

other than the tasks at hand. It happens to automobile drivers with great frequency. Many experienced guides tie themselves in before setting up rappels and belays. It is standard protocol in most climbing and adventure schools.
(Source: J. Williamson)

FALLING ROCK LEDGE, WEATHER

Nevada, Red Rocks

This is a report from Gary Bocarde (37), director of a guide service in Alaska, who was climbing on March 18, 1987, between sessions at the annual Ski Industries America trade show in Las Vegas:

This was going to be our last day at Red Rocks. We set out to do an easy route—Free Crack (5.7). I was going to lead, while Susan belayed. The climb was partly in the shade, so Susan set up the belay off to the side (in the sun). While Susan was setting up the belay, I climbed up the first six meters or so on very easy ground to a one-meter-wide ledge. I was placing protection when the ledge let go. On its way down, it tangled in the rope, pulling me off. It eventually cut the rope. I went flying, head down, landing mostly on my left arm. I landed about three meters out from the base of the climb. I broke my ulna, shattered the radius head, and did a total separation of my shoulder. All injuries required surgery.
(Source: Gary Bocarde)

Analysis

Be careful climbing on standstone—especially in spring, when there are large temperature differences. The freeze-thaw cycle makes for loose rock. The ledge that broke appeared solid; it did not move at all when I climbed over it. It was a total surprise.

Since the rope was cut, protection would not have helped. Maybe we should have stayed at the ski show and hustled equipment instead! (Source: Gary Bocarde)

FALL ON ROCK, EXHAUSTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT

Nevada, Red Rocks

The Bobs went to Red Rocks in April for a week of climbing and were on their fourth day. Mark Quiring (27) arrived midweek and was climbing on his first day. Bob Froese (27) had followed 5.9 and led some 5.8 climbs. Bob Brownlee (32) had followed 5.10 and was gaining leading experience during the week. (He had led 5.8 the day before.) Mark had led 5.7 and followed 5.8. The Bobs found that the ratings in the area climbing guide were inaccurate (downgraded), and Brownlee wanted to try what the guidebook rated a 5.8.

Brownlee chose Tarzan's Arm (5.8), with a roof problem about 25 meters off the ground. He led by following the initial book to just under the left side of the roof (Mark belaying). The route then traverses right about six meters and ascends a 16-centimeter off-width crack and face to a ledge. Brownlee had good protection on the left side of the traverse, but found only the poor protection of a shallow slotted

#2 stopper on the right. He chose to leave a large hex and Tri-cam at the base to save weight and had nowhere to protect above him.

He moved up into the slot onto a good flake for a handhold. However, his feet had no good purchase. He attempted to move up, but was unable to reach the next good hold. He tried many alternatives, but eventually he tired. He made another attempt, but slipped and lost his handholds.

Brownlee went down and back, hitting his head in the slot. Mark took up slack as fast as he could. Brownlee came off the roof and fell about six meters before hitting the sloping rock below, hitting his left thigh. As he bounced out and down, the stopper pulled. Brownlee slid and bounced stopping about three meters above the ground.

Quiring lowered him and he was treated for shock. Brownlee never lost consciousness and broke no bones. He had six stitches in his scalp, rock rash on his thigh and forearm, and a deep bruise on one heel. (Source: Bob Froese)

Analysis

Brownlee's physical condition played a big part in ensuring that he received painful but relatively minor injuries. Brownlee kept mentally alert and was aware of changes taking place in his body and let Mark and me know (nausea, dizziness, blurred vision, etc.)

A hard hat would have helped by preventing the scalp laceration and worries of skull fracture.

None of us was very familiar with the area. We did not know where medical help could be obtained. In case of unconsciousness, carrying an emergency address card including medical allergies and insurance policy number may also be beneficial.

From our own experiences and talking to many other climbers, we knew that many of the ratings in the guidebook were inaccurate. Knowing this, we should have either chosen slightly easier routes or used the book only as a guideline. Then we could make our own determination of the difficulty of the climb instead of psyching ourselves by thinking, "This is only a 5.8." (Source: Bob Froese)

Editor's Note: The last point is worth emphasizing. Climbing without a guidebook means (1) you have to use your own judgment and (2) every climb you make is a first ascent!

WEATHER, OFF ROUTE, INADEQUATE CLOTHING, HYPOTHERMIA Nevada, Great Basin National Park

On July 20, 1987, Nelson Keyes, age 58, set out to ascend Wheeler Peak (3982 meters). During the descent, Keyes became disoriented in a severe storm and lost the trail. Other park visitors hiking the Stella and Teresa lakes vicinity reported hearing cries for help from approximately 1430 until 1515. A search was initiated after Keyes' unoccupied campsite was found at the Wheeler Peak Campground. Search efforts were hampered by the winterlike storm conditions that ensued for the next 48 hours. Keyes succumbed to hypothermia and his body was located on July 22, 1987, approximately 200 meters east of the Wheeler Peak Trail at 3658 meters. (Source: Mike Nicklas, Park Ranger, Great Basin National Park)