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ASSAULT CLIMBERS

Army trains thousands of U. S. soldiers to lead attacks against Axis mountain positions

MOUNTAIN FIGHTERS: MACHINE GUNNERS SET UP THEIR WEAPON ON A HIGH RIDGE IN A CAMOUFLAGED POSITION BEHIND A HUGE ARTIFICIAL BOULDER

An assault climber is a soldier who is: (1) a mountain guide, and (2) a fighting man. He must know how to attack by going up steep mountains—swiftly and so quietly that no telltale rocks go crashing down to spread an alarm to the enemy.

Now, with American armies moving deeper into Europe's mountains, Uncle Sam is training legions of assault climbers at places like Seneca School in the Alleghenies where the pictures on the following pages were made.

In small groups, assault climbers are schooled in every phase of mountaineering—from proper walking to correct falling. They learn to stand erect in climbing and descending. In twos and threes they help each other. They learn to lead an attacking party, using ropes cinched around rocks, trees or their own braced bodies. They anchor ropes over a cliff—and use them for walking down its side.

Assault climbers come from all branches of the Army. Only volunteers are chosen. Later they return to their own outfit as fighting guides who'll lead the way in wresting mountain strongholds from the Axis. Their mountaineering training will save lives.

INJURED FIGHTERS can be lowered safely from dangerous heights, thanks to rope technique mastered by mountain troops during days of hard training.

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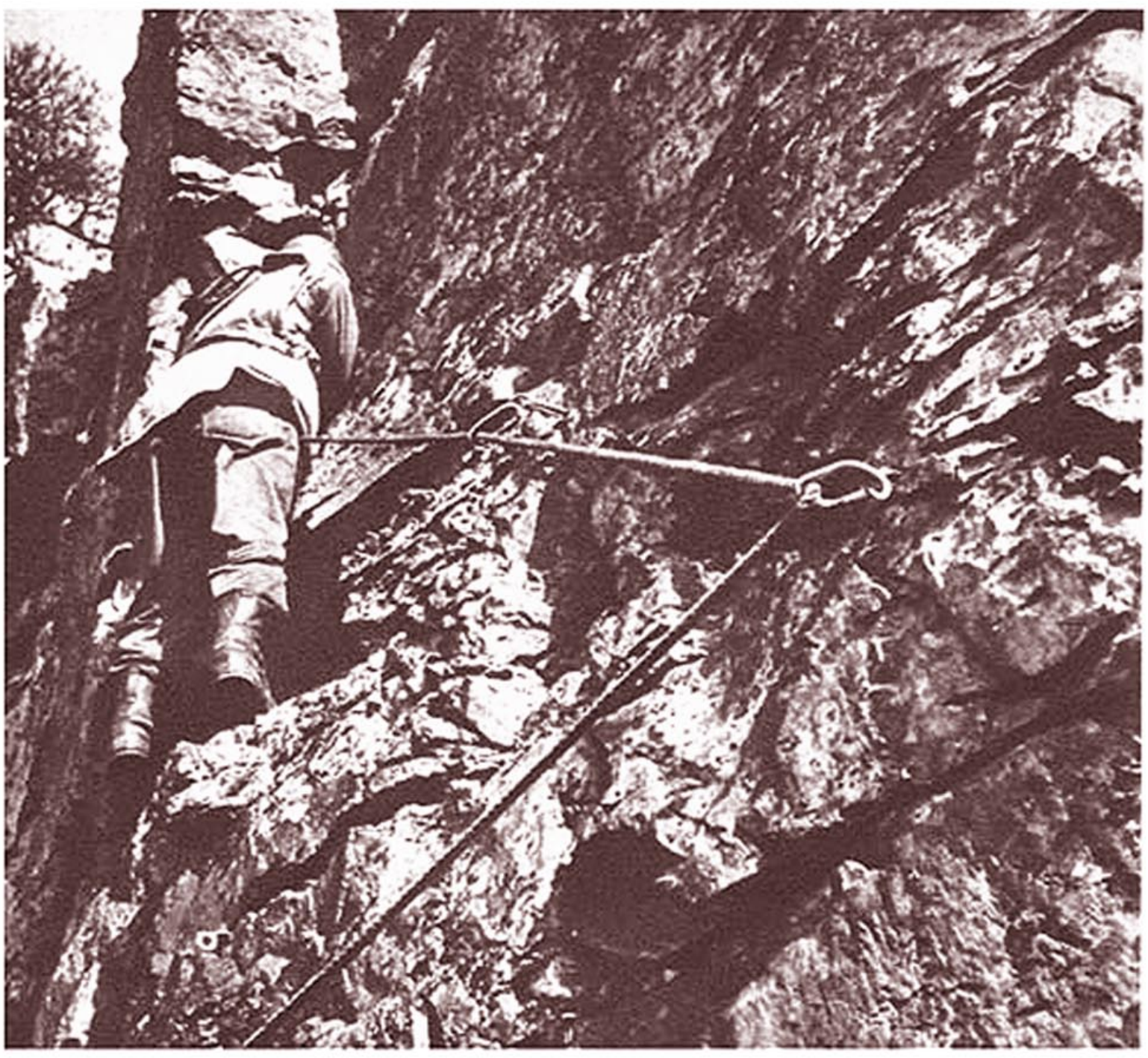
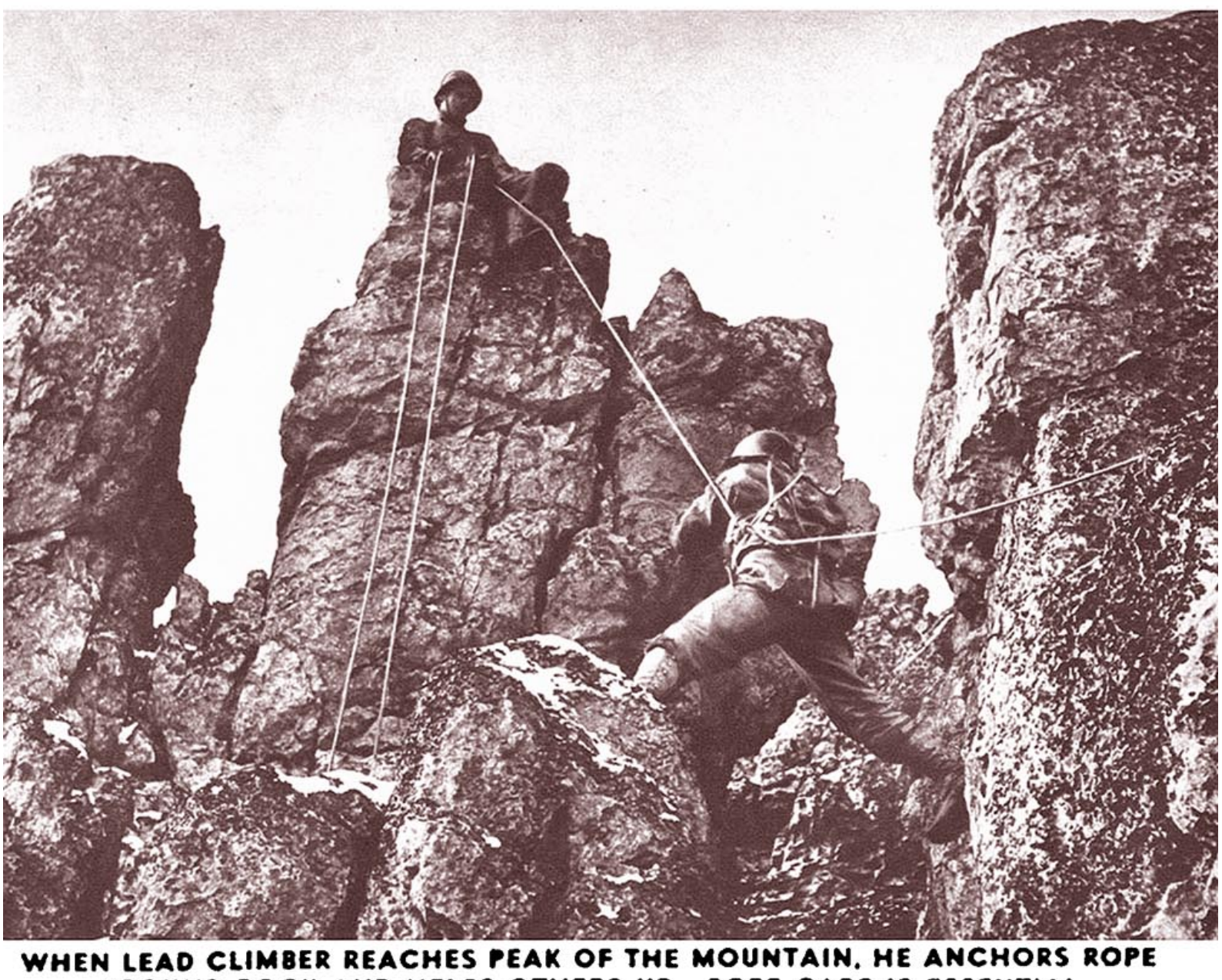
STEEL PITON IS DRIVEN into rock near top of a mountain by instructor, identified by white band on hat. Into the holes or links on these wedges of metal go snaplinks or sturdy ropes. These assist men in scaling nearly vertical cliffs.



