

Analysis

In an interview at the SAR cache later that day, Goldmann said he had spent two days planning and packing for his solo attempt on the Dihedral Wall, and took plenty of food, warm clothing and rain gear, and four and a half liters of water—plenty, he thought, for the seven days he planned to be on the wall. On the evening of his third day, at the top of the tenth pitch (he said he planned on making three pitches a day), he discovered that one of his water bottles had been leaking, and was almost empty. Goldmann said that at this point he was feeling very strong, the climbing was going well, and that with just a little rationing of his water he would have no trouble finishing the climb. He said he did not really consider going down, that he was very much “into” the climb, and wanted to finish it.

During the next three days on rationed water, Goldmann said he became progressively weaker, and climbed slower, getting only halfway up the 16th pitch by the end of the sixth day, when he began calling for water. Corbet and Tischner, not far away on the Heart Route, heard his cries for water, and descended the next morning to report that Goldmann was in trouble.

Goldmann, in retrospect, said he thought his decision to continue was poor, and that if faced with a similar circumstance, he would consider his options and the consequences more carefully. Descent, he said, would have been relatively easy from the top of the tenth pitch, but almost impossible from the top of the 17th. (Source: Gary Colliver, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALLING HAUL BAG **California, Yosemite Valley**

On September 16, 1985, I received a call indicating that some park visitors had observed a climber fall from El Capitan. I responded with climbers Grant Hisker and Bill Russell, and we began interviewing spectators along El Cap meadow. Finally at the far west end I encountered a group who said they had seen a climber fall and indicate an area on The Nose route. Hisker was sent with a radio and medical size-up gear to contact the descending climbers. He soon reported back that these two climbers had yelled warning about 45 minutes before. After yelling—they had thrown off a large haul bag. (Source: Gary Colliver, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

This was not an accident, but an example of the kind of report we get five to ten times per year. The National Park Service strongly discourages climbers from routinely jettisoning their haul bags, garbage, and so forth. With the number of other climbers and hikers around, this is a very dangerous activity. We will prosecute for “creating a hazardous condition” and/or impound equipment. Dropping a haul bag in an emergency—such as to allow a self-rescue—is understandable, but being too lazy to carry down what you carried up is not. (Source: Michael Murray, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLD, PROTECTION PULLED OUT **California, Yosemite Valley**

On September 19, 1985 Daniel Pisciotta (22) was reportedly leading the second pitch of the Absolutely Free, Left Side route (rated 5.9). A hold came loose in his hand and he fell, pulling out two pieces of protection (a stopper and a Friend), tumbling fall about 15 meters. His

partner lowered Pisciotta down to the base of the climb which is still about 130 meters above the ground, then went and reported the accident.

A team of climbers brought up a stokes litter, ropes and other gear, and Pisciotta was lowered, immobilized in the stokes litter to avoid further injury to his ankle, with two attendants, to the ground. The lowering was started after dark, and was complicated by loose rock, brush and the broken, low angle nature of the rock wall in that area, requiring the assistance of numerous climbers.

After reaching the group, we evacuated Pisciotta by litter to the road, and then by vehicle. Several of the rescuers were stung by wasps, after a nest was apparently disturbed in the dark while descending through the woods. (Source: Michael Murray and Gary Colliver, SAR Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE BELAY

California, Yosemite Valley

On October 20, 1985, about 1000, Ken Byers (41) was leading Catchy (5.10d) on the Cookie Cliff. J. Farmer was at base on bottom belay using a Sticht plate. At 1130, Byers reached the "crux" move, about 25 meters above base. He tied into protection to rest and study the route for the next move for about 20 minutes.

At this point, Farmer said he could see Byers, but knew he was having trouble at the crux move. The rope had gone slack and Farmer knew Byers had tied into protection. There was no verbal communication between the two. Byers said he thought Farmer could see him when he unhooked his static protection to start climbing again.

Farmer felt the slack rope move up and thought Byers was climbing. However, Byers had slipped and had started falling. Farmer let rope feed out, realizing too late he was falling. She apparently panicked; she did not drop her braking hand to activate the Sticht plate belay device. Instead she tried to arrest his fall with a hand grip around the rope, which burned/blistered her hands. She was unable to stop Byers' fall. He fell about ten meters and hit on a ledge injuring his left hip and right foot. Farmer and Byers then talked to each other and decided he should be lowered to the base. Farmer then belayed Byers down to her position.

At this point Ray Lassman, a climber who had witnessed part of the accident, arrived at Farmer's location and assisted her in lowering Byers another five meters down toward the base. However, Byers experienced severe pain and had to stop the descent approximately five meters above the base. There, he awaited help to be summoned by Lassman.

The National Park Service SAR team responded, providing emergency care at the scene, technical evacuation and transportation to Yosemite Medical Clinic. Byers had sustained a broken femur and possible fractured foot, and was helicoptered to Sacramento for definitive care. (Source: H.R. Steed, Park Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK

California, Joshua Tree National Monument

On September 22, 1985, I (Allen Sanderson [22]), was leading a moderate 5.8 crack on Dogleg. I had made good progress placing protection every two to three meters. About 12 meters into the climb, my foot slipped off the rock. I was able to stay on the rock and was moving upward when my hand jam slipped out. Subsequently, I fell about two meters, cutting my elbow on my way down. My partner, Mike Reeske, lowered me down. We