

**FAILURE TO TEST HOLD—HAND-HOLD CAME OFF, FALL ON ROCK****Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton, Petzoldt Ridge**

On July 20, Ben Wessler (20) was leading the pitch above the Window on the Petzoldt Ridge of the Grand Teton. He placed a piece of protection with a long sling about eight feet above the belay ledge. About four feet above the piece, he tested a large rock feature about the size of a basketball. He grabbed the feature with both hands and it pulled loose when he weighted it. He hit the belay ledge with his left foot and butt as the rope came tight. He stopped on the eight-foot wide ledge. His partner, Tim McMahill and three of their companions climbing with them on a separate rope, helped Ben rappel the steep places and lower him down less-steep places. When they reached easier ground, Ben's brother Matt went on ahead to seek help at the Exum hut. The remaining climbers lowered Ben two more rope lengths to the base of the ridge at about 12,000 feet.

Exum guide Bill McKenna reported the injury to Teton Dispatch by cell phone just after 1800. A park contract helicopter piloted by Rick Harmon ferried five rangers to the Lower Saddle. With the help of three guides, the rangers splinted the leg and carried Ben to the heli-spot on the Lower Saddle. He was flown to Lupine Meadows at 2050. Medic I transported him to St. John's Hospital in Jackson. Two pins were placed in his foot to stabilize the fracture.

**Analysis**

This incident involved a large feature that was from all indications part of the mountain before it broke. Testing holds, even big ones, is advisable, especially when unroped. This incident was a good example of good belaying, first aid, self-rescue, and responsibility in the mountains. (Source: Dan Burgette, SAR Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

**HANDHOLD CAME OFF—FALL ON ROCK****Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Symmetry Spire**

On July 28, Laura Plaut (35) was treated and evacuated from near the summit of 10,546-foot Symmetry Spire after she fell about 100 feet, shattering her left elbow and breaking a bone in her left foot. Plaut and her climbing partner sought out a hiker with a cell phone and called rangers for help about 4:30 p.m. Using the Park's contract helicopter, the first of the rescue team was able to make his way to Plaut's side by shortly after 6:15 p.m. and provided initial treatment. At that time, a determination was made to evacuate Plaut from the mountainside with the use of a litter suspended below the helicopter. She was subsequently transported to St. John's Hospital in Jackson by park ambulance.

**Analysis**

Plaut's climbing partner told Park Rangers that they had just completed ascending the Southwest Ridge route of Symmetry Spire and were headed for the summit when the accident occurred. Plaut was scrambling unroped (not an uncommon occurrence on this scramble) near the summit of the spire when she apparently grabbed a loose rock and fell. Her partner said he could see that Plaut had an open fracture of her elbow, a hurt ankle, and a head laceration and