

happened to be walking on the Burma Road over 1,200 feet below them. The two climbers, by luck again, a Paramedic and a Wilderness First Responder, called 911 from one of their own cell phones and then climbed up to the ledge, bringing gear, clothing, and shelter from the very cold winds during that long afternoon. It should be noted that Aaron and Natalie are also trained WFRs.

Several groups responded. He recalled that six men rigged the high angle anchors and lowered the rescue litter and that six to eight people assisted in carrying the belayed rescue litter down the long 45-degree scree slope. Reportedly, nineteen SAR volunteers were involved, and everything went well during a safe evacuation.

Analysis

Aaron rates himself as having a moderate level of experience and is able to lead climbs rated to 5.9. He noted that he should have placed protection at or above his stance when the stopper below him was dislodged by the climbing rope.

All of their extra clothing and other essential gear, including two cell phones, were on the scree slope below the rock climb. Had they been unable to get help from chance passers-by, Natalie would have had to rappel to the scree, and Aaron surely would have suffered the onset of hypothermia on that very cold and windy day. (Source: Robert Speik – based on interviews with the participants, witnesses, personal climbing knowledge of the venue, and on the Mission Report released by the Deschutes County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit)

FALL ON ROCK, NUT/CAM PULLED OUT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Tennessee, Sunset Rock, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

The park received a report of a serious fall and injury to a male climber (23) beneath Sunset Rock in the park's Lookout Mountain area on the evening of July 27th. A pair of climbers started Friday the 13th (5.8+). This was their fifth and hardest route of the day, according to the partner. The climb itself is short and protects well with wires and cams. There's nothing tricky about the gear to an experienced climber, but the crux is strenuous—especially for climbers attempting an on-sight lead at their technical limit—and occurs at a bulge about 25 feet up. This is where the leader encountered difficulties. According to the partner, the leader had placed four pieces of protection when he started to “shake” and lose composure. He attempted to down-climb, but fell in the process, ripping his two highest pieces (a Trango cam and a medium sized BD stopper), and hit the ground. Both of these pieces were seen still attached to the rope lying on the ground.

Responding park and local rescuers treated his injuries and began a carryout

up and to the rim of Sunset Rock. He was airlifted that evening to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga with a dislocated shoulder and a shattered left foot.

Analysis

Experienced climbers in the area reported that the pair were sport climbers and were new to traditional climbing with little/no experience placing gear. The injured climber had been doing all the leading that day on new gear consisting of Trango cams and wires with a set of Camalots apparently “on order”. Witnesses also noted that earlier in the day the leader (later the patient) was having considerable difficulty placing gear on a 5.7 route and had to jump off the opening moves several times.

Poor preparation, limited skill and understanding on how to place gear, and route selection may have been the contributing factors leading to this accident. (Source: John McCutcheon, Supervisory Park Ranger, and others)

FALL ON ROCK – POOR COMMUNICATION

Texas, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area

On Saturday, April 16, several groups of climbers were climbing at or in close vicinity of the Echo Canyon and Triple Cracks area. These included a group of six climbers from Austin, three climbers from Houston, a group of approximately 15 Boy Scouts guided by the Mountain Madness guide service, and another smaller group guided by the OWA guide service.

Arik Yaacob (age unknown) in the Austin group was about to climb Grass Crack (5.10a) on a top-rope. Grass Crack is approximately 70 feet in length. Before Arik started, his belayer and another climber below realized that Arik would be the last person in their group to do the climb. They asked him if he was okay with cleaning the anchors, which consisted of two bolts. He confirmed that he was. They asked him if he had equipment that he could use to attach himself while cleaning, and he confirmed that he did. He then proceeded to climb and reached the anchors.

At the anchors, he attached himself to the bolts and called, “Off belay.” The belayer verbally confirmed that he was taking Arik off belay, then disconnected his belay device and walked away. There is a mild positive slope at the top of this climb, which means the top is not visible from the bottom.

At the top, Arik rigged himself for lowering and yelled, “Take.” He did not receive a verbal response. He yelled, “Take!” again. This time, he thought he felt the rope tighten and felt like he was being supported by it, so he assumed he was back on belay. However, climbers on the ground had not heard him yelling, “Take!” and so had not put him back on belay.