

after dark with headlamps and camera flash.

A rescue was effected in the morning, after communications that night.

Analysis

Mescalito was their first climb after arriving in Yosemite, since they wanted to start “strongly.” Mescalito is rated VI 5.8 A3 and is a 26-pitch climb on very steep rock.

Caroline Brugvin, from Switzerland, had two years climbing experience, leads 5.11a/b trad and A2+. Prior to Mescalito, she had aid-climbed only three single-pitch practice climbs in “school.” She thought the aid climbing on Mescalito was easier in terms of the actual pitches but the climbing was longer. It was her first time in Yosemite and her first big wall. She had never done hauling before and knew nothing at all about it. She had climbed on granite before, in Chamonix. She had climbed with David since Spring 2001 as a friend, not as a client. She had not climbed with Jeremie before.

David Jonglez had been climbing for 10-12 years and leads 5.11b trad, A3-4. He had lots of aid experience. He climbed in Yosemite in 1994 (Nose, Half Dome) and 1996 (PO, Zodiac, Salathe). He works as a mountain guide at home. He has also climbed in Greenland, Peru etc. David was the boss on Mescalito. He and Jeremie had climbed together before.

This was Jeremie’s first time in Yosemite. He has only climbed in France. He felt the climbing here was less technical than at home. He felt it was easier to read the routes here. (Donna Sisson, Lincoln Else, John Dill—Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

(Editor’s Note: There were a few other accidents in Yosemite that do not appear in the narratives. These include four “rappel failure/error” situations on Royal Arches. In each case, the climbers became stranded, usually after dark, because either they were off route or did not understand how to use their equipment. One team rappelled to a point where, after they had shouted for help, the rangers instructed them, “You can walk down from there.”)

FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, CLIMBING ALONE, EXPOSURE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT/CLOTHING, WEATHER, INEXPERIENCE

California, Mount Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

Henry Clardy (41) was planning on climbing the Avalanche Gulch route on the south side of the mountain, starting on September 24. Clardy had little mountaineering experience but had attempted Mount Shasta in August. On that climb he did not summit due, apparently, to AMS. He had returned by himself in September.

Without checking the weather forecast or the current climbing conditions provided by the U.S. Forest Service, he began his climb from Horse Camp (7880 feet) at 0700 on the 24th. A storm was forecast for that afternoon and evening and during the day many signs of its approach were visible. Thinking his illness during his August climb was from too much food, he brought only a bag of trail-mix and a Camelback water pack. He wore cotton jeans, a long sleeve cotton t-shirt, a light insulated windbreaker, mid-weight boots, thin leather gloves, and a felt hat.

He did not notice the approaching storm, and when he summited around 1500, the storm began. Clardy removed his rimed (icy) glasses and unknowingly wandered off-route from the summit plateau (13,800 feet) into the steep Mud Creek drainage on the southeast side of the mountain. In the whiteout on the steep scree slopes, he fell and tumbled several times.

The storm dropped between six inches to over a foot of new snow with the snow level around 9000 feet. He realized he was lost and kept himself awake all night huddled by some rocks during the storm. He was attracted to the lights from the town of McCloud 6000 feet below and miles south. He continued at first light and, around 7000 feet, climbed out of the Mud Creek Canyon into the forest. He crossed a prominent logging road but continued past it toward McCloud. He spent his second night in a ravine against a log—around 5000 feet. The morning of the 26th, he decided to go back to the road and follow it.

The Horse Camp caretaker noticed the empty tent on September 24 and notified the USFS Climbing Rangers and Siskiyou County SAR. On 9/25 the search began with rangers following the route to 10,400 feet and the California Highway Patrol helicopter searching from the air. The helicopter was limited by winds and cloudy conditions. On the 26th, two rangers climbed toward the summit while two other rangers and Siskiyou County SAR searched the southeast side of the mountain from above 5000 feet. Clardy was found at 5000 feet, seven miles southeast of his original trailhead, at 0930 on the 26th. The ranger performed a full assessment and found mild signs and symptoms of hypothermia, bruising, abrasions, and possible superficial frostbite on Clardy's fingers, toes, and face. He was taken to Mercy Medical Center in Mount Shasta, where he was treated and released.

Analysis

Although this incident is not uncommon, it reminds us of the preventative actions we should take before a climb, even in California. Changes in weather can happen any time of the year on Mount Shasta. Climbing conditions are usually poor in September due to rockfall. It has snowed on Mount Shasta even during the peak of summer, and the average summer high temperature on the summit is below freezing. There is also a fine line between going light and being prepared. Avoiding cotton and carrying the “ten essentials” is always recommended, and we encourage climbers to wear a helmet. (Source: Eric White, Matt Hill—USFS Climbing Rangers)

(Editor's Note: The above report of a hiker-turned-climber is included for its educational value for all.)

FALL ON SNOW—UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

California, Mount Shasta, Sargents Ridge

The Mount Shasta area had a late winter start with very dry conditions on the mountain. The ridge routes, which are popular at this time of the year, were in poor shape, with loose rock and icy patches.

At approximately 1300 on December 29, a solo climber on the Sargents Ridge route came across a climber who had fallen from approximately 12,500