

the man and flew him to a waiting ambulance at the Coal Pits heli-spot. He was then taken to Dixie Regional Medical Center, where he was diagnosed with C-1, T-1, and T-5 fractures along with a lacerated spleen. About 25 park personnel were involved in the rescue. (Source: From a report by Therese Picard on the NPS Morning Report, May 14, 2009)

### **Analysis**

This is one of several incidents like this during 2009—and for the last several years. It is hard to understand why so many climbers do not have the proper length rope for these situations.

There are those who believe that the Grigri is designed in such a way that it will lock off under these conditions. But obviously that is not so. It is likely that rather than using friction by a good angle with the brake hand, the belayer was using the “clutch” to regulate the speed. This is a common error with the Grigri. (Source: Jed Williamson)

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT**

### **Utah, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Mr. Sandman**

A rock climber suffered serious injuries when he fell in Big Cottonwood Canyon on August 4. The 29-year-old man was backing off a route called Mr. Sandman in the Stairs Gulch area, located off Big Cottonwood Canyon Road, when an anchor came out. He fell about 30 feet and landed feet-first on a rock outcropping, apparently breaking both ankles.

Search and rescue crews navigated the very steep, rocky terrain to reach the man, and brought him to an ambulance about two hours after arriving. He was taken to Intermountain Medical Center in Murray. (Source: *The Salt Lake Tribune*, August 5, 2009, and a posting on Mountain Project)

## **FALLING ICE — GAVE WAY, FALL ON ICE, CLIMBING UNROPED**

### **Utah, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Great White Icicle**

On December 31, Gene Rawson (37), a solo ice climber, was near the top of the final pitch of the Great White Icicle. Rawson was waiting for another climber to complete the pitch. Rawson felt he had a firm hold in the ice with his ax. As he was waiting, one of his legs broke through the ice. He shifted weight onto his other foot to pull his leg out when the entire ice section gave way and he fell approximately 300 feet. He reported positive loss of consciousness for unknown length of time and severe left hip pain.

Other climbers in the area witnessed the fall and assisted with the rescue. The Salt Lake County Fire Department paramedics responded with medics from the Little Cottonwood Canyon Fire Station. A backboard was hauled up using a rope system through an anchor set up by the climbers responding to the accident.

Life Flight team assessment: Salt Lake County Sheriff Department

notified Life Flight of need for hoist rescue. The team surveyed the scene to determine if hoist rescue could be safely performed. Avalanche risk was deemed minimal due to the lack of snow accumulation on the steep slope: all ice and rock. The victim was located below the anchored belay station at the base of the third pitch. Just out of the drainage upslope and to the east of the Rawson was a moderately-sized flat platform with snow, but no ice in which the hoist paramedic could be safely lowered and prepare the victim for evacuation. Life Flight had communication with EMS on scene and indirectly with the climber responders. The climbers hauled the patient on the backboard up to the flat platform. The medic was inserted via hoist to this location, followed by a vacuum mattress rescue bag to maintain spinal precautions and provide protection from the below freezing temperatures. After the patient was prepared for evacuation (ten minutes), the helicopter returned for hoist evacuation. Mr. Rawson was transported via helicopter to local hospital where he required surgery for a femur fracture. (Source: Carol Rhoades, Flight Nurse, Intermountain Healthcare Life Flight)

### **Analysis**

In an interview with *The Salt Lake Tribune* on January 8, Gene Rawson said trying to climb solo was a mistake. "If I was roped up and had gear in the ice, the chances of anything severe happening would be minimal," he said. "When you go solo, it is taking the sport to the very extreme. It's not a smart thing to do at all, but it is a decision that people make at this level. That is a lesson learned from a lot of people, but being able to live through this, with a 300-foot fall, is huge. Normally, you never hear that someone would live."

The climber, who works for a company in Butte called The Peak that trains Special Forces and other military personnel on rock and ice climbing and mountaineering, praised the work of the Life Flight paramedics who came to his rescue. "It was a great experience to be rescued by these guys," said Rawson. "If it wasn't for them, this would not have gone well. My hats are off to them for everything going as smoothly as it did."

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

### **Washington, Columbia Hill State Park, Horsethief Butte**

On Sunday April 5, Tony Silva (30), a Gresham Oregon Police Detective, his sister-in-law Laura (26), and her husband, Bobby Silva, along with three young children, planned to set a top rope at Horsethief Butte, a sport climbing area popular with beginning to intermediate climbers from nearby Portland, Oregon, and towns in Washington on the Columbia River.

Horsethief Butte is characterized by many user traces and scrambles climbing up 25 to 50 feet to large, flat, weathered basalt overlooks. The Park