

the snow surface. Recommendations for the future: more avalanche instruction, avalanche radio beacons, avalanche-probe ski poles. (Source: Jean Rendeau, Federation Quebecoise de la Montagne)

### **FALL ON ROCK, FAULTY USE OF BELAY DEVICE**

#### **Ontario, Milton, Rattlesnake Point**

On April 27, 1985, a climber (30) with some experience was leading a pitch, belayed by someone (25-30) who had never climbed before. He found the pitch too difficult, fell, and shouted to his partner to hold him. From a height of about nine meters, he fell through the branches of a tree and hit the ground. It was later determined that he suffered a basal skull fracture, a cervical fracture, and internal injuries.

Meanwhile, the belayer was in a state of shock, and did not understand what happened. From the way he was holding the belay device (a Sticht Plate), it was obvious he had taken the correct action when the fall occurred. However, the device was connected to the wrong end of the rope—the end nearest the belayer, not the end nearest the climber.

The victim died in August having never regained consciousness. (Source: Brian Hibbert, Toronto)

#### **Analysis**

The belayer did not know how to set up the belay device, and the climber neglected to make certain that it was connected correctly. The belayer should have been positioned on the ground, rather than on a small ledge. Using a Sticht Plate is not the best way for a beginner to belay, since stopping a leader fall with this device takes a degree of experience. (Source: Brian Hibbert, Toronto)

### **FAILURE OF RAPPEL, CHOCKS PULLED OUT, INEXPERIENCE**

#### **Alberta, Rocky Mountains, near Banff**

On May 26, 1985, an inexperienced climber (30) was beginning a rappel descent of the southwest face of Rundle Rock. When she committed her weight to the rope, her rappel anchor pulled out. She fell eight meters, landing with first impact on her left foot, and came to rest on her back on a patch of dirt. Her two climbing partners descended and moved her onto her left side. The other two climbers came to help, and one of them with first aid training examined her. She was conscious and alert, but in severe pain from her left heel and ankle, which were later found to be completely shattered. There were also some loosened teeth, a lacerated tongue, minor shock and minor concussion. (Her climbing partners also seemed to be in a mild state of shock from the experience. When first offered help, they replied that the victim would be “fine.”) The victim’s ankle was splinted, and an ambulance arrived. (Source: James Hinter and Karla Richards, Calgary and Banff)

#### **Analysis**

This accident might have been avoided had the victim and her climbing party been more experienced in protection placement and better overall group communication. Everyone assumed that someone else in the group had checked the placement of the protection. Additionally, more injury could have been caused by moving the victim prior to the medical inspection. First aid knowledge should be a prerequisite for at least one member of any climbing party. (Source: James Hinter and Karla Richards, Calgary and Banff)