

SEARCHES, RESCUES, AND RECOVERIES IN NORTH AMERICAN
ALPINE AREAS
SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RESCUE OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE

A Joint Committee of The American Alpine Club
and the Mountain Rescue Association

Maine, Mt. Katahdin. (See accident report) Following the second radio contact with Toque Pond, Park Supervisor Taylor dispatched additional rangers, who arrived at Chimney Pond at 8:00 A.M. Two inches of new snow had fallen. This party was told that Heath had gone up into South Basin, though later parties were told he had gone up the Dudley Trail. By the time the party had arrived in South Basin 6 to 8 inches of fresh snow had fallen, and finding nothing, they returned to Chimney Pond that evening.

During the entire following week, with the brief exception of Friday morning, the weather remained unfavorable with strong winds driving snow and rain. Fish and Game Warden Supervisor David Priest (the official charged by Maine law with local responsibility for searches) heard of the effort on a commercial news broadcast on Wednesday morning.

By Friday, November 1st, collegiate mountaineering groups from Maine were searching trails, and mountain rescue personnel from Vermont and Massachusetts were in action by Saturday, having been called Thursday night by the Warden Service. Conflicting briefings were the rule, but most reports indicated that the missing people would be on the slopes below Chimney Peak, so the mountain rescue teams made as comprehensive a search as possible of this area. All gullies and ledges were filled with new snow, driving rain had saturated the surface, and snow slides were coming down the entire face. The rescue effort was terminated Saturday night, since the prevailing arctic snow conditions precluded survival above timberline.

Source: William L. Putnam.

Analysis: (William L. Putnam) There was confusion and delay at all stages of this operation in calling for sufficient competent help to get the job done properly. The severity of the storm on Tuesday, October 29th was such that no amount of competent help could have arrived in time to do any good even had they been called at first radio contact. Subsequent hearings have pointed out the need to develop sounder procedures in Maine in order to eliminate confusion and delay in the future, and the need for central control of operations.

Arizona, Catalina Mountains, Pima Canyon. On 23 February Robert Schultz (22) and his brother William Schultz (17) were hiking near the trail in Pima Canyon when Robert fell and cut his foot. Both were *deaf mutes*. William installed "shoelace tourniquets" on Robert's legs and hiked out for help. Upon arriving at the road, he discovered that he did not know how to operate their motorcycle, and much time was lost in getting it started. Upon arriving in Tucson he was immediately arrested by City Police for driving without lights (he didn't know how to operate

them) and taken to the station where his parents were called. At this time it was discovered that William was trying to give the police information through notes of his injured brother, the Sheriff was alerted, and Southern Arizona Rescue Association was called.

Even though William Schultz had come out Pima Canyon he insisted that his brother was on Cathedral Peak, some 6 miles east of Mt. Kimball which adjoins Pima Canyon. Repeated questioning did not shake William's conviction concerning his brother's location, and he pointed out the spot on the map. Subsequently it was learned that William could not read maps. After much discussion it was decided to search Pima Canyon first, but upon arriving near the end of the canyon this seemed fruitless. The search party hiked back out, arriving at 5:00 A.M., and prepared to move base operations to Sabino Canyon at 8:00 A.M.

An H-43B helicopter from Davis Monthan AFB was secured, and as it was preparing to air-lift the first team to Cathedral Mountain, William Schultz suddenly realized his error, pointing to Mt. Kimball on the map. Two rescue teams were taken to a heliport near the summit, and the chopper started to search again Pima Canyon. It soon located Robert Schultz and took him aboard with the winch and sling. Injuries were not serious, and the "shoestring tourniquets" turned out to be bandages.

Source: Raymond R. Neal, Southern Arizona Rescue Association.

Analysis: The above abbreviated account does not adequately convey the extreme difficulty of trying to obtain accurate information from this deaf-mute. The resulting confusion in the operation resulted in much lost time and false starts. The search party in Pima Canyon passed near Robert Schultz twice, but being deaf-mute he either did not realize they were there or could not make noise to attract them. Ray Neal recommends that all deaf-mutes carry a whistle when going into remote areas, and that when questioning deaf-mutes the interrogation should be conducted by someone who understands their sign-language.

Alaska, Kenai Range, Mt. Alice. (See accident report) As Hitt disappeared from sight, Hoeman and Johnston told the other two less experienced climbers to wait on the ridge while they followed the path of the small avalanche caused by Hitt's fall. They descended over the two small rock cliffs and the snow slope to the bergschrund at the head of the glacier where they found him. Hoeman cleared the snow from around the victim's head and shielded him from the stream of water falling from the upper lip of the schrund while Johnston prepared a platform on the lower lip with available packs, and they then moved the victim to this. They briefly ascertained the nature of the victim's injuries, then Johnston left for Seward for help, while Hoeman anchored Hitt and the pack platform to the ice. Hoeman then returned to the ridge and brought the other two climbers down on a rope. The team began to bandage Hitt's head, which had resumed bleeding, but breathing stopped so mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was begun. Air was escaping from the victim's head wounds and ear, and there were soon unmistakable signs of anoxia. Tracheotomy was considered, but the party had no tube, so they tried to stop air flow from the wounds by direct pressure on bandages and continued artificial