

*New Hampshire, Cannon Mountain.* On August 12th Dana Jones (age 27) and Mark Lawrence (24) were completing an ascent of Sam's Swan Song. They had reached about the eighth pitch. According to another climbing party, Dana, in the lead, went slightly off route and fell when he pulled off some loose blocks. Mark's belay anchor failed, and both climbers fell down the cliff until their rope caught around a spike of rock and suspended them high above the talus slope. Rescuers found them both dead. Neither was wearing a hard hat. The rescuers surmised that Dana had been killed by injuries sustained during the fall, including severe head damage, while Mark may have been strangled by his waistband, which was under his armpits, and by three wraps of the climbing rope around his neck. (Source: *Appalachia*, December 1973.)

*Analysis:* Both climbers were experienced and familiar with the area. The failure of the belay anchor has not been explained, but it obviously turned a potentially serious accident into a fatal one. Use of hard hats and (in Mark's case) a seat harness might have lessened their injuries. Cannon Mountain is known for some loose rock.

*New York, Shawangunks.* On December 1st a student at the State University College in New Paltz was hiking with friends in the Trapps area. They followed a footpath to the top to enjoy the view. For the return the student elected to scramble down the cliff face, while his friends preferred the footpath. He lost his footing near the top and fell about sixty feet to the carriage road, landing a few yards west of the Keyhole. He died on December 5th at Albany Medical Center. (Source: Mohonk Trust.)

*Analysis:* Although this was not a mountaineering accident (and is not included in the statistics of this Report), it became known among Gunks climbers. News of the incident eventually reached Great Britain, where it was incorporated into a *Mountain* magazine article about Shawangunk developments: "With many of these new routes graded 5.11 and some possibly even harder, this burst of climbing has resulted in a new advance in standards in the region. However, increasing numbers and possibly the new ethics have also led to a rise in the number of accidents. One fatality and a number of other serious incidents are a sobering counterweight to the more progressive developments" (*Mountain* 32, p. 11). With respect to the fatality the conclusion drawn was incorrect, since the incident was entirely unrelated to rock climbing. At the Shawangunks in 1973 there were thirteen reported climbing accidents, of which three involved nut failure. None of the thirteen occurred on routes of unusual difficulty.

*North Carolina, Table Rock.* On December 3rd Steve Longenecker (age 33) and Robert Watts (27) were doing a short rock climb at Table Rock. Longenecker customarily climbed in a seat harness made of one-inch nylon webbing. Having forgotten his own, he borrowed one that Watts had worn on two previous outings. The webbing was approximately twelve feet long and had a piece of tape about midway. When Longenecker fell on the lead, the webbing parted at the tape, letting him drop 62 feet to the ground, where he landed on his left side, sustaining a broken rib, several bruised muscles, and a brain contusion. He was wearing a Joe Brown hard hat that was not scratched in the fall. (Source: Longenecker.)

*Analysis:* Both leader and belayer assumed that the tape marked the middle of the webbing. Not so. The webbing consisted of two separate pieces that had been taped together before Watts purchased it. Manufacturers may splice webbing with

tape so as to sell it in reels of exact length. Other climbers have purchased spliced webbing, including one who used it as a running belay sling. Obviously, climbing equipment shops should put an end to this custom. Climbers have an equal responsibility to inspect their gear closely, which means that no working length of rope or webbing should be covered with tape.

*Washington, Mount Adams.* On February 3rd Keith Edwards (age 24) and Dwain Hess (19) established a base camp below Goat Butte at the foot of Mt. Adams. Their purpose was to scout the area for a later climb by a larger group, possibly up the Rusk Glacier. On the 4th, in excellent weather, they climbed the mountain via the Wilson Glacier. On their descent they fell over an ice wall near the top of the Lyman Glacier. It is not known whether their fall was caused by a slip, by a small ice avalanche, or by mistakenly taking the wrong route. Hess died at the site of the fall, and his open down jacket suggested to rescuers that he never regained consciousness. Edwards suffered a fractured skull and broken leg and ribs in the fall. With bare hands he was able to pull himself forward through the snow for about a mile toward their camp before he died. The two climbers were first reported missing by friends on the 5th, their camp was located on the 7th, a barely visible trail led to Edwards' body on the 8th, and Hess was found on the 9th. Bad weather prevented the evacuation of Hess's body until the 23rd. (Sources: L. K. Buchanan, Hal Foss, Gordon White.)

*Analysis:* Both climbers were competent, and Edwards in particular was experienced and strong. The excellent weather led them to try an ambitious climb, but the rope of two was too small to cope with any serious mishap. A rope with several climbers attached might have been able to stop the fall. Another rope of two could have assisted the injured and started the evacuation.

*Washington, Mount Baker.* On May 20th Stephen Esses (age 22) died of exposure after spending a stormy night in a rudimentary snow cave near the summit of Mt. Baker. Esses, a University of Washington student, was one of fifteen student climbers in an Intermediate Mountaineering course (Physical Education N52) offered by the Office of Non-Credit Programs in Continuing Education. The leader of the party was Warren Bleser (35), a mountaineer of twenty years' experience. His assistant was Erik Myklestad (22), a graduate of Bleser's High Angle Rock course who had been climbing for two years. The other fourteen student members of the party ranged in age from 16 to 40. Esses was a graduate of the Basic Mountain Climbing course (P.E. N51) and Winter Mountaineering (P.E. N54).

The party assembled at Kulshan Cabin on Friday night, the 18th, and left shortly after dawn on the 19th for the headwall of the Coleman Glacier. The weather was good and the previous day's forecast had not mentioned any approaching storm. At the base of the headwall the party formed a single seventeen-man rope with Bleser in the lead. Several members of the party had become tired on the ascent to the headwall, and Myklestad offered to return to the cabin with them. In addition, there were doubts about the changing weather conditions. But when word came down that the ice conditions were easier than expected, everyone decided to continue. During this stop several people noticed that Esses was wearing only blue jeans, a football jersey, and a windbreaker. Another student gave him a down jacket, and he was offered woolen underwear which he declined. The time interval between the departure of the first person (Bleser) and the last (Myklestad, the seventeenth) from the base of the headwall was three hours. Esses was thirteenth on the rope.