

been safest for them to not be tied together because of the potential for the rope to get caught on loose rock and cause rockfall.

Analysis

Family members speculate that the couple would have gotten up well before dawn, knowing that weather could be an issue. Family members found only one eaten dinner in the couple's tent and several more days worth of food, suggesting they attempted the summit on July 27.

They likely saw the weather was changing for the worse at some point on the Ellingwood Arête route—unsure when, but it's fairly certain they did not summit because they would have descended the standard route. But that's not where they were found. They had also not eaten their packed lunch, which they would normally do on the summit. Upon seeing the weather changing, they would have tried to descend as safely and quickly as possible. It's likely they rappelled or down-climbed to the gully/chute adjacent to the route where it probably looked as the safest and most direct route down to camp.

Both climbers were found wearing their boots and had their rock shoes in their packs, suggesting that they had not taken a fall on a technical pitch where they would have been wearing their rock shoes. Family members suspect they got pretty high up the arête in their rock shoes, bailed, and switched to boots, as they probably didn't want to twist an ankle in their rock shoes on any loose scree, then encountered a rock slide. Based on where they were found and the likely weather issues, we think this is what happened. The bodies were found four days after the storm.

During and after rain, climbers should expect to encounter slippery rock and terrain in general and adjust their movement accordingly. In heavy rain, expect flash floods or debris slides in gullies or chimneys. In some cases climbers can be washed away or drowned if caught in a large gully during a rainstorm and be aware of falling rock that may have been loosened by running water. (Source: Michael Buhrmester, www.14er.com)

STRANDED, OFF ROUTE, PARTY SEPARATED

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak, The Diamond

On July 20, Carolyn Davis (27) became stranded while rappelling down The Diamond (East Face). She and her partner had climbed the Casual Route (grade IV, 5.10) and reached Table Ledge where the Diamond rappels begin at about 11:00 a.m. At the bottom of the second rappel, she missed the correct anchors and rappelled past them. She found some other fixed gear to clip into. She was about 50 feet to the climber's right of the correct anchors and a little bit below them. Her partner rappelled to the correct anchors and after talking to each other about what to do, they decided to have him pull the ropes and try to swing over to her. Once they pulled the ropes, they could not swing the ropes over to her location

and her partner did not have any of the climbing gear. She had the rack and most of their extra clothes. For two hours, they tried unsuccessfully to get the ropes to her. Her climbing partner rappelled the rest of the way down and went for help. He located RMNP trail crew on Longs Peak who notified the Park.

A team of four Rangers was flown to the summit of Longs Peak just before dark. They down climbed Kiener's Route to Table ledge and lowered a Ranger to the stranded climber. She was able to ascend the rope back to Table Ledge. From there one of the Rangers escorted her to the summit. They arrived at the summit at 2:15 a.m. The climber and the Rangers bivied on the summit until 7:00 a.m. Between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., the Rangers collected all the gear and a helicopter flew all the personnel, the climber, and their gear off the mountain.

Analysis

These climbers had years of alpine and big-wall experience and Ms. Davis had done this route the previous year. They started early, climbed efficiently, had the proper equipment, and they were on their way back down with time to spare. Once they became separated and got off of the standard rappel route, they discussed a plan that would get them back on the route together. Unfortunately this plan did not succeed.

More than likely, fatigue (these climbers had been walking/climbing since 1:30 a.m.) played a large role in helping to convince them that their plan could work. It certainly must have seemed easier than the other options of having her ascend the rope or building their own anchors and leaving gear behind to get back to Broadway. Fortunately, the stranded climber had rain gear and extra clothes and could endure the several rainstorms that occurred that afternoon while she waited for a rescue team to arrive. (Source: Rich Browne, Emergency Services Coordinator, Rocky Mountain National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, ROCKSLIDE

Colorado, Mount Wilson, El Diente Traverse

During the morning of July 26, a group of seven climbers were traversing the ridge between Mount Wilson (14,246 feet) and El Diente (14,159 feet) peaks, one of Colorado's four classic 14'er traverses.

According to reports, a group of four climbers Peter Topp (59), Charlie Zimmerman (60), Kathy (36), and Shawn Sullivan were on their way from Mount Wilson to meet with three unidentified climbers who had reached the summit of El Diente. The three were heading toward the others when they heard the sound of falling rocks and cries for help.

During the ensuing rockslide, Topp was rendered unconscious and later died from blunt force trauma to his head and body. Zimmerman sustained a head injury and internal injuries and with support was able to descend