

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

to continue toward the summit. It was not long before darkness began to close in and they realized they would have to turn back immediately. In the gathering darkness Chopp slipped on a patch of frozen snow and fell some 300 ft. down a steep snow slope. His fall was arrested by vegetation farther down the mountain. Chopp was injured, but not so seriously that he could not make his way down to the road head, a matter of half a mile. Once at the road, a motorist picked him up and delivered him to hospital where he was treated for severe contusions and lacerations on his arms, back, legs, and neck.

Meanwhile, Richards, still upon the mountain, was afraid to move. He thought Chopp must have been killed, but he could not make his way down to search for his friend in the darkness. As soon as the authorities had been notified of Chopp's story, San Bernardino Mountain Rescue was mobilized. The group set up base camp at the road head below Richards' position. The rescue team knew of Richards' inadequate protection against the cold, but for reasons that are unclear it was decided to let Richards remain on the mountain overnight and search for him when it was daylight. The temperature at the top of a nearby ski-lift dropped to below 20° F. that night and represents Richards' exposure on the mountain. Richards could see the lights of the rescue camp and called to them throughout the night, but to no avail. In the morning, Richards started down under his own power and finally made it to the road head in mid-morning, as the rescue team was leaving base camp to search for him. He was taken immediately to hospital for treatment of frostbitten feet and severe exposure.

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

*Analysis:* In the opinion of this reporter, an experienced team of climbers could have reached Richards in 2 hours at the maximum and brought him out in an equal amount of time, considering the darkness and numerous belays that would have been necessary. It is evident that Richards' injuries could have been minimized by an adequately trained mountain rescue team.

*California, Yosemite National Park.* On December 17, Steve Roper (20) and Frank Sacherer (21) started to climb to the base of the face of Half Dome, hoping to get a little practice at easy ice climbing. They carried ice axes and crampons, but no rope or other climbing equipment. The climbing was easy and gradual until they reached wide, granite slabs covered with 2 inches of powder snow over ¼ inch of ice. Angle of the slabs ranged from 45 to 55 degrees. A third-class summer route winds up beside these slabs.

Donning crampons, the two started out angling up the slabs. A few feet below the top, Roper found the going difficult, as the ice on the rock was thin. His crampons slipped out and he fell, going immediately into a self-arrest position. He maintained this position for about 200 ft. with no apparent reduction in speed, as the pick was ripping away the thin cover of ice and snow and baring rock. At this point, the axe was torn from his hand, although the wrist loop held for a considerable distance. Roper fell a total of 600 ft. before landing in a pile of avalanched ice at the base. Sacherer said that his speed was so great that he bounced