

**Analysis**

Nicola was an avid rock climber, and had a wide range of experience in the Rockies. The flake that caused the fall also took out her protection. (Source: H. R. Abbott, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

**FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES****British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Armada Mountain**

On August 7, 1988, a party of 12 BCMC members flew to base camp at 1900 meters on the south side of Armada Mountain above Doran Creek in the Queen Bess area. In the early afternoon, small groups started to climb the east, south, and west ridges of Armada, short climbs that would provide an overview of the area. On the west ridge, a party of three, still unroped on fourth class rock, reached a point about 2300 meters where the terrain became more difficult and route finding was necessary. Philip and Mark explored left for a possible route, while Blair Mitten (early 30s), a climber of intermediate experience, looked to the right. Mitten worked his way up a slab to a point where he no longer felt comfortable, and decided to turn around.

In trying to reverse his last move, he found it to be a little out of reach, and slipped off, sliding about six meters into David Strange, a climber in the party behind, who tried to arrest Mitten's fall. They both stopped on a ledge. Mitten suffered a fractured left ankle, and Strange had a badly bruised right thigh.

There were seven climbers on the scene by now. One splinted the ankle with ensolite. Some provided occasional belays as necessary to help Mitten get back down. Another went down to base camp, where the radio was available to call in a helicopter to carry the injured climber out. (Source: B. P. Gavin, British Columbia Mountaineering Club)

**Analysis**

Climbing unroped on moderate ground is a common practice where the security provided by a rope may be offset by the risk of its dislodging rocks. However, it seems that this party should have roped up and been moving one at a time before encountering the more difficult climbing which was beyond the ability of the victim. (Source: Ian Kay, West Vancouver, BC)

**ILLNESS, IMPROPER RAPPEL PROCEDURE, FALL ON ROCK****British Columbia, Bugaboo Mountains, Snowpatch Spire**

On August 8, 1988, Bruce MacNab (24) and Martin Condor left the Conrad Kain Hut to climb the Southeast Corner route on Snowpatch Spire (Grade IV, 5.7). Condor led a 50 meter, 5.4 pitch and brought up MacNab. MacNab was moving slowly, making small mistakes, and seemed disoriented. (Condor had been told, vaguely, a month before by MacNab, about a diabetic condition that he had.) Because MacNab was not feeling well and going slowly, the team decided to rappel. Condor suggested climbing about six meters higher to a larger ledge from where they could possibly scramble down. But MacNab just wanted to descend. Condor set up a rappel and went down first.

The rappel was about 45 meters long, down a very steep wall-and-corner system, and ended in a steep third and fourth class gully. Condor finished the rappel and informed MacNab of this. MacNab was apparently taking a long time to set up his rappel device. Condor then saw a meter or so of rope being pulled up. (Was he connecting his rappel device to the rope?) Condor then heard MacNab cry out "Oh, no!" and then saw him tumble down to the bottom of the gully. The fall was about 45 meters down the face plus 60 meters down the gully. The time was about 1030.

Condor found MacNab moaning, bleeding from the mouth, and very smashed up. There was no verbal communication between the two, and no first aid administered. Condor climbed back up the gully to retrieve his hiking boots (he was wearing rock shoes) and ice ax, and then rushed to the Conrad Kain Hut to report the accident to the Park Ranger. A rescue helicopter arrived about 1130, and took MacNab to Invermere Hospital. He died in hospital from extensive injuries. (Source: Chris Atkinson, Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park)

### **Analysis**

Both climbers were well equipped for technical rock climbing and both wore helmets. MacNab was moderately experienced with about one year of lead climbing and three to four years experience in the mountains.

When MacNab's gear was examined later, it was found that he had a figure-eight descender attached by a carabiner to a sling around his neck and shoulder. He also had a Sticht plate attached to a short sling. The locking carabiner attached to his harness was found to be unlocked.

It would appear that MacNab had pulled up the meter of rope in order to attach his Sticht plate to the rope, in the process somehow unclipping himself from the rappel anchor. He then had nothing to stop him when he slipped from the small ledge (about 30 centimeters wide). A very likely factor contributing to his fall was his slow, disoriented condition. (Source: Chris Atkinson, Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park)

## **FALL ON ICE, NO CRAMPONS**

### **British Columbia, Monashee Mountains, Woolsey Glacier**

On September 4, 1988, Paul (45) and Don made the six-hour alpine traverse to the Woolsey Glacier. The day was sunny and warm with temperatures in the mid 20's Celsius. The glacier was free of snow and there was water on the ice. Both men carried ice axes, but not crampons. The glacier is low angle, rarely exceeding 20 degrees. Descending the glacier, Paul slipped on the ice, and in falling, suffered a severe fracture of the lower tibia and fibula. After spending the night on the glacier, Don went for help, and Paul was later evacuated by helicopter. (Source: Glacier National Park Warden Service)

### **Analysis**

Paul was experienced, and had descended the same route in the same manner a year before. A route that avoids the ice without much detour is also available. With crampons, the accident would not have occurred. (Source: Glacier National Park Warden Service)