

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.

How to instruct the would-be climbers is of course not the only problem. Eight accidents—the one on Bugaboo Spire constituting a possible exception—resulted from carelessness or errors of judgment on the part of climbers having more than a novice's experience. No mere listing of do's and don't's is of much value here. The lesson is that constant care and attention are essential in the mountains at all times, and that the responsibilities of leadership call for extraordinary amounts of both, plus a degree of judgment representing far more than technical ability.

There are few of us, surely, who can not look back to errors and mistakes in judgment similar to those reported here. That ours did not develop into accidents should make us not more critical of those who have suffered, but more critical of ourselves and of our own climbing. There are few of us indeed who can afford not to learn from others' mishaps.