

conditions is regarded as class 4 (no pitons needed). Twelve feet up the chimney which was wet, he lost his friction foot-hold and slid back to the bottom where his leg was broken by the impact. Rescue operations proceeded quickly and efficiently, aided by a second party of four climbers.

*Source:* William Siri.

*Analysis:* This accident demonstrated the value of a properly trained and equipped party which with the assistance of another party was able to evacuate the injured man without any additional assistance.

*Washington, Mt. Baker*—During the weekend of July 22-24th there was a college outing on Mt. Baker. During the descent of the 29-man party on the west side of the mountain, they came to the last steep snow slope on the snout of the glacier. The leader had examined the area on the ascent and located a couple of small crevasses. On the descent he guided the party to an area where they would miss the crevasses during their glissade. One person, Donald Wallace (22), either ignored or misunderstood the leader's directions and glissaded in the wrong area and fell into one of them. He suffered a broken pelvis and a wrenched back. Fortunately, there was a party of Mazamas who had preceded the college party who were acquainted with rescue techniques and were able to effect the rescue.

*Source:* C. A. Fisher, Bellingham, Washington; newspaper clippings.

*Analysis:* The word of the leader should be law. If the climber had understood and obeyed the instructions he would not have been hurt.

*Washington, Mt. Shuksan*—On August 7, 1955 at 4 a.m., Dr. Paul Gerstmann and Robert Parkhurst, both members of the Mountaineers and experienced climbers, along with Larry Wold, an independent climber with somewhat less experience, set out to climb Mt. Shuksan. The route taken was the established one that makes its way up through Fisher's Chimneys, Winnie's Slide, and for variation the Hour Glass, which was completed approximately at 10:30 a.m. They then proceeded to gain the final summit pitch via a long snow finger. The time was then near 12 noon.

Meanwhile, an eight-man party led by Pete Steele, a member of The Mountaineers, which had been previously overtaken by the Gerstmann team, was making steady progress on a longer routing via Hell's Highway. This involved crossing the glacier, and skirting around the huge rock cliffs that the Hour Glass dissects, and thus reaching the upper level on open snow slopes. At this point the day was getting warmer, and the effect of the sun on the snow was becoming noticeable to the larger and slower party. Consequently, by the time they reached the aforementioned snow finger, which had provided good accessibility to the first group, the snow was now soft enough in their estimation to be avoided. This they attempted to do by using it as sparingly as possible. As one member of the party explained, it wasn't done because they particularly feared an avalanche, but rather because the party strength was such that they couldn't take any chances whatsoever. This was further borne out by the fact that for one member of their party it was his first trip, and for another the first attempt on a mountain the size of Shuksan.

It was now around 2 p.m. and the Gerstmann team made preparations for leaving, using the same route as they had for the ascent. They were tied into 150-foot length of nylon rope, with Wold leading, Parkhurst, the middle man, and Gerstmann, anchor. They soon approached the snow finger and Wold, wearing crampons at this point (he was the only member who had them on), started down. He moved cautiously at this point, because he was plunging deeply with each step that he took, and at no time was he belayed. But, as the snow cohesion held good, he began to move with a more definite pace.

