

What are the lessons from this? If your first thought late afternoon is to sit by the river and have a beer, you should follow that instinct, but IF you do get injured, do it in a place where a ton of handsome rescuers come out of the woods to rescue a damsel in distress!

In addition to paying attention to instinct, I do think there are some valuable points to learn from in regards to when I actually did the climb...

...I do not really feel that the rope was stuck. It was more like I was guiding and redirecting the rope.

If I had five seconds to turn back, I would pay attention to all those things that came up just before starting the climb. The climbers I was with had done everything correctly. What I noted were some simple things that I could have changed at the bottom before starting the climb. The rope was not quite back-clipped at the right angle, the rope was slack and maybe I should yell "Up rope!" or ask for a spot. Nah, no big deal, I'll just head up quickly, I thought. Well, I really should have listened to that gut feeling. Sure, it still could have happened, but it's a good lesson in paying attention to your intuition.

(This route) is known for its awkward first funky move right off the deck, a lie-back. I started the climb in the lie-back position and made a move, then, to get the rope around the flake, leaned forward and took a hand off to redirect the rope. The hand off and forward shift caused my left foot to slip and come off.

*(Editor's Note: Thanks to Ms. Sieblank for her perspective on the incident.)*

## **FALLING ROCKS—DISLODGED BY CLIMBERS, PARTY SEPARATED, POOR POSITION**

### **California, Mount Shasta, Avalanche Gulch**

Two separate parties (totaling four people) were climbing Avalanche Gulch in the poor September conditions (loose rocks, lack of snow). Unfamiliar with the route, they veered off route at 13,000 feet and crossed the open Konwakiton Glacier. Untrained in glacier travel, they were uncomfortable with this route and decided to descend via another route. They chose the West Face, which had even less snow on it than Avalanche Gulch. While descending, one member left, choosing yet another route. The other three continued down the West Face. At 10,200 feet on a 35-degree slope, they left the snow patch, moving to loose rock. They observed both natural and human triggered rock fall and decided to move back to the snow. During that time (1645), they triggered the release of a boulder and other rocks, knocking down two of the climbers and directly hitting the third. All three tumbled 100 feet vertically and 250 feet horizontally. The climber directly hit (30-year-old female) was found by her climbing partners moaning and with difficult breathing. The other climbers had only minor injuries. They

called 911 at 1800. The injured climber was assisted by her partners to low angle terrain at 9,200 feet. Two CHP helicopters began to search at 1845. Due to lack of snow, the climbers blended in well with the rocks and were not spotted until 1925. They were evacuated at 1940 hours. They were all flown to Mercy Medical Center. They declined treatment. The injured climber was treated for broken ribs, bruising, and hematoma damage to the chest and shoulder.

### **Analysis**

Mount Shasta consists of 120 cubic miles of loose rock! Even the bedrock outcrops are not to be trusted. Therefore, the best time to climb is when the mountain is predominantly covered with snow and the avalanche danger is low. This usually occurs in the late spring to mid summer. Loose rocks and boulders along with natural rockfall occur every year by mid summer into the fall.

Additionally, group separation is not recommended. The fourth climber descended alone and was not able to help his friends. Keep your group together. You may need their help or they may need you! (Source: Mount Shasta Wilderness Climbing Ranger Report prepared by Eric White, Climbing Ranger/Avalanche Specialist)

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

### **California, Yosemite National Park, Cathedral Peak**

Cathedral Peak South East Buttress is a popular six-pitch moderate alpine climb, with many variations, about 3.5 miles from the road, at around the 10,500-foot elevation. This incident involved a party of three climbers, Dave Lubertozzi (42), Sumi Nadarajah (30), and Mike Ray (40), who started climbing the “middle” variation and moved over to the right. By around 3:15 p.m. on September 30, they were climbing the third pitch, about 300 feet from the base of the climb. The leader, Dave, fell ten feet above his last piece while trying to make the next placement. He was at the “5.6 fingers over bulge” marked just below the third belay station for route C in the SuperTopo. After falling vertically with his left foot tangled in the rope, he was yanked hard by the ankle. The piece of protection pulled out and he tumbled onto a sloping ledge, where he lay disoriented for about 30 seconds. He began to move and told the other climbers he was “basically OK except for the ankle”, which he thought was broken. Another climbing party also on the route saw the fall, but didn’t inquire as to whether they needed help, and climbed on, but then the injured climber and his party didn’t ask them for help either. Sumi tried to call friends back at camp from her Verizon cellphone, but only got voice mail; they decided not to call YOSAR, thinking it was early and they could still get out on their own.