

the mountain." His body had not been found as of January 14, 1978. (Source: Don Bryant, Punto Alto Mountaineering School.)

*Analysis:* Saulsberry did not adhere to four of the basic rules of mountaineering: (1) he failed to notify local authorities of his climb; (2) he climbed alone with little mountain experience; (3) he was dressed improperly and carried no mountain or climbing gear, which would include survival gear; and (4) though the weather had been clear, there were current weather reports which clearly indicated a fast approaching storm. (Source: Don Bryant, and Sgt. Jourden of Siskiyou County Search and Rescue.)

*FALL, CLIMBING UNROPED, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS—Colorado, Quandry Mountain.* Donald Gordon (21), Michael Bearzi (24), and William Trull (22) were climbing on the north face of Quandry Mountain on May 29. They started from McCullough Gulch at 8:30 a.m. Bearzi and Gordon said that at 11 a.m. Trull grabbed a rock about two feet in diameter and that it came loose. Trull fell 30 feet and then slid 150 feet down a snow field. They were unroped at the time. Trull suffered a concussion, knee injury, and several lacerations. He was given first aid by his partners. He was evacuated by stretcher and helicopter to Breckenridge Medical Clinic. (Source: Paul Johnson, Summit County Rescue Group.)

*FALL, INEXPERIENCE—Colorado, Mt. Royal.* Mark Baines (16) was attempting a climb of Mt. Royal with a friend when he fell to his death. (Source: Paul Johnson, Summit County Rescue Group.)

*Analysis:* In this geographic area, as well as Mt. Evans, the writer has noticed a number of accidents involving young people attempting climbing or "scrambling" without the aid of equipment and without any technical climbing experience. This one is typical of that category and while not a climbing accident in the sense that the individuals involved were not climbers, it is reported in the hope that readers who have no climbing experience will note that situations which appear to be "simply" scrambling can quickly turn into disasters. (Source: J. Williamson.)

*AVALANCHE—Colorado, Mt. Ypsilon.* Two climbers were injured in an avalanche in the "Y" Couloir on July 4. No other details available, but reported here because of an avalanche in the same place at the same time in 1976. (Source: Alpine Rescue Team 1977 Summary and J. Williamson.)

*FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, FAILURE TO TEST HOLD, INADEQUATE PROTECTION—New York, Adirondacks,*

*Wallface Mountain.* On August 13, a group of six climbers from Rochester, New York, and three from New York City attempted different routes on the cliff of the eastern face of Wallface Mountain in the high peak area of the Adirondacks. Wallface is the western side of Indian Pass through which there is a well-traveled trail maintained by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This cliff is one of the biggest in the East—some six hundred vertical feet—and thus more comparable in scale to Western rather than Eastern faces.

After the hike to the top of the pass where the wall rises, the Rochester group split into two ropes of three to attempt two different routes. William Mollet (29) and a post doctorate student in Physics at the University of Rochester led one of the ropes on the Wiessner Direct (5.6 V) which ascends the northern section of the face.

Near the top of the climb Mollet diverged to the left of the established route. At this point the angle increases substantially to about 70° which is considerably more than the final pitches on the regular route to the right. At this point it was about 4 p.m., the weather was good, the rock was clean and sound although wet from seepage water which drains down from the wooded slope above the wall. Mollet led up a pitch, placing four runners as he progressed. The first two were nuts and for the last two he tied into small trees in crevices in the wall. The trees were about three inches in diameter at their base. About sixty feet above his belayer Mollet encountered some blocks protruding out slightly from the main body of the face. As he attempted a mantle move with both hands on one of these blocks, it gave way and he fell sixty feet. (Rescuers reported that although the blocks were obviously loose when viewed from above, it might be hard to identify them as such from below.) The fall pulled out both trees and the upper nut. The lower nut held, stopping Mollet slightly below his belayer. He bounced at least once, hitting hard on his left side. His hard hat, of good quality, was crushed on the left side about the size of a fist. He was tied in to a diaper seat.

Word of the accident was brought out by two of the climbers about 7:30 p.m. to Adirondack Lodge six miles by trail to the north. The DEC headquarters about fifteen miles away at Ray Brook immediately organized a rescue operation which ultimately included over forty people—ten DEC Forest Rangers plus a large variety of volunteers.

At 11:30 p.m. the first rescue team headed by Gary Hodgson, DEC Forest Ranger, reached the top of the pass. No one from the climbing party was there to meet them nor were they able to make voice contact with any of them because of rain and wind which had by then settled in. Sometime later two members of the Rochester climbing party met DEC Ranger Bissonette on his way in to the pass with a second rescue team. They told him that they were unable to get Mollet down the face because of insufficient rope. They had carried him bodily up to a small ledge about ten feet above where he had fallen and tied him in there. Meanwhile four of his climbing companions were waiting at the top of the wall for help. They had tried to raise him from the top of the wall but were unsuccessful. The two climbers told Bissonette

that when they left Mollet on the ledge some hours ago he was unconscious, bleeding from the mouth, pulse weak and getting weaker.

