

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE, INEXPERIENCE**California, Dragon Peak**

On August 19, 1981, Bruce Dyer (24) went on a solo backpacking and fishing trip to the lake east of Dragon Peak. He was not known to be a climber but evidently found he had time to spare and decided to climb Dragon Peak (12,995 feet). The last several hundred feet of this peak is Class 3–4. From evidence found by the rescue team, he fell down the very steep east face from a point near the lower, south summit. He fell close to 1000 feet to his death. His body was found four days later. (Source: Dennis Burge, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group)

Analysis

While not a climbing accident, this report again illustrates what can happen to hikers who get themselves into a climbing situation. A similar accident occurred the month before on Mount Williamson when a thirty-year-old hiker left his companions, in spite of their warnings, and had gone up a chute left of the correct route. He fell 200 feet to his death. The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group reported only two actual climbing accidents—one involving a climber who fell trying a difficult lead and the other involving a rock accidentally dislodged falling on the climber below. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**California, Toulumne Meadows**

According to James Hobdy's climbing partner, Paul McCandless, Hobdy (27) was free climbing the Deimos Route on Polly Dome on August 9, 1981. He had placed two anchor pieces in a crack for protection. McCandless saw Hobdy slip and fall and began to pull in his belay rope to stop the fall. McCandless said he actually moved out of his belay station or Hobdy would have fallen on him. The two nuts Hobdy had placed pulled out and Hobdy hit the ledge on his thigh and back. He fell about 60 feet.

According to McCandless, Hobdy had been climbing for about four years and could lead at 5.8. The route he was climbing is rated 5.8 but locals say it should actually be rated 5.9 or 5.10. (Source: Thomas Habacker, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALLING ROCK**California, Yosemite Valley**

On September 29, 1981, Les Ellison (30) was free climbing the New Dawn Route on El Capitan when he pulled a rock loose. There had been no indication that it might be insecure. The rock hit his thigh and caused rapid swelling, and the injury then became too painful to move. By the next day, he was able to jumar on one leg, which he did. He had done five routes on El Capitan recently, as well as many routes in the Canadian Rockies and the French Alps. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

According to John Dill, this year was a record one both for falling rocks and for these rocks hitting climbers (ten *known* cases). One reason for the latter is the increase in the number of climbing parties *on the same route*. Hard hats could have prevented or lessened injury to