

## **FALLS ON ROCK AND SNOW, STRANDED, FALLING ROCKS, ETC. Colorado, Various Locations**

Of the 11 accidents reported from Colorado this year, only one was an actual technical climbing situation. That one was a simple "fall on rock" on Red Garden Wall. This narrative is a composite of the hiker accidents in order to highlight the situations and locations about which that population needs to be reminded.

The accidents involving falls on rock or snow included one in the Gore Range, three in Rocky Mountain National Park, and one on Ellingwood Point, outside of Colorado Springs.

The Gore Range one is worth mentioning because it involved two fishermen in July who found themselves on a 50-degree snow slope, resulting in one of them falling about 200 meters and breaking his leg. According to the rescuers, they had never seen such miserable weather in summer. Aside from snow and hail, there were numerous thunderstorms. The victims' destination was Bubble Lake, which meant they had to go up from Piney Lake to the pass between Mount Powell and Peak C to a pass affectionately known as Kneeknocker. A brilliant helicopter evacuation saved hundreds of rescue hours. Hikers should take note: This somewhat benevolent range, which has been used frequently by the Colorado Outward Bound School for the past 20 years as a training area, can turn quickly into a technical climbing area.

There were two fatal falls in Rocky Mountain National Park. The first was a 50-plus meter fall from MacGregor Slab. Two young men stationed at Fort Carson decided to spend the weekend in the park and do some hiking and scrambling. Arriving on a Friday afternoon in late August, they set up camp. Then, without packs or any other gear, they left to ascend MacGregor Slab, which they did without difficulty. On the descent, David Felts (21) sped ahead 100 meters or so, which he had been doing on the ascent. He chose more difficult terrain to descend, and his partner lost contact with him. His body was later found by Rangers Jane Ruchman and Bundy Philips, who determined that he had been on terrain of 5.6 and more, and was therefore well beyond his abilities.

The second case began as an "overdue hiker" report. Rangers found the victim's vehicle on Trail Ridge Road opposite Deer Mountain. As the victim, John Schnakenberg (22) was reportedly a novice climber, teams hastily searched the base of the cliffs on Deer Mountain, where his body was found. Tracks matching the victim's boots led to the main part of the south rock face, which had been partially snow covered, it being mid-December. Ranger Bundy Philips traced his probable route and determined that for a novice, the victim did quite well on the 5.6 and above terrain, but he obviously exceeded his abilities and fell some distance to his death.

There was one fatal fall on Ellingwood Point which occurred to Father Jim Schultz (57), an experienced mountain hiker who had left Colorado Springs alone leaving no word of his destination. He was initially listed as missing. Extensive press publicity brought in word several days later from hikers who had talked with the priest near the summit. A helicopter was dispatched and located his body around the 4000-meter level of the Ellingwood wall. Peggy Parr of the El Paso Search and Rescue Team points out that a year earlier the same team recovered the body of

another nontechnical climber about 50 meters lower, probably attempting the same shortcut on descent. She suggests that a DO NOT ENTER sign is in order.

Two hikers were seriously injured in falling rock accidents, one on Mount Meeker and one on Long's Peak. The routes were The Loft and The Trough! Courtney Bazzano (16) was struck by a rock which fell from about 30 meters above her as she was scrambling up The Loft to the summit of Mount Meeker with a group from Cheley Camps. She sustained numerous soft tissue injuries of the head, neck, and back. We do not know how the rock was dislodged. Reed Pierce (8) sustained a fractured femur after being struck down by a large rock dislodged by a hiker above him in The Trough on the Keyhole Route of Long's Peak. His father, a medical doctor, provided care until help and evacuation by park personnel occurred.

There were three "stranded" incidents reported. The locations are interesting, given the above reports—MacGregor Slab. In March, Don Sandusky (23) got stuck in an area which varies from 5.2 to 5.8. His partner tied their two jackets together to get down over a short, difficult section, and went for help. In June, Alex Ballard (21) became separated from his two partners. He had apparently been stranded earlier on Deer Mountain Buttress, and had been talked down by his partners. This time, rangers had to lower him. He seemed not to have an understanding of the situation, according to Ranger Phillips, who cited him for disorderly conduct. The third stranded report involved two experienced and embarrassed climbers who had to be rescued from the summit of Crestone Peak. No other details available. (Source: J. Williamson)

*Editor's Note: No reports came in from Aspen Mountain Rescue or from the Boulder area. Any readers from these areas, as well as other climbing centers in Colorado, who would like to be of help in gathering at least some data, please step forward. As for other accidents, see the U.S. editorial.*

## **FALL ON SNOW, LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, AVALANCHE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, WEATHER Idaho, Mount Borah**

On June 13, 1987, David Probst (38), who was a member of the Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit for several years, was descending Mount Borah (3950 meters) with three friends when he fell 150 meters to his death.

They had started late in the morning, around 0900. Knowing there was very little snow, they carried only one ice ax with them. They reached the summit at 1800. Then they started down, and when they reached the saddle between the summit and false summit, they changed to the Rock Creek descent. The first two, Linda Claiborne (30) and Ben Childlaw (35) with the ice ax, started ahead of Probst and Jennifer Smith (31). Probst used a rock as a dagger for control on the snow while Smith waited in the rocks above. Probst lost control while trying to self-arrest. He disappeared around a bend in the snowfield. At this time Claiborne and Childlaw were down at the fourth snowfield. They saw a large mass of snow coming down the chute, but no sign of anyone. They climbed back up to Smith. At this point they