

FALL ON SNOW/ICE, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS

Washington, Mount Rainier

At 0840 on September 1, Ken Seifert (49) arrived at the JVC Ranger Office to check out for a summit climb. After indicating he was planning to go alone, Seifert was advised by Climbing Ranger Dan Ostrowski of the solo climb regulations and also of the poor weather and climbing conditions on the upper mountain. He was also told the Park Service was discouraging climbing on the upper mountain because of these poor conditions.

During the entire conversation with Ostrowski, Seifert was very evasive about giving information concerning his climbing experience and his address. His attitude about climbing seemed reckless to Ostrowski. Seifert also seemed very excited for so early in the morning and Ostrowski suspected he might be using drugs. Seifert was told by Climbing Ranger Garry Olson that he would have to apply for a solo climbing permit in writing and that it normally takes about two weeks to go through the process. Mr. Seifert stated he was familiar with the solo climbing regulations as he had talked with a Ranger before, but stated he moved around a lot and it was not convenient for him to apply. Ranger Olson advised Seifert he did not have permission to climb solo, but that he could possibly hook up with another climbing party and make a climb in that way. Seifert indicated he would try to find someone at Muir with whom to hook up. Seifert left Paradise, arriving at Muir that afternoon.

Camp Muir Ranger Ann Lowery had been advised to watch out for Seifert by Paradise and that he might attempt a solo climb. Lowery talked to all the climbers at the public shelter around 1545, advising them that the weather had improved somewhat, but it was still not good. Lowery said she felt Seifert's reaction to her cautions seemed casual and as if he was amused by her questions. When they were discussing his climbing boots he indicated they weren't very comfortable and might prevent him from climbing. He explained he had hiked up most of the way from Paradise in flip flops.

Around 1645, Lowery noticed Seifert leaving Camp Muir alone headed toward Cathedral Rocks. He was contacted by two RMI guides and they advised him of the conditions. He was traveling without a pack, had an ice ax but no crampons, and was dressed in light clothing, even though the weather was changing, temperature dropping and snow beginning to freeze.

Seifert returned to Muir and Lowery contacted him immediately. He stated he had just gone up toward the Flats to "check things out." Once again he was advised climbing solo beyond Muir was illegal unless permission had been given by the Superintendent. His attitude during the conversation continued to be very casual and he did not want to provide Lowery with his name or any other information. She contacted Paradise for the information.

On September 2, Seifert left Muir alone climbing to the top of Disappointment Cleaver. At the top of the cleaver, he talked with the Guide Service who advised him of the poor conditions and the fact that a fatality had occurred. Seifert indicated he was going to go help, but the guides advised him they didn't need him. Seifert turned around at this point and began descending. The guided party observed that he caught a crampon on his gaiter, fell and began to slide. They yelled at him to self-arrest, but he made no attempt to stop himself, and fell approximately 800 feet, coming to rest in a small crevasse.

Two RMI guides worked their way down to Seifert. Finding no signs of life, they reported him dead at approximately 0815. Since another rescue was going on simulta-

neously involving a fatality and a critically injured climber, the guides climbed back up to assist with the rescue. About 1340, a recovery team of NPS and Seattle Mountain Rescue personnel was flown to the top of Disappointment Cleaver. They worked their way down to Seifert's body, removed it from the crevasse and prepared it for pickup by the helicopter and transport to Kautz Creek where it was turned over to the Pierce County Medical Examiner. The recovery team was flown back to Kautz at 0830.

Analysis

Ken Seifert was given adequate warning by NPS personnel and he failed to heed the precautions given by them and RMS Guides. He was offered a position on a rope with another climbing party, but declined.

It is recommended that Mount Rainier National Park authorities (1) continue to require solo climb approval for climbers above 10,000 feet, (2) continue to warn climbers of hazardous conditions on climbing routes, and (3) make a reasonable effort to get third party recovery of rescue costs based on Mr. Seifert's blatant disregard of the cautions provided. (Source: From a Board of Inquiry report chaired by William F. Douglas)

FALLING ROCK, FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED, NO HARD HAT Washington, Goode Mountain, Northeast Buttress

On September 13, 1991, Robert Nelson (41)—leader, Mitch Miller (18), Tim Hartman (40), and Randall Keys (47) bivouacked at 6,000 feet below the northeast side of Goode Glacier. On the 14th at first light, they traversed to the northwest to a near vertical wall and were put behind schedule. To make up the lost time Nelson decided the two rope teams would free climb the third and fourth class rock on the buttress. Nelson and Miller made up one rope team and Keys and Hartman the second team. At 7,000 feet at 1630 Miller was leading Nelson. Both were carrying coiled slack rope. Miller stepped on a rock outcropping that gave way. The rock hit Nelson in the chest knocking him backwards. He fell 140 feet and came to rest on a small ledge. Fearing neck and back injuries, the party decided not to move him, sending Miller and Hartman for help while Keys remained with the injured Nelson. Keys never found a pulse and Nelson's breathing was erratic. Nelson died in the night. NPS Rangers helicoptered Keys and the body from the scene.

Analysis

The accident may or may not have occurred even if the party was belaying, but the fall would not have. The party was hurrying to make up for lost time, and at least one person was scared with the climb. They had difficulty getting on glacier, and may have been able to find an alternate route, but they enjoyed the challenge of the ice wall. The guide book climbing time was under-estimated. None were wearing hard hats. (Source: Chelan County Sheriff's Office)

FALL ON ROCK, INAPPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR

Washington, Icicle Creek Canyon

On October 1, 1991, about 1400, Jon Thompson (22), climbing with Marty Thayer (28), had just finished climbing "Face Lift" (5.10a) and was casually rehearsing opening moves on "Beer and Loafing in Leavenworth" (5.10b) when his right foot blew off