

caution: be mindful of the power of erosion and the freeze/thaw cycle in early spring. Second, use a double rappel anchor. ALWAYS! (Source: Darin Ewer)

INADEQUATE BELAY, FALL ON ROCK, LIGHTNING, FEAR

Idaho, City of Rocks, Elephant Rock

On June 20, 1992, Lew Peterson (34) and Mark Parent (35) were climbing “Just Say No” (5.9) when the following accident happened. Peterson was belaying Parent, who had finished leading the climb. Peterson was lowering him using a figure 8 belay device. The 165 foot rope which Peterson was feeding out through his belay device was stored in a rope bag located just behind Peterson. Because the rope was being fed out from the bag, Peterson could not see how much rope was remaining. As Parent was leaning back, being lowered, the last of the rope fed out from the rope bag and ran through Peterson’s belay device before he could react. Parent had reached the third bolt (approximately 35 feet above the ground) when the rope became free of Peterson’s belay device and Parent fell the remaining distance to the ground. He reportedly landed on his feet and rolled partially down the slope below the climb. Peterson dashed to keep him from rolling and protected his head from hitting the rock. He fractured his pelvis, but has fully recovered.

Analysis

“Just Say No” is approximately 120 feet long and requires two ropes, tied together, to lower or rappel off. The other descent option is to walk off of an easy slope on the back side of Elephant Rock.

Mike Parent was reportedly a very experienced climber while Peterson had only two years of experience. Peterson said that Parent was so comfortable with his rope management skills that he often went too fast for Peterson to be fully prepared or understand the actions before they happened. Peterson also said that he had had several other close calls while climbing with Parent and described Parent as being almost too casual in his climbing. Peterson said that he was initially under the impression that they would walk off after climbing and that when they began the lowering, it did not seem right to him.

Parent added in his own report that both the belayer and climber should be tied in regardless of the length of the rope, and that the belayer needs to be aware of when the mid-point of the rope has passed him. He said further that the plan had been for Parent to belay Peterson from the top anchor and then both would walk off. But as Parent is really afraid of lightning, he decided to be lowered off than to be highly exposed, even for just five minutes. (Sources: Maura Longden, Ranger, City of Rocks National Reserve, and Mark Parent)

INADEQUATE BELAY, INATTENTION, FALL ON ROCK

Idaho, City of Rocks, Rabbit Rock

On Friday, August 7, 1992, at 1300, Andrew (33) and Glenda Lainias (34) were climbing a route called “Sudden Pleasure.” Andrew Lainias had reached the top of the climb and was being lowered on the rope by Glenda Lainias. Glenda was controlling his descent by using a Stitchplate belay/friction device. According to one witness, Sherry Grigsby, Glenda Lainias and Grigsby had discussed the fact that using a single rope length to lower Andrew would not adequately allow him to reach the ground. They both believed that one rope length would reach the top of a pillar at the base of the route and that Andrew would be able to safely down climb from there to the ground. While Glenda was lowering An-