

departed to climb the mountain. Klopack Jr. soloed (unroped) each day on extended glacier walks. Klopack Jr. flew off the mountain by himself on June 9. He traveled to Anchorage to stay with an acquaintance his father had met on the mountain. (Source: Ranger Roger Robinson)

### **Analysis**

This report, while not complete, is included because of its unusual nature. We have not had a situation quite like this before. The behavior of the Klopacks, especially the father, was, to say the least, inappropriate. There was discussion as to whether to charge Mr. Klopack with violating the Alaska State Code, Chapter 51, which includes a section on "Endangering the welfare of a child in the first degree." Rangers Roger Robinson and Daryl Miller elected for a strong conversation with Mr. Klopack. (Source: Jed Williamson)

## **FALL ON ROCK-RAPPEL TECHNIQUE**

### **Arizona, Windy Point**

On August 31, Joaquin Fox (38) was climbing with several other people in the North Fin area west of Windy Point. He had reached the top of his climb when he fell 80 feet, still connected to his rope according to Pima County Sheriff's Deputy T.J. Price. Fox was unable to stop himself and neither could his belayer, Lori Elliott, the climbing partner who secured his rope. Fox hit the rocks below and tumbled, injuring his back and eye and possibly received other head injuries, Price said.

Crews from the Southern Arizona Rescue Association, the Mount Lemmon Fire District and Rural/Metro Fire Department helped in the rescue. Rescuers hiked to Fox, then hauled him up about 200 feet away from the climbing slope, then carried him a short distance to a saddle where the Department of Public Safety's Ranger helicopter was able to land. Fox was flown to University Medical Center about 3:45 p.m.

### **Analysis**

Cody Tye and Ryan Fitzgerald were climbing nearby when Fox fell. At first, Tye said, it seemed like Fox was doing a fast rappel, but then he shouted "Stop!" The friction of the rope helped to slow Fox, but the fall still appeared potentially devastating, Fitzgerald said. "I actually thought he was going to be dead." Tye called Fox a "real experienced, sharp climber..." (Source: Eric Swedlund, *Tucson Arizona Star*)

*(Editor's Note: This was the only report received from Arizona this year. No other details were available.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK-PROTECTION FAILED, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan**

On May 4, Cam McKenzie (26) and I, Scott Ring (25), started up our fixed lines on the Zodiac route (VI 5.7 A2) on El Capitan. We picked up our haul bags where we'd stashed them at the top of pitch three and continued on, hoping to spend the night at the top of pitch seven. We each had a decade

of climbing experience and had done a few shorter walls, but this was our first El Cap route.

By early evening we'd finished pitch six, and I was starting the seventh. I traversed left and up for a ways on mixed free and aid, then the pitch turned upward to follow the right side of the Black Tower. At the point where it turned, I placed a solid stopper for aid. A couple of moves later, however, I looked down and realized that the direction change might pull out that stopper, upward, if there were tension in the rope. I had great cams in above the stopper so I decided to keep going.

Eventually I was standing on the top of the Tower with a Camalot about two feet below my feet. The next placement was a fixed copperhead just above me. The climbing above the Tower is rated C3RF; this means hard aid on fixed gear, with the potential for a dangerous fall because of ledges below. I'd climbed C3+ before. It was right at my limit, and I didn't like the looks of that head. I stood there for a long time, searching for something else. The topo showed a couple of bolts right there. Even a halfway decent bolt would get me by the head, so I looked all over, but there was none to be found. A crack right next to the fixed head was flaring, totally blown out, and would not accept my cam. Although I thought it might take a sawed off angle, I wanted to do this clean, so I decided to go with the head and try to reach the next piece of fixed gear. First I gave the head a couple of delicate bounces, with one foot balancing on top of the Tower. I didn't see any movement, so I stepped up. I had just reached my second to last step, maybe three feet above the Tower, when the head blew.

I hit the Tower with my feet, bounced off and spun sideways. I was falling on my right side, facing the rock, with my head toward Cam, who was 15–20 feet down and to the right. I remember my helmet taking a few hits along the way. Below me, about even with Cam, was a detached flake. I fell 10–15 feet and scored a direct hit on the flake with my right hip—the wing of the pelvis, where your pants ride. It flipped me upside down because I had a big aid rack on my chest harness.

The rope came tight right away and I only fell another couple of feet. The Camalot at the top of the Tower and the pieces just below it held, but the stopper lower in the corner—the one I'd been concerned about—pulled out. This allowed the rope to take a shorter path, adding maybe three feet of slack to the system. I might have hit more gently, or not at all, if I had taken more care with that placement.

The first thing I recall is my vision going black and white and feeling the shriek of pain in my hip. I knew I was hurt, though I didn't know what the injury was. I wanted to right myself, so I focused on clipping in my chest harness. Cam was repeatedly yelling, "Are you OK?" but at the time I couldn't talk—I just wanted to clip myself in. Then I told her I was OK. I never did lose consciousness, but I felt like I was right at the verge. Finally, Cam lowered me and I cleaned a couple of pieces on the traverse as I swung over to the belay. I was hoping it was something I could shake off. At the

belay ledge I realized that I couldn't put any weight on my right side—it was really tender—and I sat there leaning to the left.

