

guides in this area. There are many more falls than get reported, mostly because the victims self-rescue or are not injured seriously enough to warrant a hospital or ER visit.

The important factor here is the common denominator of cause: "Placed no or inadequate protection." Local experienced climbers believe that most of those getting in trouble are sport/gym climbers converting to the outdoor cliff world.

Anyone else with experience or opinion regarding this phenomenon should send reports to me. (Source: Jed Williamson)

STRANDED, HAIR CAUGHT IN RAPPEL DEVICE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, ETC.

Vermont, Smuggler's Notch

On September 11, 1993, at 1400, Stowe Hazardous Terrain was dispatched to Smuggler's Notch to assist one or more reportedly injured rock climbers. Upon arrival they were informed that one climber had fallen with unknown injuries, and another had caught her hair in her rappel device and could not move. The latter subject could be seen from the road, approximately two-thirds of the way down a 90 foot cliff. Team members were sent to the top and bottom of the cliff to further assess the scene. On their way in, the climber who had fallen was passed walking out with a minor ankle injury. He was sent with assistance to a waiting ambulance. By the time the team was in position, a climber in the area had managed to cut the hair loose from the woman's figure 8, and they both had reached a ledge. This climber's companion was also on the ledge, and the three subjects could not move any further. There were also four additional people at the top of the cliff who were unable to get down from their positions without assistance, for a total of seven people requiring evacuation. One team member then climbed up to the three on the ledge and lowered them to safety. A safety line was established for the four at the top, and they were assisted to a trail where they could walk back to the road.

Several interesting facts about this incident came out after all parties were safely evacuated:

(1) The injured climber was the most experienced of the group, and was teaching the others how to rappel. He had rappelled down the cliff on a single rope initially, and then returned to the top of the cliff. He then doubled the rope (so it could be retrieved from the bottom after completing the rappel), and sent his sister down on the double rope. Partway down, she got her hair tightly caught in the figure 8, bringing her to a stop. The doubled 165 foot rope, however, was not long enough to reach the bottom of the cliff, nor was the rope tied off at the bottom. It is entirely possible that she would have rappelled off the end of the rope into a 20-30 foot free fall onto large rocks and scree.

(2) When the brother heard his sister screaming for help, he downclimbed around the cliff (they only had one rope) to the base of the cliff. He then attempted to freeclimb up to his sister, but fell before reaching her, injuring his ankle.

(3) The two climbers who came to assist were top roping nearby and heard the calls for help. They had no rappel devices with them, and the first climber attempted to use a carabiner wrap to descend his rope to assist. He was not proficient with the technique, however, so he had a very rapid descent and was unable to slow down to assist the stranded woman. His rope was also not long enough to reach the bottom of the cliff, but he was able to swing into safety on a ledge.

(4) The second climber was also unfamiliar with the proper carabiner wrap tech-

nique, but took enough wraps with his rope around both a carabiner and his body that he was able to descend to the woman. After cutting her hair with some scissors on a Swiss Army knife, he had no way to attach her to his descent device. He was able to lift her up enough to free her from her rope, and then he held onto her with his arms while he descended to join his companion on the ledge.

There are several reminders here:

- (1) Teaching rappelling to inexperienced people should be done in easy terrain.
- (2) Beginning rappellers should always be belayed by a separate rope.
- (3) The instructor must be sure that the rope reaches the bottom of the rappel.
- (4) A double rope should have the ends tied together.
- (5) In the "heat of the moment," at least three people ignored the premise that you always look out for #1 first. One person dangerously freeclimbed (and fell) and two people tried to use techniques that they were unfamiliar with (carabiner wraps and pick-offs).
- (6) Although in pain, the stuck woman was in no immediate danger of further injury. There was plenty of time for a controlled, orderly and safe rescue. (Source: *Vermont Search and Rescue Newsletter*, September 1993)

EXPOSURE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONING, WEATHER, INEXPERIENCE

Washington, Mount Rainier

On March 8, 1993, at 0920, RMI senior guide George Dunn radioed to Paradise that three independent climbers would need to be rescued. The climbers were members of the George Laquan party, and were suffering from frostbite, hypothermia, and exposure. They were located at the 9,500 foot level of the Muir Snow field. Dunn directed other guides to get litters ready and meet him at the rescue site. He had received the report from a member of the Rush party from Idaho, who had found the Canadian party while hiking down to Paradise and returned to Muir to report the incident. Before Dunn left Muir, two members of the Canadian party reached Muir and were attended to by RMI guide John Race.

Once Dunn reached the stranded climbers, he radioed to Paradise reporting that the three remaining men were suffering from hypothermia and frostbite. One of the men, Blair Robertson (27), was semi-conscious and could not talk. The other two were alert, but could not walk. Dunn requested three litters be brought down from Muir. Dunn reported winds in excess of 30 mph, which ruled out the use of a helicopter for the rescue. Two of the disabled climbers (Robertson and Jerry Bauer [26]) had been placed in double sleeping bags by the Idaho group prior to Dunn's arrival. The third, George Laquan (29) was being led down by some of the Idaho group. Dunn was able to stop them and place the victim in sleeping bags.

Dunn, along with guide Arthur J. Rausch, the five Idaho climbers and 14 RMI clients, began the evacuation from Moon Rocks at 1030. All parties met on the top of Panorama Point at 1400. All patients were lowered down the winter route and then on to Paradise, the first patient arriving at 1545 and the last at 1600. At the base of Panorama Point Blair Robertson was placed on oxygen. Hot packs were placed on each of the climbers.

At Paradise the three patients were turned over to two Shepard Ambulance crews and transported to Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup.