

cording to Dill, the victims showed no signs of hypothermia. They were rational, conversant, and able to perform normal manual functions. The pair began jumaring, each on one rescue rope with a safety line to the other rope. At 1:30 p.m. they reached the summit. Dill followed on Jumars while summit personnel pulled the victims' haul bag to the top. By 2:10 p.m. all personnel had been transported by helicopter to the Ahwahnee Meadow. (Source: Tim Setnicka)

Analysis

Both climbers were experienced 5.10 plus climbers as well as having done a number of walls in Yosemite such as the Salathe Wall and North American Wall. The two took pride in not carrying any pitons or hammers because "we don't believe in them."

All went fine until a small period of rain and snow caused the two to bivouac 250 feet from the top of the climb. During the storm they were unable to climb the remaining four pitches to the top which included two A1 pitches, one A3 and one A1 5.6 pitch. The storm had left one to two inches of snow on the ledges. The two felt they could not climb up and did not try because of the snow cover. They felt that they could not retreat because they couldn't reverse the pendulum on the tenth pitch. So they yelled for help after the storm had ended.

Both climbers had no raingear, no gloves, no hammers, bolts, or pitons. They decided against trying to climb up or down. When asked why they didn't have a piton rack, they replied they didn't like to use pitons because they damage the rock. The two also stated that they didn't believe in using bolts or in carrying them, but it is to be noted that they had climbed on at least 15 existing bolts on various pitches in order to reach the position from which they were rescued.

In general, climbing Yosemite's big walls at this time of year can necessitate the use of hammer and pitons, as well as foul weather clothing. Additionally, this particular route could have been rappelled, thus avoiding an unnecessary rescue. A further point to note is that one of the climbers identified himself as a climbing instructor for Sonoma State College, which raises the question of whether he is also able to teach students how to extricate themselves from dangerous climbing situations which, like this one, can inevitably arise. (Source: Tim Setnicka, Yosemite National Park)

RAPPEL FAILURE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

California, Yosemite Valley

Paul Whippo (27) and Doug Meerdink (26) were descending from the top of Crack Center Route (YDS II, 5.6 or 5.7) at 6 p.m. on October 2. They had been unable to find an existing rappel anchor at the top of the climb. (It is necessary to downclimb a fourth class corner about 120 feet to reach the nearest rappel anchor.) Not wanting to leave behind their own gear at the top as an anchor, they downclimbed the route about 40 feet to a fixed (already placed) wired bashee and threaded the rappel rope through the eye loop of the wire.

While Whippo stood unroped on a large foothold, Meerdink began rappell-

ing. The wire broke and Meerdinkt slid and bounced about 450 feet to the ground, sustaining fractures and lacerations. Whippo then anchored himself as best he could and began shouting for help. His anchor was a #2 stopper and a #3 stopper individually connected. (This anchor would be considered inadequate by experienced climbers.)

A camper in nearby Upper Pines campground heard the shouts and phoned Park Dispatch at 6:15 p.m. Responding Ranger Andress arrived at the scene at 6:35 p.m., followed by Rangers Rohrback and Patterson. Rescue teams and gear were organized for a night rock rescue of Whippo and the stabilization/scree evacuation of Meerdinkt. Whippo later stated that he had noticed that the wire contained broken strands, but he had previously talked to some other climbers who said that they had successfully rappelled from that point. Whippo also stated that he and Meerdinkt had both read the article (*Off Belay*, August 1978) about the three climbers who had died in a fall from El Capitan because they had anchored to a single point with no back up. (Source: C. Patterson, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

This accident was due to extremely poor judgment. Meerdinkt and Whippo were on an established, well-known climb, one which is described in at least two popular guidebooks along with the rappel route. To attempt to rappel on a single, fixed, old wired bashee is to tempt the devil. It also was not necessary because, with a bit of downclimbing, a safe rappel route with solid anchors could have been found. Even if the two could not have found this, yelling for help would have been much better than to attempt to rappel the route on one single, shaky anchor point. It was only by a miracle that Meerdinkt fell as far as he did and was not killed. (Source: Tim J. Setnicka, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED

California, South Sierra Nevada, Spanish Needles

Frank Riseley (45) was showing Explorer Scouts how to downclimb a pitch. His feet slipped and his handhold was too weak. He fell five feet, jammed his left foot into a crack, fell over backwards. His left leg bones broke above the boot top and he hung for half an hour before his companions extricated him. He crawled to a bivouac spot without splintering, where he was left with his son. The other four Explorers continued to vehicle with double mission of returning partway with gear and notifying the authorities. Eventually, after vehicle mishaps, they did notify the Kern Valley unit. The son left the next day to look for gear (none was brought to rendezvous) and then walked out in opposite direction and notified the CLMRG. CLMRG and KV units arrived simultaneously at Lamont Meadows and drove high with four-wheel drive vehicles. The son led the CLMRG team to the area, but in the clouds and falling snow he could not locate the exact spot. Search and some tracking (and considerable luck) led to finding the victim by 5 p.m. The victim was wet and cold. First aid took two hours, eva-