55-meter rope, he attached his remaining ascender to the rope just above his Grigri. He clipped his two remaining etriers in series to the ascender, making a long ladder. He stepped onto the ladder and cut the 55-meter rope between the ascender and the Grigri. (We found a two-foot piece of the 55-meter rope, cut at both ends, with the Grigri attached and what was probably the safety knot still tied. We don't know why he didn't just unclip the Grigri, but we suspect his fingers were too cold by then.)

He then cut the cord connecting his harness to his ascender and began to climb down the ladder, unbelayed. If he had reached the bottom step and hung from his hands he would have faced a drop of only 15 feet. If he had not abandoned the other two etriers, he could have almost stepped onto the ground. But he probably collapsed from hypothermia and fell, and his hammer became entangled in the etriers. He was found suspended by the shoulder sling of the hammer, with no evidence that he had tried to cut himself free.

The lack of adequate storm clothing and a headlamp with useful range were his most serious problems With that gear he probably could have stayed on the wall through the storm or descended with more control. As it was, if he had searched carefully for the anchor-side knot, if he had not jammed his ascender, if he had been able to fashion a prusik, and if he had found and untied the knot, he would have gained 25 feet more of the 55 meter rope, enough to reach his goal. (Sources: Jack Hoeflich and John Dill—Park Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

(Editor's Note: A correction from last year's ANAM, page 31: John Dill is quoted as saying, "...leads Grigri free to 5.10b..." and "...leads Grigri free 5.9, aid A2." It should read, "... leads trad *free..." etc. Gremlins, not John Dill, caused this typo.)*

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Colorado, Ouray, Ouray Ice Park

John Ohlson (61) was leading Pic O' the Vic (WI 4) in the Ouray Ice Park. He led up to a stance at a cave—about 20 feet up, and placed an ice screw. He then continued up the next section, which was nearly vertical. About 20 feet above his screw placement, he came off. He essentially landed at the base of the climb. The rope did not come taut until the very end of his fall, and likely provided minor deceleration at most.

John sustained compression fractures to the T12 vertebra, a broken right thumb, and lacerations to his hands and face. Various others treated him at the scene. At first he thought he could walk out, but concern for the severity of his injuries prompted rescue personnel to raise him from the canyon bottom by winch on a litter with a body splint. He was taken by ambulance to Montrose Memorial Hospital.

Analysis

Ohlson had a long history of alpine climbs with modest technical difficulty, but he was a relatively new water ice climber. He had been training

hard the previous week with this particular objective in mind. He had done a lot of top roped climbs of difficulties similar to this, all without incident or falls. His leads had not previously exceeded WI3+. He felt he was ready for this climb but still ran into difficulty. Clearly, the protection was inadequate, as it failed to keep him from grounding. He may not have been as well prepared as he felt he was. (Source: Steve Firebaugh—The Mountaineers)

A few comments additional comments by John Ohlson

A humbling experience, but I have fully recovered and now lead comparable ice nearly a year later. Time and more experience provide a useful perspective. I was not as well prepared as I thought. I attribute my fall directly to my inexperience with water ice variability, which requires substantial experience to judge reliably. This cannot be overemphasized to novice leaders on water ice, irrespective of their other climbing skills.

My ground-fall became possible by my running out the lead, raising a related issue. I am a conservative rock climber and place pro liberally. However, as others do, when the climbing is easy, I run it out to save time and energy, particularly for alpine climbing where speed is safety. Where I fell was easier than the vertical section I had just readily passed and I felt fully in control. My fall was a complete surprise. Since ice is more deceptive and less reliable than rock, running out a lead, particularly to the second screw, is a dangerous habit that long-time rock climbers must suppress, at the very least until they are experienced with ice quality.

FALL ON ROCK, MISCOMMUNICATION

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Lumpy Ridge, Whiteman

On March 20, there was a very nasty accident up at Lumpy Ridge that happened to a very experienced climber (in his 30's). He fell about 110 feet from the top anchor of the first pitch of Whiteman (11c, Guillotine Wall at Lumpy) due to apparent miscommunication between himself and his belayer on the ground.

He led the first pitch (Whiteman, 11c) successfully and arrived at the anchor (fixed slings, etc.). He thought he was going to be lowered. Meanwhile, the belayer was still on the ground and NOT tied in. He thought the leader was going to bring him up. So when the leader got to the anchors, he took him off belay. The leader leaned back ... and fell in a horizontal position. Upon nearing the ground, his upper body struck a tree, which rotated him into a vertical (feet first) position, which probably saved his life.

He suffered multiple broken bones and internals, but his skull and spine are intact. He's going to be ok in time. What a miracle.

Analysis

It's another one of these cases we've been hearing about lately—someone getting grievously hurt for lack of proper communication or attention to ordinary details.