

FAILURE OF NUTS, ROCKFALL, CLIMBING ALONE

California, Yosemite Valley

On August 13, 1982, David Mital (27) was climbing Tangerine Trip on El Capitan when this accident occurred. In a statement following his rescue, he reported the following. He thought the accident occurred about 1100. He was solo climbing and had just completed the 11th pitch. While he was putting in protection, he placed a series of three wired stoppers above a fixed piton on the 11th pitch prior to completing it. He then set up a rappel anchor and rappelled down to the bottom of the 11th pitch with the intention of cleaning his protection out while jumaring back up.

On the whole pitch, he had placed seven nuts and three pitons and had used three fixed pitons and seven fixed bolts. When he reached the fixed piton just below the series of three wired stoppers (described above), he unclipped from the piton; as he looked up, he saw the first two wired stoppers pull out. That was the last thing he remembered for a while until he woke up and saw all three wired stoppers on the rope; they had slid down and come to rest on top of his lead jumar. He remembered placing the third wired stopper behind a rock or flake with a crack in it and testing it on his way up by placing weight on it. At that time it had held. Although he couldn't see the spot where the protection had come from, he was sure that it was that particular rock that had pulled out and struck him.

He stated that although he was weak and in pain, he started up to finish cleaning the 11th pitch; as soon as he started up, he began to black out and had to rest for about ten minutes. He managed to finish cleaning the pitch and then rested for approximately 20 minutes. At that time his head was pounding, his vision was blurred, and he felt he couldn't go on. When he started yelling for help, it seemed that only five or ten minutes had passed before someone called up and said they would go for a ranger.

As for the rescue, the victim stated that he was very impressed with the effort. He also stated that when he was being hauled up, he noticed a rock scar and a missing rock where he had placed the third wired stopper on his original climb.

The rescue itself is worth describing because of the technical expertise required.

On August 13, around 1130, rangers were called to the vicinity of the Devil's Elbow on Northside Drive to investigate reports of cries for help coming from the El Capitan area. After a size-up had been completed, NAS Lemoore was contacted for assistance and an NPS rescue team of approximately 15 people, plus rescue equipment, was flown to the summit of El Capitan via the contract helicopter.

An initial rescue effort by NPS personnel working from the summit of El Capitan failed, primarily because of the overhanging topography of the wall above the victim. A rescuer was lowered from the rim to a position 20 meters east of and 15 meters out from the victim. Several attempts to reach the victim, who was clipped into bolts on the wall, by using a line gun and rope throws failed. The rescuer was then raised to the rim and Lemoore attempted a cliff evolution. Lemoore lowered a crewman about 30 meters beneath Angel 1 and attempted to pendulum him into the victim. After trying this technique several times without success, Lemoore discontinued their efforts. Rescue efforts were suspended at 2000 due to darkness.

At 0730 on August 14, Lemoore's Angel 1 attempted a second cliff evolution. This attempt involved rope throwing by a crewman hanging beneath Angel 1, with

no further attempts at a pendulum. After several unsuccessful throws, Lemoore discontinued their efforts. The NPS personnel on the rim repositioned the anchors used on August 13, so that a lowered rescuer would be in a better vertical line with the victim, and began a second attempt. This time, the rescuer successfully reached the victim, and both rescuer and victim were raised to the rim and flown to Yosemite Valley for medical attention. The victim's injuries included minor facial lacerations, chipped teeth and a fractured nose. (Source: Henry Maxwell and John Daley, Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

STRANDED, INEXPERIENCE

California, Yosemite Valley

On August 20, 1982, Al Rosemann (25) and Dave Briggs (25) were attempting to rappel the 5.8 pitch on Bishop's Terrace (50 meters), when they became stranded because one of them reached the end of his single, doubled climbing rope (25 meters) below an overhang and could not climb back up. One ranger and a Rescue Site Climber did the pitch, set ropes and helped the climbers to reach the ground.

Ranger Gary Colliver and Rescue Site climber John Barbella went to the area with the needed equipment. Colliver belayed Barbella up the 5.0 first pitch of Bishop's Terrace. Barbella then fixed a second rope which Colliver used to jumar up to the climber hanging from the end of his rappel rope. Colliver gave him a hard hat and assisted him in transferring his rappel setup to the fixed rope, which reached the ground. The first climber then rappelled to the ground and Colliver jumared to the top of the pitch to meet Barbella and the second climber to whom he also gave a hard hat. The ropes were set for a full double-rope rappel to the ground and the second climber, Colliver and Barbella all rappelled safely. (Source: Gary Colliver, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

Rosemann related that they had talked with some climbers who had done this route and had told them that it was one rappel to the ground from the end of the route. Colliver told him that the end of the route was a short distance above them and about 30 meters east of them and pointed out that, since they had just climbed the pitch, they should have realized that it was more than 25 meters. Rosemann said they hadn't thought of that, only that they had been told it was one rappel to the ground. When Colliver reached Rosemann, who was hanging from prusik knots on his doubled rope, he asked him why he hadn't prusiked back up the rope. Rosemann answered that he had been too shaken up by the event to consider this. (Source: Gary Colliver, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE OF NUT

California, Yosemite Valley

On September 14, 1982, around 1400, Jim Slichter (27) was leading Pitch 24 of Pancake Flake on The Nose on El Capitan when an aid nut he was standing on pulled and he fell three meters. He struck his left foot very hard on a ledge, causing