

immediately, but saw no sign of the Parkers and returned after reaching the first peak. The custodian then descended to Lake O'Hara to summon help.

Banff Warden Service was contacted at 1600 Friday and conducted an unsuccessful helicopter search of the route that evening. When the search was resumed Saturday morning, some suspicious tracks on snow ledges of the east face almost 600 meters below the summit ridge led to the discovery of Mrs. Parker's body on the lower Victoria Glacier at the foot of the face. A snow storm hindered the search for Luc that afternoon. Bad weather continued Sunday, but two wardens left Lake O'Hara on foot to ascend Mt. Victoria. They turned back at the south summit because of poor conditions.

Monday, September 5 dawned clear, and several search teams were slung onto the mountain by helicopter to look for signs of Luc. At noon, with ideal light conditions, spotters positioned on nearby Mt. Lefroy picked out what looked like a sliding mark in the snow near the summit ridge of Mt. Victoria, and intensive helicopter investigation eventually led to the discovery of his body in a crevasse about 150 meters below the ridge.

### **Analysis**

The Parkers had previous experience in the European Alps and had climbed several moderate rock and snow peaks in Banff Park just prior to this incident. They were well equipped for the climb, but conditions on Mt. Victoria were less than ideal on the day of their attempt. Another party turned back from the first peak the same day due to icy rock. The weather had been intermittently stormy over the previous days. At the time of the accident, they were wearing crampons, and the exact cause of their initial fall is not known. In any case, since the ridge at "The Sickle" is very narrow, a bad slip there exposes climbers immediately to the steep and smooth east face.

This horrendous chain of events was initially triggered by a simple slip and inability to self-arrest immediately. It is understandable why Eva chose to descend rather than try to regain the ridge. In the end, she was close to safety, but she must have been exhausted, and without her axe to steady herself, the final slope amounted to a trap. The conclusion of this story is especially tragic in that Eva was five months pregnant. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park Warden Service)

### **FALL ON SNOW, AVALANCHE, POOR POSITION—SKI MOUNTAINEERING British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Kitimat Range near Europa Lake**

On May 21, 1994, five ski mountaineers were about two weeks into the traverse from Mussel Inlet to Gardner Canal. Four of them left their big packs, including an emergency locator transmitter, on a glacier with the fifth party member, and set off on a side trip to climb an unnamed 1860-meter peak south of the east end of Europa Lake. Not far from the summit, they reached a steep 15-meter step in the glacier, for which they briefly removed their skis to kick steps up hard snow to the more gentle slope above, where skis were again used for the short climb to the summit. After reaching the top, Randy S. (31) and John Clarke started down first, skiing toward the steep section. Following Randy to the top of it, John stopped to assess the situation, and saw Randy sliding down the slope below, in a sitting position, until he disappeared from view because of the convexity of the slope. John was alarmed, as he knew the slope ended in a cornice and Randy was almost certain to go over it. He removed his skis and climbed down to the lip, where he saw that Randy had fallen down a small cliff

onto a snow slope, triggering an avalanche which carried him over an edge and out of sight. He called out, but got no response from Randy. When the other two party members arrived from the summit, they did an avalanche transceiver search, without success. They hurried down to their companion waiting on the glacier, and activated the ELT before skiing around to the next valley to reach a position below the site of the accident. They found Randy's smashed Pieps and camera at the base of a 300-meter face, but little else.

On May 22, Canadian Armed Forces searchers responding to the ELT signal arrived from Comox, Vancouver Island, in a Labrador helicopter and spotted Randy's body about 100 meters above the base of the cliff. Later, in a complex operation coordinated by the Provincial Emergency Program (P.E.P.) in Vancouver and assisted by specialists from the Banff National Park Warden Service, a helicopter with 15-meter sling, piloted by Joe Meiers from Northern Mountain Helicopters in Smithers, B.C., was used to reach the body and pluck it from the face. (Source: John Clarke)

### **Analysis**

The risk is always obvious after the fact. Mountaineering is a continuous exercise in predicting consequences and evaluating hazard. Often the key to safety is the ability to see far enough along the chain of possible events to appreciate the real hazards present. In this case, the victim, a strong skier, did not show due regard for the serious exposure of the short steep slope where he fell. He should have taken off the skis and climbed down to easier or less exposed terrain. (Source: Tim Auger, Banff National Park; John Clarke; Orvel Miskiw)

## **FALL ON SNOW, UNROPED, UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST**

### **British Columbia, North Cascades Range, Canadian Border Peak**

On June 11, 1994, a party of five climbers went out on a scheduled ACC attempt on Canadian Border Peak. After four hours of approach and snow slopes, they reached a location known as "The Shoulder," where they stopped for a half hour of lunch during a rain shower. The weather then improved and they proceeded with the climb. Shortly thereafter, one person decided to return to "The Shoulder," while the others continued upward as two pairs. Some one hundred vertical meters below the summit, one of the lower two climbers was tiring and also decided to descend, so they called to the two above to let them know, were acknowledged, and both returned uneventfully to "The Shoulder."

The two remaining climbers continued upward, completed their ascent, and then started down along a route that used the moat between the rock and a snow patch. Although it was not their intention to descend on the snow, they got out their ice axes before proceeding. After a few steps downhill, the upper climber, B.H., apparently stepped up onto the soft, wet snow, where he lost his footing. He was unable to do a self-arrest due to the consistency and angle of the snow, and slid over a cliff at the base of it, then into a gully below, coming to rest some 180 vertical meters from his partner. He was killed. (Source: Denis Blair, Climb Coordinator)

### **Analysis**

These climbers were in a routine type of mountaineering situation, posing little hazard of an accident, but the victim did not adequately consider the possible grave consequences of a slip when he moved up onto the snow. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)