

### **Analysis**

In addition to little water intake, Truecki had a history of nose bleeding problems. He has to have his nose cauterized every two years or so. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

## **FALLS ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **California, Sierra Nevada, Charlotte Dome**

On July 7, 1984, Michael Renta (37) was off route on the eighth pitch (5.7) of Charlotte's Web when he injured his ankle and ribs in a five to six meter tumbling fall. Renta's partner, David Brown (42), lowered him and took over the lead and was on route, above the crux section, when he fell three meters to a ledge, severely injuring his ankle. Two other members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group who were above them returned and helped them up and over the peak, returning slowly to camp, with great pain to the injured climbers. Assessing the situation, the team decided to arrange for an evacuation. (Source: Excerpted from China Lake Mountain Rescue Group *Operation Reports*, Number 84-9)

## **FALLING ROCK**

### **California, Yosemite Valley**

At 0030 on August 9, 1984, Todd Mazzola (22) and Michael Daugherty (22) reported that they, their climbing partner, Craig Thomas (26) and a separate climbing party, Paul Augustine (40) and Eric Hutchinson (20), were sleeping on Dinner Ledge on the South Face route of Washington Column when rockfall landed on them.

During the afternoon the climbers had observed other persons climbing the South Face above them, apparently attempting to reach the summit that day. After retiring, Mazzola noticed small quantities of gravel falling on Dinner Ledge from above, possibly dislodged by the climbers above.

The climbers lay down to sleep about 2045. At 2215 Mazzola heard a "thud noise" followed by a shower of gravel. He and the other climbers scrambled to the wall side of Dinner Ledge to reduce their exposure to the rockfall. After a time period, described by the involved parties variously as 20 seconds to five minutes, it was noticed that Hutchinson had not moved from his sleeping position. Mazzola and Augustine examined Hutchinson who was lying in a prone position on top of his sleeping bag. A wound described as an abrasion with surrounding "stretched skin" was noticed on the left side of Hutchinson's lower back. Hutchinson was unresponsive and, it became quickly apparent, not breathing. Mazzola, trained as an EMT, also determined that the victim did not have a radial pulse. No signs of animation were displayed by the victim. Their efforts at CPR were in vain, so they rappelled off to inform the Park Service, who effected a rescue and recovery by 0930. (Source: J. R. Tomasovic, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

### **Analysis**

The party above was, as an interview with them indicated, trying to be careful. They were climbing at night on rotten stuff. While the possibility of being hit was a

longshot, it underscores the seriousness of rockfall and abolishes the myth of “solid Yosemite.” There were three other rockfall accidents this year, all of which could have been fatalities. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

### **STRANDED, MUSCLE STRAIN, CLIMBING ALONE** **California, Yosemite Valley**

At 1318 on August 15, 1984, a phone call to NPS dispatch reported “calls for help” from the cliffs left (west) of Lower Yosemite Falls. Investigation revealed a stranded solo climber on the third pitch of the “Surprise” route in the “Five Open Books” area. The climber called down that he had a strained back and could not finish his climb, but had a good foot hold and hand hold and would be stable for at least 45 minutes.

John Dill responded immediately with a rope and anchor gear from the SAR cache followed by a backup team with more climbing gear about ten minutes later.

Dill ascended the normal descent route, and threw a rope down to the stranded climber, who was then able to climb out under his own power. (Source: Gary Colliver, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

#### **Analysis**

The climber indicated that the lower back muscle spasms were probably from the strain of a long bike ride the previous day. One of the hazards of free soloing is having no one for backup if you become incapacitated. (Source: Gary Colliver, Ranger, and John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

### **FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE, PLACED NO PROTECTION** **California, Yosemite Valley**

On August 17, 1984, a climber named Ernie Milan described the following accident to park rangers.

About 1200 on August 17, 1984, Milan was with a partner at the base of Low Profile Dome preparing to climb the “Golfer’s Route” when he met Rick Cashner (age unknown), who was also preparing to do a climb. Cashner told Milan that he was going to do a free solo of “Bacher’s Revenge.” Milan began his climb. About 30 minutes later at the last point of protection on the Golfer’s Route, Milan heard a thumping sound and, looking down and to his right, he observed the victim tumbling down head over feet, finally landing face down in the wooded area at the base of Low Profile Dome. Milan estimated that the victim fell a total of 23 to 25 meters on the 65 degree granite face. The climb is rated between 5.9 and 5.10. Immediately after the accident, Milan yelled for help to climber John Barbella, who was loading his car on the Tioga Road below; Barbella immediately drove to the Tuolumne Visitor’s Center to summon help.

The victim sustained multiple lacerations, abrasions and contusions, and about six teeth were knocked out. He was helicoptered to the Yosemite Medical Clinic and then to Modesto. (Source: Maynard Medefind, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)