

rope to clip so let out slack instead. Also, be wary when using a 9.4 mm rope in a Grigri. Due to the extra slack and force generated from that, the 9.4mm rope just shot through the belay device and was not able to be arrested. (Source: Edited from various reports sent in by Al Hospers)

INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING, INEXPERIENCE, DARKNESS, EXPOSURE

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Damnation Gully

On a Tuesday morning in January, two ice climbers from Connecticut, Damian McDonald and Susanna Saarkangas (ages unknown), were rescued from the Alpine Garden above Damnation Gully on Mount Washington. They spent a night out in subzero temperatures and high winds. According to their own comments, they spent the night at the Harvard Cabin on Sunday night. They left the cabin at around 11 a.m. Monday to climb Damnation Gully.

According to the caretaker at the cabin, they were moving extremely slowly when he saw them on the second pitch of the gully at around 4 p.m. As they got to the top, the conditions had deteriorated significantly and it was dark. They did not descend the gully because the second had never rappelled before. Unable to traverse to the Escape Hatch, they huddled by a cairn near the Nelson Crag, eventually building a small snow cave and stomping around to keep warm.

The caretaker notified the authorities that they had not returned. The snow rangers got notification at about 10 p.m. Conditions at this time were -6 F with 70 mph wind gusts. A team of approximately 20 searchers went out at 6 a.m., some up Lions Head, some into Huntington, and some on the Auto Road. At this time temps were -17 F and wind gusts were 80 mph with fog and blowing snow. About 9 a.m., the climbers were spotted above Central Gully and were found by members of the MRS and AVSAR. They were led to the Auto Road where a snowcat took them to a waiting ambulance and the hospital in Berlin where they were treated for hypothermia and frostbite. They were expected to recover fully.

Analysis

The leader had done the climb before, but this was to be his partner's first climb. They were unprepared to spend a night out and, according to one report, had neglected to check the weather prediction for the day. (Edited from *The White Mountain Report*, January 27, 2005)

FALLING OBJECT—DEAD TREE (DISLODGED BY OTHER CLIMBERS)

New Hampshire, Whitehorse Ledge

On an early Sunday morning in August, I went out with two teenage clients with a plan to climb Standard Route to the Lunch Ledge via the Toilet Bowl

and Crystal Pocket. We arrived at the Launching Pad around 8:30 a.m. There was a party already on the second pitch of Wavelength. I finished setting up the starting belay when another party consisting of two women came up. Their plan was to do the same route as us, but they decided to do the easy traverse 70 feet right to the Slabs Direct second anchor. Somewhere around this time I happened to notice that the upper group was on the Wavelength/Sliding Board dike.

Our two groups continued up parallel tracks until we were at the Crystal Pocket and they were at the second Slabs Direct anchor. My kids were climbing great and having a good time for their first time on a multi-pitch climb. In addition, it looked as if the potentially inclement weather wasn't going to be a problem. There was a lot of banter back and forth between our two groups and the other leader took some pictures of us.

The leader of the female party climbed up the crux steep slab, off their belay, clipped into a fixed piece, and padded up another 20 feet on the moderate slab. I was just getting ready to lead my next pitch when I heard a scraping noise from above and looked up in time to see what appeared to be a huge rotten-looking tree slide over the upper headwall just left of the Standard Route belay tree. I pushed my young clients into the belay and covered them with my body while repeatedly calling, "Rock," as loud as I could. Glancing right, I saw the female leader take a few steps to the left and her belayer huddle at the belay. The tree trunk broke into two sections as it went over the headwall and instantly fell very rapidly. I watched as it missed the leader but struck her belayer in the head! She was shock-loaded against the belay and lay there not moving.

I quickly called to the leader and determined that she was untouched and stable where she was. Calling to the belayer I received no answer. I then heard shouts from the ground, somewhere over near Sea Of Holes. They asked if everyone was OK. I told them NO, someone was injured and to call 911 and the Mountain Rescue Service. One of them took off running. While this was taking place, the leader repeatedly called down to her belayer, who was not moving or responding. At this time I truly feared the worst.

Amazingly, all this time my young charges did not panic or become emotional. I spoke calmly to the leader making sure she could stay where she was as at this time I believed that she was almost assuredly not on belay. She responded that she was fine and that she could possibly down-climb the 20 feet to the fixed protection. I asked her to stay put for a while longer. I decided that I could use one of my 60-meter ropes and tension-rappel to the injured belayer who was 50 feet below me and 40 feet to my right. I began to set up the belay and arranged for one of my young clients to simultaneously belay me on the other rope. Around this time, the person who had

gone for help returned and started up Slabs Direct.

After repeated calls to the second, she finally responded weakly. I asked her if she could tie off her leader. She made a response I could not understand, but from what I could see, she did it. The leader then down-climbed to the bolt and clipped herself in. I kept looking up to see if anything else was coming down from the top of the cliff and thankfully at no time did any more debris appear. Just before I left my belay, I explained to my kids exactly what I was going to do and repeatedly told them both not to touch anything. Had they become emotional, I'm not sure I would have been able to do what I felt I had to do.

I carefully rappled down and tensioned over, reaching the injured belayer's position and clipping into her belay. I immediately noticed several things. There was reddish rotten bark all over the place, blood was on the rock near the belay and some of the gear, and a locking 'biner on the far-rightmost bolt was broken almost in half!

I spoke with her and was very happy to find that she was oriented and responsive. In the accident she had lost her glasses and was unable to see anything without them, which was disorienting to her. Stabilizing her head, I carefully checked her neck, spine, and extremities. Thankfully she had feeling in all areas. There was rotten bark on the back left side of her helmet where the tree trunk had struck her. She had a significant cut behind her left ear, numerous scratches and small cuts, and an extremely bruised but unbroken right thumb. For the first time since the accident started, I actually had a feeling that all of this was going to be OK.

