: Richard Denker)

Analysis

Smith Rocks, although one of the better places in the United States to climb, is full of rotten and loose rocks as well as pea gravel. Helmets are highly advisable.

Many climbs on Smith Rocks have two sections. Usually the upper section contains rotten rock and is not climbed while people are below. Party 1 did not realize this was true for Lycopodophyta. Awareness of this fact may have prevented Party 1 from climbing beyond the standard rappel point.

The climbers above, although aware of the potential danger of causing rock fall, failed to watch the ropes as they coiled them.

Party 2's failure to watch out for potential rock fall, especially after being warned, was a contributing factor in the accident. They remained at the base of the route while debating about climbing it. (Source: Richard Denker)

IMPROPER DECISION—FAILURE TO TURN BACK, FATIGUE, EXPOSURE, HYPOTHERMIA, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, WEATHER, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE

Oregon, Mount Hood

Early on the morning of May 12, 1986, a party of 20 from the Oregon Episcopal School left Timberline Lodge at the base of Mount Hood for a summit attempt. The climb was part of the O.E.S.'s Basecamp Program, a four year adventure component which is an integral part of the school's curriculum. The group was led by Fr. Thomas Goman (44). He was assisted by Ralph Summers (31), who had been hired as a Technical Consultant/Assistant Instructor by Fr. Goman.

Twelve sophomore students formed the nucleus of the group. In addition to the leaders, they were joined by one parent, a faculty member, three upper class students who had received additional skills training, and Dee Dzudniak, an Outward Bound instructor who had been asked to join the group so that she would become familiar with the route and the program. (She might have become an Assistant Instructor on a later attempt.)

The weather two days prior to the climb had been unsettled, and there had been new snowfall. Rain and more snow were predicted. The leaders had heard the forecast on the radio and in the sign out area at Timberline. They were aware that a storm was predicted.

The group left Timberline about 0230, with students leading and breaking trail through calf-deep snow. Within 45 minutes, one student and her mother turned back. The rest continued on, reaching the Silcox Hut at 0500, an hour behind schedule. Here, two more students turned back, and soon thereafter, another student was escorted down by one of the upper class students.

After a rest at the top of the Palmer Lift at 0800, during which time more students discussed returning, the group pressed on in windy, cold, but seemingly stable weather. At a "bench" below the hogsback (2850) meters), Summers reported still being able to see both the summit and Timberline Lodge.

Shortly after leaving the hogsback, Dzudniak turned back due to a recurrence of snow blindness. The weather was changing, and various members were experiencing difficulty. Goman and Summers discussed turning back, but Summers reported that the leader wanted to make one more effort upward. Continuing on, the group was apparently spread out, and the weather had deteriorated even more. Summers, who was in the lead, came back and suggested that they turn back at once, which they did.

Difficulties began immediately on the descent. In whiteout conditions, many were in need of help. Patrick McGinness (15) was hypothermic, and efforts were made to