

I believe the fact that we had been prepared to camp out and had carried a tent, even though we had been planning on staying in huts throughout the trip, may have saved Ken's life. Had a storm decided to hit that night, it most certainly would have saved us all. Considering the always present difficulties of route finding in winter conditions and the possibility that an injury or equipment problem could quite easily cause one not to reach the hut, it seems foolish to not be prepared for an unplanned bivouac on such trips. (Source: Jonathan Fischer)
(Editor's Note: Thanks to Jonathan Fischer for sending this thorough account and analysis.)

FALL ON ROCK—NO BELAY, LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Alberta, Banff National Park, Back of the Lake

On June 17, two experienced sport climbers were climbing a 25-meter, 5.11a route called Mardi Gras. G.H. (36) had just finished the route on a top rope, and yelled down, "Okay," thinking that he was going to be lowered by the belayer, T.G. (35). The belayer yelled up, "Okay," and removed the rope from her belay device, thinking that G.H. was going to rappel. G.H. paused to straighten the rope, then let go of the anchor chain and leaned back. G.H. free-fell for approximately 19 meters before T.G. grabbed the rope and managed to stop the fall with her bare hands. She was quickly assisted by neighboring climbers and later treated for severe rope burns to both hands.

Analysis

This incident shows the reason for the development of standard climbing signals. It is extremely important for climbers not to become too casual with their communication. (Source: G.H., Nancy Hansen)

SLIP ON MIXED TERRAIN, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT (ICE AX IN PACK), EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Alberta, Banff National Park, Cascade Mountain

The story behind this accident was largely pieced together from the evidence gathered during the lengthy search that was required to locate and recover the victim's body. The victim, P.O. (19), planned on climbing the south face of Cascade Mountain with two friends. P.O.'s day off work (June 23) arrived a day before the other two were available, so he told one of the others he would head up the lower part of the mountain alone to reconnoiter the route which they would try the next day together. When he failed to return that night, his friends notified Warden Service dispatch and a search commenced. His body was finally located on July 7.

Analysis

The south face of Cascade Mountain is 1200 meters high and consists mostly of steep scree gullies and rock slabs. In June of 2000, snow still covered about two-thirds of the route due to an unseasonably cold spring.

It was determined that P.O., using crampons and an ice ax, kicked steps in snow gullies well up the face. When he reached dry rock and open scree, he removed and packed his crampons and ice ax. Several hundred meters higher