

INADEQUATE CLOTHING—ASSUMPTION REGARDING WEATHER**California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan**

Vinante Donato (33), Sergio Valentini (33), and Walter del Fre (33)—all from Italy, set out to climb El Capitan on May 15, 1991.

They spent their first night on Dolt Tower. The second night was spent at Camp 4; their intended location had been Camp 5. They had climbed to within two rope lengths of Camp 5 on May 16 and then rappelled down to Camp 4 for the night. Sometime during the night or in the morning, the one space blanket, or aluminum tarp, the group had for shelter blew away and was lost. On the 17th the party had hoped to summit; however, they spent the night at Camp 6.

That evening it snowed, with about 2 1/2 inches accumulation on Camp 6 ledge. While climbing the pitches above Camp 6 (they fixed two pitches), two of the three climbers got very wet, as there was water running down the crack. By Friday night all their sleeping bags were wet. It was snowing and the ropes became iced, the crack above them was full of ice, by 1600. The climbers realized they were not in a good position to complete the climb or spend many days out in the weather with wet clothes and sleeping bags. They realized they had the option to go on, or to sit it out and hope to be able to rappel the ropes on Saturday. The last option was to ask for a rescue. The climbers knew that rescue was available in Yosemite. They stated that it was a hard decision for them to ask for a rescue; however, that was their intention on Friday night when they flashed more than five times in response to their friends on the Valley floor.

The climbers said that they understood on Friday night, via PA communication, that a rescue would begin in the morning. They got no sleep. On Saturday they stated that they understood the instructions regarding the helicopter and other rescue attempts.

The rescue went well. Rescuers were helicoptered to the summit and did a technical rope rescue. As mountain guides, two of the three thought it was very good to see the other side of rescue.

Analysis

An interview was conducted with Edith Valentini, Ranger Rick Obernesser and Mike Ray acting as interpreters.

Climbers Sergio Valentini and Walter del Fre said they have 15 years of climbing experience. Donato said he has been climbing for 12 years. The group spent most of April climbing in the Dolomites in Italy to prepare for their trip to the United States. The party arrived in San Francisco on May 2, and in Yosemite on May 4. None had climbed here previously. Members of the group have climbed in Patagonia, Peru and the Himalayas.

Since arriving they have done numerous routes, including Royal Arches, Middle Cathedral, Lower Brother, two pitches of the Salathe on El Capitan, and Serenity Crack. The three climbers climb at the 5.10 c/d, A3 level.

It had rained several times during their visit to Yosemite; however, the group thought the weather was improving. They did not check the weather forecast before beginning the climb. The climbers stated that this was California and that they therefore did not expect bad weather. (Source: Kelly McCloskey, Yosemite Search and Rescue, Yosemite National Park)

FALLING ROCK, POOR POSITION**California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan**

On May 15, 1991, at 2030, I interviewed Karin Olson's (23) climbing partner, Leo