By then (after midnight) heavy rain and thunderstorms had closed in and all rescue attempts were halted until morning.

What followed was frustration and delay due to bad weather—rain, hail and fog—until the morning of August 15 (the second day after the accident). Two helicopters flew in on the 14th, one from Plattsburgh Air Force Base and the other a DEC aircraft piloted by Ace Howland, but they were able to see little, much less accomplish an evacuation. Nevertheless, during the afternoon of the 14th a paramedic, Ron Taylor, from the Plattsburgh Air Force Base, rappelled down to Mollet from the top of the wall. Mollet was dead. In anticipation of the helicopter lift off Taylor checked the ropes to which Mollet was tied and went back up. With good weather on the 15th, Jim Wagner, volunteer rock climber, rappelled from the top of the wall to check out the ropes attached to Mollet's body. He cleared them and the lift off was accomplished before noon by the DEC helicopter.

The autopsy revealed that Mollet had suffered a broken neck, severed spinal column, broken ribs, a punctured lung, and internal injuries. In the light of these injuries it is significant that because of his hard hat, which was badly bashed on one side, there was no evidence of head injuries or brain damage. (Source: DEC *Search Report, Rescue Log*, Gary Hodgson; verbal: David Ames (DEC Ranger), and James Wagner. Entire report submitted by Landon G. Rockwell.)

*Analysis:* Mollet lacked experience to lead a route of this magnitude and the route finding problems it presents in the upper section. The fact that Mollet was off route on a much steeper pitch than he would have encountered had he stayed on the right on the proper route tends to confirm this. Apparently, Mollet was a moderately experienced rock climber on typical short eastern pitches. But Wallface is a big wall, much of it appearing to be new. The loose block on which Mollet was attempting the fatal mantle move was reported by rescuers as appearing loose when viewed from above, but hard to identify as loose when viewed from below. Whether Mollet tested it with adequate thoroughness is not known. If he did, then he was a victim of risks that one accepts in attempting a route of this kind. Such things can happen to the most experienced and careful climbers. It is also possible that the fatal block would not have passed tests by a more experienced climber. Furthermore, vegetation on this kind of ground should *never* be used for protection. The roots are too shallow to withstand any sudden strain no matter how firm the tree may feel to a manual tug.

Second, although remaining members of Mollet's group had sufficient equipment by way of rope and carabiners, they were unable to use that equipment to pull Mollet the approximately 100 vertical feet from where he lay to the top. Knowledge of rescue techniques, particularly rigging a pully system, would appear to have made that possible. (Source: DEC *Search Report, Res-*

*cue Log*, Gary Hodgson; verbal: David Ames (DEC Ranger), and James Wagner. Entire report submitted by Landon G. Rockwell.)

**FALL ON ROCK, NUT FAILURE**—*New York, Shawangunks*. A nineteen-year-old former NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) instructor fell on the first pitch of Frog's Head—a 5.5 route—pulling a hex nut and dropping 30 feet to the ground, breaking a hand. This was the third accident on this pitch this year. (Source: Brad Snyder.)

*(Ed. Note: There used to be a fixed pin here, but it has been removed. One must be able to lead 5.5 comfortably, therefore, as no further piton placement is desirable.)*

**SLIP ON ICE, NO PROTECTION PLACED, CLIMBING ALONE**—*New York, Practice Cliffs near Patterson*. H. J. Stepnowski reported that in March he fell 15 feet after discovering—the hard way—that a crucial foothold on a rock climb was iced over. He said “The *only* thing I did *right* was to wear a helmet, which kept my injuries minor.” (Source: Letter from Stepnowski to the editor.)

**FALL ON ROCK, NUT FAILURE, NO HARD HAT**—*New York, Shawangunks*. Tired while leading the first pitch of Roseland—a 5.9 route—Stephen Block (21) tried to move to easier ground. He fell, pulling out three nuts, and hit the ground. He was wearing no hard hat. (Source: Brad Snyder.)

**FALL ON ROCKS, SNAKES**—*New York, Shawangunks*. A thirty-five-year-old climber was on Wrist—a 5.6 route—when he looked down and saw a copperhead snake at his feet. When he moved up, he saw another at his waist. He stepped back into space, falling 60 feet after pulling three pieces of protection. This was on July 18. He suffered a concussion and a broken shoulder. (Source: Brad Snyder.)

*Analysis:* While common in North Carolina and the Southwest, this is not a usual occurrence in the Northeast. Climbers take note: a copperhead or diamondback snake bite is apt to be less damaging than a 60-foot fall! (Source: J. Williamson.)

**PULMONARY EDEMA**—*Oregon, Mt. Hood*. On Saturday, June 11, a Basic Climbing Class led by Bill Davis ascended to a base camp at 8900 feet on Mt. Hood's south side. One student, John Sargent (16) was quite long in attaining the base camp. He became nauseous and seemed quite tired. Since