

General Comments

The Committee thinks it desirable, before making specific recommendations, to point out certain conditions pertaining to mountaineering in our time which may have had unfortunate effects. These comments are not based exclusively on the foregoing list of fatal and near-fatal accidents, but rather on a review of all known accidents in 1947 regardless of outcome. Some of these considerations are advanced for critical examination in the belief that if they have not already directly caused accidents they may all too easily do so in the future.

These are the major factors of concern:

(1) The number of persons interested in mountaineering, but lacking in climbing experience, has grown vastly. This growth may be due in part to the phenomenal development, during the past decade, of the related sport of skiing. A proportionate increase in the number of accidents would be logical. Indications are, however, that the increase has been greater than might have been expected.

(2) Solo climbing appears to have spread alarmingly. Possibly some of the causes are attributable to World War II. It has been said that there was a similar wave of solo climbing after World War I.

(3) The alpine training of mountain troops in the Army introduced many persons to mountaineering. Although on the whole excellent, this training was often so brief, and provided such limited indoctrination in leadership, that it alone could not fit all men for mountaineering under varying conditions and responsibilities. A period of service with these troops—much of it spent, perhaps, awaiting orders in the lowlands of Texas—could develop an unwarranted sense of experience and overconfidence.

(4) Some of the younger enthusiasts, left at home during the War when mature rope leaders were away, were denied the guidance necessary to sound indoctrination.

(5) So much spectacular publicity has been given to mountaineers and their climbs that many youngsters—and some older persons—see only the glamor, and fail to perceive that real success on a difficult climb connotes careful planning, hard work, proper tech-

nique and constant attention to the principles of safety.

(6) During the War, American climbers lost immediate contact with established Alpine tradition, which for many years has had a salutary influence in North America. Previously, many Americans had received valuable indoctrination at climbing centers abroad, from guides and from accomplished amateurs. The great distances in America have hindered the effective growth of a coordinated alpine tradition on this side of the Atlantic. And now "budding extremism," in some sections, if not controlled, could influence adversely the "conservative" doctrines of our sport.

Recommendations

FROM the review of recent mountaineering accidents, it is clear that valuable lessons may be learned, many of them simply reiterations of fundamental maxims of safety. An accumulation of authoritative data not only from 1947 but from previous seasons and from seasons in the future can well be a continuing source of study and of reference for the development of more information on cause and prevention. Not to be overlooked, of course, are those tales of near accidents *which were prevented by the proper training* of the personnel involved. Space does not allow such a digression, but at least it is advisable to mention the point to emphasize fully the need for an ever-present consciousness of safety. The following list of recommendations for general mountain safety is gathered from the foregoing cases to illustrate how analysis of accidents can bring out factors which may not be easily seen in practice until too late.

A. Orientation and Cooperation for Safety

(1) *PERSONS INTERESTED IN MOUNTAINEERING* and wilderness exploration should be *urged to join* climbing organizations so that they will become aware of the necessity and the "know how" of safety in mountaineering instead of going off "on their own" and learning the "hard way" which so often leads to trouble. The Mount Index disaster shows only too well why this recommendation should be taken seriously.