

and moving slowly. Around 1330 they left Muir. Enroute to Paradise they became disoriented and lost, and failed to make it down. This necessitated yet another bivouac. By this time they were soaked. On Friday, Hutnak and Mjelde, with assistance of Mount Rainier rangers, made it to Paradise, arriving around 1230.

Injuries were treated and the party of four departed Paradise enroute home planning to stop at a hospital in Yakima. Injuries consisted of lacerations, contusions, and minor frostbite. (Source: Bundy Philips and Gary Olson, SAR Rangers, Mount Rainier National Park)

### **Analysis**

The party could have been a bit more cohesively strong. Better evaluation of members' physical conditioning should have been done prior to trip departure. This could have possibly identified weak members which would have provided a stronger and larger summit party. This could have prevented the crevasse fall. The group should have had shovels and/or snow saws with them, especially given the existing weather and the forecast. As well, they should have possibly taken tents. Anchors should be placed solidly when used rather than using a poor placement and depending on it. This could have possibly checked Mjelde's fall. Consideration should be made to wait out a storm rather than travel in badly crevassed areas during poor visibility and weather. With shovels caves could have been dug to make for fairly comfortable accommodations. This could have possibly prevented further frostbite injuries.

Rainier Rangers, however, tip their hats to these hardy souls for enduring what had produced many fatal accidents. Their persistence and willingness to continue very definitely saved their lives. (Source: Rick Krischner, SAR Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

*(Editor's Note: Mr. Mjelde sent us a personal account which does not differ from this significantly. In his analysis, he says, "We were prepared for the worst type of weather and therefore we were not in any problems due to the weather. I would stress [to] anyone going to climb any major peak to be prepared for the worst and hopefully never have to use it.")*

## **INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, NO HARD HAT**

### **Washington, Index**

On March 16, 1986, Paul Birdstrup (35) was climbing Magic Fern (5.8+) on Index Town Wall, a one pitch route. Doing the 5.8+ moves, the climber took a minor fall and became frustrated and slightly frightened. Climbing farther up, he took one more small tumble and decided to be lowered down by his belayer. He set up a sling around a horn to be lowered off; however, he was too high above the horn. He put his weight on the sling, which popped off the horn. He fell approximately 15 meters to the ground, due to no protection in below the horn. His head impacted on a large stump, breaking his skull into many pieces. (Source: Robert Madsen)

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

### **Washington, North Cascades**

On March 22, 1986, Ulrich Ganz (46), Juan Esteban Lira (33) and I (Mark Dale [31])