SLIP ON ICE, NO HARD HAT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION
British Columbia, Northern Selkirk Mountains, Mount Colossal

On August 7, 1992, during the third week of the annual ACC General Mountaineering Camp at Fairy Meadows in the Adamants, the chief guide, Don V., a long-standing member of the ACMG, was leading a party of two rope teams on a climb of Mount Colossal (2940 meters). It usually involves a long traversing ascent of a steep snow slope, but this year low snowfall and warm weather left more rock and ice exposed than normal in this area, and that was the case on Mount Colossal. A talus slope at the bottom was followed by hard snow and steepening ice, possibly 50 degrees at the top.

While leading his group up this ice slope in threatening weather, from a belay about one rope-length above the rocks, Don cautioned them to take their time and watch the footing, but moments later he lost his own on a slope of more than 40 degrees after getting an ice block stuck between the front points of one crampon. He slid some 50 meters down the ice, unable to stop himself because of the hard surface, or be stopped by his party because he had placed no protection, until he ran into the rocks at the bottom. He suffered bruises, abrasions, lacerations to his legs and head, a twisted neck, and general soreness.

He was able to discuss the situation with his group and organize them to help him back to the camp. After being given first aid and suturing to his worst cuts, he stayed there overnight and was flown out by helicopter the next morning during the weekly Saturday exchange of clients, for medical examination. He was found to be not seriously injured, but took a couple of weeks off to recuperate. (Source: Various clients and leaders from the ACC GMC)

Analysis

The climb was being done in a common manner, so accidents like this could happen much more often than they do. A sloping sheet of ice is a bad place for a slip without protection because it is often impossible to self-arrest, even for a professional mountaineer, and especially for a roped party, where one person could take down the rest. When a slip happens, the little extra time taken to place even one ice screw per rope-length may suddenly prove to have been a good investment. Also, the victim was not wearing his helmet, and in view of the exposure and his eventual head injury, it would have been appropriate. (Source: Orvel Miskiw, with advice from C. Shokoples, ACMG Guide)

SLIP ON ICE, INADEQUATE BELAY, INATTENTION, FATIGUE
British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Tahumming Glacier

For Bob P. and Doug W., August 28, 1992, was day eight of a 21-day traverse of the Tahumming Horseshoe near the head of Toba Inlet. Their objective for the day was to cross a small hanging glacier, find a route down an icefall, and then cross Tahumming Glacier to reach its west flank. After two attempts to find a way down the icefall, they still faced impassable obstacles and so decided to go back up to camp on easier terrain overnight, before reconnoitering the area for alternatives the next day. They had 15 meters of rope between them, and each was carrying 18 meters of rope and a large pack. At 1600 they were ascending diagonally on steep ice with patches of snow, and numerous crevasses around them, when Bob lost his footing on the ice. He landed on his back and started to slide.

Although he quickly rolled over into self-arrest position, his fatigue and the smooth-

ness of the ice made it impossible to stop. When he reached a crevasse, he struck its footwall, fracturing both legs and a wrist, then fell some two meters into the crevasse, where he was held in his harness by Doug's rope. Fortunately, Doug had seen him fall and had time to take a strong belay stance.

As Bob was conscious, the two were able to discuss their problem. In the next hour and a half, Doug set up anchors, splinted Bob's legs, and hauled him up to the surface. They were carrying an FM transceiver with several frequencies, and were able to get a distress message out to the B. C. Forest Service, communicating directly with their Powell River office. A Canadian Forces Labrador helicopter reached them at 1900, and the two climbers were evacuated to Comox by 2015. (Source: The injured climber, Bob P.)

Analysis

Bob is glad that he and Doug had practiced crevasse rescue thoroughly before their trip, had considered the problems of rescue and evacuation in the remote areas they would be in, and had carried a two-way radio in case of emergency. But he feels that the accident could have been prevented by paying a little more attention to his footing. One lesson to be skimmed off this accident is that in some cases, a little extra caution is better than any amount of emergency equipment. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

RAPPEL SLING ANCHOR UNTIED, FALL ON ROCK

Quebec, Mount Cesaire

On July 2, 1992, a group of 15 from the Monteregie Youth Center in Chambly, including four group leaders, plus two instructors from the Quebec Mountaineering Federation (FQM), went out to a cliff on Mount Cesaire for climbing practice. First the instructors set up top ropes on five routes, and both of them checked all the anchors and knots before descending to supervise the climbing, belaying, and lowering. The youngsters climbed these routes all morning and into the early afternoon, and four of them had climbed the route "Unnamed" and been lowered safely to the bottom by 1300. Then Patrick L. took his turn, and after reaching the top, was being lowered on a pulley by a supervised belayer at the bottom when he fell some 18 meters to the ground, sustaining fractures of the right wrist, upper arm, collarbone, and shoulder.

After the leaders and instructors determined that Patrick was conscious, one instructor, Yves B., went for help. He called Dominique F., who contacted the Quebec Police and the Ambulance Service before going to meet him with a rescue stretcher. She then accompanied the police to the scene of the accident while Yves waited for the ambulance. Ten minutes later, it arrived and he and the paramedics followed. They administered first aid and immobilized the victim for transport to the ambulance.

Seeing everything was in hand, the instructors went to the top of the pitch to find out what had gone wrong. They found the knot in the anchor sling had come untied. The knot had apparently slipped loose, unlikely as that seemed, seeing as it had been well tied. That was the only possible explanation, since all the other equipment was intact.

While the other instructor, Thierry B., stayed at the cliff to supervise the rest of the group and review the accident as much as possible, the victim was evacuated, and a group leader and Yves accompanied him to the hospital, where Patrick was kept overnight for observation. (Source: Denis Gravel, Quebec Mountaineering Federation)