

*Joshua Tree National Monument*—On October 30, 1954, Phillip Martin (17) and a companion joined a scheduled Sierra Club climb at Joshua Tree National Monument. They did not participate with the climbers nor climb under supervision, but climbed near by on their own. After observing the other climbers, they climbed a difficult rock using pitons and then decided to rappel off the rock. The rappel was set up using as a sling a single strand of nylon cord, tensile strength approximately 400 pounds. Martin rappeled and the sling gave away in some fashion; whether it broke or became untied is not known since it could not be found. He fell about 50 feet in two pitches of 15 and 35 feet respectively and suffered a concussion and bruises although he landed on his back.

*Source:* George Harr, Sierra Club, present at scene of accident; James Bonner.

*Analysis:* Good judgment would have dictated the use of at least two strands, individually tied, possibly more, for the sling. The sling was tied with a fisherman's knot but this was not followed by hitches to prevent untying. The single loop was fitted snugly (horizontally) about a horn which greatly increased the stresses in the sling.

*Kings Canyon, Windy Cliff*—On August 27, 1954, Roy Arnold (approx. 30) and Ed Barnes (approx. 30) rappelled down the face of Windy Cliff in Kings Canyon in an effort to get at the entrance of Cliff Cave which is located near the top but on the face of this cliff. They made a "hasty" rappel in an attempt to get down the cliff before the sun went down. On the last rappel with Arnold going down last, the rappel rope slipped over the top of its anchor. Arnold fell and struck his back on a protruding rock. He spun off this and continued to fall and landed on Barnes. The two fell to the next ledge where they stopped. The total fall was about 43 feet. Barnes received a few deep cuts and Arnold a broken rib.

*Source:* Statement by Roy Arnold in "Mugelnoos"; James Bonner.

*Oregon, Mount Jefferson (1)*—On September 6, 1954, Ben Oman (32), Sam Tompkins (42) and Robert Lee (42) climbed to the top of Jefferson by the East route, a climb which should be done only by experienced climbers. The trail marked with wands by a previous party attracted them. They had crampons, ice axes, and were roped. On the descent the weather began to close in. They had been moving one at a time, but then decided to move together in order to descend before the fog became too thick. Lee's steps broke out and he pulled the other two down with him. They fell approximately 100 feet when the rope caught on a rock outcrop with Lee falling on one side and the other two on the opposite side. This arrested their fall and saved them from falling about 1000 feet into the bergschrund; two were knocked out. Lee was lacerated, Tompkins broke his fibula and Oman had a double break in the same area. Oman was given all the clothing the other two could spare and then they left to report the accident. A rescue party was organized and it was only by good fortune that Oman was found the next morning. If he had carried a flash light he could have been found the evening of the accident.

*Source:* John Biewener, who talked to members of the party.

*Analysis:* Inexperience coupled with hurrying to get off the mountain before the weather closed in.