



Subject: **Please Help Me, I'm Falling**
A Review of Mountain Rescue Texts

Instructional Support

Version: 6.2

Technical Note

Contents: 4 Pages

04/2007 - Winter

INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS DOCUMENT AND ANY SOFTWARE THAT MAY ACCOMPANY THIS DOCUMENT (collectively referred to as a Technical Note) IS PROVIDED "AS IS" WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND, EITHER EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND/OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. The user assumes the entire risk as to the accuracy and the use of this Technical Note. This Technical Note may be copied and distributed subject to the following conditions: 1) All text must be copied without modification and all pages must be included; 2) If software is included, all files on the disk(s) must be copied without modification; 3) All components of this Technical Note must be distributed together; and 4) This Technical Note may not be distributed for profit or as part of a course of training or newsletter.

Copyright © 1995, 2001, 2005, 2007 Cyril Shokoples. All Rights Reserved.

There is very little information to be found on the topic of mountain rescue in any of the current texts on climbing or mountaineering. *Freedom of the Hills*, *Alpine Climbing* and several other books have chapters on rescue but the range of available rescue skills is much greater than what is included in those volumes. This series of reviews lists the books available at this time on the topic of mountain and rope rescue. Several Industrial rescue texts are included to provide a more rounded survey of the topic. The books are listed chronologically from newest to oldest.

Climbing Self Rescue: Improvising Solutions for Serious Situations, by Andy Tyson and Molly Loomis, published by The Mountaineers, 2006. This latest addition to the *Mountaineers Outdoor Experts Series* of books is very much in keeping with the high quality of the rest of the books in this series. This is bound to become a standard reference in the library. It does not cover crevasse rescue systems. A more detailed review will follow at a later date.

International Mountain Rescue Handbook, 4th Edition, by Hamish MacInnes, published by Frances Lincoln, 2005. This is an interesting reference work on British / European rescue technique which is aimed at organized rather than self-rescue. It covers a wide variety of resources and techniques from avalanche rescue to helicopters, winches, cable and litters. The first edition was a well researched text with many interesting facts contained within. The fourth edition is still a fair reference but has a large amount of outdated, obsolete and antiquated techniques and equipment pictured. This is fine from a historical perspective but adds little to the overall value of the book as a

reference on current practice. The next edition needs a substantial bit of editing to remove much of the extraneous material with an eye to revising the current best practices in some cases. For example, the discussion of avalanche transceivers makes no mention of digital beacon advances and the transceivers pictured have been out of production for at least a decade or more. Read this hard cover book at the book store, so that you will not have to buy it.

High Angle Rescue Techniques, by Tom Vines and Steve Hudson, published by Mosby, Inc., 3rd edition, 2004. This is an exceptionally well laid out teaching text on rope rescue skills. It is written for organized rescue groups and does not cover improvised rescue. It does cover some topics of interest to general climbers. There are chapters on rope, hardware, anchors, belaying, ascending, rescue systems, highlines and helicopters. The 2nd edition attempted to strike a balance between the various competing schools of thought regarding technical rescue and was reasonably successful in that regard. The third edition has seen still more refinement over the second. I would recommend this as a reasonable reference on large scale industrial rope rescue with appreciable applicability to mountain rescue even though it is NOT wilderness or mountain specific. A companion field guide is also available and can be purchased packaged with the main text. The field guide is not quite as good as Rick Lipke's *Technical Rescue Riggers Guide*, but worthwhile nonetheless.

The Complete Guide to Rope Techniques: A Comprehensive Handbook for Climbers, by Nigel Sheperd, published by The Lyons Press /

Globe Pequot Press, 2002; This is an update and consolidation of the authors similar volumes published under the names **A Manual of Modern Rope Techniques**, (Constable, 1990); and the companion volume - **Further Modern Rope Techniques**, (Constable, 1998). This newer book is precisely what the name implies. A strong British flavor pervades the text which starts with basic knots and progresses to rock and crevasse rescue with much in between. Although there is the occasional technique of dubious merit, most of what is contained will not get you into trouble. In fact, much of what is contained is designed to get you out of trouble. This book is somewhat expensive and can be difficult to obtain in North America, albeit worthwhile. Look at some of the other books first then consider this one you have more experience. (p.s. The idea of a retrievable ice screw rappel anchor is outdated and should not be attempted. Likewise a retrievable ice axe anchor will usually lead you to grief. Each of these two techniques has led to accidents. Also, the idea of rappelling with a patient with both of your weights hanging from a single figure of eight rappel device is liable to fail with today's light thin and slippery new ropes. Learn other safer alternatives.)

Engineering Practical Rope Rescue Systems, by Michael G. Brown, published by Delmar Thompson Learning, 2000. This is a relatively new book on the topic and one with a focus on skills for the experienced rescuer. It is not intended to be a basic text nor is it mountain specific. It covers rope standards for those in fire or industrial rescue and goes into detail on various systems and evolutions. I have only had a brief opportunity to review this text, but what I have seen so far makes it worthy of adding to the library of industrial rescuers, if not others in related fields. New edition scheduled for 2008.

