

Pay attention to fundamentals! If a fall will cause you injury, put a piece in; even if it's easy climbing! As far as the hold goes, the old adage "test them before you trust them" still goes! (Source: Myron Young)

Editor's Note: Right!

FALL INTO CREVASSE, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, INADEQUATE CLOTHING

Washington, Mount Rainier

On August 8, 1987, Larry Weathur (42) was climbing on a rope of four team members at the 2900-meter level of the Emmons Glacier, just below Camp Schurman. Ranger Baugher had just passed Larry and made a detour from the climbing trail due to a crevasse crossing with soft edges. Larry observed this. He continued to follow the track and fell through a snow bridge while crossing the crevasse. His team members arrested his fall, which resulted in his being suspended five meters deep with water soaking him.

Ranger Baugher directed the rescue operation with the equipment and assistance of his party of nine Spokane Mountaineers. He was belayed on his original rope while he employed a second rope over a prepared lip to raise him with a "C" pulley system. His other rope was freed from the lip and his pack recovered.

Weathur was uninjured and suffered only from a mild case of hypothermia (uncontrollable shivering and slurred speech—both cured with warm clothing after ten minutes). His total time in the crevasse was 15 minutes. (Source: Paul Baugher, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

Analysis

The fact that the victim weighed 100 kilograms probably saved him from more serious hypothermia. The fact that he was wearing a T-shirt at the time of the fall probably led to the hypothermia level he exhibited, however. On August 9 another member of this party fell into a crevasse on the descent. There was no injury, but park personnel had to perform the extrication. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ICE, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, CLIMBING ALONE, DARKNESS, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

Washington, Mount Olympus

On August 9, 1987, Robert Concannon (27) arrived at Glacier Meadows in midafternoon. He signed out on the bulletin board in front of the ranger tent and started up the moraine trail. Ranger Dave Halloran chased him down to ask if he was climbing. Concannon remembers that he did not stop to talk to Halloran because he was in a hurry. He told Halloran that he was climbing and that he would return after dark.

Concannon reached the summit of the west peak of Mount Olympus at 2015. He descended to the saddle between the west peak and the false summit. (He had been seen in the saddle around 2100 by Janet Hardy, the Snow Dome researcher.) He decided that he could save time on his descent if he descended on the north side of the saddle instead of going up the False Summit and around the Five Finger Ridge. There was a large crevasse which he would have to cross immediately below the

saddle. He thought that it would be possible to jump the crevasse. While he was walking the edge looking for a jump off place, he slipped. He remembers thinking that since he had the momentum he would go ahead and jump. He jumped. He landed on the lower lip of the crevasse. Instead of landing in soft snow as he had expected, he landed on ice. He lost his balance and fell into the crevasse. He remembers looking up from the bottom of the crevasse about six meters to the lip. There was a ledge system within the crevasse and by cutting steps and holds, he was able to climb to the lip. He descended the rest of the way down the apron ramp toward Snow Dome. In the fall he had damaged his ribs on his left side. He also remembers that he could not use his ice ax in his left hand. (His left wrist was later found to be broken in two places.) He found that he was breathing hard and that the breathing was causing pain in his ribs.

He remembered seeing some snow chutes leading off of Snow Dome to the Glacier on the east side. He cut over to the chutes rather than follow the normal descent route because he thought that the normal route would require him to down climb on rock and he was worried about his footing in the dark. He fell twice and self-arrested with his ice ax as he crossed toward the chutes. He fell a third time and although he was in an arrest position, he could not stop because he was on ice. He fell down-slope and over two crevasses before striking the lower lip of a crevasse. The crevasse had a ledge inside the lip which he ended up resting on. He discovered that his leg was broken. He lay there wearing shorts and a Gortex parka. He eventually worked his way into his bivy sack and spent the night. He had a pair of Lifa "long johns" and decided that he would have to remove his boots to put them on, but did not. In the morning he tried to reach the lip of the crevasse and found that he could not get out. He experimented with yelling early in the morning but gave up. Later in the morning he yelled again and thought that he could make a loud noise and perhaps attract some early climbers.

Concannon was heard by a group of climbers who had overnighted at a camp below the chutes which Concannon had intended to descend. The climbers were able to notify Ranger Halloran and the Glenn party who were starting to search from the area of the Cal Tech Rocks.

A total of 22 people participated in the rescue—11 volunteers, 10 park rescuers, and one helicopter pilot. The rescue started at 0630 and was completed at 1958, when the victim was airlifted from the scene. (Source: Hunter Sharp, Ranger, Olympic National Park)

Analysis

Mr. Concannon went climbing solo, at night, and on a mountain that he was unfamiliar with. He was not very well equipped, and he attempted to take a shortcut. It could have been worse, though. It so happened he fell into a fairly shallow crevasse, there was a climbing party camped nearby who reported his fall, and the weather was good. (Source: Steven Glen)