

Sinjin most likely did not have a dangerous spinal injury, it was necessary to lower him off the ledge for a rescue team to gain access to him. Sinjin became courageous enough to be lowered off the cliff and was able to maintain most of his weight on one foot until he reached the bottom. Although he could manage this, he could not walk, and attempting to do so would exacerbate the situation. All fours were needed to get out of the canyon and Sinjin had maybe one and a half at best.

Hours later, Jen Semon and Steve arrived with a rescue medical kit and we gave Sinjin a desperately needed IV and narcotics. Moments after that, a Kirkland Air Force Base CH 53 helicopter arrived with a Para-rescue team. The winds were shiftier at about ten to fifteen knots, but the down draft in that little vertical canyon made it seem like a hurricane. Sinjin was lifted by winch at a 35–40-degree angle with a tag line and taken to the hospital. A ground rescue for Sinjin would have been complicated and absolutely taken into the next day. The storm that came in an hour after the rescue had gale forces that would have made it impossible for the CH 53. This would have proven a bad outcome for his medical well-being as he would most likely have lost a major portion of his hands and possibly his foot to secondary infection and sepsis. He spent an extra two hours in surgery to make his hands functional again.

Analysis

What I learned from this experience is that good decision making, being prepared, being lucky, and good, fast connections can all come together to escape disaster. Sometimes a safer route cannot be taken, so it is important to realize when the danger zone is present. It was a humbling experience for both of us to find ourselves at the mercy of nature, especially since we have many years of climbing experience between us. (Source: Marc Beverly)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, INADEQUATE CLOTHING, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

New Mexico, Organ Mountains, Organ Needle

On December 1, John Smith (name changed) was reported overdue from a solo climb of the 4th-class route up the Organ Needle (9,012 feet). Following a lengthy search, his body was found at the base of a 60-foot frozen waterfall on the east side of Dark Canyon, directly below the Organ Needle. The subject had apparently fallen while either attempting an unnamed fifth-class route from below the Dark Canyon Saddle to the summit of the Organ Needle, or traversing below the south side of the summit. He had apparently survived the initial fall but suffered a second fatal fall while attempting to down-climb the ice.

Analysis

Reports from friends and family indicated this man was experienced in this area; however, he was clearly exceeding his abilities. The subject was clothed in cotton jeans and a light cotton jacket. While unusually mild weather existed at low elevations, temperatures at summit elevation were regularly below freezing. The exact details of the accident will never be known, but the subject appeared to be attempting either an unroped solo climb or an unroped traverse. And, while he

survived the initial fall, he was apparently disoriented, so in attempting to climb back down the mountain, chose the wrong route. It is unclear whether the subject would have survived the wait for rescue with the head injuries sustained in the initial fall. (Source: Tim Manning, Albuquerque Mountain Rescue)

VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, INADEQUATE BELAYS, NO OR INADEQUATE PROTECTION, NO HARD HAT

New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

There were 28 climbing-related accidents reported this year. Eighteen involved leader falls, six involved top roping or seconding, and one was a rappel error. There were three bouldering-related accidents that resulted in minor injuries. These were due to poor spotting or missing the landing pad. Bouldering is gaining in popularity again.

Seven falls resulted in fractures, one in a dislocation, and two in concussions, one of which was due to no hard hat. The rest, with the exception of the fatality described below, included bruises and lacerations. Three of the reports indicated poor rope handling, either with too much slack in the rope or not enough rope to lower the climber to the ground. Several mishaps were due to leading grades above the climbers' abilities.

One cliff rescue was performed on the poplar climb "Hawk" (5.4) in the Trapps. The leader had fallen on the second pitch, and the old piton he had clipped into pulled out of the rock. Due to his ankle injury, the climber needed to be lowered from the top of the first pitch by litter. (Source: From the annual report submitted by the Mohonk Preserve and Jed Williamson)

RAPPEL ERROR – WEBBING ANCHOR NOT TIED, FALL ON ROCK

New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

On October 14, Scott Ruit (29) fell about 80 feet to his death while attempting to rappel from Birdland. He set up an extended anchor using webbing, weighted it, and the fall began as the webbing came away from the anchor.

Analysis

Ruit's rope was found on the ground with carabiners attached to it. A piece of unsecured nylon webbing was found hanging from the anchor. When Ruit went to weight the rope, it apparently dropped through the 25-foot webbing, which Ruit probably thought was tied. It did not appear that there was anything wrong with the equipment or the fixed protection.

Ruit was described by locals as a good friend and a competent climber who was a cautious, experienced climber and who did not push his limits. (Source: Kirsten Conley, *The Times Herald*, and the Mohonk Preserve annual report)

FALL ON SNOW, WEATHER – UNSTABLE SNOW CONDITIONS, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS

Oregon, Mount Hood, Cooper Spur Route

Carey Cardon (31) and his wife Tena Cardon (29) were experienced mountaineers training for a proposed climb of Mt. McKinley. They started climbing the