The Essential Technical Rescue and Field Operations Guide, by Tom Pendley, published by Desert Rescue Research, 2000. This one of a number of field guides pertaining to rescue and emergency care that have been flooding the market. It is intended for technical rescue teams that work in multiple environments such as industrial, alpine, swiftwater, trench, confined space, etc. As with the above text, it is not wilderness specific but contains technical rescue information that may be useful in several disciplines. Check it out if you are a member of an organized rescue team.

Technical Handbook for Professional Mountain Guides, edited by Karl Klassen, published by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, 1999. This book contains 8 major sections on the craft of mountain guiding. It is primarily concerned with the technical aspects of guiding and is the only current source for some of the guiding techniques shown. There are four sub-sections which deal with rescue, totaling 36 pages. There is very basic coverage on improvised rescues, including emergency response, raising, lowering, ascending, descending, and counterbalance. The instructional text, diagrams and photos are usually clear and easy to follow. There are very few mistakes in this manual and those that exist are minor in nature. The appendix on Parks Canada organized rescue techniques which was in the previous manual is no longer included. The manual's intended audience is professional mountain guides and aspirants who are already highly skilled and experienced. For this purpose, it is the best manual available. Those new to climbing and anchors systems may find there is a vast amount of material lacking, therefore I would not recommend it as a basic or introductory manual. (currently being revised)

Confined Space and Structural Rope Rescue, by Michael Roop, Tom Vines and Richard Wright, published by Mosby, Inc., 1998. This is a good treatment on confined space and structural rescue for the industrial rescuer. For those in industrial settings, it provides broad coverage of industrial response information. As with the previous listing, this book is NOT wilderness or mountain specific.

Technical Rescue Riggers Guide, by Rick Lipke, published by Conterra, Inc., revised edition, 1998. This is an excellent field manual for students of the "tandem prusik belay" school of large scale organized rescue. It is best used by the well trained and experienced rescue specialist as a rapid reference. In this role it is invaluable. A few minor errors still exist. Hopefully they will be repaired in the next edition. This field book is wilderness and mountain specific and should be included in the kit of every mountain rescue group. It does not include improvised rescue techniques.

CMC Rope Rescue Manual, 3rd edition by James Frank and Jerrold Smith, published by CMC, California, 1998. (A 4th edition of this text and a companion field guide are rumoured to be on the way.) Excellent diagrams and concise

text. The latest edition has rectified many of the things which I found detracted from earlier editions. I would suggest waiting for a 4th edition to incorporate the latest state of the art techniques.

On Rope, by Allen Padgett and Bruce Smith, published by the National Speleological Society, 2nd edition, 1996. This is not really a text on mountain rescue at all, but is fact a book on caving technique. How then does such a book find it's way into a rescue text review? It contains what is likely the best collection of technical information on vertical single rope techniques (SRT) that I have seen published. If you are truly involved in rope rescue, then read this hard cover beauty. The second addition includes a chapter specifically written for other rope users and is of interest as well. If you are simply a climber, then the techniques are from a different world, but still excellent as general background and a change of perspective.

Self-Rescue, by David J. Fasulo, published by Chockstone Press, 1996. This booklet is an excellent introduction to improvised rope rescue for the climber who is already fully competent in climbing, anchoring and rope systems. The beginning climber may find the myriad of techniques overwhelming. This treatment of the subject would best accompany closely supervised professional instruction on self-rescue systems. It provides a cookbook approach to many of the skills and procedures presented. It does not include crevasse rescue. Well worth buying.

Basic Rescue and Emergency Care, edited by Robert A. Worsing, Jr., published by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, 1990. This is NOT a manual on rope rescue or systems. In fact it is anything but. It provides introductory coverage of rescue response from Incident Command to patient care. In at least a cursory way, it is a treatment of all aspects of LAST – Locate, Access, Stabilize and Transport. It is NOT wilderness specific, but it should be required reading for everyone who intends to pursue a career in rescue. Out of print.

Mountain Rescue Training Manual, published by the Canadian Forces Survival Training School, 1989. Out of Date. Although no author or editor is listed, this internal military publication was primarily compiled by MWO Arnie MacAuley when he was posted to CFSTS in Edmonton. It is designed to provide members of the Canadian Forces Search and Rescue Technician trade

with a standard reference to accompany their basic and advanced mountain and glacier rescue courses as part of their trade qualification training (level 5 and 6A).

It borrows heavily from *Freedom of the Hills*, as well as from works by A Larson, B. March, W. G. May, T. Setnicka, and C. Shokoples. Topics covered include equipment, anchors, rock, snow & ice climbing, organized rope rescue, improvised rope rescue, crevasse rescue, pulleys, highlines, avalanche rescue and much more. It is probably the only manual that contains written descriptions of some of the techniques. The diagrams and editing are sometimes crude and mistakes and out of date references now exist, but was by far one of the most comprehensive mountain rescue skill compilations in existence. It is not available to the general public. It is currently in need of a substantial revision to bring it up to date it with changes over the last two decades. Find a SARTECH and borrow his copy!!

