

ACCIDENTS—1957

New Hampshire, Mt. Washington—On February 28, Peter K. Luster (Leader, 21), Boyd N. Everett, Jr. (22) and James Wheeler (19), all members of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, were ice climbing in Damnation Gully in Huntington Ravine. Luster, who is considered a competent ice leader by the H.M.C., had had very little sleep the night before and was carrying no extra clothing. About 4 P.M., the sky clouded over and a few snow flurries appeared when Luster was half way up what he thought was the final pitch of the climb. Upon reaching the top of the lead, however, it became apparent that the ice continued for some distance. About 5 P.M. the party left the gully and climbed diagonally up over the rocks to the north of the gully in a rapidly worsening storm, reaching the crest of Nelson Crag at 10 P.M. by means of a snow gully. Owing to darkness and the severity of the weather, short leads and frequent belays were required. Shouts of a search party in Huntington Ravine were heard, but no communication could be exchanged and the search party was forced to return to the H.M.C. cabin on Boott Spur, due to the cold and the inability to hear or see much of anything. The party started down over gentle snow slopes to the north-east of North Gully, moving slowly and resting from time to time. During the night the temperature on the summit fell to 5°F below zero and the wind velocity averaged 80 m.p.h.; the open slopes of the descent route offered no protection from the wind, which was from the east. Snow fell heavily until about 3 A.M. and the visibility was very poor. The party encountered waist-deep snow over small evergreens at about 1 A.M., which made walking very difficult. At 2 A.M. Luster became exhausted but was able to reach the floor of Huntington Ravine. At 3:20 A.M. Wheeler started back to the H.M.C. cabin for help, while Everett stayed with Luster, who was unable to move. Aid from the cabin arrived at 6:15 A.M. and Luster was evacuated to the Fire Trail by a toboggan from the first aid cache in Huntington Ravine. From there he was taken to Pinkham Notch by weasel. He was treated for exhaustion and mild frostbite at the Memorial Hospital in North Conway.

Source: Peter K. Luster, Boyd N. Everett, Jr., Caspar Cronk (Member of Rescue Party), and John Humphreys; *Appalachia* 31: 406, 1957.

Analysis: (Luster). "The party had been relying on reaching a known escape route down the rocks on the north side of Damnation Gully. Owing to weather and darkness, however, it did not seem wise to attempt the descent over steep rocks, necessary to reach this route. Instead, the slower, but easier route described above was selected. Clearly the party should have turned back earlier than it did. Additional clothing, flashlights, and a compass would have been useful under these conditions."

This demonstrates how important it is, particularly in winter, for the leader to be aware of the possible consequences of pushing on with a climb when he is bordering on fatigue. If climbing in bad weather in the dark is to be contemplated, the party must be fully prepared to meet these conditions, which this one was not.

New Hampshire, Cannon Mt.—On June 8, S. M. Ornstein (27), Robert Jahn (27), John F. Noxon (28), and John S. Humphreys (24) climbed the