

### **Analysis**

Summer showers in the central Rockies come quickly and violently. However, most daily storms occur around the same time as the previous day's storm, so climbers can easily plan their climb timing around this. This party did not even leave the trailhead until 0930. Also, if caught in a storm, even if familiar with the route like Koppe and Wiegand were, it is better just to rappel off. They still had an additional pitch to ascend above the one on which the accident occurred.

Koppe stated that he was comfortable with leading pitches up to 5.9 in difficulty. On wet rock, the difficulty goes up the scale, especially if the rock has any tripe or similar slimy fungi or lichen species on it. (Source: Jim Detterline, Long's Peak Supervisory Climbing Ranger, based on original reports by Rangers Doug Ridley, David McKee and Karl Pearson)

## **FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

### **Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, The Book**

On August 15, 1994, about 1500, Laura Grignon (29) slipped and fell on rock while leading what they believed to be the J Crack III 5.10a on The Book of Lumpy Ridge. She and her partner, Greg Langkamp, were actually several hundred feet to the left and above the J Crack on the Exit Wall area near Fang Ledge. Although they had already determined that they were off route, they continued to climb. Grignon was about ten feet above her last piece when she slipped and fell 20 feet. She sustained a compressed T-12 vertebrae, and was evacuated by technical litter lower by the Rocky Mountain National Park SAR Team.

### **Analysis**

Getting off route is a commonplace occurrence in rock climbing. Climbers schooled in the "connect-the-dots" arenas of the sport climbs are often ill-prepared in dealing with complex, traditional multi-pitch routes. Because any climber should expect at some time or another to be off route, s/he should have and follow a pre-planned procedure instead of just "wandering." On multi-pitch climbs, a guidebook is a good idea for those not used to route finding. It is also good to understand the author's style before attempting to decipher it while hanging in slings. Also, one should pick a particular ability level encountered at which the decision to retreat instead of continue is made. (Source: Jim Detterline, Long's Peak Supervisory Ranger, based on original reports by Rangers S. Scot Bowen and Mitch Fong)

*(Editor's Note: Of the 79 SAR missions in Rocky Mountain National Park in 1994, 20 involved climbers. These include reports of overdue climbers, which often end up as unfounded. They cost time and money, but are not considered to be accidents.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT**

### **Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Red Garden Wall**

On September 10, 1994, a climber (30) was leading on "Blackwalk" (5.10b/c) on Red Garden Wall. He was 30 feet off the ground and five feet above his last and only piece of protection. He slipped and fell, pulling the 2½ inch Friend out. He hit his head on a