

experience, according to reports, had been on the firm rock of Yosemite, he may not have had sufficient appreciation of the danger of unsound rock and of the need for additional care. Perhaps he relaxed his vigilance as the slope eased off, despite the poor quality of the rock, which should have kept him constantly on the alert. Whether the cause of his fall was a simple slip, loss of balance, or the collapse of a hold, is impossible to determine. One may conclude, however, that his margin of safety was too slim and that more awareness of this might have saved his life. Here might be emphasized the need for understanding that such climbing *is* dangerous and that only constant care, watchfulness and recognition of one's limitations can eliminate the danger factor.

*Northern Cascades, Washington: (1) Monte Cristo District.* On the morning of 13 September 1947, a party of four young members of the Mountaineers of Seattle left Monte Cristo by trail to climb the three Wilmon Spires. According to one of them, "This was a feat never yet done in one day." They climbed the two west Spires and debated the advisability of going up the east Spire as it was already between 5.00 and 6.00 P.M. Some of the party did not feel it was wise to go on, but one who had climbed there before assured them it would go quickly. The climb took longer than they had expected. According to reports, they by-passed three pitons left by an earlier party in places where the stances were questionable. The top was reached after dark. Jim Wells rappelled off last, and at the bottom of the rappel, for undisclosed reasons, untied the belay rope. The end of his 100-foot rappel was still 12 feet above a spacy ledge. After pulling the rope down and dropping it to the others, Wells started to climb down the remaining 12 feet unroped, while the other climbers were coiling the two ropes. Apparently he got into difficulty, and at 8.15 he slipped. The ledge failed to stop his fall. He landed on talus 175 feet vertically below, and was killed.

*Source of information:* The Mountaineers rescue personnel.

*Analysis.* This tragedy demonstrates that the leader, be he first man up or last man down, must protect himself. This is especially important at night, when it is difficult to see. Of course, anyone who deliberately allows himself to be caught out at night, on steep

and difficult terrain, is asking for trouble. If Wells had worn his belay rope while he was climbing down the last 12 feet, he could have been secured quite easily. All members of the party had taken the Mountaineers' climbing course. Darkness and fatigue from a long, severe day undoubtedly contributed to the fall. Certainly they were overzealous in trying to climb the three peaks in one day. Here was the place for the leader to say, "Let's try it tomorrow." Here also is an illustration that, while mountaineering clubs themselves cannot control the activities of members, certainly they can do much to indoctrinate them in the principles of safety.

*Northern Cascades, Washington: (2) Snoqualmie Pass District.* On 14 September 1947 a girl fell from Guye Peak while she was descending unroped, in the dark. She was seriously injured. She had done no previous climbing, and the two others in the party had only slight experience. Apparently they left the pass rather late, were caught on the summit after dark, and descended by night instead of waiting for daybreak. They were not members of the Mountaineers.

*Source of information:* The Mountaineers, Seattle, Washington.

*Analysis.* Such a late start violated one of the fundamentals of mountain safety, and to continue on over steep terrain unroped and in the dark was a doubly serious error in judgment. Whether or not accidents of this kind can be effectively minimized by a system of registration at Ranger Stations, or by the placing of signs on trails, is a matter to be considered carefully. (See later recommendations.)

*Northern Cascades, Washington: (3) Mount Index.* During the first week of October 1947, there occurred a tragic accident which has not yet been fully explained. Two young men named Franklin and Westphal, each 17 years of age and with a minimum of climbing experience, set out on the normal route up this difficult peak. They had no extra food, and they wore light jackets and lightweight cotton shirts. They carried only 25 feet of rope. They have not been seen since. Their jackets were found later at a camp beside a lake. The only other traces were a few scattered orange peels at the