

*Illinois, Mississippi Palisades, near Savanna*—On October 16, 1955, ten members of the Chicago Mountaineering Club were joined by five uninvited American Youth Hostlers. The Chicago Mountaineering Club party was climbing in two groups. One group had rappelled down a face and had left the rappel rope in place when the Youth Hostlers appeared at the top of the rappel rope. One member of the Hostlers asked and was granted permission to rappel down since he was known as a fairly experienced climber to the Chicago group leader. Two more Hostlers, without asking permission, rappelled down safely. A fourth, Joe Sporn (26), with one day of previous experience rappelled down the same rope. He slipped out of the rappel rope when he hit against a rock while going over. He fell about 25 feet. An ambulance was called from Savanna and after a trying rescue he was delivered to the hospital where X-rays revealed eight broken ribs. He also suffered a concussion.

*Source:* Safety Committee, Chicago Mountaineering Club.

*Analysis:* Inexperienced group without proper leadership attempting descent beyond its experience.

*Wisconsin, Devel's Lake Practice Bluffs*—On October 16, 1955, the weekly Sunday rock climb of the Wisconsin Hoofer Mountaineers was attended by nine climbers and four leaders. Four rope teams commenced climbing the quartzite buttresses of the east bluffs. The rocks were dry, the weather cool. After completing the first pitch two rope teams started climbing simultaneously two different routes on the same buttress. At this point Steve Smith, a relatively new climber, became impatient and left his party to traverse diagonally upward across the buttress alone. His leader climbed upward without knowledge of this. Smith's chosen traverse led to a point 18 feet off the ground and brought him to a ledge gained simultaneously by Tom Benedict, the leader of the rope team ascending the opposite side. Benedict then directed him to retrace his route to rejoin his party. Smith remained on the ledge while Benedict examined the route upward. It consisted of an inside corner climb containing a layback crack which Benedict judged unsuitable for the party. Benedict then selected a parallel route for his party, expecting Smith to follow his advice. At this point Smith, now out of sight, attempted the rejected route alone. He climbed up to the layback crack where insufficient holds caused him to free fall a distance of 25-30 feet, resulting in a compound fracture of both bones of the right lower leg. Evacuation was accomplished by stretcher and truck in about 90 minutes.

*Source:* Club members present at the time of the accident.

*Analysis:* Inexperienced climber attempting to exceed abilities, failure to accept judgment of leader.

*Colorado, Mt. Wilson*—On July 3, 1955, Herbert Martin, unroped, was leading a climbing group on Mt. Wilson. At the time of the accident he was out of sight of the others, so it is not known whether he slipped or was struck by a rock. He fell about 400 feet and was killed.

*Source:* G. Cunningham.

*Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Long's Peak (1)*—On August 30, 1955. Rod Harris and Felix Hagerman set out to climb the east face of

Long's Peak via Stettners ledges and the Window. The following is Hagerman's account:

"Stettners was in beautiful condition—the rock was dry and warm. The climb is very stiff all of the way but the rock is sound and the view is magnificent. It was a bright clear day without a cloud in the sky. We moved carefully so as not to miss the route but since there were only two of us and as we alternated leads we made good time. I have never enjoyed a morning more nor felt better. We were both in top form and climbing well. Broadway was reached on schedule in three and one-half hours.

After a candy bar and a drink of water we moved on down Broadway to the beginning of the Window. I led off diagonally to the right about 100 feet over fairly easy rock. Then Rod moved up and made a difficult 60-foot lead more or less directly up the face under the Window itself. He called down that he had found a piton and had a good belay spot but that the route above him looked very thin. He suggested I check to the right but I found that even worse and decided to continue on the line he had started.

Accordingly I climbed up to his stance and proceeded above him. The first 15 feet were slabs, vertical but with fair holds. Then a flake offered a resting place. From there the climbing grew very difficult and after another six or eight feet I found a stance where I could get in a piton. I snapped in, rested awhile, and started again. I could see where I wanted to go—a small ledge directly under the Window and about half way up. It looked as if it might give access to the Window although it was pretty apparent that it was not the standard route. Another eight feet however convinced me that while it might go I wouldn't. The holds petered out entirely and it was only by pressure on some vertical grooves that I could stay on the rock at all. About this time Rod called up that he had spotted a traverse at his level which looked like the route. I needed no second invitation and started down.

With the rope to help I had no trouble getting down to my piton, but as the section below was very thin and I was at least 25 feet above Rod I wanted something solid to hold on to until I was back down on the flake. I was already wishing the pitons on my belt were in the rock below me. Calling for tension I took out a sling, already knotted in a loop, and started to thread it through the piton. It was about two feet long and would have furnished at least one secure handhold while I climbed the bad section just below. At the time I had a one-half-inch nub for my right foot and a jam crack for my left hand. The piton was my right hand hold. The sling wouldn't go through—the karabiner was in the way so I called for slack and snapped out of the piton. Unprotected now and moving rapidly I again started to thread the sling through.

I am somewhat hazy as to what occurred next. I thought at first that the fall occurred when I tested the sling and pulled on the wrong end, but further consideration leads me to believe that in trying to secure it to the piton I must have shifted my weight too much onto my right foot which slipped off the nub.

Fortunately the drop was sheer enough that I was able to kick myself clear and drop outside the flake. The only physical sensation was one of extreme speed. I never saw so much slack—there seemed to be miles of it coiling up. The last thing I can remember is a small prayer that I'd hit

my head quickly so it wouldn't hurt *too* bad. Then Harris, who had not consigned either of us to a record descent to Chasm Lake, put on the brakes ending my progress.

