

that the victim was not following normal precautions. Another factor that adds to the latter is that he was not wearing a helmet. Third, the system of top-roping he chose was not ordinary. A friend of both the victim and his partner wrote a letter in which she indicated that John High was both knowledgeable and careless. We would agree with her further observation that "careless accidents seem to happen far more frequently to very experienced climbers," and that, "Confidence [can be] dangerous.")

DISLOCATED KNEE—FALL ON ROCK, MISCOMMUNICATION

New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge

On July 3, 1992, Mark Chauvin was guiding on Standard and had gone about 35 feet up the Toe Crack to a belay ledge when his first student, who was doing the crux layback move, experienced a dislocated knee and fell as a result. Chauvin did a counter balanced rappel with the student on his back to bring them to the ground. MRS members carried the victim to an ambulance.

Analysis

The student had dislocated his knee before this time. He did not communicate this fact to the guide or to other students. Even though he thought the problem had been corrected, he should have told the guide, and perhaps even have considered wearing an appropriate knee brace. (Source: George Hurley)

FALL ON WET ROCK, NO HARD HAT

New Hampshire, Whitehorse Ledge

On August 2, 1992, Steve Wickham (32) was about 600 feet up on "Wedge" when he fell. His rope was clipped through about six pieces of gear, with the final one being a 1 1/2 Friend which caught his fall of about 50 feet. He was upside down and bleeding profusely, and he was unconscious. The male partner, with a belay from the female, climbed to Steve and righted him. Steve regained consciousness after being out for about seven to ten minutes. He suffered a wound on top of his head, a fractured skull with the break running half way around his head, and two compressed vertebrae.

The accident happened around 1505. The litter-lower rescue by the MRS and other climbers was completed by 1800. Members of SOLO and the North Conway Fire Department Rescue Squad were at the base to carry Steve to the ambulance. Because of the severity of his skull fracture, he was flown from the North Conway Hospital to the Hitchcock Center near Hanover.

Analysis

The victim was not wearing a hard hat. He and his partners had decided that Whitehorse Ledge is a clean cliff, and therefore left helmets in the car. (Source: George Hurley)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge

On October 4, I was climbing at Cathedral Ledge with a friend. We were doing a four pitch 5.9 route called Diedre, and despite the sun, we were on the north side on a cool (but blue) Fall day, which made finger warmth marginal. I was leading the top pitch, a

crack book whose left pages were about one meter wide, and had already reluctantly parted with my #2 Camalot to get to it. At the bottom of the crack, perfectly sized for a #2, as guessed from the base, I had to plant my next largest piece, a #1, far back in said crack. It didn't look too bad, and resisted a few pulls.

I moved up, getting my left foot out on the outside corner and right foot near the crack, to move my left hand up to a high hold near the crack. By the time I'd moved the left foot up and discovered that the only right hand-hold was where the left one was, my left hand was weakening badly. Some combination of it collapsing and my left foot coming off its perch caused me to fall before I was expecting to have to try a retreat. The #1, at waist level, pulled out with no discernible resistance, causing me to go down ten to 12 feet (pendulumming a bit) to the next piece (a rap sling), banging the bony protrusion just below and on the outside of my left knee en route and winding up upside down. I quickly righted myself, discovered that I couldn't stand on my left leg, and got lowered back to the ledge. My partner cleaned the pitch with me belaying from a seated position, and rappelled off the sling, then we roped up to move (hop) back down a levelish flake and rappelled to the ground in a single rope-length. After a few failed attempts to hop or walk supported, my partner (5' 6", 130 pounds) carried me the 100 meters down to the road.

The injury proved to be a fracture of the left tibia, requiring a two hour operation and four titanium screws.

Analysis

One's health and fitness are far too valuable to mess with for matters as trivial as poorly placed protection. (Source: Bruce Normand—25)

(Editor's Note: There were a few other incidents of interest in New Hampshire during 1992. In April, a hiker tried to descend Huntington Ravine. He slipped in the fresh snow covering hard ice and triggered an avalanche that carried him down 900 feet. He suffered multiple fractures, and was not found until nine hours later. Rescuers got him down. He was wearing work boots and jeans, and had no climbing gear.

