

The evening before the climb, while filtering water from Milk Creek, they did not hear any rockfall. They began their climb at 0230 to avoid rockfall and benefit from firm snow conditions. When they approached the couloir shortly before 0300, the snow was firm enough for them to use crampons. They stopped to put on crampons and to rope up. Still, no rockfall was heard. At 0310, a rock was heard rolling down the couloir. In the darkness, it was impossible to see the rock, but T.E. heard it strike P.D. and turned to see P.D.'s headlamp flying down the couloir.

A climbing group of ten came to the aid of these two and called for help. P.D. was evacuated by a National Guard helicopter about seven hours after the accident. He had suffered a concussion.

### **Analysis**

This accident appears to be just bad luck. The climbers looked for but did not observe any rockfall earlier in the evening prior or during the climb until the one rock that caused the accident. The climbers started their climb in the early morning to lessen the rockfall danger. They stopped before reaching the couloir to rope up and put on crampons so they could move quickly through the couloir. It is not known what actions P.D. took immediately prior to the rock striking him, but he was wearing a helmet, which no doubt saved his life. (Source: Bob Freund)

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **Oregon, Smith Rock, Lyon's Chair**

On July 7, Christopher Ekstrom (22) was leading the first pitch of Lyon's Chair in the Morning Glory Wall area of Smith Rock State Park. Lyon's Chair is a three star route rated 5.11a and requiring gear to 3.5 inches according to Alan Watts' *Climber's Guide to Smith Rocks*. "The start of the initial pitch makes a popular 5.10c stemming jaunt" according to Alan. Christopher was about eight inches from the first bolt anchors when he came off the rock, falling 15 to 20 feet and twisting his ankle.

His friends continued to climb for a while and then assisted him down the path toward their car, a half mile distant. They were met at the Crooked River bridge by a State Park Ranger who drove Chris up the steep hill to the parking area. X-rays taken the next day showed a broken tibia, requiring a cast for seven weeks. He made a full recovery.

### **Analysis**

Christopher states he was seven to ten feet above his last piece of trad protection, and he reminds everyone to watch their run-outs. This is one of many accidents at Smith Rock that would not have been reported had not the Ranger observed the slow, painful progress of the group up the path. (Source: Robert Speik)

## **FALLING ROCK, PARTY SEPARATED—CLIMBING ALONE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

### **Oregon, North Sister**

On July 10, three people, including Matt Gorman, were climbing the North Sister. The terrain became more technical than Mr. Gorman's climbing com-

panions were comfortable with, so they proceeded back down the route of ascent. Mr. Gorman elected to continue to the summit alone. While on the west face of the mountain in one of several large, exposed, and unstable gullies, a large (500-800 pound) boulder slid out from under him. He said he then “rode” the rock a short distance before he was ejected off it and went end over end several times. He came to rest in a gully several hundred feet below the summit. His two friends heard him yelling for help and called 911 via cell phone.

The response was from Lane County (Eugene Mountain Rescue), with an assist from Deschutes Co. SAR. Due to the fact that we did not know the extent of the subject’s injuries and that he was seven to eight hours away from ground search personnel, we elected to send in a helicopter for extraction.

Matt Gorman was wearing a climbing helmet, and that may have saved his life. Injuries were a broken finger, strained knee with various bruises, and lacerations. He also lost his backpack during the accident. This left him with no survival gear if he had had to spend the night.

### **Analysis**

A need to be aware of the loose volcanic rock of the Cascade Mountains and the consequences of climbing solo and within your abilities are only a couple of the lessons that can be learned from incident. (Source: John K. Miller, Search and Rescue Coordinator—Police Services Division, Lane County Sheriff’s Office)

## **HIKER DISAPPEARED**

### **Oregon, Broken Top**

On August 10, Danny Curran (24) left his younger brother at their Green Lakes pack-in campsite late in the day, saying he was going to climb Broken Top, the snow capped mountain summit just one and a half miles due east. The elevation gain is 2,670 feet, over friable volcanic rock, snow, and ice.

Several climbers’ trails lead to the prominent north west ridge, which in turn leads to a very exposed summit block with a 1,000-foot drop to the Crook Glacier. Permanent snow fields and the Bend Glacier buttress the north side of this summit ridge. At the end of the summer, the snow fields and glacier ice had pulled back from the rock of the knife edged ridge leaving crevasses and bergschrunds of great depth.

Search and Rescue teams and local climbers searched for Danny Curran until November 18, when the weather deteriorated and more snow began to fall.

### **Analysis**

Danny Curran had little mountaineering experience. He was dressed in blue jeans, a black down jacket, hiking boots, a knit cap and gloves. He had no pack with back-up gear, even though he was climbing late in the afternoon in weather that dropped below freezing at night. The five-inch snow pack of the previous week had turned to two inches of hard snow, making footing treacherous.

The obvious recommendation is that it is best to climb with others. If people choose to go alone, they should learn to be prepared. “A lot of people hike alone,” said SAR spokesman Chris Nolte. “We were up at the trail-head today, and it was raining, and we watched people heading up there solo or in pairs,