

**Analysis**

Had it not been for the helmet, the falling rock would have caused a serious, if not fatal, injury. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

**FALLING ROCK****Wyoming, Tetons**

On July 17, 1981, Randy and Duane Taylor (24) were climbing the North Ridge of the Grand Teton. D. Taylor stopped on a ledge on the Grandstand about 200 feet above the Teton Glacier while R. Taylor scrambled on above. About 8:00 a.m., R. Taylor dislodged a loose rock about 150 feet above D. Taylor. Several more rocks then started down the mountainside, one of which struck D. Taylor on the back.

R. Taylor climbed down to D. Taylor, lowered him a short distance to a good ledge and then climbed off the Grandstand and returned to the valley. Ranger Rich Perch ran into R. Taylor at 9:50 a.m., about one mile from the Lupine Meadows parking area, and called Jenny Lake to report the accident.

Beginning at 10:45 a.m., seven rescuers and equipment were flown to the glacier in four separate flights in the Forest Service contract Bell 206B helicopter piloted by Phil Fillingham. Craig Patterson, Barb Eastman, Jim Dorward, John Carr, Rich Perch, Steve Rickert, and Chuck Harris participated in the ensuing rescue.

The victim was reached at 12:20 p.m., an IV of Normosal R was started at 12:25 p.m., and lowering began at 2:50 p.m. D. Taylor was lowered 200 feet to the glacier and then lowered another 1,300 feet across and down the glacier to the helicopter landing site on the lower glacier which was reached at 4:30 p.m. He was then flown directly to St. John's Hospital in Jackson, arriving there at 4:45 p.m. It was determined that his injuries consisted of fractures of the three lowest ribs on the left side.

The members of the rescue team were then flown out in three more flights to Lupine Meadows. The rescue operation was completed at 5:30 p.m. (Source: Bob Irvine, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

**Analysis**

Most climbers have accidentally knocked off rocks at one time or another. This accident reminds us that the consequences may be serious, if not tragic. We need to be especially alert and cautious about loose rocks when someone is climbing below us. (Source: Bob Irvine, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

**RAPPEL FAILURE****Wyoming, Tetons**

On the morning of July 17, 1981, Marvin McDonald (25) and Eric Breitenberger, both experienced climbers, signed out for a climb of the North Ridge of the Grand Teton. They planned to bivouac on the Grandstand that night, then complete the climb the following day.

They hiked up Valhalla Canyon and then climbed the Gunsight Couloir and Notch to the north shoulder of the Grand Teton. About 6:00 p.m., a storm developed. The pair decided to abandon their climbing plans and descend. About 7:00 p.m. they set up a rappel into the Gunsight Notch. McDonald started down first while Breitenberger watched.

As McDonald descended, the rappel rope above him went over a diagonally-sloping ledge. McDonald pendulummed to one side and out of sight as the rope shifted sideways at the point where it went over the ledge. Breitenberger saw the rope suddenly begin to slide through the anchor. It pulled completely through and dropped out of sight before he had a chance to grab it.

McDonald fell approximately 1,000 feet down the west Gunsight Couloir to his death. In the coroner's report, it was determined that he died instantly in the fall. Breitenberger began downclimbing toward McDonald and reached him at 8:30 p.m. He was not sure whether or not McDonald was still alive, so he covered him with some tarps and a foam pad, and ran out for help; he reached Jenny Lake at 11:00 p.m.

Four climbing rangers with EMT gear left Lupine Meadows shortly after midnight and reached McDonald at 5:15 a.m. During the rest of the morning, the rescue team lowered McDonald's body to a level area and evacuated him by helicopter. (Source: Craig Patterson, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

### **Analysis**

An 11-mm Kernmantle rope was still attached to a carabiner brake system that was attached to McDonald's climbing harness. A 3/8-inch Goldline rope was tied to the 11-mm rope with a grapevine knot, but the 3/8-inch rope did not go through the brake system. The victim was wrapped up in the Kernmantle rope and both ropes were strung out on the snow above him. There were no knots in the bottom ends of the ropes, nor was there a safety prusik hooked to the rappel ropes.

Apparently McDonald somehow rappelled or slipped far enough down his ropes for the Goldline to go completely through the carabiner brake system; his weight then pulled the rope through the anchor as he fell.

Knots in the ends of the ropes might have kept McDonald from going off the end of his rope, but even knots can slip through carabiner brakes. The climbing community still needs to develop an effective way to secure rappels. (Source: Craig Patterson and Robert Irvine, Rangers, Grand Teton National Park)

## **FALL ON SNOW, INEXPERIENCE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE**

### **Wyoming, Tetons**

On July 26, 1981, Keith Walton (27), a relatively inexperienced climber, made a solo ascent of the Southwest Couloir on the Middle Teton. Descending the same route, Walton lost his way. He had descended about one third of the distance from the summit to the saddle before he realized that he had strayed to the east. He decided to work his way west instead of retracing his steps to the regular route. While downclimbing a rock rib, he attempted a short jump into a snow gully, lost his footing on the hard snow at the edge of the gully and began somersaulting. His fall carried him over a small section of scree and into a second patch of snow. He came to rest in a collection of rocks at the bottom of the gully. He sustained a deep two-inch laceration below his right knee. Walton estimated his fall at 100 feet.

He wrapped the wound with a bandana and without further complications made his way into the south fork of Garnet Canyon. He met Karen Noar near his campsite which was 30 minutes above the meadows. Noar properly bandaged the leg and, with two friends, Rick and Carolyn Wallen, helped Walton break camp and assisted him to the meadows. The