WITH NYLON ROPE around his waist, the instructor goes farther up mountain. Rope is strung through snaplink on piton. Other end is around waist of next climber. Going up, best climber takes the lead; going down, he's in rear.



WHEN LEAD CLIMBER REACHES PEAK OF THE MOUNTAIN, HE ANCHORS ROPE AROUND ROCK AND HELPS OTHERS UP. ROPE CARE IS ESSENTIAL PART OF TRAINING

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NO WINTERIZING OF QUARTERS HERE! AT NIGHT SOLDIERS SNUGGLE INTO SLEEPING BAGS IN PUP TENTS ON LEDGE 900 FEET UP THE MOUNTAIN. MEN GET WELCOME REST HOVERING AROUND FIRE. THEY'VE BEEN BUCKING 30-MILE WIND IN FOUR ABOVE ZERO WEATHER

ARMY'S CLIMBING RULES

"Mountain marching" principles from Army's Assault Climbers' handbook:

1. March at a constant rate.
2. Swing legs from hips. Do not lift feet without cause.
3. Step around, not over, obstacles.
4. Move noiselessly.
5. Take two short steps instead of one long one.
6. Go slowly up steep grades, faster over gradual slopes.
7. Maintain balance at all times.
8. If a foot slips, do not try to regain lost distance with a jump.
9. Do not perspire.
10. Use legs to climb, arms for balance. Legs are stronger than arms.
11. Test all hand and footholds before placing full weight upon them.
12. Watch for reptiles on sunny ledges.
13. Take care of rope; avoid snarls, snags or tripping over it.
14. Warn those below of falling rock.
15. Descend in a loose-jointed way.
16. Keep a little energy in reserve.
17. When marching in files, keep three to five yards apart to avoid rock falls and whipping branches.
18. End marches early enough to dry sweaty clothes before bedtime.

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