

struggling through the lower chimney sections they began linking pitches and arrived at the bolt anchor of pitch 17 with 60 minutes of daylight left. Geerling pulled a small bulge above the anchors to a ledge, placed a tri-cam, and began traversing into the final dihedral. During the traverse, a handhold pulled from the sandstone and he barn-doored into the opposite wall. He fell ten feet and sustained blunt trauma to his right knee. A local guide on the route immediately below the pair passed Pannucci and provided first aid to Geerling's knee; he and his climber planned to wait for the pair at the summit. Pannucci led pitch 18 and brought Geerling to his stance as darkness fell. Given Geerling's injury, the two decided to remain roped for the 700 feet of fourth-class terrain to the summit. Pannucci led 200 feet and built an anchor. As he ascended, Geerling (a 5.12 climber) fell once on the fourth class terrain and arrived at the belay ledge shivering, disoriented and in severe pain, his leg nearly locked in the straightened position as it swelled. The pair considered bivying and completing the climb in the morning but Pannucci was unsure of Geerling's ability to make the extensive descent from Whiskey Peak. From the summit, the guide used his cellular phone to activate the Las Vegas Search and Rescue and rappelled to the pair's ledge until their location was identified by helicopter. Geerling was man-winched to the summit and evacuated by helicopter to a waiting ambulance. He was treated at the UMC Trauma Center for hypothermia (93 F), evaluated for a fractured patella, and received stitches for his knee laceration.

Analysis

Loose rock is common even on often-climbed routes in this area. Rain two days prior to the incident may have contributed to the hold breaking.

In the interest of speed, the pair had brought minimal gear and were unprepared for anything but an emergency bivy. They also did not have a second rope, so an up-and-over ascent was their only option.

On the fourth class terrain, Geerling exhibited classic signs of hypothermia (loss of coordination, disorientation, mental slowing), likely brought on by the combined effect of injury, exposure, and exhaustion. The pair's position on a ledge several hundred feet below the summit slowed Geerling's rescue as a search and rescue team had to be airlifted to the summit to create a man-winch. (Source: Chris Pannucci and Joel Geerling, the climbers.)

FALL ON SNOW/ICE, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, INEXPERIENCE

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Pipeline Gully

On March 9, Robert Douglas (39), John Corse (38), and Colin O'Farrell (23) became involved in a situation requiring climbing techniques due to the conditions they found when they attempted to find a good backcountry ski descent route on the west side of Mount Washington. Colin O'Farrell provided this description:

I met John and Rob at the Cog Railway base station. I had never skied with either of them, but had numerous conversations with Rob regarding backcountry skiing in the White and Green Mountains. We skinned up alongside the Cog Railway and then worked our way north along the Gulfside Trail looking for good snow. It had rained with a changeover to snow a few days before, consequently there was both fresh snow and icy hard-pack. Rob had been having difficulty keeping his crampons on, so we stopped, pulled out a Leatherman, and he readjusted them.

We found a gully off of Mount Clay that looked promising. We skied the upper $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ in about six inches of snow. We stopped at the transition to hard-pack and decided to head back up in order to either lap the upper portion again or find another gully. In transitioning from skis to crampons, John Corse lost his footing and fell the length of the gully, coming to rest on the apron below. Rob and I heard his cries for help. I immediately began descending with crampons and ice ax, while Rob elected to sidestep/side-slip his way down on skis. I asked him to give me a lot of distance so as to avoid any complications. I reached John and found him conscious and oriented but in a lot of pain and with facial trauma. At the time I thought his chief issues were ribs and tib/fib. Rob reached the top of the icefall that [as a result of] the low snow year of 03/04 separated the gully proper from the apron below. I advised Rob to throw his backpack/skis down to us and descend the mellowest part of the ice, along climber's left. Rob did not have an ice ax, so he was holding his ski poles near the baskets in an attempt to gain additional purchase on the ice.

About halfway down, Rob lost a crampon. From my vantage point, it looked like he decided to jump and aim for a pocket of windslab at the base of the ice in the hopes that he would arrest his fall. It was perhaps an eight to ten foot jump. He failed to arrest his fall, gathered speed and slid through the boulder field in which John and I were sitting. He came to rest slightly above John and me.

He had no breath or pulse, so I commenced CPR for 30 minutes, but to no avail. At this time I put in the 911 call and asked for a helicopter. I ceased CPR on Rob and focused on keeping John warm, comfortable, and awake. The rescuers from the Mount Washington Observatory reached us shortly after sundown and put the call in for the heli. Given our location on the side-slope of the ravine, we had to move John to a better pick up point, using a Sked litter. John was lifted into the helicopter and I opted to get a ride with him as well. We landed at the Glen and were transferred the hospital in Berlin via ambulance.

Analysis

I spoke with Colin O'Farrell and some individuals from Mountain Rescue Service (the North Conway based team). All agreed that in addition to ski-

ing ability, mountaineering skills and equipment are required in this kind of terrain. Many backcountry skiers, if not carrying ice axes, use ski poles with picks fixed just below the handles for self-arrest purposes. Setting up an anchor and/or creating a platform when switching from skis to crampons in technical terrain, especially where a fall is possible, are common practices. On this day and in this gully, conditions required good skiing ability and winter mountaineering skills, along with the appropriate equipment for same. John Corse, an avid backcountry skier who had negotiated many good ski routes in the White and Green Mountains, did not have the equipment or mountaineering skills required for the terrain he and his partners encountered. (Source: From a report by Colin O'Farrell and Jed Williamson)

FAILURE TO TURN BACK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, INADEQUATE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT, WEATHER

New Hampshire, Mount Lafayette

Russel and Brenda Cox went for a hike to the summit of Mt. Lafayette early Sunday morning, March 21. They had planned to follow the Bridle Path and return the same way, often a ten hour round trip. They started hiking around 8:30 a.m. and reached the Greenleaf Hut, just at timberline, around 11:00 a.m. There they met a party who had been on the summit. They advised the couple that the weather was deteriorating and suggested that they turn around. The Coxes decided to continue to the summit. When they started down, they got lost in the worsening conditions, heading down the wrong trail. By the time they realized their error, they were in a whiteout with winds gusting to 75 mph. They had no clothing or gear for a night out. They built a snow cave and hunkered down. When they awoke on Monday, the weather had not improved.

When they didn't return by Monday morning, their son called authorities. Their car was found in the Falling Waters parking lot on Monday. Rescuers were called out but were unable to find the couple's tracks due to a very large snowfall the previous night. Conditions on Monday deteriorated, and around midnight the rescue was suspended.

Monday morning the Coxes continued on the trail, but by this time they and their clothing were wet. Unable to continue or to find their snow cave, they huddled together in a niche between several rocks. Sometime during the night, Mrs. Cox slipped into hypothermia and died.

The rescue resumed on Tuesday morning. The weather had dramatically improved, allowing for the use of a N.H. National Guard Blackhawk helicopter. Members of the local Mountain Rescue Service were ferried to the top of the ridge and started searching at the same time as volunteers started up the surrounding trails. Sometime in mid-morning Mr. Cox crawled from his niche and spotted the helicopter and managed to attract its attention. Mr. Cox and his wife's body were airlifted out.