

The Air Care Helicopter from Durango was in the air on a training mission and was diverted to the wide highway in front of the lodge where it was met by the victim. Very little time was spent on the ground and Seeberg and Leo Lloyd, who is also a strong and experienced mountaineer, were lifted into the vicinity of the site and raced over snow to the victims. Hutt was then stabilized, given oxygen and packaged for the drag out to a suitable landing zone, where he was evacuated by a second helicopter to the waiting Air Care ship below, and taken to the Durango Hospital 27 miles to the south. Hutt's core temperature upon arrival at the Emergency Room was 86° F. (I believe he has made a full recovery.)

Were it not for Seeberg's decisive actions—reaching the scene, stabilizing the victim, racing to the parking lot and to a phone and then joining the initial rescue party to pinpoint the location and helping the flight nurse treat, package and drag out to the landing zone—Hutt would surely have died. Minutes made the difference.

Each victim suffered severe trauma, but little other impact injury after a fall of slightly over 1,000 feet, much of that nearly vertical. (The dog was virtually uninjured.) I theorize that the head injuries occurred early in the fall, but that enough snow was entrained in the descent to act as a cushioning envelope around the victims. The slope below the face upon which the avalanche ran out was probably about 45° which helped decelerate the fall velocity and minimized chances of further injury. Hutt remembers nothing beyond the cornice collapse and the first few feet of the fall. (Source: Don Bachman, Avalanche Forecaster—Colorado Avalanche Information Center, Silverton Office)

RAPPEL ERROR—ROPES UNEVEN

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Hand Crack

On June 11, a climber (29) rappelled off the end of one-half of his rope and fell 30 feet. He indicated that his rappel rope was not doubled equally. (Source: Tim Metzger, Park Manager, Eldorado Canyon State Park)

FALL ON ROCK, FATIGUE, LATE START

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Hallett Peak

On July 15, at 1030, Robert Gould (53) and Kenneth Brenneman (55) left Bear Lake trailhead to do an ascent of the Northcutt-Carter Route on Hallett Peak. Upon arrival at the base of the North Face, they realized that their start was too late. So at noon, they began to climb the Hallett Chimney (III 5.6, A2) because they thought that this would be a fast and easy route. The chimney was wet and had patches of snow in parts, causing the climbers to move slowly and resort to aid at one point. At 1845, about 300 feet from the top of the route, Gould took a 35 foot fall on wet and muddy rock, becoming unconscious and unresponsive. Brenneman lowered Gould to the side of a snow field, tied off Gould at two points on his harness, placed all extra clothing on Gould, and rappelled ten 70-foot rope lengths to the base of the face. He then reported the accident to Rocky Mountain National Park SAR team. The rescue effort, which was initiated at 2230 upon Brenneman's report, took until 1245 on the following day. Gould was wearing a helmet, and this probably contributed to his survival of the head injuries. The intensive care unit at St. Anthony's Central Hospital in Denver, CO, said that Gould did not sustain any fractures from the accident but that he may take six months to a year to recover from the neurological injuries. He was able to recognize his wife and daughter within three days after the accident.