

FALL ON ROCK, WEATHER

New Hampshire, Rattlesnake Mountain

On September 17, 1994, Leon Kaatz fell down a wet rock slab while trying to set up a handline for friends with whom he was hiking. Kaatz is a climber, and this hiking situation called for climbing skill because of the wetness of the rock slab. Fortunately for him, he landed next to a rock climbing class from the University of New Hampshire. Most of them were EMT or Wilderness EMT trained. The class took over the responsibility for the evacuation and carry-out.

The students were pleased—and somewhat surprised—to find out that their training actually worked when put into practice. Their teacher, Dr. Michael Gass, said, “Their perspective on life is service to others. Action personifies the perspective the students have. I admire and respect them for that.”

Kaatz, who came out of the accident with a fractured elbow and many cuts and scratches, is an experienced climber. In a letter of thanks to Gass’ class, Kaatz said: “I have done much climbing in my days and I have participated before in litter rescues. This is the first time, however, I have ever participated in a litter rescue from the reclining position.” (Source: From a report and letter submitted by Michael Gass)

STRANDED, GREED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

New Hampshire, Mount Meader

In October 1994, two youths (c. 18) spied some climbing gear on rappel stations on a cliff of Mount Meader in the Carter Range. They had previously done a rock day at a summer camp and were excited about climbing. They were interested in accumulating some gear and knew that it was expensive. Here they saw their opportunity. Using some half-inch hardware store rope, one of the kids hand-over-handed down the line, retrieved a biner and a couple of slings, then went hand-over-hand back up the rope.

They then set up to hit the next rappel station. Down he went again, only this time the wall was slightly overhanging and he swung out into space. The youth jumped and landed on a four-foot by eight-foot ledge. His partner hiked back to their camp, then back up to the top of the cliff and threw down blankets and water. He then hiked two miles to a road and notified authorities. Fish and Game called us at 1800. Mike Belchat, Ray Cotniour and I hiked to the cliff with Lt. Jeff Gray. I rappelled down and put the kid in a harness and helmet. We then rigged an assisted 2-1 and hoisted the youth to the top, about 20 feet. We all hiked out and were at the cars around midnight. (Source: Paul Cormier)

FALLING ROCK, NO HARD HAT

New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff

On October 14, 1994, while ascending the talus slope below Cannon Cliff, a large section of rock (est. 100 feet across) fell off the cliff high above us. The rock broke up as it fell and swept down the talus slope over our position. (The victim (52) suffered a fractured arm and head injuries.)

Analysis

Although this type of accident probably cannot be prevented, wearing your helmet even when you are quite far from the cliff can’t hurt. (Source: Robert Garrison)