

Cooper Spur at 0430 on May 23. They summited about 0800 via the 2,000-foot, 50-degree snow slope that capped the 4,500-foot route above their tent. On the descent, one of the Cardons slipped just below the summit and they tumbled roped together more than 2,000 feet down the mountain to their deaths.

### **Analysis**

The Cooper Spur Route below the summit of Mt. Hood is notoriously dangerous, having caused the deaths of at least 13 climbers preceding the Cardons. The Oregon Mountaineering Association's route description states, "Particular caution should be taken on descent, and some climbers arrange a shuttle ... so that they may descend the standard route." *Oregon High, a Climbing Guide* by Jeff Thomas states, "Do not descend Cooper Spur... during periods of hot weather, as the snow becomes excessively soft..." *The Summit Guide to the Cascade Volcanoes* by Jeff Smoot states, "It is quite steep and exposed. Falls from this route are common and often fatal..."

A spring heat wave and the strong morning sun had dangerously softened the snow on the Cooper Spur Route on this day. Joren Bass and his partner had ascended the route at the same time as the Cardons. Bass decided to descend an alternate, safer route. "We were kind of surprised that they were going back down that way."

An eye witness reported that he was certain that both climbers were wearing crampons. Therefore it is probable that snow was balling up in them. One rescue team member said that Carey Cardon was found with his crampons on, while Tena was not so found. A professional climbing guide named Charles Hsieh rendered this opinion: "There were no gross errors in judgment." However, the facts suggest otherwise. (Sources: Robert Speik, Jed Williamson, and *The Oregonian*, May 25)

## **FALL ON HARD SNOW, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Oregon, South Cascades, Broken Top**

On September 19 in the Three Sisters Wilderness area, Bonnie Lamb (39) was ascending a volcanic talus and scree ridge on Broken Top when she came to a short, steep section of surface-softened hard-snow near the 9,175 south summit. She slipped and rocketed about 300 yards down the slope coming to a stop in the rough scree below. Unconscious for 15 minutes and with a severely injured scalp and nose, she was aided by climber Vince Hudson, a former medic, who described her fall as follows: "Originally she was sliding just flat. Then she went over a rock ledge and started to tumble, head over heels, and started picking up speed. Then she went over another ledge and I could see her head hit it. I couldn't believe how fast she was going. It was just like you throw a Raggedy Ann doll off a cliff. She seemed [to be going] 60 to 70 mph easy."

### **Analysis**

Surface-softened hard-snow slopes have claimed many innocent victims. An ice ax quickly used could have stopped the initial slide. Modern ultralight ice axes are a good companion on spring hikes and climbs. Had somebody not witnessed her fall, she might not have survived. (Source: Robert Speik)