

**FALL ON ICE, PROTECTION PULLED OUT****New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Pinnacle Gully**

On March 20, a group of three climbers fell while simul-climbing upper pitches of Pinnacle Gully. It was a very busy Saturday in Huntington Ravine. Temperatures Friday were warm and sunny, and then overnight they stayed above the freezing mark. Saturday was also warm and sunny, so there was a significant amount of water running over the snow and ice in the gully. One party of two had climbed the first pitch and was preparing to rappel off due to the excessive water. Another party, including a local guide (KM) and his two clients had also climbed the first pitch, but rather than contend with the water, the guide climbed out of the gully on the rock to the right. As this was going on, the party of three was simul-climbing from the top of the first pitch (they had used traditional belays for the first pitch). DH was leading, TV was in the middle of the 60-meter rope, and GT was tied into the bottom end.

Between the top of the first pitch and the top of the climb, DH had seven pieces of protection: one fixed piton, four ice screws, a V-thread left by another party, and an ice ax deeply sunk and tied off. Just as DH was about to exit the gully, he felt the slack in the rope tighten up. After waiting a moment and not getting more slack to move upward, he stepped down a bit into a good stance to give slack to the climbers below him. At this time, TV had ascended to the second ice screw; GT had passed and unclipped the piton and V-thread but had not yet arrived at the first screw. As she was at the second screw and after unclipping it, TV began to have problems with her crampon falling off. After a couple minutes without much progress, GT began to climb up to assist her. This created a lot of slack between the bottom two climbers. TV eventually fell, pulling DH out of his stance near the top of the gully. He said that it happened very quickly, so he didn't really know what was happening. The ice tool and two screws above TV were ripped out of the ice and the two climbers began falling simultaneously down the gully. The fall was stopped by a single 10-cm ice screw that was between GT and TV. Had this screw pulled out as well, it is likely that all three climbers would have fallen over the first pitch and possibly brought down other climbers with them.

According to the two clients of KM, DH fell down the left side of the gully and near the bottom hit the rocks, bouncing him across to the other side and missing them by only a few feet. The two came to rest near the top of the first pitch, having fallen approximately 300 feet (DH) and 100 feet (TV). Neither climber was seriously injured. KM quickly responded, assisting the entire group down off of the climb and stayed with them until out of the steep terrain in Huntington Ravine. Snow Rangers learned of the incident from the HMC caretaker who had heard about it from some-

one else. The climbers were encountered descending the trail to Pinkham Notch. They were bruised and slightly bloody otherwise uninjured and they walked themselves to the bottom.

### **Analysis**

She commented afterward that she didn't really know what to do and probably should have clipped directly into the screw or even re-clipped the rope. (Source: [www.mountwashingtonavalanchecenter.com](http://www.mountwashingtonavalanchecenter.com))

## **FALL ON ROCK**

### **New York, Adirondacks, Upper Washbowl Cliff**

On August 16, Dennis Murphy (35) had reached the top of a climbing route on Upper Washbowl Cliffs in Keene Valley at about 6:10 p.m. when he lost his footing and fell more than 100 feet. New York State forest rangers and Keene Fire Department Wilderness Rescue personnel found Murphy near the bottom of the rock face.

Department of Environmental Conservation spokesman David Winchell said Murphy climbed up either Hesitation or Weissner. "Dennis, from what I understand, was a very good climber," Winchell said. Murphy and a companion had planned to rappel down Partition, a descent with a fixed anchor for the ropes. "There was an obstacle that he was walking around while his partner was tying off. Dennis came around this obstacle and slipped and fell." (Source: Edited from a report by Kim Smith Dedham and Michelle Besaw, *Keene-Valley News*)

*(Editor's Note: Perhaps failing to be anchored in contributed to this fall. It is all too common to untie once at the top while preparing anchors to rappel or belay.)*

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

### **New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks**

On the morning of October 17, I (Lisa Wang, 23) was leading the route Frogs Head. It was my second day of leading at the 'Gunks.

At the bulge above the first crux, I first placed one small Metolius 1 and slung it with a long quickdraw. Next, I placed a gold nut about three to four feet up and put that on another quickdraw; however, I didn't like this placement very much and so placed a red nut about a foot immediately above the previous nut. This red nut was slotted into a v-shaped crevice, again slung with a quickdraw. At this point, I am approximately 40 feet up, possibly a little higher. When I was preparing to go up for the next set of holds, I smeared with my right foot because I couldn't reach the next horizontal crack otherwise; however, my left hand came off the rock and I fell off the bulge. Both nuts pulled, one by one, and then force of the fall also pulled the Metolius 1 cam. My partner told me he felt each piece hold for a second and then pop. He also felt the brown Tri-cam catch and take up