I took the leader off the original belay and put her on my device. I then asked her to set herself up for a lower. I figured that would be easier for her than trying to untie and do a rappel. She did it and I lowered her to the anchor and clipped her in. Finally I knew that we were all reasonably safe. Around this time I realized that the weather was not going to hold. Clouds were building up in the Valley and every once in a while I could feel a sprinkle. As we were 200 feet up on a slab route with minimal available protection, it would not have been easy for other rescuers to get to us without hiking to the top of the cliff and rappelling 600 plus feet. I felt that, if at all possible, I needed to get the injured woman to the ground before things deteriorated. Of course, through all this, I was talking to my young clients, who were doing fine.

By now the climbers who had called for assistance, Rob and Mike, were heading up to the first belay on Slabs Direct and the Fire Department rescue people were on the scene. I explained that I wanted to lower both women to the Toilet Bowl anchor 150 feet down and 40 feet to the climbers-left of us. I spidered the injured woman to her partner and set them up to be lowered.

I put a second 'biner in the belay system to slow things down and hooked up an autoblock for security. Before I started the lower, I made myself slow down and make certain that absolutely everything was being done properly. I could feel my heart beating fast and my mind was working overtime. Rob brought Mike up to his belay on the pitch below us and immediately headed over to the Toilet Bowl just as I started lowering. They arrived at roughly the same time and all clipped into the two-bolt anchor. Of course by now it had started to rain! Why was I not surprised?

Somewhere around this time Joe K, a member of the Mountain Rescue Service team, had arrived at Lunch Ledge. That made me feel better. Once I was confident the lowered party were safely hooked in, I disconnected their ropes from my belay and dropped them. Rob and the female leader set up the second lower and began the process. Joe collected them at the Lunch Ledge and lowered them into the hands of the waiting EMT team where the injured party was whisked off to Memorial Hospital.

Now it was really pouring down rain. Fortunately it was warm rain and there was no thunder and lightning. I cleaned up the belay, made sure that my kids had me on belay again, and lowered myself off my belay. I quickly bat-manned and self-belayed back up to the kids where I immediately slowed things back down. I pulled my rappel rope and reset for a rappel. Putting the kids on a spider on me, I carefully rappelled first to the Toilet Bowl and then the Launching Pad then continued down to the ground. WHEW, we were all happy to be there.

We headed back to the parking lot, pausing to let Rob and Mike know how much their help had been appreciated. Another MRS member mentioned that they spoke to the party who had been on Wavelength and they admitted that they had accidentally dislodged the tree. I would really like to talk with them if at all possible so I can understand where they were and what took place. There is no blame here, just a search for knowledge!

Later that afternoon my son Daz and I stopped by the hospital so see how things were going. I was very happy to find that the injured party was doing very well and would have no lasting problems. She assured me that it was only going to be a short time before she was back on the rock. We were all very fortunate that, in spite of the injury, things worked out as well as they did. It was lucky that the leader was not knocked off the climb, the belayer was not seriously injured, the tree was rotten and not solid, the weather wasn't all that good so there weren't any other people on the cliff, my young charges and I were not in the path of the tree, Rob and Mike were nearby and able to help out, the EMT's and MRS got there very quickly, and there wasn't a thunderstorm. (Source: Al Hospers and a few details edited from the White Mountain Report)

(Editor's Note: This lengthy narrative is included because it provides some good lessons in how to manage a situation that could easily have taken a turn for the worse. Helmets off to the guide, those who aided in the rescue, the climbers directly involved, and the clients!)

WEATHER—WIND, FALL ON SNOW/ICE

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Odell Gully

On December 4, a climber was traversing into the center of Odell Gully with his two partners. They were about a third of the way across the neck of the gully when a gust blew the lead climber off his feet and spun him, causing him to strike his face on the ice. He slid 400 feet down-slope on windslab and boilerplate and did not self-arrest because of being in a state of shock from the blow he experienced. He slid into rocks and stopped. His partners down-climbed to him, tied him in, and lowered him to more moderate terrain. One of his partners then went to call for help from Harvard cabin.

Analysis

The climbers were unroped but were planning on roping up when they reached technical terrain. The avalanche conditions were posted as “considerable” at the time. None of the party members had avalanche training nor were they equipped with beacons or the like. No party members were wearing helmets. They had not climbed together before. The leader/patient has 12 years ice climbing experience in Quebec, mostly on steep ice, but lots of time on Mount Washington and similar alpine climbs. The other climbers were similarly experienced.

The patient had no brain trauma and only sprains of both ankles (mild). His nose was broken with underlying ethmoid bone fractures that sent thin bone chips into both frontal sinuses. He had a displaced, open fracture of his L radius with associated comminuted (aka pulverized) fracture of his L elbow (olecronon) and an elbow dislocation. He had a fractured R elbow without dislocation and finally a rare anterior left shoulder dislocation. He spent until 4:00 a.m. in the operating room having these pinned, aligned, etc. He was released the next afternoon. This was only possible due to the fact that he luckily had no visceral injuries and no cardiopulmonary trauma. (Source: Brian Irwin)

FALLING ROCK—BLOCK PULLED OFF

New Mexico, Sandia Mountain Wilderness, Hail Peak

After breakfast and coffee, Sinjin Eberle and I set out to have a nice day for a multi-pitch 5.8 climb of Hail Peak on May 9, Mother's Day. The weather was warm and stable with a storm possibly moving in later that evening. The Sandias typically keep many climbers away because of the long ap-