

in the head and killed by rockfall while ascending the last 150 metres to the pass and the hut. The custodian at the hut was able to contact the warden service right away on the emergency phone. The deceased and her partner were evacuated by helicopter later the same day.

### **Analysis**

The victim's helmet was on her pack, but it is unlikely that it would have saved her life given the size of the rockfall and the injuries sustained. Picking protected locations for breaks, moving quickly between safe zones, and traveling during the cold early morning parts of the day are possible mitigating measures. The unfortunate party was witnessed as being tight to the Victoria side of the approach gully. The marked trail (blue squares of paint) is in the middle of the gully at this point. Remaining on the marked trail would likely have been safer as there is considerable threat from falling rock off the side of Mount Victoria. Parties should also communicate with any other parties in the gully at the same time and take care to their safety. (Source: Percy Woods, Yoho National Park Warden Service, Barry Blanchard)

## **STRANDED, PARTY SEPARATED, WEATHER**

### **British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Lake O'Hara, Mount Biddle**

On August 8, a party of six climbers headed to the West Ridge of Mount Biddle, a 5.4 alpine rock route on the Lake O'Hara area of Yoho National Park. Two of the party turned around low on the route when they noticed an approaching storm. The other four continued. There are a series of small rock steps on the route interspersed between loose exposed scrambling. Above the technical pitches, G.D. decided to traverse across the Southwest face and disappeared into storm clouds. The rest of his party assumed he had fallen to his death, but carried on up in spite of the ongoing storm. The three reached the summit around 1530. On descent, two of them were able to down-climb the steep sections in the rain, but one of them could not. The only rope in the party was carried by the climber who had earlier disappeared. So the climber waited on the ridge at around 10,000 feet while the other two went for help. The two reported the incident around 0200. Park wardens responded at first light and spotted the climber. The rescue crew attempted to evacuate him by heli-sling, but had to abort due to clouds. Clearing weather a short time later allowed the heli-sling rescue operation to continue.

Searching for the assumed-dead second climber began on the normal climbing route and fall-lines associated with it. The climber was eventually located 300 feet below the summit on ledges on the opposite side on the east face of Biddle. He had traversed on ledges looking for an overhang to sit out the storm under. One rescuer slung into the climber and he was evacuated to the Elizabeth Parker Hut and his elated friends.

## **Analysis**

The forecast for the day was for a severe storm with lightning. Darkening skies by late morning confirmed the forecast and a heavy rain and lightening storm followed. The decision to carry on when the storm became obvious was questionable. The decision above the technical sections to carry on during the storm after one of the climbers was presumed dead is difficult to comprehend. This is particularly puzzling since none of the three had a rope at that point and they likely knew that getting down the steep sections would get increasingly difficult with the rain. (Source: Percy Woods, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

## **SLIP ON ROCK OR ICE, UNROPED**

### **British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Mount Dennis, Carlsberg Column**

On November 19, two climbers were approaching the base of Carlsberg Column (60 m. II WI5), a waterfall ice climb on Mount Dennis in Yoho National Park. B.R. (32) had started traversing on an exposed ledge that went over to the base of the ice climb. His partner J.D. was a short distance behind him adjusting his boots but had yet to start the traverse. Both climbers had put their helmets and crampons on before starting the traverse. J.D. heard a shout and looked up in time to see his partner slipping off the edge of the ledge and disappearing over a short cliff below. J.D. ran down slope to assist his partner, who had fallen over 35 metres. B.R. was seriously injured and unconscious. His partner stabilized him as best he could and went for help at the Yoho Park Information Centre close by in the town of Field. Park Wardens, Field Ambulance, Banff Ambulance and RCMP all attended the accident scene. B.R. was heli-slung out to an awaiting ambulance and later transferred to STARS air ambulance. He died of his injuries a short time later in hospital. (Source: Percy Woods, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

## **FALL ON ICE—ICE TOOLS PULLED OUT, UNROPED**

### **Quebec, Mont du Gros Bras**

On February 22, J.S. (39) and M.L.(38) had finished the Gros Bras route at Weir and were packing up their gear when they decided to have a look at the rock climbs further along the cliff. On the way back J.S. decided to attempt an unroped mixed traverse across the ice shrouded base of the cliff. After one or two moves, he noticed the ice was very poor and was just beginning to step back down onto level ground when the ice supporting his left tool disintegrated and he fell heavily downward about half a metre, firmly planting his right crampon, unfortunately he also fell backwards on his planted foot and snapped his tibia, just above the boot top, and his fibula near the knee. He then proceeded to flip onto his back, fall about one more metre and luckily landed in between two large boulders which stopped him fall-