

edge of the ledge, and the entire coil of rope which was between them unwound before Taylor had time to take a stance. Most of Speck's momentum was absorbed when he hit a steep ice slope below and hung suspended by the rope. The impact brought Taylor half-way to the edge of the ledge, but fortunately he was not pulled off. The two men who had fallen were killed instantly. With the aid of the Italian party on the ledge and a British party close behind them, the guide service was informed; and that afternoon and evening the bodies were brought down to Courmayeur.

There is no readily apparent reason for McNear's fall. He was well-trained in rock climbing in the United States and had completed several difficult climbs earlier in the summer, among them the Charmoz and the Grépon. The rope was nearly new, and it is considered by members of the party that Fisk's belay would have been strong enough to withstand the shock of McNear's weight, had he not fallen outside the flake which cut the rope. Whatever lessons can be garnered from this tragedy probably do not lead to criticism of McNear's rock technique, although it is known that he particularly liked to use wafer-type pitons and hence may not have inserted a piton large enough to ensure a substantial margin of safety. What can be fairly said, however, is that, on mountains where a large number of parties are interested in climbing at the same time, if one party feels rushed it must take special care not to hurry along too rapidly, and not to permit one rope to remain waiting directly beneath another. It is possible that McNear felt a psychological pressure to speed up his climb, although the route was one which he had not climbed before, because he knew that an Italian and an English party were coming from below.

(d) ACCIDENTS IN MEXICO

The Club de Exploraciones de Mexico reports that since 1935 there have been about 100 deaths due to various types of accidents on the great volcanoes and mountain crags of Mexico. At least 30 of these have been on the volcanoes themselves, but only seven have occurred to members of the Club de Exploraciones, and only one of these was on a regular club trip. During 1949 there was an unusually large number of fatalities -- 19 in

all -- including one on Orizaba, three on Popocatepetl, four on Ixtaccihuatl and three on local rock climbs. Apparently the only way that these accidents will be minimized is through public education.

The most tragic phase of the recent surge of mountain accidents in Mexico has resulted not so much from volcano climbing as from rock climbing by poorly indoctrinated persons on the crags of Pachuca, Tepotzotlan, Salagar and elsewhere. In the last ten years, at least 70 deaths have been due to this activity among inexperienced persons, none of whom were members of the Club de Exploraciones. It is reported that some of the deaths on the Pachuca Crag have occurred while climbers were under the influence of alcohol. It is known that some have made the climb only to celebrate it with a bottle and, as a result, have been killed on the descent. Most of the deaths, about 20, have been on a crag called "la Muela."

In all of Mexico there are about 12,000 persons actively interested in mountain climbing. It appears that these climbers are very individualistic: they have formed a great number of clubs. There are in Mexico City about 60 different clubs which dedicate themselves to rock climbing such as is found on the Pachuca. In every one of these there has been at least one death. It would appear that there is much need for the dissemination of information on safe climbing. This need becomes even more apparent when one considers the loose nature of the rock on most of the Mexican peaks.

OTHER INCIDENTS AND EVENTS

Clues to fate of two mountaineers lost in the Northern Cascades in 1947. By referring to page 11 in the "Report of the Safety Committee of the American Alpine Club May, 1948," one can read about a tragic accident which for several years has gone unexplained. Bones and other articles found this past summer by three University of Washington students have been identified as those of two Seattle youths who disappeared on Mount Index on 12 October 1947. The missing youths were Thomas Westphal and Richard Franklin, both 18 years of age when they