

me. The pillar was about six feet in diameter. The second bolt I wanted to clip in to was not an easy reach, so I swung my pick into the ice with intentions of reaching the bolt by leaning off a secure pick placement. But the placement caused a clean shear across the pillar, propagating instantly from the point of contact. I fell a split second behind the falling pillar due to the friction of my butt against the rock. Right above the ground, I was arrested by the rope, but I was not spared the shower of large ice chunks. I ended up with broken ribs and shoulder and a deeply bruised leg. My wife was belaying 50 feet to the side, tied to a tree. It took us about three hours to get to the car, usually a half hour jaunt.

Analysis

The warming trend had probably created a lot of tension in the ice underneath its point of attachment. The cold night had made the ice brittle, so long, running fractures were more likely. The danger was fairly obvious. The lapse was in my perception of my ability to deal with the danger. I was too focused on doing this particular route. Also, I was complacent because I had climbed many similar structures with no mishap.

In hindsight, I can see I was lucky to get away with relatively minor injuries. My choice to climb an unstable route endangered the follower, since she could have caused the entire structure to collapse near the bottom, which would be almost certain death. (Source: Seth Shaw)

FALLING ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS, LEADER'S LAPSE LEAD TO MISJUDGMENT

Utah, Uinta Mountains – Between Gunsight Pass and Kings Peak

On June 29, Lucy (42), a beginning climber, was climbing above the leader (71) on an ascent near Kings Peak. She tried to stand on a precarious cluster of rocks and managed to dislodge four of them, varying in weight from an estimated 50 to 1,400 pounds. This resulted in a fractured ankle, multiple abrasions and lacerations, and a sprained knee.

Her leg was pinned under one rock, which had to be levered off. The ensuing rescue was complicated by the victim's husband being in psychogenic shock and giving the wrong location of the accident to rangers via phone.

Analysis

Being slower at age 71 and on a remarkably stable slope, I allowed a novice climber to climb above me. Always enforce discipline with inexperienced members of climbing group. Never allow novices to lead unless closely controlled for training, even if terrain is apparently ultra easy. Anticipate surprise obstacles. (Source: Stan Sattelberg)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, PROTECTION PULLED, FATIGUE, WEATHER, INEXPERIENCE

Vermont, Nichol's Ledge

On October 22, Ian (22) and Ryan (23) were attempting to climb the first pitch of a two-pitch route unfamiliar to both. Ian was leading and Ryan was belaying. The weather that day was cloudy, cool (40s), and windy. The first pitch of