

(Editor's Note: North Carolina ranks high nationally in the number of lightning-related deaths. In June, another lightning death occurred when a hiker near the Attic Window Peak area of Grandfather Mountain was struck and thrown from a cliff, falling 40 meters to rocks below. Our thanks to Aram Attarian for sending reports from North Carolina.)

LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE

Oregon, North Sister

The following accident on May 13, 1989, was reported as follows:

All my information is secondhand. As a result of head injuries, I have no memory of the climb. I belayed my partner onto the glacier. I decided to glissade, lost control, went by my partner "in perfect self-arrest posture, with a two foot plume of snow coming off the ax." He braced himself in but was pulled off. We tumbled down the glacier about 500 vertical feet (150 meters) and stopped, probably because we snagged a big bulge with the rope.

I would like to commend Andy Van Brocklin (25), my partner, for preparing me for the night on the glacier. He was badly shaken up, it was very late, and it looked to him like I would be dead in 20 minutes anyway. But he probably spent an hour getting me bundled up before he left to notify rescuers. I would also like to thank Jim Munroe, a paramedic with the Oregon Air Life helicopter. Jim climbed about 2000 vertical feet (600 meters) up the glacier the next day, alone and without an ice ax or crampons, to administer first aid. (Source: Gerald Seeley, 34)

Analysis

My partner described our progress during the climb as scraping off slush so our crampons would hold in the snow. It was a warm day. I believe the top layer of the glacier was too weakened by melting to provide adequate purchase for self-arrest. I wasn't aware that such conditions could exist. A boot-ax belay would probably have stopped my fall, and can be set up in seconds, with practice. (Source: Gerald Seeley)

FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS—JUMPING CREVASSE

Oregon, Mount Hood

On June 11, 1989, while descending from a climb of Mount Hood, a rope team of four Mazamas reached the bergschrund, about 3250 meters. At this time and location, the 'schrund was opened about 60 cm wide and 40 cm high. Snow conditions were reported good, crampons were considered necessary due to the steepness of the terrain. The two climbers injured were recent but not novice climbers.

Bev Sherrer (49) was third on the rope, hesitated momentarily, then jumped the crevasse. Jumping it was apparently the standard method of crossing for most of the parties on the mountain. Her crampons locked her feet into the snow when she landed, and her momentum carried her sideways, twisting her left knee and ankle. Assistant leader Tom Stanwood began first aid and arranged for notification of authorities that help was needed.

The next rope team of the Mazama party came to the crevasse, continuing to jump. The last member, Sharon Birrel (28) jumped also, but when she landed, she "heard a

bone break in her leg." The final two rope teams traversed the crevasse to the west avoiding the jump.

Shortly, a private climb party which had done Leuthold's Couloir, a nearby route, arrived, notified by radio. Kent Romney, Portland Mountain Rescue (PMR) member, was one of the Leuthold party, and carried a radio tuned to the PMR frequency. PMR has established a policy of members carrying radios and advising the PMR controller when they are on the mountain. This policy significantly improved response to the accident.

Both injuries were treated, and the 304 Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron was brought in for evacuation. The accidents happened about 1100. By 1300, Tom Stanwood took the rest of the party down, while the climb leader, Tom Nelson, remained at the scene. Sharon was evacuated about 1730 and Bev about 1800. Sharon required hospital treatment. (Source: Bruce Coopender, Climbing Committee Chair, Mazamas)

Analysis

Several factors contributed to the accidents. One, jumping is to be avoided if at all possible, particularly while wearing crampons. Crampons improve traction on ice and snow, and allow no slippage if momentum carries the climber past the point planned. Second, though an injury occurred, the practice of jumping the crevasse continued until the second injury. If jumping was the only option, assistance at the landing site, or belay from above could have reduced the chance for injury. (Source: Bruce Coopender, Climbing Committee Chair, Mazamas)

(Editor's Note: See 1987 ANAM cover for a pictorial account of what crevasse jumping can be like....)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, DISTRACTION, POOR POSITION

Pennsylvania, Ralph Stover State Park

On October 22, 1989, Phillipp Grout (40) took a six-meter fall to the ground while leading the center crack on the practice wall. Climbing a meter to the right of a top rope, he protected about three meters off the ground. About six meters off, he stopped to protect himself again. After placing a stopper, he stepped up to get a better look at the placement. Meanwhile, the top-rope climber had moved into the same crack and her rope crossed Grout's shoulder. This distraction caused Grout to lose his focus. Air time! Ground fall. Fractured left heel. (Source: Phillipp Grout)

Analysis

Always clip in, even if you don't trust the placement. Be aware of climbers around you. And no matter how easy a climb may seem, don't take it lightly. Stay focused and concentrate. (Source: Phillipp Grout)

(Editor's Note: The other reports we have from Pennsylvania this year include two stranded "climbers" who were cited for disorderly conduct after requiring rescue from an aerial fire ladder. These fellows were on a shale cliff above a pullout on U.S. 209. Another example of how nonclimbers end up proving that climbing is hazardous.)