

the top of the route and proceeded along the summit ridge towards the summit of Mt. Andromeda. The pair was last seen by the Seattle climbers some distance above them, standing near a cornice. Some time later, when the Seattle climbers looked up again, the pair were gone from view. Their tracks were obliterated by blowing snow, so it was not clear whether the climbers had pushed on quickly to the summit. However the Seattle climbers reported the incident later that day in the event that something had gone wrong.

Park wardens initiated an investigation, but were limited by high winds and poor visibility. On the morning of May 31, the weather had improved enough for a flight over the area, and wardens immediately spotted two persons near the bottom of the Northwest Shoulder Direct route, on the glacier. Despite high winds, wardens were able to sling to within half a kilometer of the victims. Both climbers were deceased, after having fallen 550 meters down a near vertical rock face.

Analysis

In reconstructing the likely cause of the accident, wardens believe that the two climbers were standing too close to a cornice on the summit ridge of Mount Andromeda, either together, or close enough that one pulled the other off when the cornice failed under their weight. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

PROTECTION PULLED, OFF ROUTE

Alberta, Ha Ling Peak (formerly known as Chinaman's Peak)

On July 6, two climbers set out on the Northeast Ridge of Ha Ling Peak (5.6/5.7). The climbers got off route on the third or fourth pitch, and discovered by the sixth pitch that the climbing was much more difficult than 5.7, the protection was next to none, and the rock was loose. The lead climber decided to retreat and attempted to be lowered from a Friend placed in a shallow crack. While being lowered, both of his pieces of protection pulled out and he fell past his belayer for a total of approximately 80 meters.

The belayer, J.S., lowered to his partner, and found him conscious; however, he soon lost consciousness and stopped breathing. J.S. performed artificial respiration, but soon left to call for help. J.S. reported the incident to some other climbers, and then returned to the base of the third pitch (the victim was hanging between the third and fourth pitches). Kananaskis Emergency Services personnel were slung in and removed J.S. in a screamer suit. The victim was pronounced dead, lowered to the base of the third pitch and heli-slung off the mountain. (Source: Kananaskis Country Alpine Specialist)

Analysis

Both climbers were quite experienced. However, many climbers, both experienced and not so experienced have gone off route on the Northeast Ridge of Ha Ling. The climbers did not have pitons or a hammer with them. Properly placed pitons (if it were possible) may have made a much safer anchor than one Friend placed in a shallow crack. (Source: Nancy Hansen)