

were heard by other climbers at East Face Lake. One yelled that the other was hurt and hypothermic. Two climbers started up to help and one went out to initiate a rescue. China Lake Mountain Rescue Group was helicoptered in the next morning. The climbers from East Face Lake had been unable to reach the victims. As the rescue team was trying to reestablish voice contact, a body fell from the Buttress down into the Mountaineer's Route. The weather had turned bad and it was very cold, with snow and hail. The rescue team found that Reeves was dead at the end of the third pitch and that Douglas had fallen to his death into the Mountaineer's Route.

Analysis

Reeves and Douglas were not prepared for this climb and continued on in deteriorating weather. The face routes on Mount Whitney are very popular and are easily climbed by well equipped and well conditioned climbers, when conditions are good. However, an injury that would just be an inconvenience with good weather can be fatal if conditions change and become extreme. (Source: Art Green, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group Leader)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT

California, Yosemite National Park

On September 7, 1991, John Medlock (28) was lead climbing the Nutcracker route on Manure Pile Buttress and was about 120 feet off the ground going around a large rock horn when he fell. For protection, Medlock had placed a sling around a tree below, a stopper protection chock, a Camelot camming device and three more stoppers above that as he began to climb around the horn. When he fell, the stoppers above the Camelot and the stopper below all pulled out of the crack. Medlock fell about 40 feet down the cliff face before the Camelot held his fall. Medlock hit on a small ledge as the rope caught his fall, landing on his right foot severely injuring his ankle. Medlock also sustained numerous abrasions on his hands, right arm and both legs.

Medlock was able to reach a tree nearby for stabilization, then was assisted by several other climbers. Medlock was lowered by rope about 40 feet to a large ledge located 40 feet above the base of the cliff where the rangers contacted him upon their arrival at the scene.

Medlock was diagnosed at Yosemite Medical Clinic as having a closed fracture and dislocation of the right ankle. (Source: R. Scott Bowen, Park Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

STRANDED, WEATHER, HYPOTHERMIA, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan

On September 27, 1991, four climbers were rescued from two different routes on El Capitan.

On September 15, the first winter storm of the season moved into the Central Sierra, dropping 4.5 inches of rain at lower elevations with snow level reaching 4,000 feet. On the evening of the 26th the NPS received reports of cries for help on El Capitan. Initial size-up indicated that two climbers, Simon Peck and David Megerle, were approximately 2,000 feet up the Sea of Dreams route and stranded in their hanging bivvy under a waterfall that had been created by the runoff from the storm. Both indicated that they were unhurt but becoming hypothermic and unable to move because of the storm. High winds had blown the rain flies from their porta ledges and both had