

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