

The accident on the South Face of Mt. Conness, 12 June 1959

The party consisting of Don Goodrich, Krehe Ritter, Lito Tejada-Flores, Denis Rutovitz (climbers), and John Shephardson (spectator) reached the stretch of meadowland at the foot of the talus coming down from Conness' southwest face on the evening of June 11th. The following morning we all walked up the talus to the commencement of the line of cracks running down from the great orange chimney near the center of the face and started climbing at about eight ~~A.M.~~ By three that afternoon we were disposed as follows: Ritter was belaying from a small ledge, Goodrich had moved about ~~20~~ 20 ft. to the right on sixth class pitons, Tejada-Flores and Rutovitz were waiting on a ledge 60 ft. below; Goodrich then began to climb fifth class towards a projecting block near the lefthand edge of a ledge that we had been heading for all day. Goodrich began to pull up on the block, but at some point it came away. He shouted 'falling!', one piton came out and he fell about 40 ft. in all, being stopped by the dynamic belay. The fall would in all probability have been harmless had it not been for the block which appeared to roll round his neck and head. The rope was allowed to run freely more than usual in order to avoid a second collision with the rock.

At the termination of the fall he was hanging unconscious in the rope, with a very large bloodstain (estimate: ~~one~~ ^{one} quart ~~(Rutovitz)~~ ~~2 quarts Ritter~~) on the face around him. Ritter lowered him to Tejada-Flores and Rutovitz, who laid him down on his back on the ledge where they had been waiting.

Apart from minor abrasions, ~~there~~ his only apparent injury was a deep cut in the shape of an 'x' about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ' side. This was no longer bleeding, and no first aid measures were used. Goodrich recovered consciousness as he was being put down on the ledge, and his condition did not seem too bad; he asked for water and swallowed some water and aspirin. We called to Shephardson, who had been filming the climb from below, to go to the ranger station in Tuolumne Meadows and report the accident; at the time we did not know ~~wh~~ whether it was serious or not. After ~~John~~ Shephardson had gone Goodrich began to complain of pain 'inside' his neck on the ~~right~~ ~~right~~ left side, and also said that he could not use his one leg and arm, though there was no apparent injury. He relapsed into unconsciousness at about 3.15 and began to look very bad; yellow, bloodless, blue at the fingernails.

We arranged slings around his knees, thighs, waist and shoulders, padding his head with all available parkas and sweaters, and tying the outer parka with a light sling so as to support his head and the padding. Tejada-Flores and Rutovitz then lowered him to Ritter, who tried to keep him off the rock with a line from below. The head truss snagged on something, however, and came off so that his head rolled around worryingly. He reached a sloping shelf below ~~xxxxxxx~~ and at first was lying on it in a head down position, and the ~~xxx~~ bleeding started again, though not profusely. When all were down he was put into a sleeping bag and propped and padded so as to be as comfortable as possible.

The time was now 4.30; Rutovitz left for the Ranger Station, arriving there a little after ~~IX~~ 7.00. He described Goodrich's condition as last seen, and this information was telephoned to the valley.

* Shephardson arrived at the station at about 6.00 p.m.

Rutovitz asked about the possibility of getting a helicopter in, and requested that the Sierra Club rescue practise party then in the valley should be immediately informed. The District Ranger took a negative ~~xxxx~~ stand , and more or less refused to do anything more until he had heard from the party of three men who were then saddling up horses and mules. He thought that the mule team would reach the scene of the accident within two to three hours, and upon radio contact being made any necessary further action could be taken; he also thought it likely that Goodrich could be brought out in the Stokes' litter on the back of a mule.

Rutovitz returned with the horseback party, which was led by Bob Peterson; the party left at about 8.00 p.m. Good time was made until reaching Young Lakes, but thereafter the rangers did not seem familiar with the terrain and were not at first willing to follow the route taken by the climbing party on the previous day. Some time was lost, and the foot of the talus was reached at midnight. Progress up the talus with the litter was slow; ~~xxxxxxx~~ the parties met at about 1.00 a.m. Goodrich was still alive. He was trussed into the Stokes' litter (a pressure bandage being first applied to the head wound which was oozing slightly). He was then carried down the talus, much use being made of ~~the~~ snowfields, to slide the litter; six men ~~xxxxxxx~~ could certainly manage the litter, but more would have made the job smoother and quicker. When we reached the foot of the talus E Petersen thought Goodrich was dead. We fetched a tent from our campsite and put him inside it, but by 6.00 a.m. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ he was quite cold, and we accepted the fact of his death.

No radio contact was made the whole night, although lights of parties on the road and round the corner of Ragged Peak could be clearly seen. A first support party of 4 rangers arrived at about 8.00 a.m., and four others followed shortly. Sierra Club members began arriving after another half hour or so.

D. Rutovitz

K. Ritter

DONALD Q. GOODRICH
BORN-SALINAS, CALIF.

6 APRIL 1932

DIED-MT. CONNESS

13 JUNE 1959

PLACED HERE
BY HIS MANY FRIENDS