

men were injured in the same way on Mt. Torrey in Colorado. These are illustrations of one of the most common causes of mountain accidents to hikers and climbers alike.

*California: (1) Sierra Nevada.* Two 17-year-old youths, Christopher S. Reynolds and Steven R. Wasserman, left a camp on 7 August 1950 to climb the east face of Mt. Whitney. with only very light clothing and tennis shoes, they started up the buttress route, an extremely difficult climb. They fell, it seems, from a sharp pinnacle above the buttress and were killed instantly. Intensive searching included a complete descent of the route and other very difficult climbing nearby. One body was reached August 13th; the other, August 15th.

*Source of information:* report by G.B. Harr, one of the search party; newspaper accounts (especially Owens Valley *Progress-Citizen*, Lone Pine, California, August 18th); and the Mountaineering Committee of the Sierra Club.

*Analysis.* Inexperience, overconfidence, and the lack of proper equipment combined to result in the death of these two 17 year old boys. After the identification of his son, Mr. Wasserman said:

I hope that this tragic happening will serve to convince those parents who take pride in bringing about courage and determination in their sons and who desire to instill independence and initiative in them, that they also must have the insight to drill home the necessity of proper training for the job to be undertaken.

The accident is a horrible example of youthful overconfidence and unpreparedness. Some climbing in the States and a successful guided ascent of the Matterhorn do not make one an expert, ready to attack climbs of the utmost difficulty. The two boys had "practically lived and breathed scaling Mt. Whitney the hard way" during their month's period of work in a nearby gold mine just previously. A photograph was found in their pack sacks; this showed the proposed route, which in fact went up two separate parts of the mountain in different portions. The youths clearly had no real conception of what such a climb really entailed. Possibly, above the buttress, they were afraid to descend and thought it easier to attempt going on to the top. A safe rule to follow before attempting a climb on

unfamiliar mountain terrain is first to consult men who know the area. In the case of young Wasserman and Reynolds, they should have consulted the forest rangers.

*California: (2) Devil's Slide, near San Francisco.* On 24 September 1950 Harry E. Bates, 46, of Oakland, fell 75 feet to his death while trying to climb down the sheer face of this sea cliff. He had climbed about 20 feet down the side when he suddenly lost his footing and fell to the rocks below.

*Source of information.* newspaper report and Mountaineering Committee of the Sierra Club.

*Analysis.* Apparently a result of inexperience; but certainly also a result of the fact that he was alone and unroped. At least one or two persons a year are killed at this point, which is only 15 miles south of San Francisco. The county authorities would probably build a fence around it if they could afford the cost. They have threatened from time to time to prohibit anyone going there, but probably that would be quite futile.

*California: (3) Stinson Beach Cliffs, Warm Springs, Marin County.* On 12 February 1950 Robert L. Swift, 19, an experienced member of the Sierra Club, from Alameda, California, fell during a scheduled Sierra Club practice climbing trip on which he was trying to practice rappelling from a steep cliff face along the ocean. He was climbing with W. W. Dunmeyer, 20, of Berkeley. Their 5/16-inch rappel rope broke, causing the fall.

*Source of information:* newspaper account, Mountaineering Committee of the Sierra Club and Swift himself.

*Analysis.* This shows that even an experienced climber on a well organized and scheduled climb can receive serious injury. Swift's own explanation:

A sling of seven sixteenths inch manila climbing rope had been tied around a projecting rock at the top of a thirty foot practice rappel pitch. The rappel had been made fast to this sling by means of a bowline, using the center of the rappel as an end. This knot secured each strand independently, so that neither depended on the other. It should be noted that, had either strand parted, the other would have prevented a fall.