

Realizing that he now lay in the middle of the primary avalanche track below the north face, Koch hobbled several hundred feet down and across the slope to a safer location, then collapsed. Unable to continue, he drifted in and out of consciousness for the next three to four hours, until the sun moved behind the peak. With temperatures dropping, he began glissading down the slope on his left hip and then his back. He continued a very slow descent until he reached his gear cache at the boulder. It was here that he spent the night, sitting on his climbing harness.

Koch planned to sit out the night, feeling relatively confident that he would be reported overdue and that the Jenny Lake Rangers would be responding the following day. He said he had planned to wait until about 1130 for rescue, at which time he would continue his attempt to descend. In hindsight, Koch said he would have benefited from wearing a helmet and, while he thought he had picked a safe line up the face, realized that he was behind schedule and subject to the hazards of changing conditions. He did not anticipate that debris from above would affect him on his adjusted line of ascent. He noted that he was still climbing in the shade, but sun had already been warming the upper slopes. Koch expressed extreme gratitude for having survived the accident and for the rescue effort that ensued. (Source: Mark Magnuson, SAR Coordinator)

(Editor's Note: In the "Jackson Hole News," April 29, 1998, Koch is quoted as saying that he survived, he believes, because of his will to live. Also, he said, "Too much to do. Babies to have. It's a sign. I've got more work to do on this earth—helping others, especially since I've been helped so much." His recovery has gone well.)

FALL ON ICY ROCK—BLOWN OVER BY WIND

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton

On June 25, James McDonald, Larry Susanka and Dan Sola (38) were attempting to climb the Exum Ridge of the Grand Teton in icy conditions with a storm in progress. Around 1430 Sola fell about ten feet while leading the Friction Pitch. Sola was wearing crampons on the iced rock, but was caught by a strong gust of wind and blown over backwards. He had protection below him, but still hit the belay ledge, dislocating his right shoulder and injuring his ankle. Susanka used a cell phone to call 911 and was connected to Ranger Tom Kimbrough at the Jenny Lake Ranger Station. Susanka asked for route information, but stated that the party would try to descend without help. Park Medical Control, Lanny Johnson, PA, was contacted and called Susanka to talk them through the reduction of the dislocated shoulder. When Johnson reached them by cell phone, the reduction had already been accomplished. The group rappelled and down-climbed the Exum Ridge, occasionally calling for route information. They reached Wall Street, the end of the most technical part of the descent, at 1840. Continuing down, they arrived at the Lower Saddle at 2130.

When this group left the Lower Saddle to climb the Grand Teton at 0445, a fourth member of the party, Jack Hicks, elected not to climb. He remained at the Saddle, and when tents began to be blown down by strong winds, he broke the window of the Ranger Hut to gain access to better shelter. He also con-

tacted Mike Detmer, a ham radio operator in Jackson, to let the Park know that weather conditions were severe and that he was worried about the other members of his group. Detmer continued to assist with communications until the climbers were safe at the Lower Saddle.

Susanka and Sola continued their descent to the Lupine Meadows Trailhead during the night of June 25. They arrived at the trailhead at 0230 on June 26. Hicks and McDonald spent the night at the Saddle, returning to the trailhead by 1400. (Source: Tom Kimbrough, SAR Ranger)

FALL ON SNOW, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, CLIMBING ALONE

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Disappointment Peak

On July 11, Joe Zitomer and Melynda Cable stopped at the Jenny Lake Rescue Cache to report possible cries for help coming from Disappointment Peak. Zitomer and Cable had hiked to Amphitheatre Lake, arriving between 1500 and 1530, when they heard the cries. They described them as male and coming from the cliffs above the lake to the south. They heard the cries for a period of about 30 minutes and confirmed in their own minds that they were indeed calls for help. While at the lake, they ran into a party of two males who also heard the cries. Zitomer and Cable then hiked back down the trail to make the report.

At 1655 park dispatch received a cellular phone call from off-duty naturalist Jeff Hancock. Hancock reported an injured climber who had fallen 120 feet in the ice couloir above Amphitheatre Lake and sustained serious injuries (bilateral ankle fractures and head and chest trauma).

The NPS/USFS contract helicopter piloted by Ken Johnson departed Lupine Meadows at 1715 with rangers Ron Johnson and Bill Culbreath on board. A recon flight of Disappointment Peak located the injured climber in the snow couloir along the east side of the Lake Ledges Route. Johnson was able to land the helicopter several hundred feet above the accident site and Culbreath and Johnson descended to the scene, arriving at 1738. Rangers Bill Alexander and Jim Springer were flown to the same landing zone with additional medical and rescue gear and also descended to the scene.

Following a patient assessment and consultation with medical control Lanny Johnson, Gale Long's suspected injuries (wrist fractures, femur fracture, cervical-spinal, and head and chest trauma) were stabilized. Given the mechanism of fall and the nature of Long's injuries, along with other evacuation alternatives, a decision was made to shorthaul Long from the accident scene to Lupine Meadows.

At 1904, the patient was transferred to NPS Ambulance Medic 1 and was en route to St. John's Hospital, arriving there at 1933. Long was admitted with extremity fractures, torn tendons in his thumb (requiring surgery), rib fractures, multiple facial lacerations requiring sutures, and abrasions and contusions over the entire body.

Analysis

On July 12, I interviewed Gale Long (56) in his room at St. John's Hospital. According to Long, he arrived in Grand Teton National Park on July 10 and