It was close to sunset and I first thought, 'OK, let's just set up the portaledge here and call it a night.' Cam was rearranging everything so that we would have room for the ledge. But then I felt my back. It was swelling really fast, between my spine and my right hip. That scared me. We talked about it and decided to go down.

A descent from the top of pitch six, where we were, was pretty straight forward: We could make one rappel to the top of pitch four on double ropes. From there, our two 60-meter ropes, tied end-to-end, would reach the ground. We'd take our gear with us and leave the ropes in place for friends to retrieve. I felt I could get myself to the base, but there was no way I'd get down a quarter mile of talus boulders by myself. We had our cell phone, so I called a friend who lives in the park and he notified the Park Service.

Cam took the haul bag, the hardware rack, and the portaledge, and went down to pitch four, so I had only myself to manage. I kept a little bit of gear to clip in if I needed it. We had each rigged two descenders to make changeovers easier—at a knot we'd rig one descender below the knot, then de-rig the one above it. I clipped both of mine to my big-wall chest harness and backed that harness up to my seat harness. The chest harness fit really well and kept most of the weight off my hips. My right leg just hanging there was killing me, but I supported it by clipping the loop in the back of my shoe to my harness. This relieved a lot of the pain, and I was able to brace myself with my good leg on the wall.

It was totally dark when I got to pitch four, where Cam was waiting. We tied the two lines together, anchored one end, and tossed them off. The cliff was steep enough there that they hung away from the wall. We knew how to pass knots while hanging on the rope, but I felt like I wanted something solid to stabilize myself in case I needed it. So Cam's main objective as she rappelled was to keep the rope close to the wall. She would look for suitable places to tie it off until we were past the knot joining the ropes. Because of the way the Zodiac angles up and left, we were above the lower pitches of the Shortest Straw route. Cam rappelled from pitch four and found a belay station on Shortest Straw about 30 meters down, where she anchored the line. I joined her there and tied myself off, then she went on down another 30 meters to the joining knot.

The Shortest Straw anchor was a hanging station with a couple of bolts. A solo climber was somewhere in the dark above me, and all his gear was hanging from the bolts. I clipped off short and tried to stand on his haul bag and to position myself with an etrier, but it hurt a lot even to use my good leg so I mostly weighted my chest harness. Then I relaxed as much as I could and looked at the stars a lot. Meanwhile, Cam was swinging around 30 meters below. She found a cluster of gear—not at an anchor, but just fixed along the pitch—and managed to clove-hitch the rope there, right next to the joining knot.

By this time rescuers on the ground were yelling up to Cam. They had good intentions, trying to find out what was going on, but Cam needed to concentrate on what she had to do and she finally had to ask the rescuers to give her a moment

Up at the Shortest Straw anchor, I couldn't hear what they were saying and everything seemed to take forever and in my little bubble I was thinking, "Ow, hurry up!"

Cam had the haul bag on her rappel loop, so it was quite heavy for her when she was off rappel at the fixed gear. On rappel, its weight was on the descender, but passing the knot was still quite a hassle for her. She finally got to the ground and yelled up at me to come down.

With the rope clipped off I was able to rappel right to the fixed pieces, and Cam had left some slings there for me to grab. It was still a bit overhanging. As before, I clipped in an etrier for my good foot and used it to un-weight the rope when I needed to; I hung off my chest harness the rest of the time. But I was swinging around so it was tricky and every little move was another "Ow!"

I set up the descender below the knot, transferred my weight, released the rope from the wall, and swung out a couple of feet. Then I went straight to the ground, or rather, into the arms of the rescue team, who helped me into a litter. From the time of my fall it had taken me three hours to go down three rope-lengths.

They started an IV and morphine immediately and carried me straight down the talus. It was 2:00 a.m. by the time we got to the road. I was flown to Modesto where it took a CAT scan to discover that I'd broken the pubic ramus in my pelvis. The weird thing was that the huge swelling wasn't blood, but lymph, as though I'd ruptured a lymph duct. They released me that day and Cam drove me home in the van, flat on my back, all doped up. I'm 100 percent healed now, several months later, and back on the rock.

### **Analysis**

In hindsight I should have dug out the hammer and tried a piton instead of relying on a head I didn't trust. I also should have trusted my judgment and improved that corner piece that pulled. That may have made the difference in my injury. Being competent on the ropes helped a lot to get us down, but I think our tiny headlamps would have been a problem if we'd had to see farther to spot anchors, so I also carry a longer-range model now. (Source: Scott Ring and John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, NO HARD HAT**

### **California, Yosemite Valley, Lower Cathedral Rock**

On May 21, Chris Hampson (28) and Sibylle Hechtel (52) teamed up to climb Overhang Bypass on Lower Cathedral Rock. The route is approximately six pitches, originally rated 5.6 but considered more difficult since a large block fell from the crux a number of years ago, creating a mandatory 5.8/5.9 mantle. Their plan was to climb the route and top-rope Overhang Overpass, a 5.11 crack accessible from the upper section of Overhang Bypass.