

series of rocky grass covered ledges. Variations in climbing speed caused the group to spread out. When rocks bounded down from the climbers above, several below turned back. As the ledges turned difficult, the leader decided to call a halt to the climb and shouted ahead for all to come back. The victim, Michael Levine (42), who had climbed the highest, shouted, "Why?" and continued to the ridge.

Levine had not returned by nightfall, so the group returned to Colorado Springs, after informing the Sheriff of Huerfano County of the situation.

Extensive and widespread foot-searching by Colorado rescue groups, aided by helicopters, failed to locate the victim.

On August 31, a possible sighting of clothing in a small, shallow ravine on the sheer face, slightly south and 245 meters below the Ellingwood summit, proved positive on September 2 when the body recovery was made. The site was at the 4000 meter level where a ledge in the ravine stopped his freefall. Assumption is that the victim was going for Blanca Peak, and fell while dropping south of Ellingwood summit on a rocky ridge to Blanca. After reaching the body by a difficult ascent and rappel, it was bagged and lowered off the wall, followed by an evacuation to the roadhead. (Source: Peggy Parr, El Paso County Search and Rescue)

Analysis

This area is full of crumbly rock and severe drop-offs. The terrain demands caution and reduced speed. The victim needed a ride home from another climber in the party, and was probably hurrying to include Blanca Peak. (Source: Peggy Parr, El Paso Search and Rescue)

(Editor's Note: No mention is made as to why the victim felt he could question the leader's decision. It is indicated that the victim was considered to be experienced.)

FALL ON ROCK, FALLING ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park

(On August 26, 1986, Doug Grimm [40] was climbing the northwest corner of Twin Owls on Lumpy Ridge when he fell. Here is his report.)

The fall resulted during a down-climb of an easy 5.4 pitch on the northwest corner (backside) of the Twin Owls, when a 45 by 60 centimeter rock being used as a hold came loose. I failed to recognize the rock as a separate piece and thought it was an attached part of the main rock.

I had belayed my partner down the ten meter pitch and reminded her to put in protection, even though she had an upper belay, to prevent any penduluming, and to protect me when I followed. I had just removed the last runner remaining and was using both hands on a "bulge" when it (very surprisingly and quickly) pulled out and I fell over backwards approximately three to four meters to the ground onto some boulders landing on my tailbone. After some rest I found that I could walk and a rescue/carryout was not needed. X-rays later revealed a broken sacrum. (Source: Doug Grimm)

Analysis

One factor is recognizing potential hazards, such as the large chunk which "appeared" to be a solid part of the main rock. I am in the habit of testing holds which seem questionable—this one didn't at the time, but I'll certainly be more careful in the future.

The other lesson brought out is that of strategy of protection for the second climber, which the leader must consider as important as his own under certain climbing situations, such as this instance of both following on a downclimb and traversing at the same time. There was no solid rappel anchor to rappel from so we decided to downclimb the short ten meter section. The reason we did not continue the climb was a notice at the Lumpy Ridge parking area that stated the entrance gate would be locked and the area closed at 1800. While trying to get back to our car so we wouldn't be locked in, I was surprised to see a couple of other climbers still on the rock who seemed unconcerned about the closing time. When we finally did make it to the parking lot and our car, at 1850, we found the gate unlocked and there appeared no intention of locking it, as numerous other cars were still in the parking lot, indicating that others who probably were more familiar with the area knew that the gate was not going to be locked. (Source: Doug Grimm)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, LOOSE ROCK

Colorado, Pikes Peak

On August 30, 1986, Richard Andrews (42) was climbing a 15 meter pitch on Tenny Crags. He was belayed by his daughter (13). He was two to three meters above his last chock when he fell, pulling all protection and going all the way to the ground. He fractured his ankle and injured his spine. (Source: Skee Hipszky, El Paso County Search and Rescue)

Analysis

The rock here is extremely loose and weathered. It is doubtful that any protection would have held the fall. (Source: Skee Hipszky, El Paso County Search and Rescue)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE BELAY, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT, LOOSE ROCK

Colorado, Bear Creek Canyon

On October 26, 1986, two climbers with proper equipment, including seat harnesses, carabiners and pitons, were climbing in Bear Creek Canyon. The victim (18) was belaying the climber. Slack existed. Climber fell, stress caused victim to lose balance in standing belay. Victim fell, pulling piton out, dropping 18 meters, landing on head and back. (Source: David Niegocki, Fireman with Colorado Springs Fire Department)

(Editor's Note: We don't know what happened to the climber.)

OVERDUE CLIMBERS, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, INEXPERIENCE

Idaho, Mount Borah

On May 26, 1986, Glynda Miller (age unknown) and Geoff Lyons set out to climb Mount Borah. On May 27, Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue received a call from Don Miller to say that his ex-wife and her friend had gone either mountain climbing or caving and had not returned. Glynda Miller had left their daughter with a babysitter, but had not returned to pick up the child.