

The remainder of the party continued the descent with considerable haste, taking one hour and a half to reach the cars and additional time to reach the nearest ranger station. Rescue personnel reached the body late in the evening and completed the evacuation before midnight using standard mountaineering techniques.

Considering the season, climbing conditions at the time of the accident were excellent; the weather was pleasantly cool with a slight north wind blowing.

*Source:* Robert C. Gardner, Altadena Mountain Rescue Squad, Altadena Sheriff's Station, Altadena.

*Analysis:* It is evident that Brubaker used poor judgment in not roping up. The party was inadequately equipped for such a climb at this season; each member should have had an ice axe and crampons. This is another instance where an easy summer route becomes much more difficult under winter conditions.

*California, Tahquitz Rock.* On November 4, John Suppe (18), Stuart White (19), and John Bahr (18) were climbing on Tahquitz Rock. Suppe was leader; he had had five seasons general mountaineering experience, including one summer of rock climbing in Yosemite Valley. White and Bahr had had limited experience. In the morning before the climb, Suppe discussed theory and gave them some drill in fundamentals.

The party began the climb at 2:00 p.m., on The Trough. The route was in shadow most of the day, and by the time the accident occurred (about 5:45 p.m.) all of the climbers, especially White, were chilled. The party had reached their objective and descended by rappelling and climbing. On the next-to-last pitch Suppe belayed while first Bahr and then White climbed down to the large ledge at the top of the bottom pitch. White and Suppe were tied into the climbing rope; Bahr was not tied in. Suppe had told White to stand in a certain crevice to belay while Suppe climbed down; White did not do so but simply stood on the ledge to belay. Suppe made a one-strand sling out of nylon parachute cord and looped it over a rock nubbin, with his climbing rope passing through it; thus, as Suppe climbed down, the rope was going from White up to the sling and then down to Suppe. Suppe climbed down most of the pitch, but in some places where he could not see footholds he used the two strands of climbing rope to give himself tension. When almost at the belay ledge he stopped to rest in tension and the sling broke. Suppe fell somewhat more than the length of the rope (120 ft.), down a steep slabby trough, suffering extensive abrasions. White, pulled off the ledge, fell more than 150 ft., hitting his head on the way down. Suppe climbed down to White while Bahr rappelled down and went for help. A rescue party, organized by the Idyllwild Fire Department, reached the injured climbers at 8:00 p.m. White was carried out on a stretcher, but Suppe was able to walk down. The party reached the cars at 9:30 and the hospital at 10:00 p.m. White never regained consciousness and died in the hospital eleven days later.

*Source:* David Harrah (from interviewing Suppe and Bahr and examining the area).

*Analysis:* The immediate cause of the accident was the breaking of the

sling rope. Since the sling rope was new and the break occurred in the bottom of the loop (this was established a week later by another party which found the sling in place), it appears that the climbing rope sawed through the sling. Still, if the belayer had been properly anchored, the fall would not have been serious. The important question is, why White did not use the belay stance that Suppe had told him to use; this belay position is the most obvious feature of the ledge where White was, and it has an obvious rock to anchor to. The only plausible answer is that White was cold and not thinking clearly. He had been the most lightly dressed of the three climbers, wearing only light slacks and a light nylon shirt, and he seemed to have been thoroughly chilled at the time of the accident. The obvious lesson is that a climb that can be quite easy to a party of two climbing rapidly on a summer day, can be insidiously dangerous to a party of three climbing slowly on a day when the route is in shadow.

That Suppe escaped serious injury is due to a number of factors. He was wearing a Bergen Pack that cushioned his fall; in addition it was too dark for him to see so he was relaxed as he fell. Another piece of good luck is that the rappel rope was with Bahr, and that he was able to get himself down. This rappel, the second one he had ever made, is a sign of coolheadedness on his part and good training on Suppe's part.

*California, El Capitan Peak.* On December 2, David Gunn (19) and a group of twelve other teenage hikers embarked on an ascent of El Capitan Peak, a prominent landmark near Lakeside. During the ascent of a brushy scree slope one member of the party dislodged a large rock which traveled some 50 ft. and struck Gunn in the right leg. Gunn was severely cut by the rock and lost considerable blood before any rescue could be effected.

Immediately after the accident some members of the party went back down the mountain to the nearest telephone and called the local authorities, while the remainder stayed with Gunn and administered first aid. The County Sheriff summoned a helicopter from a nearby Coast Guard base and a doctor was flown to the scene of the accident. After he had seen to Gunn's condition the victim was flown to a hospital for treatment. He will recover completely.

*Source:* Robert Gardner, Altadena Mountain Rescue Squad.

*Analysis:* The accident could have been prevented by better party management and by the usual signal "rock" being given as soon as the boulder was dislodged.

*California, San Gabriel Mountains, Mt. Baldy.* On December 5, James Chopp (19) and Thomas Richards (20) started up the south slopes of Mt. Baldy. The weather was cold with a gusty north wind blowing and climbing conditions were generally poor. Neither man was an experienced mountaineer and neither was properly equipped for the existing conditions. Both wore tennis shoes and inadequate clothing.

The climbers' initial plan was to climb to the top of the falls and no farther, but inasmuch as they were making good progress they decided