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REVIEW OF ACCIDENTS 1953

Maine—Katahdin: David Ripley (21) of Belmont, Mass., while leading, suffered a fall of about 100 feet on September 12, 1953. He was rock climbing with Robert Kruseyna (25) on Pamola. His fall was down a slope and not a sheer drop. Ripley stated he was too tired to hold on. His companion caught his fall and Ripley received serious bruises which necessitated his evacuation by means of a stretcher.

Source: *Appalachia* 19: 588, December, 1953.

Roland Anderson, Ranger at Mt. Katahdin.

Connecticut—Sleeping Giant, State Park: On the afternoon of May 2, 1953, members of various mountaineering clubs were engaged in recreational climbing on Mt. Carmel after a morning occupied in discussing and demonstrating mountaineering safety techniques. John Ewing (19) and Ted Rice of the Princeton Mountaineering Club paired off. The weather was raw, overcast with occasional mist and clouds on the mountain. The rocks were generally dry, but protected or mossy spots were wet from previous rains. A route of ascent was described to Ewing by Steve Porter, a Yale climber who knew the cliff. Porter, conscious of loose rocks to the right of the route told Ewing to "stay in the slot." The climb rose diagonally to the left following a crack at some points and a broad open "V" at others. A buttress formed the right boundary of the first half of the route and was normally not climbed because of obviously precariously balanced rocks present. The rock was firm, not rotten, but quite fractured. Ewing climbed the first pitch of about 20 feet on the normal route smoothly. He passed one end of a broad grassy ledge and then proceeded about 40 feet straight up the face of the buttress to the right of the described route. This ascent was completely exposed, probably more difficult than the normal route, and passed close to, if not directly over, a number of large loose rocks. In the total lead of about 60 feet, no pitons or other security were used. Ewing then took a stance and brought his second man, Rice, up to a wide ledge on the buttress, had Rice tie to a bush, and then led up diagonally to the left across the left face of the buttress to get back on the route. This necessitated crossing more loose rocks but was simple climbing because of the low angle and fractured rock. In 15 feet he passed the usual belay position at the junction of the buttress and main cliff face. From this point the climbing was steeper, exposed and with holds not so large, but still of easy caliber. Ewing crossed the face 4 feet to the left and proceeded up 6 to 8 feet where he placed a long horizontal type piton in a vertical crack on the solid face of the cliff. When in driving position for

this piton, he was standing on a six inch wide ledge with inward slope and there was no strain on the arms as the face sloped back amply for balance. The piton crack was excellent with about an 8 inch span of optimum opening for piton use. He then spent 10 to 15 minutes trying to remove this piton, finally gave up, and without clipping through it, or driving another piton, proceeded upward. [Rice states that the piton did not ring true.] He now had 30 feet of rope out, was about 45° above and to the left of his belayer, and was on easy climbing with excellent hand holds and small but adequate footholds available. His fall, which began a little above the piton, may have started from a slip due to his exhaustion, or from a foothold or handhold breaking off. Wetness may have been responsible if he stepped in dirt on a lower ledge. As Ewing fell, small rocks were noticed to fall with him. His fall was arrested by Rice and a large rock, which apparently had been dislodged by the rope, followed him down the cliff and struck him on the head. Rice deserved considerable credit for his good belaying technique and composure. Ewing was lowered to a grassy ledge; he died shortly thereafter.

Sources: J. B. Gardner, Chairman Rock Climbing Section, Connecticut Chapter A.M.C. David Harrah, Stephen C. Porter, Yale Mountaineering Club. James P. McCarthy, Princeton Mountaineering Club.

Analysis: J. B. Gardner has made the following comments: "that Ewing and the rock (happened) to be (in) the same place (at the same time) was certainly bad luck and could not have been avoided once Ewing fell. However, it should be kept in mind that none of those who climbed the route before would possibly have had the accident happen to them. (Ewing was climbing to the right of the regular route where there were precariously balanced rocks.) It seems to me that something a good leader and second should think about as well as how well the second is tied in is the possibility of fetching back the leader if he should fall and *what chance there is of taking down part of the mountain with him to endanger (the) leader or anyone else.*"

Much of Ewing's previous experience was obtained by climbing in the Shawangunks where the routes were all "ironed" and the belay points previously defined, so that a person qualified to lead in the Shawangunks might not have developed judgment to determine when a piton was necessary for belay purposes or safety. In this instance Ewing certainly felt a piton was necessary but was dissatisfied with the one he inserted. Because of this, mountaineering clubs should examine their leader classifications and qualifications to insure that a person rated as a *qualified* leader really is one.

Furthermore, the various college mountaineering clubs should have experienced advisors, either from alumni or faculty, and the colleges should require that these organizations have such advisors. Alumni or faculty members should deem it a privilege to have the opportunity to guide the development of the future leading mountaineers.

Connecticut—Sleeping Giant State Park: On July 25, 1953, Thomas Beck (16) and Terrance Lockavitch (16) were climbing up the face of an