

REVIEW OF ACCIDENTS IN 1949

(a) MOUNTAIN FATALITIES

California: (1) Yosemite Valley. On 22 March 1949 Kenneth A. Haines (19) and Peter B. Yeazell (18), from Fresno, California, were killed in a fall in the vicinity of lower Yosemite Falls. The boys were tied together with a 120-foot standard rope. Positive indications, such as uprooted and disturbed brush, point to a fall of 200 to 300 feet. From all evidence, both died instantly from head and neck injuries. They had been dead 24 to 36 hours before they were found, because they had failed to register for the climb and consequently were not reported as overdue or missing. It was by sheer luck that the bodies were discovered so soon, since they were against the base of the cliff, where hikers seldom go at that time of year because of the terrain and the coverage of snow. The night after they fell, seven inches of new snow fell. This partly covered their bodies.

Source of information: National Park Service memorandum.

Analysis. So far as can be learned, the boys never had any organized training at all. They had a piton hammer with them, but it appears that this and other equipment was designed for climbing of a difficulty far beyond the range of their training or experience. The accident indicates again the very practical reason why climbers on their own should register with the U.S. Forest Service or National Park Service authorities before starting an ascent; and it points out also, tragically, what has been stressed more and more by most other accidents during the past several years. That is the urgent need for efforts by organized climbing groups to pass information and proper mountaineering attitudes to the younger generation.

California: (2) Yosemite Valley. On 11 November 1949 Darrel J. Warren, a soldier from Castle Field Air Base at Merced, California, was instantly killed by a fall from the cliff just east of the base of Yosemite Falls. Evidently a rock on which he had stepped gave way. He fell about 250 feet to a ledge near the base of the cliff. This fall was witnessed by a companion, Sergeant Earl Leatherman, and Park Ranger Herbert Ewing, who were near by at the base of the cliff. Warren and Leatherman had not registered for the climb and had no ropes or climbing equipment.