

Cathedral Rock. They were rescued by park personnel, who went to the summit and lowered fifty feet to the climbers, providing them with dry clothing and then hauled them to the summit. They walked down.

Analysis

Simmons is 5.12. sport and 5.10 trad leader. Emily leads 5.11 sport, but had done no trad leads. This was their first long route. It has lots of chimneys but they had never climbed chimneys before this. They had left headlamps behind, had insufficient clothes, only one rope, and made a late start. The top pitch is confusing and they got lost at dark. They tried to find a way out and finally called for help by cell phone. (Source: John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

STRANDED, WEATHER, DARKNESS, INADEQUATE CLOTHING, INEXPERIENCE

California, Yosemite Valley, Royal Arches

On June 16, Deana Barone (25) and Yoshiko Miyazaki (27) started up Royal Arches (5.7 AO, 15 pitches). Though neither had done the route before, they planned to complete it well before dark and then descend by the North Dome Gully.

Route finding proved harder than expected, as did some of the climbing. They completed the last pitch just before dark. As it got dark, the team could not find their way through the last section. Spring run-off made the climbing more difficult than usual and various off route “use trails” led them astray. To make matters worse, a storm front moved in and it began raining just after dark. Stuck just below the valley rim without warmth and rain or bivy gear, they decided to call for help.

Rescuers reached them late that night and escorted them safely down North Dome Gully. (Source: Lincoln Else, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

We had agreed from the beginning that Yoshiko would lead every pitch and that we were not going to take a second rope to rappel, but instead descend the North Dome Gully in the dark, even though neither one of us had done it before. We had only climbed (together) one other time. One party passed us at the bottom of the first pitch and another around the sixth pitch. Storm clouds rolled in, loud winds obstructed our communication and route finding became an issue. We were traversing slowly across wet, slippery, exposed slabs. We lost sunlight at the top of the last pitch and could not figure out how to get ourselves off the final ledge.

Never again will I climb with someone whom I had only been climbing with once before on a long route. I will always bring a second rope so I can rappel if needed. I will never let more than one party pass me along the way. *Always* will I be prepared for a High Sierra storm. This experience

has taught me that there should always be two leaders—never one leader and one follower. It has encouraged me to learn how to lead climbs and start getting my act together. (Source: Deana Barone)

Royal Arches has been climbed round trip in under an hour, but epics and rescues are common on this “easy” route. Why? Like many other “moderate” trad climbs, the route is frequently underestimated. While the technical climbing is relatively straight forward, the climb as a whole is far more challenging than its rating might indicate. The route finding is difficult, the level of commitment is high, and for many teams the descent is a larger challenge than the route itself. (Source: Lincoln Else, NPS Ranger)

FALL ON ROCK

California, Yosemite Valley, Lembert Dome

On July 5, John Hrizo (36) was injured in a lead fall of about thirty feet on the second pitch of Northwest Books on Lembert Dome (5.6, 3 pitches).

According to Hrizo, he did all the leading, followed by his partner, Stacy Waksmonski (29). After they climbed the first pitch, Hrizo climbed to an intermediate belay midway through the second pitch where he rigged a belay. Because Waksmonski was a relatively inexperienced climber, Hrizo wanted to break the pitch into smaller pieces for her.

After belaying Waksmonski up, Hrizo began to lead the second half of the pitch. He had with him a copy of the *Supertopo Guide to Tuolumne Meadows*, and from it he concluded that the right-curving crack above and to the left of the belay was 5.9, harder climbing than he intended to do. Hrizo placed a #3.5 Camalot just above the belay and began to climb the face to the right of the crack.

Initially, the face climbing was easy, around 5.6. But as he climbed higher, he began to suspect that he was off route. Ten feet above the Camalot, he decided he was definitely off route and that the crack to the left was where he wanted to be. He stopped and assessed his options.

Hrizo thought about down-climbing, but didn't want to down-climb on slab. “The slab seemed to keep the same angle, then flatten out some and meet the crack,” said Hrizo. He decided to press on to the crack. Although the slab didn't get steeper as he continued up, “it got pebbly” in texture, with small loose rocks that made foot placements uncertain.

About fifteen feet above the Camalot, Hrizo began concentrating on foot placements, but his climbing shoes kept picking up pebbles that made his feet slip. “I cleaned off my shoe and replaced it several times,” he said, but could not get a secure foothold. He started to down-climb and traverse left to meet the crack when his feet suddenly slipped.