

did not recognize the need for such equipment when they ventured out onto the cliff band.

The climbers got off to a late (8:00 a.m.) departure on a day when the weather forecast called for thundershowers. The early development of thundershowers made the climb unwise, as the majority of the route crosses exposed ridges and faces. B.B did not mention that weather concerns factored into their decisions.

Finally, their decision making process was simply to react to obstacles by changing directions. They had several opportunities to retreat but did not consider this option until they were in serious trouble. (Source: Edited from a report by Wes Collins, Butte County Sheriff, Tom Lopez, and Perineum Life Flight RN Lance Taysom)

FALL ON ROCK, NO HELMET

Maine, Acadia National Park, Gunklandia

On October 8th around 11:30 a.m., my girlfriend, a group of friends, and I were top-roping Old Town and a few adjacent routes at the Precipice. Two young women were climbing the nearby route Gunklandia. For reasons unknown, the experienced lead climber, L.B. (21), lowered off after climbing through the crux and switched ends with her partner S.B. (21), a beginner. Minutes later I looked up to see S.B. falling. Her feet hit a small ledge and sent her over backwards, and as the rope came tight, she hit the back of her head on the wall. The fall was estimated to be 30 feet. After righting herself, she felt the back of her head, which was covered in blood. Her partner lowered her. My girlfriend called 911 on her cell phone and I came over to assist. S.B. had a deep gouge on the back of her head that was bleeding profusely. Using a t-shirt and athletic tape, we bandaged her head, and after L.B. (EMT) looked for spinal injury, we assisted her in walking her down the trail to meet the park rangers.

After the rangers took over her care, I went up Old Town and rapped down Gunklandia to retrieve their gear. Her last piece, a #4 BD stopper, was clipped to the rope with a long sling. There were three other pieces of gear, all stoppers clipped to the rope. No gear failed and all the placements looked secure. It is not known if S.B. placed any of the gear, since they had switched rope ends. The area she fell from was past the difficulties, and she reported "just slipping". There were ample places for protection in the area she fell.

Analysis

It is fairly certain a helmet in this fall could have significantly reduced the seriousness of the injury. One can speculate about inexperience, inadequate protection, climbing above one's limit, etc. What one can not speculate on is whether a helmet would have reduced this injury. Of the dozen or so

climbers in the area that day, only a minority wore helmets. This occurred three days after an earthquake had released tons of rock in this area. (Source: David Lottmann, EMS Climbing Guide)

RAPPEL ERROR—INCORRECT SET UP AT ANCHOR, HASTE, FAILURE TO CHECK SYSTEM, DEVIATION FROM ROUTINE, DISTRACTION
North Carolina, Table Rock Mountain, The North Ridge

Around 2:30 p.m. on May 27th, Donald Gallo (39), Somsanouck Gallo (40), along with a friend, M. E., set out to climb The North Ridge, a 5.5 trad route on Table Rock. The three had arrived the night before and this was the first route of the holiday weekend. The area was busy, since much of the mountain was closed to climbing during the falcons' nesting season. A second group, with two adults, P.M., E.W., and three children, had earlier set up a top-rope, anchored at the end of The North Ridge's first pitch, about 130 feet into the climb. A third group arrived, C.T. & K.T., and after speaking to M.E., they decided to climb a nearby route, White Lightning. This third group reported a sense of frustration about how long the second group had been top-roping this trad route.

The decision was made that Donnie, Som, and M.E. could safely lead The North Ridge, while the top-roping continued. Donnie led the first pitch. He then belayed Som up to the ledge. Before M. E. cleaned the route, a man from the second group, P. M., climbed to the anchors on his top-rope. M.E. then cleaned the route. There were now four people on the ledge.

It was somewhat cooler and windy on the ledge compared to the base. Som was cold and wanted to get down to get her jacket and warm up. The fixed anchors on the ledge consisted of three pitons with static line, equalized to a master point. Concern was raised as to the safety of rappelling down on just these points. P.M. offered to let Donnie, Som, and M. E. rappel off of his top-rope anchor, which was already set up. Everyone agreed. Donnie backed up the three pitons with a cam. While Donnie and P.M. were setting up the rappel off of the pitons, Som and M.E., along with P.M. whose anchor it was, were preparing the rappel from the top-rope anchor. While all of this was happening, the leader from the third group, K.T., had arrived at the ledge and was bringing up his second, C.T. Several people on the ledge mentioned later that there was a lot of talking, "chatting about whatever." It was very distracting, but no one said anything about it at the time.

What exactly happened next is in dispute. We know that the two ropes were tied together in order to make the long rappel to the ground. Either M.E. handed the ropes, already tied, to P.M. who placed them in the carabiners, or P.M. passed one rope through the carabiners to M.E. who removed the rope from the carabiner, tied them together, and then placed them in the carabiners. Either way, the ropes were placed into the carabiners. Don-