Manual of U.S. Cave Rescue Techniques, 2nd Edition, edited by Steve Hudson, published by the National Speleological Society, 1988. Out of Date. Although the focus is on cave rescue, there is a broad range of skills presented which can be used by the climber. After all, the 1980s was the decade of cross training. In 260 pages, this text addresses organization, management, search, medical, patient transport, vertical equipment & technique, and other problems unique to cave environments. There are many photos and diagrams to enhance the text. Once you have some mountain oriented texts to work from, try this one for a completely different change of pace. Many good ideas can be found here.

Self Rescue Techniques for Climbers and Instructors, by Nigel Sheperd, published by Adventure Unlimited, 1987. Out of Date. This is a small pocket book (75 pages) of basic self rescue information for rock climbing. It is amazing how confusing simple concepts can be made in such a small space. This overpriced gem contains some neat little ideas but is entirely superseded by *The Complete Guide to Rope Techniques: A Comprehensive Handbook for Climbers*.

Modern Rope Techniques in Mountaineering, 3rd Edition, by Bill March, published by Cicerone Press, 1985. Out of Date. Composed of drawings of a number of different improvised techniques and explanations of same, this latest

revision is still a bit disorganized. It remains difficult to find the subject you are interested in. The techniques are fairly well illustrated but the book contains an occasionally disjointed flow of thought. Much of the new material in the 3rd edition is similar to articles published by Mr. March and gives the impression that it was stuck into the book wherever it would fit. A 4th edition of this pocket book could have easily corrected these flaws. With Bill March's untimely death, this possibility vanished. As it stands, "Modern Rope Techniques" is now simply a historical footnote on "self rescue" and rope techniques.

Wilderness Search and Rescue, by Tim Setnicka, published by Appalachian Mountain Club: Boston, 1980. Out of Date. This is a massive text with a wealth of SAR technique contained within. This mammoth undertaking suffers many faults, but is still worth owning as a historical overview of the many techniques that were once used (some of questionable worth). The illustrations are many and the techniques covered are legion. "WSAR" was published in 1980, and many innovations have come along since. The text leans heavily on gadgets and in many instances, simpler and safer procedures could have been included. There are also some basic problems with some of the simple math explaining some systems. There is little self-rescue information here that can be used

without significant adaptation. For those interested in a historical perspective on organized rescue there is sufficient information to warrant a closer look. Don't believe everything you read.

Mountain Search and Rescue Techniques, by W.G. May, published by Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, 1973. A fine but outdated book on the topic of rescue. It has stood the test of time well given its age. Being almost 30 years old, one would expect the information to be far less current than it is. There should be a place for this book on your shelf even if you have some of the other texts. This book is geared toward organized search and rescue rather than self-help.

Mountain Rescue Techniques, by Wastl Mariner, published by Austrian Alpine Association, 1963. Although most of the technique in this book is very dated, this was the former number one reference. For those interested in how many of our current techniques developed, it provides an excellent, unique historical perspective. This book is long out of print and very difficult to find.

Note: For reviews of books which contain information on crevasse rescue and related ice and glacier travel skills, see the book review article entitled "The Cools Ones", part of this Technical Note Series.

About the Author: Cyril Shokoples is an internationally certified Mountain Guide and is a Past President of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. He has been a member of the Alpine Club and Edmonton Section since 1975. He became a Senior member in 1979 and received the Silver Rope Award in 1988. He received the Distinguished Service Award from the Alpine Club in Canada in 2002. He subsequently received the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides in 2003. He received the George Stefanick Legacy Award from the ACC Edmonton Section in 2005. Cyril instructs the ACC TNF National Mountain Leadership courses in summer and winter and recently ran the first ACC Central Canada Rock Leadership Course in Quebec. Cyril has trained the prestigious Canadian military SARTECHs (Search & Rescue Technicians) for the last fifteen years. He instructs both the basic and advanced mountain climbing and mountain rescue phases of their trade qualification courses (TQ5 & TQ6A). Cyril has been training mountain guides and National Park Wardens in advanced first aid for 25 years. He spent 8 years as coordinator of Prehospital Care Programs at the Alberta Vocational College where he ran Alberta's first nationally accredited EMT- Ambulance program. He is also a PADI certified Rescue Diver and a DAN certified Dive Emergency Specialist. To top it all off, he is a professional member of the Canadian Avalanche Association. He currently resides in Edmonton and is the proprietor of the firm Rescue Dynamics, which is involved in climbing, rescue and safety instruction, as well as mountain guiding.

Further information on courses as well as additional copies of this and other technical notes in this series can be obtained directly from Rescue Dynamics. On the Internet, visit the Rescue Dynamics World Wide Web Site at - <http://www.rescuedynamics.ca>