

holding her entire body weight. We were 20 feet out on a pendulum exposure and I could not find sufficient footholds to apply enough leverage to pull off the sling or to lift the cam from the protrusion above. The surface features available (a few small, rounded knobs in inconvenient locations) presented only very marginal protection between our position and the last good piece. What followed was almost mechanical. Somehow I was able to rig a lowering system near the previous good piece and release Ishun from her position without causing a further pendulum swing. I am wracked with doubts as to whether I made all the right decisions in administering emergency care while managing the anchoring in our precarious position. All I wanted was to get her off the rock safely and see her wake up. I tried to hold out high hopes throughout the ordeal, but deep in my heart I think I knew she was already gone.

(Editor's Note: A long description of the down-climbing and extrication and followed. Mr. Callery offered the following, which will serve as the analysis.)

First, Ishun [was] an excellent climber and quite experienced leading on backcountry trad routes. She [had] a solid understanding of protection and anchor dynamics and is a careful route finder. She [was] an exceptionally strong climber and share[d] my unhealthy enjoyment of suffering heavy packs over long approaches to reach remote backcountry gems. She had many long backcountry routes under her belt, most recently a two-day outing to climb the South Face of Charlotte Dome, which we successfully completed in good style two weeks prior to the accident. She [had] demonstrated very solid capability leading sustained 5.8 trad routes, with raw technical ability well into the 5.10 range. I would like to emphasize my opinion that this accident was not a result of inexperience or exceeding abilities.

It appears she may have simply slipped and come off her stance, perhaps while trying to place protection. She should have taken a swinging pendulum fall on the steep slab, with the likely consequence some scraped limbs, a possible bonk on her (helmeted) head, and at worst maybe a sprained ankle. The cam catching on a small knob and stopping her fall was an extremely unlikely occurrence with a devastating outcome.

(Editor's Note: This report was edited from a posting by Patrick Callery on SuperTopo and SummitPost. Climbing Web sites often have deeply personal postings such as this one. We appreciate the candor and specifics provided, even though not all the details we seek are embedded.)

STRANDED CLIMBER, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, INADEQUATE CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT AND FOOD AND CLIMBING UNROPED

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Lumpy Ridge

A party of three (two males, early 20s, and one female, 17) began soloing Organ Pipes (5.6) on the Twin Owls formation, Lumpy Ridge on January

16th late in the day. All three had little or no climbing experience. They only had lightweight cotton clothes and no food to spend the night. One of the males made it safely to the top of the route. The other one stopped after about 30 feet and was able to down-climb to the base of the route. However, the female climber stopped about 20 feet below the top of the route. She could not climb up or down. One of the other members of the party called 911 around 1730.

An NPS team responded to the climbers and lowered one of the team members to the stranded climber about 1900. He secured her to a rope and helped dress her in warmer clothing. The rest of the NPS team then lowered both the stranded climber and the NPS person to the ground. They hiked out and reached the trailhead at 2145.

Analysis

This party underestimated the difficulty of the intended route and overestimated their climbing abilities. They climbed past the point where they could have safely down-climbed to the base.

Fortunately, this group was a party of three and two of them made it off the route. If they had not called for help, it is unlikely that the stranded climber would have returned uninjured. By the time rescuers reached her she could not move her lower legs and could barely hold onto the rock anymore.

Honest and continued assessment of one's skills, open communication between the party members, proper equipment, and training can prevent incidents like this. Many times when climbing teams fail to talk openly with one another, they end up in situations like this where one member is well within his/her comfort zone and another member is well outside of his/hers. Communication about the intended route and the skills of the climbers in the party will often reveal discrepancies long before more serious situations arise. (Source: Edited from a report by Mark Pita, Search & Rescue Program Manager, Rocky Mountain National Park)

RAPPEL ERROR – THREADED ROPES INCORRECTLY, FALL ON ROCK

Colorado, Garden of the Gods, Red Twin Spire

During the afternoon on February 7, a climber (21) fell over 50 feet sustaining serious life-threatening injuries. He had just climbed the popular route Potholes, a moderate 5.8 route up the steep east face of Red Twin Spire in the Gateway area. The 55-foot-high route, protected by four fixed pitons and bolts, works up a series of potholes to an airy exit and a small summit the size of a dining room table. At the edge of the summit is an anchor composed of fixed pitons linked together with chain for top-roping, lowering, and rappelling.

The climber apparently untied, threaded his rope through a large quick-link on the chains, and prepared to rappel with a figure-8 descender. He