

Ridge. The area they were in was just left of a route called Broken Wing. Ranger #1 had spent the morning working on the first ten meters and at that level he put in the first bolt (3/8 inch diameter x 1 1/2 inch shaft, Star-Dryven). He then lowered off the bolt to rest and Ranger #2 (22) decided to go up and work above the high point. He passed the bolt and continued approximately another three meters where he placed four more pieces of protection, claiming that each one individually was dubious, but that the four combined should be sufficient in supporting his weight while he drilled another bolt. He worked on the hole for approximately 20 minutes, during which the drill bit became repeatedly stuck and he would have to pull furiously on the bit to get it out of the hole. This certainly put further stress on the protection from which he was hanging.

He finished the drilling and was preparing to put in the bolt when suddenly the protection he was hanging from pulled and he began falling. At this point the first bolt was just below him and should have arrested his fall, but instead the bolt pulled out without even slowing him down. A knifeblade also pulled and he then impacted the rocks and continued into a nearby chimney where a marginal 3 1/2 Friend finally stopped his fall.

As soon as he was able to speak (30 seconds to a minute), he complained of pain in his pelvis as well as numbness in his left leg. At this juncture, it was established that he was alert and oriented times three. Ranger #1 moved to a small ledge just beneath the victim and directed the lowering of him onto the ledge. He positioned him as comfortably as possible, padded him and anchored him. Assessment of the victim continued until the rescue was completed. Radio contact was made within two minutes after the fall to park dispatch and he continued to relay medical information as well as receive information from Paul McLaughlin (Strike Team Leader), who was enroute during the assessment. Victim was stabilized, assessed, and vitals were taken three times by the time McLaughlin arrived and took over coordination of the rescue, which was completed by 1930. The victim suffered a fractured pelvis and elbow. (Source: Rocky Mountain National Park—various reports)

## **FALL ON ROCK, NO HARD HAT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **Colorado, Glenwood Springs**

In June, a climber (age unknown) was leading a moderate (5.6-5.7) route in No-Name Creek when he/she fell from ten meters off the deck, six meters above protection. Victim landed on soft ground, but broke right tib-fib, then struck head against neighboring boulder. Victim survived for two hours after the fall. (Source: Wyman Bontrager)

## **FALL ON ROCK ON DESCENT—AFTER FREEING RAPPEL ROPE, LOSS OF CONCENTRATION, UNROPED**

### **Colorado, International Wall**

On June 25, 1988, a 175 meter route was completed on a granite wall (International Wall) approximately one half mile west of Shoshone Dam. The first rappel was completed by both members of the party. The rope became stuck on the pull down for the second rappel. Mike Collett (32) unclipped from webbing and free climbed back

up and freed the rope. Upon descent, he stepped on moss and fell 18 meters. Falling into a chute of a chimney, he caught some webbing with his arm at the same time his partner broke his fall out of the chute. Between the two, the descent was stopped. (Source: Mike Collett)

#### **Analysis**

I had been on the wall at times before, often solo. My concentration was not there. I let my guard down and concentration wander. Putting in a pin or piece of protection and using the rope to descend instead of down climbing would have been much safer and wiser. The climb is never completed until you are safely down, no matter the level of your skill. One should never mentally leave the climb until physically down. I was fortunate; I had an excellent rescue group attend to me and therefore am able to climb again! (Source: Mike Collett)

### **LIGHTNING, POOR POSITION**

#### **Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park**

On June 25, 1988, Randall Vett (21) and Adam Hurst (25) hiked to the top of the Naked Edge intending to rappel down and climb the last two pitches. Bad weather had moved into the area by the time the party reached the top of the climb. It is believed that they decided to rappel down the route rather than descend the way they had come up, in order to escape the weather. Just when they were beginning to rappel, they were struck by lightning. Randall, who was just starting to rappel, was knocked unconscious. His clothing jammed into his rappel device, preventing him from sliding off the ends of his rope. Randall's calls for help were heard by park visitors who notified park rangers. Once at the scene, park rangers and Rocky Mountain Rescue group personnel treated Randall and lowered him 200 meters to the ground. Adams, who had been killed by the strike, was then lowered to the ground. (Source: Steve Muelhauser, Ranger, Eldorado Canyon State Park)

#### **Analysis**

Perhaps poor judgment was used in continuing to the top of the Naked Edge even though storms were moving into the area. The climbers were from out of state and may not have been familiar with the area's typical pattern of afternoon thunderstorms. (Source: Steve Muelhauser, Ranger, Eldorado Canyon State Park)

### **FALL ON ROCK, PLACED INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDED ABILITIES**

#### **Colorado, Glenwood Springs**

In July, Wyman Bontrager (36) attempted to lead a 5.8 crack climb and attempted to lie-back an extremely thin crack one meter parallel to main crack system. Victim had placed TCU in flaring crack three meters below point of fall. Victim fell about eight meters, fracturing left ankle, right heel, and spine. (Source: Wyman Bontrager)

*(Editor's Note: The victim, who was the rescuer/reporter for the fatality near this area, advises placing protection at closer intervals.)*