

Chris lowered me to our last belay, and we then began six single-rope-length rappels, and belayed descents of two snowfields. My fall occurred 180 to 200 meters above the base. Once there, I was able to hike out. (Source: John Seebohm)

### **Analysis**

As with all mixed alpine climbs, this climb required judgment calls about changing conditions. There was sufficient snow and ice to climb, but the warm temperature was against us. In retrospect, we may have wrongly ignored early signs of significant warming: water on rocks encountered along the approach which had not frozen overnight, and softening snow, both at the base and on the route. Yet, the weather in the preceding days had been cold, and our climb was north facing. We incorrectly thought it would be in fine shape.

As we progressed up the climb, the lack of secure protection on ice did not greatly concern us. We were able to find sufficient protection along the rock for comfortable climbing, given our abilities. Apparent protection ran out at the point where the melting conditions made for treacherous climbing. It is doubtful that such a fall could have been altogether avoided without turning back. Having chosen to go forward, I might have searched longer for protection prior to committing myself to steep ground which posed as much danger to ascend as to descend.

On the other hand, our experience and safety-consciousness ultimately served us well, although the preceding account might lead one to seriously question whether we had learned anything in our 30 years of combined climbing experience.

A sound belay, established by my partner, held a forceful fall. My helmet likely prevented more serious injury, as I struck the chockstone encountered in my fall with my head, shoulder and ribs. Even with the helmet, it is pure luck that I did not receive greater injuries than a bruised shoulder and ribs.

After the fall, we maintained our composure and effected a safe self-rescue without further mishap. (Source: John Seebohm)

## **LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, INADEQUATE INSTRUCTION AND SUPERVISION, POOR POSITION**

### **Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Andrews Glacier**

On June 14 at 1300, Mike Hill was leading a group of 25 to 30 juveniles from River Valley High School, Spring Green, Wisconsin, in a glissading class on Andrews Glacier. A 17 year old female failed to maintain control, and broke her right fibula while glissading. Hill, a former EMT, initiated a self-rescue with an improvised litter. (Source: Rocky Mountain National Park Rangers)

### **Analysis**

During an interview with Hill, Park Service investigators found out that the group had not been properly briefed before attempting actual glissade practice. The group was also insufficiently supervised, as there were too many students per instructor. The runouts at the base of Andrews Glacier are somewhat dangerous, ending in a deep, cold alpine lake on one part and in talus on another part. This kind of exercise requires (1) doing more prebriefing, (2) having more instructors per student, and (3) using a different, safer location. (Source: Rocky Mountain National Park Rangers)