

Twin Thumbs. At about 4:30 p.m. they set up a rappel using a new 5-inch angle piton. The piton was driven into a vertical crack. Considerable time was spent finding a good crack and piton rang with the characteristic tone indicating a good seat. A sling of avalanche cord (nylon) and a 2-inch descending ring were attached, then two 7/16th 120 feet climbing ropes were knotted through the ring and dropped. The rappel followed an 85° slope for 60 feet to a rocky ledge then a 25-foot vertical drop to the top of a 24-30 degree snow slope which ended 300 feet below in another series of cliffs. The rappel point was tested with a horizontal pull. Bishop, weighing 170 lbs., descended first using a sling and Karabiner rig. Phyllis Anderson began to descend next. Since neither Bailey nor Bishop were watching Anderson at the moment of the accident the exact cause is not known, but it is presumed that about half-way down the 85° slope the piton popped out of the crack and Anderson fell over backward; she landed on her back on the ledge and her pack which protected her somewhat was torn from her shoulders. She bounced and landed 25 feet below Bishop on the snow bank on her back with her head up the slope. She began sliding down the snow slope with increasing speed. The rappel ropes with piton, sling, and ring attached were trailing behind. Bishop was able to grab the rappel ropes and arrest the slide just above the second set of cliffs. Bishop made Anderson comfortable with extra clothing. She was conscious, but had received cuts about her face and forehead, and had considerable pain in her right arm, left shoulder, and chest. Bailey, meanwhile, by some excellent climbing descended to the snow slope and joined Bishop and Anderson. Bishop returned to the AAC CMC camp and a rescue party was organized. Anderson was evacuated by a well-organized team from the mountain to base camp and later taken across to the train which transported her to Durango. She had suffered considerable injury: a broken pelvis, one broken rib, a compound fracture of her right elbow, multiple fractures of her left shoulder and multiple cuts and bruises.

*Source:* Barry Bishop.

*Analysis:* Bishop has stated that "perhaps the accident would not have happened if (1) a double piton anchor had been used and (2) the rappels had been belayed." The second statement is certainly in accordance with conservative climbing techniques, but there may be times when it is too conservative. A third procedure would be to check the piton after each use and reseat it if necessary. It seems likely that Bishop weighing 170 lbs. could have loosened the piton sufficiently so that Anderson who was much lighter could have pulled it out. Bishop commented further that the rock in this area, which is a granite containing 70+ per cent orthoclase feldspar with large crystals and well weathered, might be treated with more caution in the future.

*Colorado—Rocky Mountain—No-Name Basin, Sunlight Peak:* On 5 August 1953, a party of eight under the leadership of Dr. Roger S. Whitney set out from the CMC-AAC camp to make the reputedly easy ascent of Sunlight Peak. Approaching the Needle Ridge-Sunlight Saddle from the north a course was taken intending to lead diagonally across what appeared to be

a névé slope with the hope of avoiding the ascent of an unpleasant moraine. When the border of this slope proved to be ice, it was followed on its up-mountain side for a distance until it became evident that the hoped-for snow suitable for step kicking was not going to materialize. Accordingly it was decided to descend across the snow patch—approximately 75 feet of soft snow on an ice base at an angle of up to 40 degrees, a slope on which the experienced could move with ease with the support of the ice axe and on which a man so equipped could with confidence support a fellow climber on the rope. Dr. Robert Wade (50) in front of the main party along with Whitney, was not so equipped, but felt that he could negotiate the slope unassisted. The proffered rope was declined with the statement that “Two men in the Sierras were killed doing just that.” He almost succeeded in his speedy and unsupported descent, but threw himself at the bottom to avoid a boulder and suffered bruises which spoiled his day even though he was able to continue the climb.

*Source:* R. S. Whitney.

*Analysis:* Avoid snow with an inexperienced and inadequately equipped party. Don't feel bashful to ask for the rope and never refuse it when offered by the leader. Own and learn to use an ice axe and carry it on all climbs.

*Colorado—Rocky Mts., Wolf Creek Pass:* On 12 August 1953, Douglas Beard (15) and two companions, all members of a scout troop summer camp, set out to climb a steep slope above Wolf Creek Pass. About 100 feet up, Beard lost his footing and plunged to his death on sharp rocks.

*Source:* Newspaper clippings.

*Analysis:* Inexperienced persons attempting more than their ability.

*Colorado—Flatirons, Boulder:* On 16 August 1953, Ann Blackenberg (20), Carlton Fraiser (23), and David Rose (22) set out to climb the face of the First Flatiron with the idea of exploring unknown routes. Rose had attempted to get over an overhang and rappelled off. While rappelling he noted a water course nearby which looked like a fairly easy friction climb at the bottom. The rope was therefore left through the piton in anticipation of this climb since the rappel piton was well placed. Fraiser with much less experience than Rose was anxious to lead and Rose, the leader, consented. Fraiser made the first 60 feet which were protected by the rappel piton easily and did another 50 feet with apparent ease. He announced he needed 10 to 20 feet to reach a belay stance. Rose moved up under the overhang taking a new belay position and Fraiser proceeded up 10 feet. Standing on an insecure foothold, he began to search for handholds, when his leg began to quiver and he started to retreat to a better foothold. At this point he slipped, and slid and rolled down the face about 100 feet. As the rope began to catch his weight, he struck a ledge feet first and crumpled onto his back. A preliminary examination of Fraiser was made, then Rose left Miss Blackenberg with Fraiser and rappelled 150 feet off the rock to summon help. The rescue was organized and executed by the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group. Fraiser suffered a partially fractured bone in