

FALLING ROCK, FALL ON ROCK, NO HARD HAT

Washington, North Cascades National Park

On May 24, 1987, Tom Wiesman (33) was fatally injured while descending Mixup Peak. He was struck on the head by a falling rock and fell an estimated 400 meters over rock and snow, coming to rest in a narrow snow gully.

Wiesman and his partner, Kathy McCreedy (25), started their climb from the end of the Cascade River Road. They reached the summit and then rappelled off the east face. They had completed the rappel and were standing on a small ledge. McCreedy reached for the rope to remove it from the anchor when several rocks came down. At the time or just prior to being hit, Wiesman pushed McCreedy out of the way of the falling rocks. Wiesman was hit in the head and pushed off the ledge and disappeared from McCreedy's sight. She down-climbed from the ledge in an attempt to locate him. She looked for about an hour and then decided to return for help. She climbed back up to the route and returned the same way they had come in. Park and MRA personnel completed an evacuation by 2130. (Source: William Lester, Park Ranger, North Cascades National Park)

Analysis

Rescue personnel determined that the head injury which caused this death could have been prevented if the victim had been wearing a hard hat. (Source: William Jones, Skagit Mountain Rescue Unit)

ASPHYXIATION, WEATHER, FATIGUE

Washington, Mount Rainier

Dr. John Weis and Donald Wiltberger, Northwest transplants from Ohio's tabletop farmland, loved to climb mountains and showed that love up to their final moments on Mount Rainier's steep peaks.

The Olympia men, both 31, were found dead on the mountain Saturday [June 6, 1987]. But they left behind a 30-minute videotape of their venture, explaining their love for climbing and their longing to share the euphoria of the adventure with family and friends.

The tape, recovered by searchers who found the bodies in a tent at the 4050 meter level, came from Weis' portable videotape camera. Relatives said the two men had a habit of chronicling their climbs so they could preserve the sounds, sights and excitement.

Last night, the final videotape spun the story of the climb for Weis' older brother, Bill, who replayed the footage as he sat quietly in the living room in his Queen Anne Hill condo. He watched his brother read passages of the 19th-century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche. It was the younger Weis' way of giving the climb perspective.

Weis, a pathologist, and Wiltberger, a nurse at St. Peter's Hospital in Olympia, were experienced climbers and were attempting Liberty Ridge.

They had tried twice before but had not been able to reach Rainier's summit. The tape begins with Wiltberger stopping to view a picturesque waterfall on the morning of May 26, the first day's climb. That night, Weis reads a passage from Nietzsche, and the men hold up photos of their children and talk about how they miss their