

technique is fast, and the climbers are not in danger if the helicopter has to leave suddenly—e.g., the clouds close in.) After waiting out more bad weather, Bokelund and Andrews finished the climb on April 30.

Analysis

In subsequent interviews with Bokelund and Andrews we learned the following:

Andrews had made one previous ascent of El Cap. Bokelund had made four ascents and several other attempts, and had experienced stormy bivouacs. They planned to take five or six days for the climb, so they took full rations for six days and a little extra that they could stretch over two more days.

They started climbing on April 19, with a forecast for clear and stable weather, and by April 22, they had reached the top of pitch 22. They had been climbing more slowly than expected and were now a day behind schedule.

The next morning it was obvious that nasty weather was on its way. They fixed pitch 23, then set up the fly on their portaledge. On the 24th they fixed the 24th pitch and went back to the bivy, leaving two lines fixed and a third put away inside their shelter. Both days had been snowy but not very cold. Sunday was their sixth day on the route, the day they had planned to reach the summit.

The 25th was colder and still snowy. They had seven pitches to climb and were low on food. Although the route below was overhanging, they could retreat if they left some gear behind, however, their ropes were now frozen. Furthermore, they would risk serious hypothermia if they tried to rappel in all the water running on the cliff—they were already wet from condensation inside their fly and from fixing the pitches. The forecast on their AM/FM radio was for clearing weather. If true, they'd make the top in two days, losing a little weight along the way.

Tuesday the 26th was warmer and the forecast was OK, but more water was running down the face and the ropes remained frozen. Bokelund and Andrews were hungry, noticeably weak, and getting worried. Two cans of tuna and a couple of rolls remained.

At midday they heard the NPS calling, "Do you need a rescue?" "No!" "Are you wet?" They were wet and a bit cold but not shivering—no worse than usual when sitting out a storm—so they answered "No!" again, to avoid a rescue. Then the NPS called up that more bad weather was on the way. That did it. They accepted an offer of food, which was delivered by helicopter about three hours later.

They sat out wet, stormy weather the next day. By Thursday their ropes had thawed so they began climbing. Conditions remained wet, windy, and a bit above freezing until they reached the summit on Saturday the 30th. Their six day climb had stretched to twelve.

This is not the first time a stormbound party has run out of food on El Cap. Multiday storms and low temperatures are common here in April, May, and even June. Forecasts are not trustworthy and both ice and running water may prevent you from climbing or retreating for days after the storm. There are no vending machines up there, either, so take more than one day's spare rations. This rescue cost the NPS and the Navy \$5500. It would have cost several times that and added to the risk, had the weather forced us to lower from the summit. (Source: John Dill, NPS Ranger)

ANCHOR FAILURE—SLING BURNED THROUGH, INEXPERIENCE California, Yosemite Valley, Reed's Pinnacle

On June 12, 1994, four Swiss climbers were top roping an unnamed 60 foot pitch in the corner formed by the left side of Reed's Pinnacle. Fabian Nuescheler (23) first climbed

to the top by an alternate route, rigged a belay anchor and rappelled. For the anchor, he ran the rope through a one-inch nylon sling that was, in turn, looped through slings around a small chockstone.

Andreas Slahel (20) then climbed about 10 feet up the pitch and was lowered by a belayer at the base. Urs Draeger (22) then climbed to the top. When he had been lowered about two-thirds of the way to the ground, both he and the rope suddenly fell free, about 20 feet to the base. He landed on his back, then slide 50-70 feet down a steep slope.

NPS dispatch was notified by phone at 1325. Rangers Ruth Middlecamp and Lane Baker reached Draeger at 1340 and the rest of the SAR team arrived shortly thereafter.

Draeger was conscious but confused, complained of chest and back pain, and had a laceration on his scalp. His friends stated he had been unconscious for two to three minutes just after the fall. He was given oxygen, an IV, packaged in the full-body vacuum splint and, evacuated in a belayed litter down the scree to the road. He was ultimately flown by helicopter to Modesto, where he was found to have a concussion and compression fractures of three vertebrae, T11, T12 and L1.

Analysis

Ranger Mike Ray climbed to the anchor immediately after the rescue. He found that the sling directly holding the rope had been melted through, almost certainly by the friction of the rope as the climbers were belayed and lowered. Seventy feet of climbing and 50 feet of lowering had done the job.

The climbers stated that they had rigged ropes this way previously with no problems. They refused to believe that the rope could have caused the damage, until we showed them the sling. Draeger and Nuescheler, the most experienced climbers in the group, had each been climbing for about two years and led 5.10a. (Source: Harry Steed & Lane Baker, NPS Rangers)

FALL ON ROCK AND FALLING OBJECT—LITTER

California, Tahquitz

I went to Tahquitz on Sunday 12 June, ostensibly to help a friend practice aid climbing, but in reality to try to dissuade him from attempting the Regular Route of Half Dome as his first-ever wall-climbing experience. We had planned to climb the Bat (A2), but finding two parties waiting for The Vampire and two more parties waiting to start the Bat (all sharing the same initial crack pitch) we changed our plans. We then went to do Human Fright as an aid climb and hauling exercise. While we had lunch and water on a ledge at the top of the first pitch (late start), we heard something falling, some screaming, and chunks of football-sized rock and mountain mahogany limbs falling past us. I was, at that moment, glad to have been wearing my helmet, as I was struck with a golf ball-size rock. By the sudden commotion of people on the ground and parties on the Vampire and Dave's Deviation, there had been a horrendous accident. All nearby climbing parties abandoned their climbs and gravitated toward the injured to try to help out. They were apparently in the dihedral of Angel's Fright.

After a quick discussion with my partner, we decided to see what we could do to assist. He 3rd-classed the ledges and dihedral with a light rack and was then not heard from. The rope leader of a Japanese party below us on Human Fright led through, expressed that he had First Aid training, took my haul rope and was gone. After 20 minutes without rope movement, I tied off my partner. I packed nonessentials in the haul bag, keeping the