

*Washington, Mount Olympus*—On August 21, 1954, Ian MacKay, Anthony L. Levy (30), Robert Hegstrom (24) and Richard K. Neal, Jr. (24) left camp at 6:00 a.m. for an ascent of Mt. Olympus by way of the Hoh-blue pass. They reached the summit of the middle peak at 2:30 p.m. The descent was started at 3:00 p.m. To save time the party took what appeared to be a shorter route down to the Blue Glacier north of the east peak. This led to a rock descent with belays used on the more difficult areas. The party unroped two-thirds of the way down the rock face because the last rocks did not appear very difficult. Neal went first by himself and near the edge of the snow he slipped on some wet rock and fell 75 ft. into the bergschrund, fracturing his left heel. He wore smooth-soled boots. The others climbed down by a different route and finally located Neal at 7:00 p.m. A rope was dropped to Neal but became stuck on a ledge 5 ft. or so above him. Levy then insisted upon being lowered into the schrund. He soon contacted Neal. Neal was tied to two ropes and was pulled up by direct pulling. The party was not familiar with Prusik slings and none were used although they had three slings with them. There was difficulty getting Neal over the edge, but with Neal's help this was finally accomplished after one-half hour of exhausting work.

Levy, meanwhile, had been exposed to the cold water spraying over him. He was dressed in bluejeans, part wool shirt, sweatshirt, and nylon parka. A rope weighted by an ice axe was dropped to him. The two men pulling could not get him closer than 15 ft. from the top. He was lowered and the Bilgeri method tried. Only MacKay knew of this but had never practiced it. Directions were given by shouts to Levy. Somehow the leg loops were not passed through the body loop so that he was turned upside down several times. Direct pulling was again attempted but Levy could not be brought up high enough to be removed from the crevasse. Many more tries were made until about midnight when the cold and exhausted party gave up and Levy was left hanging in waist loops 12 ft. below the surface. A six-man search party found them the next morning and quickly removed Levy's body. He had apparently died of exposure some hours earlier.

*Source:* Personal accounts of the three survivors. Report by head ranger Olympus National Park; Victor Josendal; *The Mountaineer* 47:3-4, 1954 (Oct.).

*Analysis:* An imminent accident situation had been established for some time by a buildup of contributory causes such as late start, inexperienced party members taking short cut, and personality conflicts which undermine effective leadership. After the accident happened this party was not able to cope with the emergency situations. In addition, the party violated two rules: (1) Parties which climb in crevassed glaciers must be able to effect a rescue from a crevasse. (2) Never climb beyond one's ability and knowledge.

*Mount Rainier National Park (1)*—At approximately 1:00 p.m. on July 15, 1954, a summit party led by Mountain Guide, James Whittaker, was descending the Cowlitz Glacier, just below the Beehive, to Camp Muir. About 12 inches of snow had fallen 10 days before. That morning the snow was so hard that crampons did not penetrate beyond the points. Later in

the day when the party was coming down from the summit, the snow was mushy. There were two ropes of four persons each. The first party of four had traversed a steep snow and ice slope when an avalanche broke loose about 100 feet above the second rope (Whittaker's rope), knocking all off their feet. Each member of this rope attempted to stop themselves but the moving snow continually kicked their ice axes into the air. The avalanche carried the party over an offset crevasse, the lower lip of which was about 10 feet below the upper lip. Three of the party landed on the lower lip while the fourth fell into the small crevasse where he was buried waist-deep by the snow. Members of the other rope ran to their assistance although it was not needed. Three members of the party sustained minor injuries. Mr. Rod Reid received a sprained knee; Martin Popelka, Jr. received a cut on the right knee and abrasions on the right arm; and guide, James Whittaker, strained muscles in his back.

*Source:* Report of Preston P. Macy, Superintendent, Mt. Rainier National Park; the *Mountaineer* 47:4, 1954 (Dec.).

*Analysis:* This avalanche was unexpected and its occurrence surprised the park rangers and experienced guides; this in turn points out the need for great caution on all potential avalanche slopes.

*Mount Rainier National Park (2)*—On Wednesday, August 11, 1954, a group of climbers from the Mountaineers climbed Meany Crest, which is within sight of Summerland and approximately two hours away. The crest was reached at 12:30 p.m. where they enjoyed one hour of rest in bright sunshine. An alternate route of descent was selected which involved crossing a step snowfield below and to the northwest of Meany Crest. The leader climbed down the slope and as large boulders came into view, he cut diagonally right (east) to clear them. During this traverse he indicated that the others should cut across above him. Another member of the party had already traversed the snowfield and glissaded down using a self-arrest. Seeing the success of the blizzard the leader gave permission to the other five members to do the same. They were kicking individual steps. Clare Combat mentioned her fear, lost her footing in the snow, and began to slide down. She was wearing Tricouni boots. Albert Carlson, who was sitting on a rock leaped toward her in an attempt to arrest her fall. The shock of collision knocked Carlson 20-30 feet down the slope where he was able to make a self-arrest, suffering a dislocated shoulder. At about this time, Combat lost her ice axe and it stopped sliding in about 15 feet. She continued to slide in a sitting position, arms spread out for some 200 feet when she struck the outcropping of boulders, bounced into the air 5-10 feet, and then fell into a wide (5-10 ft.) crevasse between the vertical rock wall and a snow wall. She was given first aid and evacuated by stretcher, but died that night.

*Source:* Victor Josendal from members of the climb; the *Mountaineer* 47:3, 1954 (Oct.).

*Analysis:* Anyone who climbs on snow slopes should carry an ice axe and must be familiar with its use. In addition the climbers should have stayed together so that the stronger could have helped the weaker, and if necessary, use the one rope available.