Another accident, resulting in a fatality, occurred on Cathedral Ledge in the summer. A young woman (19) was walking with family members on top of Cathedral Ledge when she stumbled on an open slab and fell about 150 feet to the tree covered ledge below the route called "Grim Reaper."

While neither of these is considered to be climbing or mountaineering accidents by our definition, they may be interpreted as such by others, which is unfortunate. It would really be unfortunate if this final description, by George Hurley, were to be categorized as a mountaineering mishap: A 20-year-old from Framingham, Massachusetts, was lost recently for six days on and around Mount Chocorua. During this time he lost his tent and his cigarette lighter (his only fire starter), but otherwise had his camping gear including plenty of food, a sleeping bag, and his battery powered portable TV on which he watched the many searchers and a National Guard helicopter looking for him. If the lost man's explanation is accurate, he did not know what a trail looked like. He expected something grand (like a road), so he crossed trails instead of following them. He also crossed instead of following streams. Had he followed either trails or streams downhill, he would have come to a highway. Instead, he kept moving—mostly uphill—without map or compass or plan until he happened on the Forest Service road which led him out of the woods at the

place he went in. His comment after his six days in the woods was, "Great country.")

VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, PROTECTION PROBLEMS, PULLING BELAYERS OFF

New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

Thirteen accidents were reported in 1992, six of which resulted in fractures—the most serious injuries. In two cases, belayers were pulled from their positions. All but one of the accidents were falls resulting from climbing, including two solo climbers who fell to the ground. One male (47), however, fell because his nut placement demonstration on practice rock above the Uberfall pulled out when he tested it.

One of the reasons attributed to fewer accidents in the area for this year is that there were an unusual number of rain days on the weekends. (Source: Mohonk Preserve)

(Editor's Note: An independent report of a fall from Birdland (5.8), resulting in a severe rope burn behind one knee, came in with an interesting comment. It seems the climber who fell—about 20 feet—tried to hook the rope with his leg and wound up dangling upside down. His partner concluded that, "...a chest harness seems a necessity, especially when climbing where a fall out over an overhang may be realized." This conclusion is not necessarily correct, as research by the French Commission de Securite in Chamonix has shown that free falls with chest harnesses are likely to result in whip-lash injury.)

FALL ON ICE, CLIMBING UNROPED

Oregon, Mount Hood

On February 29, Ralph Leach (40), Tom Morgan (53), and Lee Hepfer (49) successfully ascended the South Side (Hogsback) route on Mount Hood. At 1130 while descending the same route, Hepfer jumped the bergschrund (10,300 feet), slipped, and fell into a fumarole bowl known as "Devil's Kitchen." He was able to self-arrest after sliding about 300 yards. Leach descended to report the accident while Morgan down climbed to assist the injured Hepfer.

A multi-agency (downhill ski patrol, Nordic ski patrol, professional EMT, mountain rescue) hasty team reached the accident site around 1600 and made contact with the two skiers who had just assisted in moving Hepfer to a slightly lower location. A fully equipped Portland Mountain Rescue team left the base at 1637 to support a possible ground evacuation. Hampered by a steep, icy approach and inadequate equipment, two hasty team members managed to reach the subject at 1645. Requests for an air evacuation by the ARRS 304th were met and Hepfer was hoisted aboard a Pavehawk at 1710 and transported to Oregon Health Science University. Hepfer was treated for a broken ankle and lacerations of the face and hand.

Analysis

The bergschrund on the Hogsback is a frequent site for climbing accidents. Numerous climbers have broken or sprained ankles after underestimating the vertical drop of the jump. Down climbing is usually a more controlled and less traumatic maneuver. The use of a rope belay would have prevented the fall. This is particularly prudent if the