

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT**California, Yosemite Valley**

On May 11, 1985, John Wiley (32) took a leader fall while climbing the North Face route on Quarter Dome. Wiley stated that he was leading the fourth pitch (A-2) and had placed a Friend with only two of the cams in the crack. The Friend came loose and he fell for 25 meters. He slid for the first 12 meters, hit a ledge and bounced for the next 13 meters before being caught by his belayer. He injured his ankle in the fall, but was able to jumar back to the ledge where his belayer was located. He and his partner made four rappels to the base of Quarter Dome and spent the night. Early the next morning his partner hiked down to the Valley to report the incident.

A helicopter rescue (Angel-1) was deemed necessary and completed by 1630 on May 12, 1985. (Source: Kelley Maxwell, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

Wiley was asked why he had fallen so far, and he stated that he had been leap frogging his protection, and that after the Friend popped, two nuts and a pin popped. (Source: Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT**California, Yosemite Valley**

On May 15, 1985, Frances St. Amant (38) stated that he and his partner had climbed Overhang Bypass the previous day, bivvied, then descended Gunsight early in the morning. He tried to glissade a small (30 meter) snow patch at the base of Gunsight using a hand held rock for self-arrest. He couldn't arrest, slid about 24 meters, and hit a boulder with his feet. This resulted in a dislocated and fractured ankle, and required evacuation. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK AND SLIP ON ICE, CLIMBING UNROPE, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS**California, Sierra Nevada**

On May 19, 1985, Sean Collinsworth (29) was climbing a 5.4 rock and was about 65 meters from the summit of University Peak when he pulled a hold loose and fell 15 meters vertically to a snow slope, where he slid another 50 meters bouncing off rocks before coming to a halt. His partner, Laura Gatner (29) was descending to him when she slipped on an ice covered rock and fell 65 meters down the snow slope, also bouncing off rocks.

They sustained multiple injuries, but were able to descend 600 meters to their base camp at Bench Lake. Collinsworth walked out for help the next morning, and Gatner was littered out by China Lake Mountain Rescue Group the next night. Temperatures at altitude had been well below freezing with high winds. (Source: Daryl Hinman, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group)

FALL ON SNOW, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT**California, Mount Whitney**

Andrew Richey (24) and his partner were attempting to climb the East Face of Mt.

Whitney, but got off route and were in a couloir to the south of the route. When it was obvious to them that they were off route, they descended and got on some snow. Richey fell and was unable to self-arrest, resulting in a fracture. A helicopter rescue ensued. (Source: Mike Renta, China Lake Mountain Rescue)

Analysis

These climbers had no rope or crampons. (Source: Mike Renta, China Lake Mountain Rescue)

FALL ON ROCK, PLACED INADEQUATE PROTECTION **California, Yosemite Valley**

On June 3, 1985, Joseph Palmer (23) was killed when he took a leader fall on Aftershock. Palmer had selected Aftershock (5.11b) because he was currently working on leading at that difficulty and he had heard that Aftershock was well protected. It was to be the first climb of the day, followed by one or more 5.10 pitches that his partner, Ruth Galler, would lead.

Belayed by Galler, who was anchored to three solid Friends, Palmer climbed about two meters up to a horizontal crack, where he placed a Friend. He then hand-traversed right and up to a small sloping pocket and placed a stopper nearby. At this point the route became a finger-tip undercling/layback in a small crack at the back of a left-facing corner that arched up, then left, almost forming a shallow ceiling, before it turned up again, to form a shallow letter "s."

Palmer climbed along this corner, placing two more stoppers. Then, worried that the first two stoppers would cause rope drag by the time he reached the crux by constraining the rope to the "s" pattern, he downclimbed and removed them. He climbed one meter beyond his one remaining stopper and reached the crux section, where the corner turned up again. He placed another stopper here and moved a couple of feet beyond it. He was perhaps ten meters above the belay.

Up to now he had been climbing well and had not indicated any problem to Galler. However, the crux required a very strenuous, off-balance, finger-tip layback without much friction under foot, and she could see that he was having trouble keeping his left foot from slipping off the face. She knew it would be hard for him and that he might fall, so she had given him as little slack as possible; nevertheless, when he did fall she felt the two top pieces of protection (stoppers) pull. She hauled as much rope as possible through her Figure-of-Eight and held the fall without incident.

The fall had been caught by the Friend just above her (the only remaining piece of protection) and Palmer was hanging ten or more meters below her. He seemed to be hanging upside-down but, because of a bulge in the rock, she could only see his feet. He wasn't moving.

Since Aftershock started from a ledge about 30 meters above the ground, Galler knew she had to lower Palmer ten meters, but she could not see what obstacles lay below, so she called to two climbers preparing for a route about 30 meters to the east. They arrived below Palmer about four minutes later. Galler lowered him down, then unroped and scrambled down the approach path. She called other climbers over, then drove to the Arch Rock entrance station to report the accident. Meanwhile the climbers on the scene checked Palmer; they found major damage to his head and no vital signs. It appeared he had died instantly from striking his head. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)