

RAPPEL ERROR—ROPES UNEVEN, RAPPEL OFF END OF ROPE, NO HELMET Colorado, Eldorado State Park

Just Another Girl's Climb (5.12) on Lower Peanuts Wall begins on a ledge about fifty feet off the ground requiring a scramble for access. On September 6, a forty-two year old male experienced climber had lowered his partner who unsuccessfully attempted a lead on this route back down to the ledge. The victim then decided to scramble to the top of the route and rappel down. The victim ran his rope through the fixed anchor and successfully rappelled for the first forty to fifty feet until he rappelled off one end of the rope. The victim then fell about twenty to thirty feet down to the ledge where his partner was still positioned. The victim fell to the ledge and continued falling the additional fifty feet to the ground. The victim did not check to see if the ends were even nor did he tie knots in the ends of the rope prior to rappelling. He was not wearing a helmet. The victim suffered multiple abrasions and lacerations over his body as well as severe fractures to his shoulder and left leg. (Source: Steve Muelhauser, Park Manager, and Conrad Bieniulis, Seasonal Park Ranger)

(Editor's Note: Reports from Eldorado Canyon and a few other locations in Colorado were received for 1997 following publication of last year's ANAM. They have been put into the data. Among these incidents, of which there were eight, were two fatalities, one caused as a result of not wearing a helmet, and the other due to an ice climber not being anchored. Five of the incidents involved injuries that could have been prevented by wearing a helmet. One serious injury resulted when a belayer was using a figure of eight for a device in the same manner as it is used for a rappel. The friction was inadequate, and the rope passed through the device, causing the climber to drop to the ground. Another fall was the result of an experienced climber tying in only to the elastic part of his harness. He survived a long fall, but suffered serious head injury and seizures.)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE (NO) BELAY, MISCOMMUNICATION Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Lumpy Ridge

On August 9, Stewart Ritchie (38) fell 60 feet from the top of the route Ziggy's Day Out (I, 5.10b) on Checkerboard Rock at Lumpy Ridge. Ritchie had completed his lead of the route, and clipped a second rope that he had been trailing through the top anchors. Ritchie's plan was to be lowered off the route via this second rope. However, there was miscommunication between Ritchie and his belayer, Steve Britt. Britt did not place Ritchie on belay on the second rope, and Britt had also removed the belay from the lead rope. Subsequently, when Ritchie leaned back to be lowered off the cliff, he fell unbelted from either line. Ritchie's ground fall resulted in fractured leg, abrasions, and possible internal injuries.

Analysis

The members of this team were international level climbers with guiding experience. They had a casual attitude and approach to enjoying this short, fun route. Assumptions about what his partner was doing led Ritchie to this unfortunate result. (Source: Jim Detterline, RMNP Ranger)