

initial investigation that N.S. died after a fall of some distance, possibly from near the summit. The initial coroner's report indicated that he fell at least 800 feet and that equipment failure was not being considered as a cause.

Analysis

With no witnesses, it is not possible to say how this accident happened. It is included because it illustrates the additional risks in climbing alone and unroped. (Source: Paul Walton—B.C. Coroner's Service, *Nanaimo Daily News*, and Jed Williamson)

AVALANCHE, ICE ANCHOR FAILURE—FALL ON ICE

Baffin Island, Auyuittuq National Park, Mount Breidablik

On July 8, after reaching the summit of Mount Breidablik, a group of 14 began descending their route of ascent. They had climbed the prominent glacier visible from Summit Lake at Pangnirtung Pass. The snow and ice slope is 45 degrees at its steepest. In order to facilitate the descent for such a large group, the party fixed their climbing ropes with screw-anchors every 50 meters. The last climber would down-climb and pull the ropes and anchors as he descended. The lowest climber was waiting at a two-screw anchor when an avalanche released from above. The avalanche hit the lowest climber and the anchor failed. He was swept 200 meters down-slope and suffered a broken leg in the fall. The victim was stabilized by a doctor in the group and one member descended to the Park Warden Patrol Cabin at Summit Lake. Fortunately, a Medium helicopter working in Qikiqtarjuaq (Broughton Island) was available and dispatched to the accident scene. The helicopter was able to land nearby and the patient was evacuated to Pangnirtung. Fixed wing aircraft then flew him to the hospital in Iqaluit by Nunavut Health Services. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

EQUIPMENT FAILURE THROUGH IMPROPER USE—INADEQUATE ANCHOR

Québec, Sageunay National Park, Cap Trinité, Les Grands Gallets (5.9, A2+, 350 m.)

A couple began their planned three-day outing to climb Les Grands Gallets at Cap Trinité on Saturday August 4. They were seen climbing around 100 meters up on Les Grands Gallets (5.9, A2+) on Saturday. On Sunday, park rangers became alarmed when they could no longer spot them on the rock face. Their bodies were found in a crevice at the foot of the cliff. Police believe L.P. and J.V. fell between 100 and 150 meters to their deaths, some time between Saturday and Sunday. The two had intended to spend the night in a portaledge. L.P. had previously acknowledged to a newspaper reporter that she was nervous about sleeping in the portaledge, for it would be her first time using such equipment.

Analysis

A public inquiry determined that the fall occurred while the couple were resting on their portaledge. The couple had overloaded their portaledge

with too much weight, had improperly attached it to their anchor system, and had neglected to tie themselves in to an independent anchor. (Source: Tu Thanh Ha—*Globe and Mail*, and Edwina Podemski)

FALLING ROCK, WEATHER

Yukon Territory, Mount Augusta, North Buttress

At 1500 on June 18, South District Ranger Daryl Miller in Talkeetna, AK, was phoned by Charlie Sassara's wife, Siri Moss, about an accident on Mount Augusta—a border peak 20 miles northeast of Mount St. Elias on the U.S.-Canadian border. In the U.S. the land is managed by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and in Canada by Kluane National Park. Jack Tackle (40's) and Charlie Sassara had flown onto the Seward Glacier at 6,300 feet on June 16 in order to attempt a new route on the North Buttress (Canadian side) of Mount Augusta. After caching their skis at 7,700 feet the pair began climbing on June 17 in the early morning.

At 2000 on the 17th, after 12 pitches of climbing, the team began looking for a suitable bivouac ledge at 9,200 feet. The first ledge they chopped proved too small for the tent so at 2200 Tackle climbed to a higher ledge to investigate its suitability while Sassara belayed. About 60 feet up, Tackle was excavating a possible ledge when a briefcase size rock struck him in the back causing him to fall. The protection that he had placed held and Sassara arrested his fall quickly. The blow initially paralyzed Tackle. Sassara was able to lower Tackle directly back to the existing ledge and secure him to the belay. Tackle's pain was so severe in his chest and abdomen that Sassara feared internal injuries. Sassara was able to stabilize Tackle in two sleeping bags inside the tent and secured him to the mountain using both rock and ice protection. Sassara remained on scene throughout the night helping Tackle with fluids and making him more comfortable. The team discussed their options and concluded that a helicopter rescue was Tackle's best chance for survival because they feared that lowering him could have been fatal.

Sassara began descending at 0630 on the 18th. It took him 13 rappels and five hours to reach the glacier and then another 45 minutes to ski to their base camp where they had a satellite phone. Sassara called Kluane National Park and his wife to notify them of the emergency.

Kluane's Chief Park Warden Ray Breneman and Hunter Sharp (Assistant Superintendent of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park) worked out a memorandum of agreement for cross border rescue cooperation. Miller offered to gather a ground team of experienced climbers and RCC offered air support. The Canadians had a helicopter capable of short-haul operations at these altitudes and were getting ready to fly to the scene. Miller assigned the mission to ranger Joe Reichert, who located Kelly Cordes, Colby Coombs, and Michael Alkaitis to form a ground team and emergency hired them. At 1930 the four flew from Talkeetna to Kulis AFB, Anchorage where they boarded a C-130 to Yakutat, Alaska. Arriving in