

FALL ON SNOW/ICE COVERED ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT

New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff, Omega

On March 13, Alan Cattabriga (35) started up Omega, an extremely difficult and dangerous mixed (ice, rock, verglas, and snow-covered rock) route on the east face of Cannon Cliff a few hundred feet south of the Whitney-Gilman Arête. Cattabriga placed protection near the ground and threaded a runner behind ice columns at 20 feet. Higher on the pitch he threaded another runner around a less solid ice column. His highest protection was a Spectre ice piton, a steel beak made for marginal conditions. He was above that and at a point about 40 to 45 feet above the ground, standing on his front points on a snow covered 80° rock slab, with no adequate holds for his hands, when his front points slipped. He fell and the top two protection points failed. He hit the ground before the better protection came into play.

Cattabriga suffered a broken tibia and fibula in his right leg and a broken scapula in his left shoulder. He also had extensive bruising to his left shoulder (with probable rotator cuff damage), left ribs, elbow, hip, and calf. The entire left side of his body turned black and blue a few days after the accident. He was wearing a helmet and received no head injuries.

Cattabriga's two climbing partners, Jim Shimberg and Ted Hammond, splinted Cattabriga's right leg and then tied his helmet over his right foot so that his foot would slide easily over the snow. Cattabriga then crawled feet first down the snow covered talus slope and then at times head first through the trees. The crawl to the road took four hours.

Analysis

Omega is "an extreme route which epitomized the desperate nature of modern ice climbs with its thinly-verglassed start [and] mixed climbing... . [It] rarely comes into shape" (p. 72, *An Ice Climber's Guide to Northern New England*, second edition, by Rick Wilcox). The three experienced climbers understood the risks of difficult climbing and marginal protection. After the accident, Cattabriga wanted a self-rescue—with help from his partners—because he believes in climbers being self-reliant if at all possible. (Sources: George Hurley, Alan Cattabriga, and Jim Shimberg)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge, Intimidation

On May 21, Craig Johnson (26) was at the crux move on Intimidation (5.10) trying to place protection, but could not. So he "went for it." He made the crux and was about to put in protection when he slipped off "polished, moist rock." He fell 20 feet and hit a ledge just as the rope came tight. He broke both tibias and fibulas.

Analysis

Johnson "definitely recommends slinging two nuts to protect the crux." He also commented, "Make sure you are *leading* solid 5.10." (Source: Craig Johnson)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT

New Hampshire, Rumney Cliff, Holderness School Crack

On July 3, I was leading Holderness School Crack, which I have climbed at least 20 times and led (in fact I led it before the accident). I scrambled onto the ledge, started the climb and placed a directional nut near the bottom. I continued and placed a #1 Friend. I continued about ten feet past the Friend (a total of 25 to 30 feet above the

ledge at the bottom). I believe my left foot slipped—though I only remember hitting the ground. The Friend pulled out. I landed on my back and hit my head. I was littered off the edge. My husband is a paramedic and directed the rescue as well as administered first aid. I went to Speare Hospital in Plymouth and was transferred to Lakes Region General Hospital. My injuries included cracked ribs (back), cracked left humerus, sprained ankle, severely broken right hand which was operated on and put back together with three screws. I had lots of typical Rumney abrasions all over my body and minor bleeds in my brain (detected on the CAT scan).

Analysis

I would have been dead if I didn't have my helmet on. It's hard to know exactly what happened. I was not climbing above my ability and I was not ill equipped. I may have been over-confident and so did not pay enough attention to the Friend placement. Having a cellular phone in the car made everything happen very fast. It was not a luxury but a serious part of rescue equipment. (Source: Susan Kennedy, 27)

STRANDED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff, Lakeview

On July 13, Eric Lougee, with two years of climbing experience, took his cousin, Donald Lougee (33), to Cannon Cliff for what Donald thought was to be an introductory climbing lesson. After a short lesson, the two men started up Lakeview. When Donald realized that they were headed for the top he objected, but his cousin insisted on continuing. Eric Lougee reached the top of the Old Man's head in the late afternoon. Donald was unable to climb the final crux flake, 50 feet below the top.

Eric left Donald on the slab below the crux and went down the climbers' trail to call for a rescue. Two rescuers reached the stranded climber at 2200. As one rescuer rappelled down to him, he saw climbing gear (protection and quick draws) in place in the exit corner, but no rope. The rope was in a pile at the beginner's feet where he was sitting on the slab. The leader must have dropped the rope, either intentionally or by accident.

Analysis

It is unfortunately fairly common for leaders to talk less experienced companions into climbing a route which is too difficult. In this case the beginner was not a willing companion. His first words to the rescuer were, "I told him I didn't want to do this. I told him!"

A more experienced leader could have helped his partner to the top in one of several ways. He could have hauled him using a Z pulley. He could have used his own weight as a counterbalance to help the second up the crux. He could have tied foot loops in his (the leader's) end of the rope, lowered those loops and anchored that end of the rope so that the second could climb the loops. He could have rappelled with the beginner to the brushy ledge below the Old Man's head and then bushwhacked north to meet the climber's trail. He could have taught his partner how to prussik before taking him onto a big cliff like Cannon. (Source: George Hurley)

STRANDED, OFF ROUTE, LATE START

New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff

On July 24, John (26) and Lisa Tedesco reached a spot close under the Old Man's chin on Cannon Cliff. They could not find the normal exit corner, the Wiessner finish, which