

FALLING ROCK—ROUTE OVERCROWDED, POOR POSITION **Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Red Garden Wall**

On September 29, a climber (30) was recording the first pitch of Rewritten when a rock was knocked loose by a party higher up on the route. The rock struck and fractured her right forearm. (Source: J. W. Wilder, Park Ranger)

(Editor's Note: On the weekends in this park, it is typical to see 50 to 100 climbers in clusters of ten to twenty on the popular routes.)

FALL ON ROCK—RAPPEL ANCHOR SLING NOT TIED, DISTRACTION **Colorado, Aspen, Die Hard**

On October 12, Jake McNelly (23) set up a rappel on a short sport climbing route at a popular cliff called Die Hard. McNelly had walked around to the top of the cliff to set up a top-rope above a half-pitch 5.8 route called Ain't Over 'Til It's Over. Two medium sized trees near the lip of the cliff typically are used for top rope anchors. According to the other climbers in the area, McNelly appeared to set his anchor and clip his rope into it, then tug on it before backing off the lip of the cliff, which forms a very clean, 90-degree break. At this point the climber began to free fall down the cliff. For most of the approximately 50-foot fall, he slid on his chest, ultimately landing on his right side at the base of the cliff and rolling approximately 20 feet downhill to stop at a tree.

The accident occurred about 1230. Other climbers rendered aid and were able to make a cell phone call for help within 15 minutes. Ambulance EMTs and an emergency room physician (also a member of Mountain Rescue-Aspen) were on the scene within 15 minutes of that call. An evacuation team arrived shortly thereafter. The victim, who was alert and oriented but inclined to persevere (repeat himself), complained of back pain and difficulty breathing. He was placed on high-flow oxygen and intravenous fluids. He had no obvious deformities and showed good capillary refill. Spinal precautions were maintained to prevent further injury. He showed oxygen saturation rates of 90 percent or better and a heart rate of 90 during evacuation. The patient was littered 50 yards to the top of a scree slope, then lowered approximately 150 feet down the slope to an ambulance. The victim was loaded into the ambulance 30 minutes after the evac team arrived at the trailhead and 70 minutes after the first page was issued, departing the scene about 1430. The victim was continuing to complain of injuries at the time he was loaded into the ambulance.

McNelly was transported approximately ten miles to Aspen Valley Hospital, but died in the emergency room around 1530 of a ruptured aorta. Autopsy results suggested the aorta had been partially ruptured during the fall, developed a hematoma, and then ruptured fully. Also, there was noticeable bruising on the right temporal lobe, which could have led to the perseveration.

Analysis

Discussions with other climbers on the scene and inspection of McNelly's equipment suggest the following. First, McNelly set up a single rappel anchor, despite the fact that two anchors are located in close proximity. The sling used for this anchor reportedly fell to the bottom of the cliff with the climber, along with the single locking carabiner he had clipped in with, and his rappel device. Inspection of the sling revealed the following: three short sections of black, flat tubular webbing, tied together with water knots to form a sling about six feet long. Two single overhand knots were also present in the webbing, appearing by