

## FALLING ROCKS—DISLODGED BY CLIMBER

### Washington, North Cascades, Mount Logan

On Labor Day weekend, Silas Wild and I climbed the east ridge of Thunder Peak, a satellite of Mount Logan in the North Cascades. On Saturday, we hiked over Easy Pass, down Fisher Creek and up a steep forested slope to a 5200 foot lake northeast of Logan. Beckey's guide recommends this route to approach Logan's Banded Glacier. From a camp above the lake, on Sunday morning we crossed a 7040 foot col to reach the base of our route.

The 2000 foot ridge has two notches, at 7500 and 8000 feet. We rappelled eighty feet into the first notch. We found some nylon fibers at the rappel horn, indicating that someone had been there before. The route had no previous reported ascent, so we don't know whether the earlier party was successful or whether they retreated from this point.

The crux of the climb was a 5.7 pitch out of the first notch. From there to the second notch, the ridge was mostly low class 5 on solid rock. The route has great views of Ragged Ridge, the Arriva-Black group, the Douglas Glacier and the north face of Mount Goode. The second notch had a short rappel and a rotten gully, but the rock improved above it. We reached the 8800 foot summit at 4 p.m., about ten hours from camp. Mount Logan and the Banded Glacier dominated the view. We noted icebergs floating in the lake at the foot of the glacier.

The descent was class 3 down-climbing, then a gentle talus descent along the north ridge of the peak. We rappelled 150 feet from the low point of the ridge, then descended snow, slabs and steep moraine back to the basin where we had camped. Near the base of the moraine, not more than twenty feet from flat ground, Silas dislodged a loose boulder. This started a chain reaction of boulders tumbling underfoot and above him. I watched horrified as he fell and was overwhelmed by crashing rocks. When the avalanche stopped, I scrambled down and found him lying on his back, his legs and right arm buried, and a suitcase-sized rock on his torso. Silas wailed to get it off, saying that he couldn't breathe. I strained to lift it for a few seconds, then with Silas pushing with his good left arm, we shifted it clear.

Next I removed the rocks burying his right arm. After loosening his pack straps, he miraculously wriggled free. His legs had been caught and spared by a pocket between the boulders. Even more amazing, after his pain subsided some and we assessed his condition, was that he could walk. His right shin had a one inch gash, both legs were bruised and sore, and his right arm was swollen, but that was about it.

He hobbled a hundred yards to good camping site and I fetched our overnight gear from our previous camp in the twilight. We got him into his sleeping bag and discussed having me hike out for a helicopter the next day.

On Monday morning, Silas was feeling better and thought he could hike out. We loaded the heavy gear into one pack, which I carried, and put sleeping bags, bivi sack, food and a head lamp in the other pack for him to carry. Since his right arm was not usable, I lowered him with a rope a few times down the

steep forest. After we reached the Fisher Creek trail, I hiked ahead to Colonial Campground, 13 miles away. Tired, hurting, and walking slowly, Silas spent that night on the trail. But he was moving steadily under his own power when two rangers and I found him early the next morning.

Back in Seattle the doctors reported a broken wrist, bruises, and a cut on his shin that should heal without stitches. Silas and I both gained more respect for the dangers of moraines. I've had a chance to ponder the problems of self sufficiency and accident response in remote wilderness areas. (Source: Lowell Skoog)

## **AVALANCHE, POOR POSITION**

### **Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Mount Owen**

On the evening of April 22, Ranger Renny Jackson received a phone call from Jackson resident Christian Beckwith. According to Beckwith, his friend Stephen Koch (29) had not returned from a solo snowboard descent on Mount Owen. Koch had planned to depart the Taggart Trailhead early on April 22, bicycle to south Jenny Lake, ski up Cascade Canyon, then climb Mount Owen via the north face. He would then attempt the first snowboard descent via the Northeast Snowfields and return that same day. As Koch is a very experienced mountaineer and snowboarder, Beckwith's level of concern was significant.

On the morning of April 23, rangers confirmed that Koch's vehicle was still parked in the Taggart parking lot. At 0915, a helicopter search was initiated for Koch with myself (Mark Magnuson) and Renny Jackson on board. Tracks were followed up Cascade Canyon and into the Owen Cirque below the north face. A pair of cached skis were seen midway up the lower snowfield, with a boot track traversing back and forth across the slope above, leading up to the face. At 0950, pilot Ken Johnson spotted Koch in the main snowfield below the north face, sitting at the base of a large boulder. Koch was waving. Johnson performed a toe-in landing/hover several hundred feet above Koch, and Jackson exited the aircraft. He went directly to Koch to assess injuries. Johnson and I then flew back over Cascade Canyon to make radio contact with ranger Rick Perch, the Incident Commander. After updating Perch on the status of Koch and resource needs, Johnson returned to the scene, and I departed the aircraft with our gear.

Koch was found in a sitting position, with his climbing harness beneath his buttocks. He was wearing light gear (neck gaiter around the head, goggles, medium-weight long-sleeve North Face capilene shirt, medium-weight long underwear, guide pants, gloves, and double plastic boots). He had no additional equipment with him as his pack had been lost in the slide. Koch was dehydrated and hypothermic, but conscious, alert, and conversant. He had extensive wounds visible to his face and head, was spitting up small amounts of blood, and was complaining primarily of pain in both knees, neck, and back. He stated that both knees were "blown."

We began efforts to warm Koch by providing additional clothing, then continued to further assess his injuries. Additional equipment was delivered to the scene via long line/sling load. A cervical collar was placed on his neck, and