

speed during this training climb. It is possible that Mark's assessment of the flake was compromised by his desire to move fast; however, it should also be recognized that it is impossible to identify all loose rocks. Climbers should treat all holds as suspect. (Source: John Bouchard)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION—RAPPEL ANCHOR (PITONS) CAME OUT

New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff

On December 16, Tom Douglas (26) and I (29) hiked up to the base of Cannon Cliff to climb Black Dike, a moderate four-pitch mixed rock and ice climb. Finding a line of climbers waiting for the Dike, we decided instead to climb a harder line just to the right, called Fafnir. While following the final pitch (almost completely rock in the current conditions), Tom released an engine-sized block with his feet and watched it crash 300 feet to the ground. Thankfully, no one was hurt and we completed the three-pitch climb successfully without further incident about 1 p.m.

Hoping to have time to climb the Black Dike, we immediately began our rappel, using a single 60 meter rope and the fixed gear at the belay stations as anchors. Rappelling first, Tom neared the final anchor and realized that the rope did not quite reach the fixed gear (since the length of the rope allowed us to skip the second-to-last anchor). Tom told me that the rope did not reach and that he would down climb the remaining ten feet on moderate ice to the anchor. He clipped into the anchor and I rappelled to the end of the rope. I untied from the rope, passed him an end and then he threaded the rope through the fixed gear (two pitons connected with two slings) and began his rappel as I down climbed to the anchor to clip in. Just as he started rappelling, the anchors pulled out and he fell approximately 100–120 feet to the ground, bouncing twice on the way down and then rolling for about 20 feet on the 30-degree scree slope below. Tom stood up after about ten seconds and said that he had broken his right arm but was otherwise OK. It took me about fifteen minutes to down climb the last pitch, during which time Tom began walking down. I joined Tom and he completed the two-hour walk under his own power. At the hospital, we found that he had broken his left tibia, left hand, and a number of bones in his right arm.

Analysis

Lessons learned: always, always, check fixed gear and back up anything that looks even remotely unsafe. Also, it's easy to focus on the difficulties of the ascent of a climb and let your guard down during the descent. A climb is not over until you're safely at your car! (Source: Hank Midgley)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Huntington Ravine, O'Dell's Gully

December 29, Greg Farrell (39) and Brian Carlock, both experienced ice climbers, were ascending O'Dell's Gully at 0815 in preparation for a trip to Mount Katahdin. Part of their training was to climb Pinnacle and O'Dell's in a day