

FALL ON ROCK

Colorado, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Escape Artist

A 37-year-old climber fell yesterday afternoon (October 23) at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park while ascending the Escape Artist route on the North Rim wall. Nearby climbers witnessed the fall and were able to reach the climber who fell approximately 60 feet. The unidentified climber's protection held him on the wall until other climbers were able to lower him to the base of the climb. National Park rangers were notified at 5:00 p.m. and a rescue team was assembled. A Montrose County Fire Department paramedic reached the patient at approximately 10 p.m. The climber suffered possible pelvic and femur fractures and is in stable condition. He was evacuated to the Montrose Community Hospital. (Source: Edited from the NPS Morning Report)

FALL INTO BUILDING—MISCALCULATED PENDULUM SWING FROM CRANE

Colorado, Boulder

On December 6, Ryan Young and Jacob Fuerst climbed over the chain-link fence surrounding a University of Colorado construction site, and walked straight to the base of the towering yellow crane. It was about 3:00 a.m., 28 degrees F, with enough ambient light from a nearby classroom building to see. Wearing warm clothes and backpacks, the 22-year-old friends scaled the middle of the crane's square tubular tower, pulling themselves up hand-over-hand, accustomed to the effort, and not talking much.

"We knew what we needed to do," Fuerst said. They climbed up and around the crane operator's box and arrived at the boom—a triangular steel tube they estimated to be longer than the 125-foot crane was tall. They worked their way out to the boom's tip end, which extended across 18th Street and over an alley between two buildings below.

They thought the boom had been left angled in the perfect position for the giant swing off of it they were about to attempt. They calculated that they would swing through the alley and whoosh within five feet of the ground, before soaring back up above the buildings.

"We liked to go get where people had not gone before," Fuerst would say later. "It seems like these days, that's hard to come by. It's especially even harder in Colorado to get up in faraway places and do what no one's ever done."

Even though they hadn't taken a jump this daring before, they craved the adrenaline rush that would follow. They unzipped their backpacks and extracted two 200-foot climbing ropes, some webbing, and carabiners. They secured two pieces of webbing to the crane tip, as anchors, and attached their climbing ropes to the anchor with carabiners. They then retreated

about 90 feet along the boom, back toward the center of the crane, until their ropes pulled almost taut against their hip and chest harnesses.

Young would go first. He extended his arms wing-like, preparing to take flight. And then he hopped off the 12-story crane into the night. Fuerst watched as the rope took control of Young's plunge. He would say later that he couldn't see anything going wrong until it happened.

Young's swing carried him with lethal impact into the side of the CU power plant building, a trajectory much like that of a wrecking ball. Passersby said they heard a loud crash.

"He went right into it," Fuerst said. "Then he didn't move." (Source: From an article by Chris Barge, *Rocky Mountain News*, December 10, 2005)

Analysis

This incident was not included in the statistical data. It was chosen to illustrate how variations on extreme sports need to be thought through. Ryan Young, from all reports, was an enthusiastic, fit climber, who had also taken up sports such as skydiving. A closer profile can be found at the following website: bargec@RockyMountainNews.com (Source: Jed Williamson)

(Editor's Note: Our new correspondent who took responsibility for Colorado narratives this year lost all her work as a result of a computer problem. Therefore, only these few reports appear. There were at least two other fatalities and several serious falls – including a rappel failure at the Ouray Ice Festival, but the editor did not have enough details to print instructive reports.)

No data or reports from Rocky Mountain National Park were submitted this year.)

FALL ON ROCK, MISCOMMUNICATION—INADEQUATE BELAY, CLIMBERS UNKNOWN TO EACH OTHER

Maine, Bald Mountain, Shag Crag, Tightrope

Jed Piatt (29) of Dover, N.H., was in a group of experienced climbers when he fell from the route Tightrope (12d) on Bald Mountain's Shag Crag shortly before 6:00 p.m. Steve Allarie, District Game Warden for the Woodstock area, said Piatt fell 15 to 25 feet. He suffered broken ribs, a broken ankle, and a slight concussion.

"Based on his injuries, he had to be hand-carried down the mountain in a basket," Allarie said. "It was very difficult because of the steep terrain and it was nighttime."

The LifeFlight rescue helicopter was able to land near Reading Road in Woodstock, and took Piatt to Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston, where he was treated and released Sunday.

Analysis

Always go over your verbal signals, especially if you and your partner don't know each other. Piatt called, "Take," and the belayer thought he wanted