

as the leader, to make an extrication happen. The substantial difference in weight made this very difficult. Extra people power would have resolved this problem, hence the decision by a guide to travel on the glacier with only one client, although many teams of two climb McKinley each season, must be evaluated more thoroughly in the future. Perhaps Gum could have waited at a higher camp for the group to make their summit attempt and then descend as a team.

Despite having practiced ascending a rope at the beginning of the expedition, Gum encountered complications that he could not overcome to ascend out of the crevasse himself. Taniguchi attempted to rig a Z-pulley system but due to limited gear he could not build enough mechanical advantage to raise Gum. While in the crevasse Gum could have helped his situation by putting on a fleece hat that was in a side pouch of his pack and eating snacks from the top of his pack. One medical complication which was discovered at the hospital was that Gum's potassium level was ten points below normal. This occurred because he ingested such a large quantity of hot water. The warmth provided by this water undoubtedly contributed to his survival, but the addition of a flavor mix to the water would have helped even more. (Source: Denali National Park—Talkeetna Subdistrict Ranger Station)

RAPPEL ERROR—ROPE NOT ANCHORED, NO BELAY

Arizona, Oak Creek Canyon

On April 13, Benjamin Rusev (19) fell 75 feet down a cliff in Oak Creek Canyon. At the time, he was attempting to rappel. Rusev's partner tried to grab the line after Rusev began falling.

Many other people were climbing in the area—one of the most popular climbing spots near Flagstaff—when Rusev fell. (The overlook is about eight miles south of Flagstaff.) One of them was a registered nurse, Jeff Davis, who works at Flagstaff Medical Center. Davis and other climbers cared for Rusev while rescue teams headed to the scene. Eleven members of the Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team responded, as did Kachina Village firefighters and an Arizona Department of Public Safety air-rescue team. (Source: *Arizona Daily Sun*, April 4, 1996)

(Editor's Note: Angelo Kokenakis, a mountain guide from Flagstaff, reported in a letter that the usual beginning climbing area of this crag had been closed off for safety reasons—to protect the non-climbing public who use the crag as a vista lookout. So these neophytes were actually using an unknown 80 foot crag rather than the established 30 foot beginner area.)

CLIMBING ALONE and UNROPED, DISTRAUGHT

Arkansas, Sam's Throne

On October 12, Chris Harris (23) was soloing at night on Instant Trauma (5.10a) when he fell 75 feet to his death.

Analysis

Harris came out late in the afternoon, and was supposed to meet friends. But they didn't show up. He took all his gear—rope, solo aid device, etc.—and laid it out neatly at the bottom of the cliff. However, when he was found, it was obvious that he didn't

use any of it. It was also known that he had several unresolved personal problems which may have had an effect on his actions. (Source: Mark Allen)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED

California, Morro Bay, Morro Rock

On January 21, Jody Walker (17) of St. Helena died from head and neck injuries after he plunged about 100 feet from Morro Rock while climbing its northwest face.

"When our paramedics got to him he was unconscious," said Morro Bay Fire Chief Jeff Jones. "He suffered significant blood loss."

Jones had worked with the Morro Bay Fire Department since 1979 and said he can't remember anyone dying in a rock-climbing incident at Morro Rock.

"If it's not the first, it's the first in a long time," he said.

Walker and his friend Justin Valasquez, also of St. Helena, were free climbing the Rock Sunday morning when Walker fell.

The 578-foot high rock is treacherous, said Dave Sears, spokesman for California State Parks, which manages Morro Rock. He said signs prohibiting climbers are posted near the Rock. Morro Rock is a peregrine falcon preserve and it is against the law to scale it, he said.

"The signs are there for their own protection," he said.

Several agencies participated in the rescue. Jones said even with the best training and professional equipment, rescuers can't save every accident victim. He urged the public to respect signs posted around the Rock. (Source: *San Luis Obispo County Telegram Tribune*, January 23, 1996)

(Editor's Note: This is the first report from Morro Rock. In nearby San Luis Obispo, there is a popular climbing cliff—complete with poison oak, snakes, owls, etc. Any additional information from this area will be appreciated.)

FALL ON ROCK, ROPE SEVERED, CARABINER BROKE

California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan

On April 1, Matt Baxter (26), an experienced big-wall climber, set out alone to fix the first few pitches of Zenyatta Mondatta, a difficult multi-day aid route on El Capitan. The next morning, after he had failed to return home, friends found his body at the base of the route. He had apparently fixed the first two pitches and fallen while leading the third.

The first half of the third pitch slants up left at about 65 degrees on a vertical wall. The climbing is mostly on hooks and fixed copperheads, with an occasional camming device. Few placements offer bombproof protection. The equipment on Baxter's body—harness, daisies, etriers, hardware racks, and rope—was properly rigged, but the rope, a new Mammut Flash 10.5mm, was severed about 25 feet from the clove hitch he was using for an adjustable self-belay.

The other end of the rope, 15-20 feet long, was anchored at the start of the pitch and then clipped through a TCU 10-12 feet above and left of the belay. From there the rope ran 5 feet left across the top of a 2-foot wide pedestal and was jammed into a 1/4-in. wide crack between the pedestal and the wall. It had broken where it exited the