

then scramble down to report the accident. (Source: Jeff Putnam, *Review-Herald*, December 29, 1989)

(Editor's Note: There was another, similar ice fall accident a few days later. We are told that these are on the increase in Mono County.)

FAILURE OF RAPPEL SETUP (PROTECTION PULLED OUT), INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park

On May 7, 1989, Robert Johnston (30) was attempting to lead Conan's Gonads, a 5.9 crack climb on Twin Owls Crag. After 12 meters of rock climbing, Johnston decided that he was incapable of continuing the lead. He anchored his rappel from a single hexcentric which had been left in place by a previous climber, and pulled the rope free of his own protection. Upon weighting the rope to begin the rappel, the hexcentric pulled out.

Johnston fell 12 meters to the ground, sustaining head lacerations, tenderness to back and abdomen, and abrasions on arms and legs. He was unconscious for approximately five minutes after the impact. Johnston was evacuated by the Rocky Mountain National Park Search and Rescue rangers, Estes Park ambulance personnel, and local climbers. (Source: David Essex, Chief Park Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

Analysis

Testing single placements by visual observation and tugging in the direction of the intended force may indicate the superficial soundness of a placement but may not be reliable. If Johnston had augmented the rappel anchor with additional chocks from his rack, he could've later retrieved all placements by rappelling from the top of the route, easily accessed via a walk up the Roosting Ledge. (The route is a single pitch in length.)

If forced to rappel or lower off a single placement, one should not pull the rope through lower intermediate placements before descending. Failure of the uppermost anchor may place a stress loading upon the next placement, but this is better than no backup at all! (Source: David Essex, Chief Park Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

FALLING ROCK, NOT FOLLOWING INSTINCTS

Colorado, Ophir Wall

On May 27, 1989, Katie Kemble (34), former owner and Chief Guide of Leavenworth Alpine Guides, Inc., and Ric Hatch were climbing on the Ophir Wall when this accident occurred. Katie sent in the following narrative:

We had been climbing and decided to finish up at a practice slab that supposedly offered full face climbing. Katie was finished and Ric was six meters up a 12 meter slab. Katie was sitting at the base of the cliff belaying Ric when a rockfall was heard. Katie was hit by a rock ricocheting off the wall. It amputated her left lower leg, almost at the knee, leaving only two to three fingers of flesh attaching it. Katie felt there was no time for a rescue and asked Ric to carry her out, while she carried her leg. She was driven to the Telluride Emergency Clinic and then helicoptered to Grand Junction. (Source: Katie Kemble)

Analysis

The only way to have avoided this accident would've been to follow my inclination and not go climbing that day. I really had strong feelings that day and discarded them. I should have gone mountain biking....

I think climbers should have Mountain Rescue self-evacuation techniques and advanced first aid, or better, training. My background as a nurse probably saved my life and hopefully my leg. I ran my own rescue and care until I was helicoptered out. I told them what IVs to start, where to start them and how to care for my leg. (Source: Katie Kemble)

(Editor's Note: This is the second description of self-help in acute injury situations in this year's report. This one is, obviously, understated. Katie's ability to direct staff at the Telluride Clinic, let alone to stay alert and somehow avoid going into shock, should emphasize the value of good training. Without her medical knowledge and strong will, the result surely would have been different.)

FALLING ROCK, POOR POSITION

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park

On May 18, 1989, Tricia Timms (20) was struck in the hip by a 14 kg rock on Eagle Cliff Mountain. Timms had been sitting at the base of a cliff band, directly in the fall line of rappellers in her party. One of the rappellers had dislodged the rock unintentionally. Rocky Mountain National Park Rescue Team responded and evacuated Timms via long scree evac. Timms' injuries were diagnosed at Estes Park Medical Center as a deep contusion of the right buttock. (Source: David Essex, Chief Park Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

Analysis

Positioning oneself directly beneath climbers and rappellers increases the chances of being struck by falling rock and/or equipment. Timms was not belaying anyone at the time of her accident, so it was unnecessary placing herself in that poor position. If possible, when belaying, one should be positioned off to the side of the fall line. (Source: David Essex, Chief Park Ranger, Rocky Mountain National Park)

NO ROPE, CLIMBING ALONE, UNABLE TO DOWNCLIMB, JUMPED

Colorado, Boulder Canyon

On June 24, 1989, Stephen Gilmore (30), David McConnell (27) and Annette Halley (31) were out to climb Cozyhang on "The Dome." While getting ready and waiting for another party, Steve strolled off alone. Finding an interesting face, he decided to warm up by bouldering. After climbing about five or six meters up, a hold pulled off and he realized he was further off the ground than he had intended. Unable to downclimb and unwilling to go any further, he finally had to jump. Steve sustained a very severely bruised heel, strained right knee, and minor laceration to his left leg and several minor abrasions. He was able to walk out without assistance and treat his own injuries while David and Annette finished the climb. X-rays later showed Steve had broken nothing but he still was unable to climb for several months. (Source: David McConnell)