Bob Parkhurst then made his move, but he had just started when he slipped. Wold, at this juncture, turned around, took a look at Parkhurst, and saw him seated in the snow. Then, seeing nothing unusual, thought no more about it and turned to make his way further down the slope. But Parkhurst, who at first thought nothing of the slip, began to find himself in trouble. When he tried to regain his feet he found the snow was moving under him in a manner which continuously threw him back into a half-reclining, half-sitting position. Then suddenly the slope broke, and Parkhurst found himself losing control of the situation. He immediately went into an ice axe arrest position, but the depth of the moving snow prevented it from being effective. By now he was in head-long motion, and soon ran out the rope length leading to Gerstmann, who in turn was jerked into the avalanching snow along with his comrade. They swept on past Wold, and then he too was abruptly caught in the avalanche. Completely out of control, they fell an approximate total distance of 150 to 200 feet, going over rock outcroppings and ending in a partially snow-filled schrund. Wold was completely buried, Parkhurst partially so. Only Gerstmann remained above the surface, though badly shaken up, suffering numerous head and facial cuts and abrasions, and limping with what he thought was a sprained ankle (it later was found to be broken). He immediately tried to extricate the other two climbers, and had nearly succeeded, with the exception of Wold, who was in a semi-conscious condition and still buried almost to his shoulders, when a large rock came plummeting down the slope and struck Wold in the chest. The impact was somewhat lessened by the cushion of snow. Following that, Parkhurst and Gerstmann quickly worked Wold free and they made their way out of the Schrund a short way to an area free of rock fall. They took stock of damage and injuries. The packs were more or less intact. Gerstmann's ice axe was broken, Parkhurst's was missing and never found; Wold alone retained his ice axe. Painful breathing made it difficult for Parkhurst to move about, and Dr. Gerstmann, as was stated previously, was severely injured. Wold's condition was far more serious. The extent of his injuries could not easily be discerned. He had a lacerated kneecap, pain in his chest, was having trouble breathing. Dr. Gerstmann diagnosed the chest injury could possibly be broken ribs and a punctured lung (his diagnosis later was to be borne out—7 broken ribs, along with a punctured lung). The problem now was one of evacuation. No one, including Wold, had any idea how far he would be able to travel before collapsing.

Meanwhile, the 8-man party that was left on the summit was having its troubles. Completely unaware of what had happened below them, they still

wished to avoid the mushy snow finger below. To do this they had moved far to the left, working their way down the rock that was more exposed than it had appeared in the beginning. It was hard going. They had made their way however, to a point where contact was made with the lower group. It was soon apparent to them that the lower group had met with an accident. Steele placed one of his more experienced members in charge of his party, and along with one other climber descended to the accident scene.

There was no delay in formulating a plan of action. He, Steele, would take four of his group, after leaving all the extra clothing and food they could afford to part with, and immediately leave for help. The other four members of his party would join with the Gerstmann party and they, in turn, would travel down as far as it was possible. Considering Wold's condition and all, what ensued was quite remarkable. Someone remembered a broken sign on the far end of the glacier, and because this meant wood, and wood meant fire, no matter how small, they made this their goal. They believed it was around 11:30 p.m. when they finally reached this point. There they bivouaced for the remainder of the night. As soon as the sun's warmth reached them in the morning hours, roughly 9 a.m. they decided to move down below Winnie's slide to one of the rock islands. This they did, and had just about completed this when the result of Steele's action was learned by the surprising appearance of a Coast Guard helicopter. From this point on the situation became increasingly improved. In rapid succession supplies were dropped. Next, a doctor from the Mountain Rescue Council was lowered. By late afternoon after a succession of three ten minute trips, the men were placed in the helicopter and flown to waiting transportation. The rescue personnel of MRC figured that it would have taken approximately some 60 men another 24 to 36 hours to do what the helicopter with its accomplished pilot and crew did in minutes.

*Source:* The Mountaineer, 48: 6-7, Oct. 1955.

*Analysis:* (from the Mountaineer).

While actually no climbing rules were violated, the decision the party took of not belaying when they first ventured on the slope was unfortunate. Seemingly they were in a good position to have made full use of the rope. The reason for Parkhurst slipping in the first place is unknown. He cannot actually offer an explanation. And while avalanches of this type are unexpected at this time of the year, it consistently points out the need for great caution on all potential avalanche slopes.

*Washington, Mt. Rainier National Park*—On July 24, Mr. Louis W. Whittaker, age 26 (Mount Rainier professional guide), suffered severe lacerations of the right leg and minor lacerations of arms when he tripped (wearing crampons) on rock on the Gibraltar Ledge and pitched 20 feet amongst rocks and debris. Members of the party assisted him to Paradise after rendering first aid.

*Source:* Preston P. Macy, Superintendent, Mt. Rainier National Park.

*Washington, Mt. Rainier National Park*—On July 30, a party of 15 Tacoma Mountaineers under the leadership of Stan Engle were camped at Steamboat Prow in preparation for a scheduled experience climb of