

tion, and one was the result of rushing because of darkness. The average age of the victims was 34, and 15 of the routes were 5.8 or less. (Source: Mohonk Preserve)

*(Editor's Note: The average age and route difficulty might suggest that the climbers here are "regulars." Not entered into the statistics was a 41 year old man who was sitting at the base after climbing with his son when he keeled over in cardiac arrest. He was DOA at the hospital.*

*The oldest victim was 136, if dog years are converted into human ones. Preserve rangers were called upon to rappel down to pick a stranded dog off the cliff face at Hudson Highlands. The victim is alive and doing well.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **North Carolina, Crowders Mountain State Park**

On May 23, 1993, Dan Plaisted (31) was standing on the cliff, preparing to return to the bottom and begin his climb, when he suddenly fell, said park supervisor Joe Sox.

Plaisted broke several bones. He was airlifted to Carolnas Medical Center in Charlotte, where he was in critical condition Sunday night, a hospital spokeswoman said.

The accident occurred at 1115 in the eastern part of the park, in a designated climbing area known as the Red Wall.

Plaisted was atop the 50-foot cliff, securing some ropes he planned to use during the climb. Suddenly, Plaisted lost his balance and plunged to the ground. He landed on his feet, which probably saved him from head injuries or death. (Source: *The Charlotte Observer*, May 24, 1993)

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **North Carolina, Crowders Mountain State Park**

On August 30, 1993, Jeff Rosenkrans (17) fell 80 feet when the anchor system he and his three friends installed for their rappel came out. He sustained massive head injury and several broken bones. (Source: *The Charlotte Observer*, August 30, 1993)

### **Analysis**

Crowders Mountain is a popular climbing area, both because it is good climbing and easy to reach. Currently, about 160,000 people visit the park annually, of which 7,000 are rock climbers. Of the four state parks that have cliffs good for climbing, Crowders is the easiest to get to, and is near the population centers of Charlotte and Gastonia. An average of four a year are injured in falls in the 2500-acre park, and these include hikers. Three of the four fatalities in the past nine years were hikers who wandered off the trails.

Many of the climbing accidents, like this one, happen to young and/or inexperienced climbers. As one climber was quoted regarding Crowders Mountain, "It's Crowded up there." (Source: Jed Williamson)

## **IMPROPER DECISION—FAILING TO TURN BACK, WEATHER, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE**

### **Oregon, Mount Hood**

On May 1, 1993, Robert McQueen (38), Lisa Padilla (42), and Lance Piatt (32) were descending Mount Hood in an intensifying storm. In their own words:

"We were descending the hogsback. Due to the stinging ice particles, we could only glance at our route. Although very familiar with the route, everything looked like a cliff looking down. On an avalanche slope looking up, we couldn't find the wands. We made a group decision to call by cellular telephone for advice and keep warm on the hot rocks. We found out there was a rescue party already just 1000 feet below us and we were advised to stay put and await their assistance." (Source: Robert J. McQueen)

### **Analysis**

This party did not have adequate equipment to bivouac, was unable to navigate in the whiteout conditions, and did not accept the free use of an MLU (Mountain Location Unit—a radio beacon device).

Again, in their own words:

"We heard there was incoming weather, but underestimated its ferocity. We avoid winter climbs and always try to climb in good weather but have had to use a compass several times. Still, none of us had ever felt a blizzard like this before. Another group had placed the wands but they didn't go high enough and weren't placed close enough together for us to find them.

"We were directly responsible for creating this hazardous situation. The rescue was the responsibility of a highly professional and cohesive group of people who went beyond being on duty, mustering exceptional strength and bravery and putting our welfare in front of theirs.

"While cellular technology can help provide safety in almost any situation, we were lacking in the ability to spend the night on the mountain and did not carry a Mountain Locator Unit, which sends an alert and pinpoints climbers' location. This device can be rented for a token fee, and should be valuable for climbs in any conditions." (Source: Robert J. McQueen and Jeff Scheetz, Portland Mountain Rescue)

*(Editor's Note: The MLU availability is the result of the 1986 tragedy involving two teachers and several students from the Oregon Episcopal School. In fact, the conditions encountered by this party were not dissimilar. See ANAM 1987, pp. 65-67.)*

### **LOSS OF CONTROL—GLISSADE, CRAMPON CAUGHT ON ICE Oregon, Mount Hood**

On May 23, 1993, Jason Bacon (22) said that he was sliding down the mountain when suddenly his crampon caught on the ice and he heard a loud pop in his leg. He was evacuated by Portland Mountain Rescue. (Source: C. Nolte, Portland Mountain Rescue)

### **LOSS OF CONTROL—GLISSADE, NO ICE AXE, INEXPERIENCE Oregon, Mount Hood**

On June 9, 1993, Gary Whalen told me that he and his companion were glissading down from the Hogsback when suddenly his friend went over a large cliff and tumbled down about 200 feet. In calling down to his friend he said that he was told that he thought he had broken his leg or ankle and it seemed to Whalen that Williams was having difficulty breathing. He said at this time he left his daughter at the top of the cliff and he skied down to the top of the Palmer Chairlift where he called for help.

Daniel Williams (32) told me that he was glissading down the Hogsback toward the White River Canyon. He told me that on two separate occasions he stood up and tried to