

ACCIDENTS OCCURRING IN 1958 NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED

Colorado, Halletts Peak—On July 18, John Barry (28) and David Burke (27) of Boulder were climbing the north face of Halletts Peak by the 800-foot sixth class chimney. After a long struggle with the final large overhang, lacking tension stirrups or water, the climbers began an unbelayed rappel descent over a series of chockstones. At one point, a six-inch angle piton could be driven in only half way. Barry used the rappel rope as a hand line and climbed safely down. Drake, placing his full weight on the piton, began an ordinary body rappel. Several feet down the chockstone, the piton came out. Drake fell about thirty feet, breaking a vertebra in his back, spraining an ankle and suffering a laceration of the hand. He was revived and able to continue the descent, belayed from above by Barry.

Source: J. J. Barry via Harold F. Walton.

Analysis (Barry): Rappel pitons should first of all be soundly placed. If in doubt, though time consuming, belays should be established.

The use of a six-inch piton in any but deep cracks is highly questionable. The leverage exerted when the full length of the shaft cannot be inserted no doubt contributed a great deal to the piton's failure.

In this case, the lack of elementary first aid knowledge made the continued descent highly dangerous. Drake complained of back pains but was able to move about. That no serious damage was done to the spinal cord as a result of the broken vertebra was indeed fortunate.

Wyoming, Sherman Mountains—On October 16, Jim Burton (18), Floyd Young (18), Slyvan Brown (18), and Terry Richardson started to climb Piton Perch a rock climb of 200 vertical feet.

Three of the climbers ascended Piton Perch and the fourth climber stopped on a ledge 60 feet below the summit. The three climbers rappelled 60 feet to the same ledge to meet the fourth climber. All four rappelled from this ledge twenty feet to another ledge. The third and bottom rappel was then set up with a single sling around a nubbin of rock. Jim Burton was first man and when about five feet off the ledge the anchor sling became untied due to an improper knot and rubbing by a rock crystal. He fell free for 50 feet, hit a rounded ledge in a standing position and fell another fifteen feet onto an approximately 30° slope. The other three climbed down a chimney to where Jim lay. The ambulance was two hours in arriving because the driver had trouble with the route. Jim was then carried 300 yards to the ambulance through a heavy boulder field on a canvas stretcher. Due to the fracture of his back, this was highly inadequate. Injuries were: fractures of both os calses, left tibia, fourth lumbar vertebra and fracture in head of right femur as well as slight laceration of right knee.

Source: Raymond Jacquet, President, University of Wyoming Outing Club.