

### **Analysis**

Penny Davis (29) who was the belayer, had no previous experience climbing or belaying a climber. She did not understand the belay system or how it worked. Penny was not tied in, nor was she in a position to arrest a fall.

Davis had never climbed a 5 10a before. His climbing experience was less than a year. (Source: Jerry Bronson, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

### **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

#### **California, Joshua Tree National Monument**

On November 16, 1986, a report of a fallen climber on Jimmy Cliff rock was called in. John Hayward (43) was leading "Third World" (5.9), and while trying to place protection, he fell about three meters onto a ledge. His partner, Bill Gibson (26) lowered Hayward to the base of the climb about ten meters. Gibson made Hayward as comfortable as possible while another person reported the accident to the Park Service. Hayward sustained a broken lower leg and elbow. (Source: Kip Knapp, Ranger, Joshua Tree National Monument)

### **FALL ON RAPPEL, IMPROPER TECHNIQUE**

#### **California, Joshua Tree National Monument**

On December 9, 1986, at 1400, Ellen Hoffman (26) was rappelling down the face of Intersection Rock from a climb called "The Flake," when her rope became tangled. She stopped about six meters from the bottom to untangle it, letting go of the rope with her belay hand. She fell to the ground, landing on her lower back.

An ambulance was dispatched to the scene when the incident was reported at the request of the reporting person. She refused the ambulance transport when it arrived, because of the cost. The Para-medic from Joshua Tree Ambulance and myself explained the possible consequences of transport in a private vehicle without neck and back precautions. Hoffman signed a release from JTA and left at 1700.

On December 17, I contacted Hoffman by phone. She stated that she had sustained a mild concussion from the fall and was seeing a doctor about lower back pain. There were no broken bones. (Source: Kip Knapp, Ranger, Joshua Tree National Monument)

*(Editor's Note: The victim must have disconnected her rappel rig, too. This is a rare accident these days, especially with most climbers using a prusik loop back-up or being belayed. We could call this "failure of the rappeller" rather than "rappel failure."*

### **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT**

#### **California, Joshua Tree National Monument**

On December 21, 1986, Lawrence DeLong (38) was lead climbing "Double Cross," a 5.7 crack on Old Woman Rock. He was approximately six meters from the ground, with his second piece of protection, a Friend, placed at waist-level. DeLong fell, and the Friend pulled out of its placement. DeLong fell past his first piece of protection (a nut) and struck the rock face with his head approximately three meters above the ground. The nut prevented DeLong from falling to the ground. DeLong was unconscious and

bleeding from the head. He subsequently expired on December 29 of a basal skull fracture. (Source: Mary Taber, Ranger, Joshua Tree National Monument)

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, EXHAUSTION**

### **Colorado, Eldorado Canyon**

(On February 1, 1986, Clayton Jackson [24] fell while lead climbing “Raggae” [5.8]. The following is his account of the accident.)

After failing miserably on one route, we decided to try a slightly easier one. As I began climbing, I felt a little shaky coming off a three-month lull because of cold weather.

My first mistake was placing all my vitally important equipment down low on the pitch, where the climbing still was relatively easy. So, when I reached the crux of the climb, I had no remaining equipment with which to protect the climb.

My partner realized I was in trouble when I started taking a long time. As he stuck out his head, he saw me slip and he exclaimed, “uh-oh” as I began to fall.

“I started to take in the rope and the force pulled me up about 30 centimeters,” he said.

Initial impact broke the talus bone in my left foot and also caused dislocation of my ankle. After initial impact, I cartwheeled backwards before coming to rest. My immediate reaction was to grab my left leg, which was in excruciating pain.

“My leg is broken,” was one of my first utterances. My foot was cocked about 45 degrees to the inside because of the dislocation, and my partner was wondering why I had not straightened out my leg.

I had him lower me about 30 meters to the base of the climb. As I was being lowered, my injured leg hit the rock a few times, sending a shiver of pain up my spine.

Upon reaching the cliff’s base, I waited for my partner to retrieve what climbing gear he could.

A kind of paradox occurred as I was preparing to go back to the car—two climbers came up to my position and offered help, while another individual was helping himself to the climbing equipment I had left behind. This added insult to the injury. (Source: Article by Clayton Jackson in the *Daily News Press*, March 31, 1986)

### **Analysis**

Most climbing accidents are caused by poor judgment. I realized I had been overtaxing my abilities so early in the season and should have placed more protection near the crux of the second pitch. (Source: Clayton Jackson)

## **RAPPEL ANCHOR PULLED OUT, INADEQUATE BELAY, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Colorado, Eldorado Springs**

On May 8, 1986, a novice female climber (23) was on the west wall of Redgarden Wall in Eldorado Springs State Park when her male climbing partner rappelled to the ground. The woman then adjusted the rappel anchor, backed off to rappel, and the anchor came out. She fell approximately 30 meters to the ground.

When members of the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group and A-1 Ambulance arrived at the scene, the victim was moaning and barely conscious. Her pulse was 136, and two intravenous lines were started on her. Medical anti-shock trousers and oxygen were also