ice followed by some vertical columns that are avoided by climbing around them on the left. Bob climbed to the top of the first section and placed an ice screw. Looking for a greater challenge, he headed up the 15-foot tall columns direct. Deciding the ice was too candled and poor in quality, he choose not to "waste time" attempting to place an ice screw, but instead climb to the top of the column and finish the climb. With his tools over the top of the column but feet still on the steep ice, his right tool came out of the ice, then his left tool also came out. Acting quickly, Bob was able to replace his left tool. Any feelings of safety melted as he "barn-doored" to the left and his left hand came out of the leash. With the tool remaining in the ice, he fell, pulling out his only ice screw along the way. Bob fell 40 feet to the ground. Nearby climbers, including a doctor and a paramedic, assisted in the half mile carry out using a litter from a rescue cache at the parking lot. Bob broke both his tibia and fibula of his left leg when his left foot caught the lower angle ice at the base of the column.

Analysis

The main problem here is of the climber not placing adequate protection. Once on the column, Bob had three alternatives. First, stop and take the time to place good protection. Second, conclude that he could not (for any reason) place the protection and retreat. Or third, conclude that he could not (for any reason) place the protection, keep climbing and risk ground fall, hoping that he would not fall. Bob chose the third alternative, but fell. As ice climbers, we sometimes do not place protection as frequently as we do on rock in the summer relying on hopefully solid ice tool placements. The merits of this can be argued both ways. Nevertheless, placing protection infrequently enough so that ground-fall is a possibility is never a good option, as we cannot be certain that we will not fall. (Source: Bob O'Brian and Lisa Thompson)

FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS and LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT—NO ICE AX

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Tuckerman Ravine Trail

On December 30 there were two separate accidents involving sliding with crampons. In the first incident, a party of two was descending the Summit Cone by glissading with crampons on their feet. One of the climbers snagged his crampon and broke his ankle. Other climbers on the scene aided his continued descent down the Lions Head trail. In the second accident, a party of two climbing the summit cone had crampons on their feet and no ice axes. One tripped and with no ax to self arrest with, slid 300 feet into a rock outcrop badly dislocating his ankle in the process. Local Mountain Rescue Service member Brad White was nearby and assisted in the rescue using his ax as a splint. With a litter from the Mount. Washington Observatory on the summit, he was carried down Lion Head Trail.

Analysis

Snowstorms this winter had been ending as wet snow or rain followed by cold

air. This makes for very icy conditions on Mount. Washington. The first incident is an example of why a climber should not glissade with crampons on. Having an ice ax in hand and knowing how to self-arrest with it could have prevented the second accident. (Source: Brad White, Mountain Rescue Service)

VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, RAPPEL/LOWERING FAILURES, AND INADEQUATE PROTECTION (INCLUDING NO HELMET)

New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

There were 18 incidents reported from this popular climbing area this year. Of the twelve falls, six were the result of rappel or lowering errors. In four instances, protection came out and in another, no protection was put in, so the consequences of the fall were guaranteed. The average age of the climbers was 34, and the average degree of difficulty on which the climbing incidents occurred was between 5.7 and 5.8. We do not receive the level of experience information from this area, but some of the reports come in from the individuals involved or from someone who witnessed the scene.

There were some interesting causes in the "other" category. There was an individual who fell 20 feet after taking his harness off in an effort to try to get his rope unstuck. He walked away uninjured. In three cases, climbers fell when being lowered because the end of the rope went through the belay device, and in one of these cases, the climber fell right on the belayer. One case involved distraction. A father was talking at his twelve year old son who was climbing Easy Keyhole (5.2), lost his concentration, and fell. A slightly trickier case, not counted as a climbing statistic, involved a dog lunging at a climber as he was approaching the Trapps. The climber fell, receiving lacerations to the head, arms and face.

Some falls that were reported did not get counted because they are considered "normal"—in that leaders consider falling part of what is to be expected when trying harder routes.

The most interesting accident from this area for this year was one that involved two climbers simul-rappelling. Using the same rope, they had apparently not used a knot, and as he was heavier than she and the rope did not reach the ground, he fell 25 feet to the deck. The other victim fell 40 feet, also off the end of her rope, to the deck. They got away with only a few fractures.

There were no fatalities, and the overall accident rate was down. The number of climbers appears to be constant over the last few years. (Source: From the annual report submitted by the Mohonk Preserve and Jed Williamson)

RAPPELLED OFF END OF ROPE—TECHNIQUE (SPEED AND CONTROL)

North Carolina, Pilot Mountain State Park

On January 1 Nathan Lane (23), with the U.S. Army, was being video taped in the Amphitheater to see how fast he could descend via "Australian Rappel" (face first). Witnesses on the scene described the climber as "out of control" as soon as he began his descent. The climber let go of the rope and fell 30 feet to the base of the route.