

climbers. One death occurred last year at Devil's Lake State Park. A man was jumping back and forth between two bluffs, stumbled, and fell 80 feet to his death.

It was reported that there was a non-climbing death at Gibraltar Rock State Park as well. Gibraltar Rock State Park is currently closed for climbing, but hikers and sight-seers are permitted. Gibraltar Rock offers bluffs with heights over 100 feet. The report was that a person was standing too close to the edge, turned, slipped on dirt, and fell some 100 feet to his death, hitting several trees on the way down.)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

West Virginia, Seneca Rocks, Triple Si

Regrettably I must report my involvement in another climbing accident. I was leading Triple Si, a dihedral climb on August 10. About ten feet from the top, I was having trouble figuring out a crux move and decided to put in a stopper at the crux, even though I had a solid cam about three feet below the crux. The stopper jammed before it was set well. I knew this and tested it with body weight, and then ignored it as I had the cam below. I re-climbed the crux and still didn't see the combination. On down-climbing I fell, and the stopper pulled. My fall was only ten feet, but at nine feet I landed full force with my right foot on a chock stone in the crack. The result was a ruptured Achilles tendon. The injury (and complications) has cost more than \$50,000 and six months to a year of climbing.

Analysis

The lesson: Take time to place good protection and check the fall potential, particularly at cruxes.

One last comment: It certainly pays to climb with a partner trained in rescue and Wilderness First Aid. Carole Simmons lowered me, bandaged my foot, hiked my pack down the mountain, brought up Leki poles, and got me down the trail. Thanks, Carole.

P.S. As owner and President of The Challenge Rock Climbing School based in Atlanta, GA, I use every accident or incident as a learning experience. Our general analysis covers three parts: One, What happened? Two, What was done that led to the accident? And three, What wasn't done that could have prevented the accident? Every year I note and copy for our instructors and climbing partners portions of your Accident Report. Thanks for your good work. (Source: Jerry Dodgen, Professional Member of AMGA, Member of AAC Since 1989)

(Editor's Note: Here is a letter that Jerry sent forward to the leading staff of the school.

CLIMBERS! Accidents happen! We know that, and we try to prevent them. Prevention of accidents in rock climbing is critical because they can result in serious injury, or death. We know that too on an intellectual level. Well, I know it on a painfully personal level. On my accident August 2001, I fell only ten feet but at nine feet my right foot hit a chock stone—with enough force to completely rupture my Achilles tendon.

This accident could have been prevented had I taken three minutes to reset a stopper that was poorly set at the crux. Since I had a bomber

cam three feet below the stopper I didn't consider it much, but when it pulled it allowed me an extra 6 feet of fall. Sitting around for a month with my foot in the air allowed me to realize how often I have let poor placements slide because I didn't think I would fall. It's kind of stupid to place a piece of protection that won't catch you just because you don't think you will fall. By that thinking I might as well free-solo. I learned two things. One, place solid pro, and two, check the potential fall, particularly at a crux. I knew these things intellectually, but the pain, cost, and inconvenience and out of commission time has me really knowing them now.

All accidents are learning opportunities. Read (no Study!) the following excerpts from *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*. They deal with common incidents that we experience almost every time we're on the rock. Note how many times a minor decision or small incident led to grave consequences.

I understand more fully what Kathryn has always said: that anything happening should be considered a "mishap or accident," something to train us. Right down to many scrapes and rock rash on "My First Time Rock Climbing Trips" can indicate something more serious about to happen... Get a low-cost lesson!

Also, on another matter, we have the following from Steve Pack about a report in ANAM 2001, pages 82-83: "One particular error sticks out in the accident description for Seneca Rocks. It lists it as being in VIRGINIA. The last time I checked, unless they moved it, Seneca Rocks is in WEST VIRGINIA, a completely different state since 1863! There is even an editors note... This is a bit of a sore point with me, since I still run into people who are incredulous when I tell them West Virginia is a separate state from Virginia." Apologies, especially to Steve, as he is a West Virginia native.)

OUT OF BOUNDS—LOST, INADEQUATE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT **Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Rock Spring Canyon**

On February 6 at 1330, Cameron Morgan (25), Jonathan Gagne (25), and Katherine Gagne (24) left the Teton Village Ski Area boundaries with the intent to ski out of bounds in Rock Springs Canyon. They were on alpine skis and a snowboard. The avalanche danger was listed as "Considerable." They took a wrong turn and entered Granite Canyon in Grand Teton National Park and headed north, not south. They were unable to retrace their tracks and spent the night at the bottom of the canyon. On the following afternoon, a fourth member of the group reported that his companions had not returned.

Grand Teton National Park rangers were notified by the ski patrol at about 1430. Rangers and a ski patrolman were flown by helicopter to search the Granite Canyon area and located the missing party from the air. They were picked up just before nightfall and flown from the backcountry. Despite the ordeal, all three members of the party were in good condition and were released.

Analysis

Aside from the clothes they were wearing and a Camelback with water, they had no other survival gear, such as food, extra clothing, matches, shovel, probes,