

a less expensive option is to climb down well below Joe and then tension across. There are other simple solutions too numerous to describe here.

Regarding helmets, Joe said, "The thought of falling never entered our heads," yet both took serious falls on this moderate route. They also assumed that being the only party on the climb avoided the risk of rockfall, but Greg was below another climber (Joe) on every pitch and both were exposed to debris every time they pulled their rappel rope.

Ideally, Greg should have been immobilized right where he landed, in case of spinal injury. However, draped over a tree trunk 14 pitches up the climb with night falling is not an ideal setting. Would you know how to handle this situation? Wilderness First Responder training will help. [See also Bishops Terrace in this issue of ANAM.] Another serious risk from head trauma is intracranial bleeding, which may develop over several hours. The only treatment is fast transport to the neurosurgeon. Even if a rescue in the dark were not possible, and it often is, rescuers could at least have gotten basic medical care to Greg that night. They could have flown him off the route soon after dawn, shaving several hours off his time to the hospital.

But how to get help? Joe didn't realize his voice would be heard in the Valley, but it probably would have been. Making lots of noise is the best action in a situation like this. Second, he could have tried his FRS radio "in the blind" (to no one in particular). The NPS does not monitor these channels but many private users do. Third, he could have flashed an SOS if he had had a light. Fourth, something that in fact was done, is telling someone where he and Greg were going and when to begin to worry. In fact, the NPS was looking for them. (Source: Joe Hardy, Greg McFalls, John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park, and Jed Williamson.)

*(Editor's Note: In September, two climbers—inexperienced—repeated this accident. They became stranded because they forgot to untie the safety knot in one end of the rappel rope, so it got stuck and they were stranded and benighted. They yelled for help. NPS personnel rescued them because it was a cold night.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK—INADEQUATE BELAY, ROPE TOO SHORT—LOWERING, DISTRACTION**

**California, Yosemite Valley, Yin Yang**

On April 26, an experienced climber (44) had led Yin Yang (5.10d) and set up a top-rope for his partner (26) to follow. The leader had used long cordelettes to extend the anchor because the climb was about 120 feet and their rope was only 200 feet. With the rope doubled, the leader was lowered safely to the ground because the anchor was extended. His partner top-roped the climb and disassembled the anchor. She threaded the rope through the anchor chain and her partner began to lower her. Her plan was to get to the end of the rope and swing over to another climb and down-climb a crack

to the ground, a distance of about 15 feet. She was cleaning gear (stoppers) from the climb as she was being lowered. After she had done the retrievals from the crack, her partner began to lower her. As he did, the end of the rope fed through his belay device (an ATC), thereby resulting in a 20-foot fall to the ground. No serious injury resulted.

### **Analysis**

The leader indicated that he did not have a knot tied in the end of the rope to prevent the rope from feeding through the belay device. He also said he was distracted by his partner's activity of extracting the stoppers, which were difficult to get out. (Source: David Horne, Yosemite Park Ranger)

*(Editor's Note: Several lowering accidents have been reported each year over the last decade or so. Another one follows this one! Help get the word out to everyone that having a safety knot in the end of the rope is a given, but most importantly, be sure the rope is long enough for the job. Also note that if a knot IS tied in the end of the rope, the belayer still has to control the lowering. It's obvious that if the rope is not long enough, by 20 feet or more, then loss of control on the belay will STILL result in a fall that could lead to injury. Also, consider wearing gloves.)*

*The person who was being lowered had some additional comments: I asked the third party to tie the knot when I was about 15-20 feet up, not from the top of the climb. Incidentally, the third party had previously been using the same set up, i.e. 60m. rope to TR the climb. This is an important detail to me because these were "experienced climbers" as well, all YOSAR folk and acquaintances. I think it created a bit of an "if everyone is doing it, it's OK" atmosphere. It was a good, if hard, lesson in trusting my instincts and taking responsibility for myself as well as the choices I make when it comes to climbing and safety.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK—INADEQUATE BELAY (INCLUDING NO KNOT IN THE END OF THE CLIMBING ROPE), NO HARD HAT**

**California, Tahquitz Rock, Whodunit**

On May 23, my partner and I had just arrived at the base of Whodunit (5.9) about 9:00 a.m. A female belayer (c. 25) was at the base of the route. She began to lower her partner (male, c. 25), who had just finished leading the first pitch of the route. It was not clear to us as to why the decision was made to lower rather than continue.

The belayer allowed the end of the rope to pass through her belay device, so her partner fell—a sliding, tumbling fall—about 40 feet and landed at her feet. He suffered a fractured arm, dislocated shoulder, and assorted abrasions/lacerations. Despite not wearing a helmet, there were no head or neck injuries.

Five of us (including his partner) were able to get him to the parking area, where he was able to be transported to medical treatment. (Source: Michael Morley)