

storm clothes because they thought they'd get off in time. They realized they'd made a potentially serious mistake. They were not cited for negligence, but, in the future, climbers in similar situations may be. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT**

### **California, Tahquitz Rock, Consolation**

On July 4, 1992, I was about 25 feet into the third pitch of our climb when I came off. Two pieces that I had placed failed. One was a small Metolius tri-cam unit a few feet below the spot from which I fell. The cams tipped out and reversed. A foot or two below that piece I had a wired, curved stopper or rock. It didn't wind up in front of my harness afterward. One is left to guess what happened to it. Perhaps the carabiner failed or the swage on the piece failed. Mike Jaffe remembers hearing two distinct sounds just before I flew past. He describes it as, "Bam! Bam!" The first sound was likely the TCU blowing out, the second the other piece. In any case, I went on a longer ride than expected. I think it was good fortune that I had just cleared an overhang, so I took to the air and didn't go tumbling down. I have a vague recollection of wondering what had happened with my pieces and when I was going to stop falling. I had no sense that I was going to die, no life flashing before my eyes, just gray and blue and then some green. When I finally stopped falling and got some friction underfoot, on a small face and held by the rope, I was fairly calm. I talked with Mike, letting him know I was OK but for some pain in my right knee. Very little in the way of abrasions and blood. He let me know that he had hurt his hands, one badly. I asked him to let me down a bit so I could move over into a crack. I clipped into a fixed piece there so that we could be somewhat more free to get our bearings on the situation. I considered climbing up to him and going up and off by a different route. On testing my right knee it became apparent that I wouldn't be doing any more climbing that day. Mike said he didn't think he would be able to climb either, given the injuries to his hands. We went about rappelling down the roughly 350 feet to the base. This took an hour because of our various infirmities, the perceived need to deal with the damage to the rope (discovered only after I almost rappelled past the worst of the damaged spots), and our somewhat unsettled, not totally clear state of mind.

The piece that finally held my fall was a small, solid hex slung on perlon, a good placement just right and above the place where Mike sat on belay. When he caught me he was pulled over into the piece. Some rope ran through his hands and the belay device (a new Black Diamond figure eight with red anodizing), burned his hands in the process. As a medical student, Mike was impressed with the fact that, although the burn when through the dermis and some blood vessels, there was little bleeding because the wounds were instantaneously cauterized. (Source: From a letter sent to New England Ropes and ANAM by Terry Hartig)

*(Editor's Note: Hartig was impressed by the fact that his 60 foot leader fall did not result in the rope parting. We were impressed by the lack of more serious injuries.)*

## **FALLING ROCK**

### **California, Yosemite Valley, Leaning Tower**

On July 5, 1992, I spoke with Brad Young (32) at the Yosemite Medical Clinic about a climbing accident that he and his climbing partner Doug Burton (age not noted) were involved in on the Leaning Tower.

Young told me that they started on the climb from the Bridalveil Parking Lot at 0900. They walked from the lot and arrived at the base of the climb at 1230. Young led the first and fourth pitches as described in the climbing book. Burton led the second and third pitches as one. Young said that he had done the regular route before. They arrived at the Ahwahnee Ledge between 1930 and 2000 and spent the night there.

On July 4, Young started the A-4 pitch at 0815. He finished the pitch about 1000. Burton started the next pitch about 1115 after sorting the gear. It was during the climb of this pitch, A-3, that Burton took a 15 foot fall. He was not injured and continued the climb. He finished the pitch about 1500. Young said it took a while because Burton was not as experienced. Young came up to Burton and re-racked the gear. He then began the third to the last pitch. He was about 20 feet up in the climb when he came upon a flake on the right. He said it looked like an obvious place to go. He mentioned that it was a thin flake but it was tucked behind another flake so he thought it would not be a problem. The flake was almost three feet off to the right of Burton. Young said that he did not warn Burton that he was testing the flake. He thought that if it fell it would miss Burton as there was a three foot space. Young put in a #1 Friend and clipped in his daisy chain to the Friend. He pulled on it and the flake came off. He yelled, "Rock," immediately. The flake fell to the left and not to the right as expected. Young said that the flake fell to the left because of the fracture line. When he yelled rock, Burton looked up and the flake struck him on the forehead. Fortunately, Burton was wearing a helmet.

The force of the blow caused Burton to become unconscious. Young said that Burton was bleeding from the forehead. He downclimbed immediately. He thought Burton was dead. He had some difficulty in downclimbing as he had to climb through the system already rigged. When he was downclimbing and got along side of Burton, Young said that he was yelling, trying to get a response from him. After about five minutes he said that he detected a moaning sound. Young said that he gave him a brief check and determined that the head wound was the most serious. He checked his fingers and toes and asked him about pain in his neck. Burton was coming around and could speak. Young removed the helmet and bandaged up the head wound and replaced the helmet. He then secured Burton on the wall.

Young then downclimbed and brought up the portaledge. He set it up and transferred Burton from the hammock to the portaledge. He placed Burton in his jacket and sleeping bag. He checked the pupils in his eyes. At this time he felt that Burton was improving. Burton told Young that he was allergic to penicillin and morphine. Young kept talking to Burton and rechecking him. He yelled for help and reported his situation to visitors below. Rescuers soon arrived. (Source: Daniel Horner, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

*(Editor's Note: Ranger John Dill sent a sketch of the helmet. He noted that the rock had split the shell, the suspension, his scalp and his skull—but not the meninges. As Dill put it, "Send the boy to Vegas—with my money!")*

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

### **California, Yosemite Valley, Bishops Terrace**

Keith Kramer (22) was planning on climbing Bishops Terrace with a new climbing partner who had little to no experience. Kramer did not have a guide book and was able