

she was trying to pass the first (lowest) chockstone in the Chimney route on Mt. Katahdin. She sustained a badly fractured left ankle and lacerations about the face and arms. The party, which was apparently not very experienced, was not using a rope. Rescuers were hampered by a large and treacherous snow field, which they avoided, and below it by boulders and bushes. Evacuation was completed six hours after the accident.

Sources of information: *Appalachia*, XXVII (December 1948), 240; and letter from H. J. Dyer, Supervisor of Baxter State Park.

Analysis. The Chimney route on Katahdin, though not extremely difficult, is yet difficult enough to warrant the conclusion that only experienced persons should attempt it. This was a case of an inadequately prepared person attempting something beyond her ability.

Appalachian Mountains: (2) Mt. Katahdin. On 4 September 1948 Mary Rossbach (25-30) was climbing with her husband on Mt. Katahdin. They had climbed to Baxter Peak from the Chimney Pond Campground and had crossed the Knife Edge to Chimney Peak. In the descent of Chimney Peak, a simple scramble, Mrs. Rossbach fell into Chimney Notch. She had been in an insecure stance where she had only one foothold and practically no handholds. She was knocked unconscious and suffered a severe scalp laceration. Another climbing party was in the vicinity, and two of its members remained with the Rossbachs while the third went down to notify the Park Ranger.

Much confusion ensued, for the accident was reported as having occurred at the base of the Chimney. Finding no signs of trouble there, the Ranger realized that the accident had been somewhere up on the mountain. The party was finally located in Chimney Notch at dusk. Mrs. Rossbach had regained consciousness, but was dazed. She was made comfortable, and supplies were brought up that night. In the morning she was assisted down the Dudley Trail, and arrived at the campground that night.

Sources of information: *Appalachia*, XXVII (December 1948), 240-41; and letter from H. J. Dyer, Supervisor of Baxter State Park.

Analysis. Reports indicate that Mrs. Rossbach's climbing experience had been extremely limited, even for "a simple scramble." Also, she has been described as a "large, heavy woman" and in

poor physical condition. It would seem, therefore, that fatigue was a significant factor, and that the mountain had been underestimated and the climber's abilities overestimated.

CONCLUSION

Study of this report reveals an increase in the proportion of accidents involving climbers of little or no experience and without experienced companions. Of the 28 climbing accidents in 1948 on which data were available, 20 resulted directly from ignorance of mountain problems and hazards. Most of the cases involved young persons who ventured onto cliffs or high mountainous terrain without recognizing fundamental dangers and how to deal with them. Acting independently, without guidance, they invited tragedy. One can not but conjecture that there were hundreds of similar situations in which the elements of tragedy were present but—by good luck—suppressed.

We can expect that mountains will always attract the adventurous. Often these are individuals who are impatient under instruction and control, and prefer to teach themselves—"to learn on their own." Many of today's and yesterday's great climbers started thus. There are today, however, mountaineering organizations that make a point of encouraging novices and would-be climbers to benefit by the skill and judgment already won by older members. Climbing instruction—some of a very high order—is available in all but a few mountain areas. The efforts of the regional mountaineering clubs to teach safe and sound techniques have been, indeed, of enormous value; and further expansion in this field offers one of the brightest hopes for a reduction in the number of future accidents. Here is the most important single contribution that the clubs can make to American mountaineering, and one worthy of their best efforts.

The American Alpine Club, working through the safety representatives of mountaineering clubs and interested government agencies, can do much, we believe, in calling attention to mountain dangers and in helping to develop principles of safety. But our main reliance must be on the regional clubs: they, and they alone, are in close contact with the young climbers and able to start them out right in their home territories.