Rod said that when I flashed down outside him he couldn't believe it. He said his next thought was to do everything possible to stop the fall, but that he didn't really believe I could live through it. He gave me a beautiful dynamic, and as soon as he heard me slam into the face, he put on a static, for, as he said, when he heard the thud, he figured I was done anyway and there was no point in bruising the body. Actually he was faced with the problem of stopping me before I hit some flakes and ledges some 40 feet below and still not breaking the rope. As it was, one strand and two ribs went but I did stop short of the flakes. I am probably prejudiced but I think it was a wonderful job of rope handling. The fall was absolutely clear for at least 50 feet and several people, watching through glasses, said it was further. I also outweigh Rod about 40 pounds.

After stopping the fall Rod called to me but couldn't get any answer. So he decided to lower me until I caught on something. *This* got an answer alright! Fortunately I seemed to be able to climb O. K. and reacted to the signals properly so Rod went back for the pack and started us down to Broadway. By then my mind had started working again.

We had seen two other fellows climbing Alexander's and Rod called to them. They had already completed their climb and waited for us at the Notch Couloir. Their names are Bill Yowell and Ed Williams, good mountaineers both, and they were certainly good Samaritans that day. Without them we would have had a tough time indeed.

Bill took me on his rope and we started on up the standard route. I knew I had a couple of broken ribs at least and my right wrist was gone. Besides this, I had a bad cut on my left palm and my left knee was badly gashed. It felt in fact as if the knee cap were gone. There was a beautiful bump on my head. We bandaged the hand but there was nothing we could do about the ribs or the wrist and I was, quite frankly, afraid to look at the knee since I knew how far we still had to go. I thought I'd be happier not knowing. Rod was O. K. except for his hands which were badly cut both from the rope and from the rock.

The trip up was slow since I didn't walk or breathe "too good" and I had to develop an elbow technique to get up some of the chimneys.

However, we reached the summit at 3:45 p.m., recorded the climb and the accident and started down at 4:00 p.m.

Deciding that the Fried Egg route was too long we roped down the Cables which were unoblingly covered with verglas. For what it's worth you can rappel nicely no-hands, with the rope wrapped around your elbow. Boulderfield was reached at 6:00 p.m. Bill kept me roped in all the way, catching me when I slipped and helping me up when I fell flat. He and Ed saw us safely on the trail and headed back to Chasm Lake where their gear was.

The next 8 miles were long, painful, and of no interest to anyone. We just kept putting one foot in front of the other and eventually got to the parking lot which was full of friends and well-wishers. Thence to the hos-

pital and inside of 2 hours were applying "medicinal stimulates" while we listened to the music of frying eggs.

*Source:* Felix Hagerman.

*Analysis:* By Hagerman.

The accident was, of course, unnecessary. Most accidents are. It is hard to pinpoint any one thing which caused it. The climb was not beyond our ability since the Window is admittedly no harder than Stettners and we had no difficulty with it. It was still early and the weather was fine. If I made a technical mistake it was probably snapping out of the piton before I had the sling rigged but the holds I had were the same I had used to drive it and should have sufficed for what I was trying to do. At no time did I feel particularly insecure or "about to fall." Fatigue probably contributed coupled with the false sense of well-being or exhilaration which sometimes comes after a tough pitch or route has been climbed (in this case the Ledges). Certainly it is very apt to lead to carelessness or relaxation of vigilance which is always dangerous. I cannot help but remember Bollinger's statement made the day of his fall that he had "never felt better in his life."

This may sound somewhat involved but I am convinced that mental attitude and watchfulness during a climb are quite as important as any technical aspects.

The accident does demonstrate, however, that good technique and adherence to standard safety procedure such as starting early, not attempting difficult routes in bad weather, etc. can turn what might have been a fatal slip into nothing more than a painful incident. Belay technique should be practiced until it is automatic. Rod said all his actions were unconscious as were mine in jumping away from the rock. When something does happen you don't have time to think. As for the rest, the Swiss sum it up well when they say, bluntly, "the leader will not fall!"

*Colorado—Rocky Mountain National Park, Long's Peak (2)*—On October 2, Sidney Cohen (27) of Boulder, Colorado, was climbing Long's Peak via the Cable route when he slipped on ice and fell down the 60-degree slab rock 150 feet, striking a ledge which catapulted him to a snow bank 150 feet below. This man was hiking alone and had ignored the posted warnings which told of the ice and snow conditions on this route and advised people without the proper equipment to take the Keyhole route. Mr. Cohen was wearing shoe pacs. He suffered a possible broken right lower leg and abrasions of legs and abdomen. This rescue required the service of all available rangers plus the services of four Colorado University students and the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group.

*Source:* James V. Lloyd, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park.

*Colorado, Devil's Thumb*—On Sunday, August 7, 1955, John Auld (16), Jim Auld (19), and Sheldon Schiager (18) drove from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to the Boulder area intending to climb the Maiden, a popular rock formation famous for the spectacular free rappel from its summit. They evidently misunderstood instructions they had been given for finding the Maiden, and they hiked to the base of the Devil's Thumb. Devil's Thumb is in the same area as the Maiden; it is similar in appearance to the Maiden, and is often mistaken for the Maiden. The two rock formations