

*New Mexico, Organ Mountains—Dingleberry Peak*—The accident occurred during September 1956, at 10 A.M. when Bonard E. Topp (21), Robert E. Conner (22), and Alton H. Earle (20) were descending the south side of Dingleberry Peak after completing the first ascent. Conner used a large loose rock as a handhold while descending a small cliff of about 6 feet. When he released his hold on the boulder, it fell, pinning his left leg to the wall. His injuries consisted of a large puncture wound in the back of his left thigh, bruises and numerous small cuts.

*Source:* Alton H. Earle

*Analysis:* (Earle). Conner was unroped, the difficulty of the climb did not require the use of one for safety. This accident was due to lack of experience on the part of Conner. He had been warned about the loose rocks found throughout the Organ Mountains.

*New Mexico, Organ Mountains, Needles Area*—In September 1956 Walter Casey (21) was apparently climbing alone. He does not remember how the accident occurred. He was attempting a slope which was between 45 and 60 degrees and his height above the ground was not over 10 feet, when he either lost his grip or a handhold broke off. The broken leg he suffered apparently resulted from the position of the leg when he slid to the ground rather than the sheer force of the fall. In this sense the accident was a freak since this type of fall would normally have resulted only in scratches, bruises, or possibly a sprained ankle.

*Source:* Harry S. Davis

*Analysis:* This was Casey's first attempt at rock climbing, and clearly his judgement was in error when he attempted to do climbing in a class higher than grade two.

*New Mexico, Organ Mountains—Cuevas Rocks*—On the day in October 1956 when the accident occurred the weather and climbing conditions were ideal. A group of South Western Mountaineers were out for a short afternoon of rock climbing, they were finishing the climb with a series of rappels that ranged in length from 100 to 80 feet. The accident occurred when the last climber was making the last rappel. They were using manila rope, which although three years old exhibited no external sign of excessive wear.

The rope broke before Kenneth Olhausen (21) had dropped two feet on this last rappel and he fell 80 feet into brush and rocks. His injuries were a fractured pelvis and a broken wrist.

*Source:* Kenneth Olhausen

*Analysis:* (Olhausen). Inspection did not reveal any additional abrasion of the rope immediately before it broke, but subsequent tests have revealed that manila rope in the dry environment of the Southwest is subject to what we believe to be some type of dry rot and is not to be trusted for even a year. The rope broke a few inches above my hand and not at the rappel point.

The judgement of the party was faulty in using a manila rope of this age even for rappelling.