

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

and employ the technique of “simul-climbing” to climb quicker on the easier sections. Neither of them had used this technique before.

Using a doubled 8.6 mm rope, they had at least one ice screw between them. The terrain was water ice, moderate angle. Brian was leading. With one screw in the ice, Greg stopped at the screw to wait for Brian to place a second ice screw before he removed the one he was at. Catching his crampon point on his bootstrap, Greg lost his balance and fell, pulling Brian with him. Sliding and bouncing down the ice, the single ice screw did hold their fall (the 17 cm, Yates Screamer had activated). Greg fell 13 meters while Brian fell 39 meters, and both ended up hanging side by side on the ice. Both seemed to be OK at this point, so Greg built an anchor where they were and lowered Brian down to the snow slope using an extra rope he had in his pack. Once at the base of the ice, Brian realized pain in his right hip would prevent him from standing, so a second climbing party used an ice anchor to lower Brian down the snow slope to the trail. Many nearby climbers assisted in getting Brian to the trail where he was carried out by litter. Later that evening, Brian was treated for his soft tissue injuries and released from the Androscoggin Medical Center.

### **Analysis**

While simul-climbing is a technique used for moving quickly over moderate terrain, it is also dangerous because a slip by the second could easily pull the leader off, as happened in this accident. We should have had more protection between us. This technique calls for abundant protection even on easy terrain as these points are the only “belay” for the climbers, at least two points of protection between climbers. Because the terrain was easy, I was more “relaxed” and didn’t have my axes planted well—they were dangling at my side—at the stance before the fall, which would’ve resulted in a stumble only. The leader should have his tools planted well and anchored to them while placing a screw, thus creating a temporary anchor for himself and partner. Even on easy terrain it is important to be constantly vigilant and to immediately have tools planted securely at stances, as portable belays. (Source: Greg Farrell)

*(Editors Note: Jeff Fongemie points out the following. “Easy ice is not always about the angle of the ice. The ice on Mount. Washington is often very brittle and even low angle ice can be difficult. If, at a Mountain Rescue Service meeting here in North Conway, you asked how many have taken falls on low angle ice, you might be surprised to see how many highly experienced mountaineers raise their hands.”)*

## **FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **New Hampshire, Crawford Notch, Frankenstein Cliffs**

On December 30 Bob O’Brien paired up with Lisa Thompson for some ice climbing. Bob is an experienced ice climber of more than ten years and while Lisa has limited experience with ice climbing, she has many years of rock climbing experience. They had not climbed together before.

Bob set off for a lead of Cave Route (NEI 3) with Lisa as the belayer. Cave Route is a one pitch route that begins with a 30 foot section of 55 to 60 degree