

## UNITED STATES

### SLIP ON SNOW, COLLAPSED CORNICE

#### Alaska, Mt. Hunter

Masamitsu Urayama (29) and Yutaka Shinohara (40) registered through Jack Kim to climb the north face of Mount Hunter. Their attempt on the Lowe/Kennedy route was stopped by a large crevasse one-third of the way up the route. They abandoned their attempt and moved to the west ridge to make another attempt at climbing Mt. Hunter. Sometime during the day of May 9, while climbing at the 9,000-foot level of the west ridge, they were moving along a corniced section of the ridge. The cornice they were climbing on collapsed beneath them and they both fell approximately 20 meters, stopping in a hidden crevasse. Urayama was buried in the snow with only one of his feet exposed, and presumably died quickly. Shinohara received several injuries (torn ligaments in one knee, bruised ribs, lacerations on mouth, loosened teeth, possible broken nose) and was unconscious for a period of time. When Shinohara awoke, he tried unsuccessfully to dig Urayama out of the snow but passed out again. When he regained consciousness he tried a second time to free Urayama from the snow but was again unsuccessful.

The decision was made not to attempt recovery of Urayama's body. The following factors were considered in making the decision. (1) Hartzell's aerial inspection of the accident site indicated a significant amount of risk to any rescue team; this observation was confirmed by two other climbing parties that passed by the accident site (without seeing Urayama's body) and by Talkeetna glacier pilots who flew over the area. (2) Urayama's family requested that his body not be recovered if any risk to rescue parties existed. (Source: Robert Gerhard, Mt. McKinley National Park)

### SLIP ON SNOW, COLLAPSED SNOW LEDGE

#### Alaska, Mt. McKinley

On May 22, 1979, Ken Currens (25) and Jack Tackle (25) were climbing at 10,000 feet on the southwest face of Mt. McKinley. Their route was a ridge on the west wall of the Northwest Spur of the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier. They had been on the mountain since May 18.

At 2 a.m., Ken Currens took a 240-foot leader fall when the snow ledge he was standing on collapsed. He had run out 150 feet of rope on 50-60° ice, placing one Chouinard tubular ice screw 30 feet above his belay. The screw held the fall, leaving Currens hanging about 90 feet below Tackle. Tackle lowered Currens to the edge of the bergschrund several feet below and rappelled down to him. Currens was conscious and in great pain. He had a possible fracture of the left femur and numerous facial lacerations and abrasions. He was wearing a helmet which may have prevented serious head injury.

Tackle administered a strong pain killer and then spent the next four hours lowering Currens 200 vertical feet to an ice cave, arriving at 6 a.m. Tackle spent the next several hours making Currens comfortable, as he planned to ski out to the Mountain House

for help. Tackle left the cave at 1 p.m. and arrived at the Mountain House at 4:30 p.m. Cliff Hudson was in the air and was contacted by Tackle on CB radio. Hudson landed at the Mountain House and transported Tackle to Talkeetna. Jim Sharp and Jack Tackle notified the NPS of the incident at 6:15 p.m.

In Talkeetna, a hasty rescue effort was organized as the weather appeared to be deteriorating. Tackle and two climbers—Jim Logan and Muggs Stump—were flown back in to the West Fork of the Ruth at 7 p.m. Logan and Stump flew in an Akland Helicopters, Inc. (Hughes 500) helicopter piloted by Jim Okanek. Tackle flew with Jim Sharp of Talkeetna Air Taxi in a Cessna 185. They arrived on the glacier at 7:45 p.m. and began the climb back to the ice cave, 1,200–1,500 vertical feet above them. They carried a NPS Thompson Litter and some medical supplies. They arrived at the cave about 11:30 p.m. and found Currens in sufficiently good shape to be transported back down to the glacier.

The group left the cave at 1 a.m. on May 23 and began the slow descent on steep snow and ice (50–60°), which was crevassed in spots. Runouts of 300 feet were used with Stump belaying and Tackle and Logan on the litter. They arrived on the glacier at 5 a.m. Currens' leg was splinted at this point with two pickets.

Jim Okanek, in the Hughes 500, and Cliff Hudson, in the Cessna 185, left Talkeetna at 4:30 a.m. to make the pickup and fly cover. NPS Ranger Dave Buchanan and a climber—Ed Newville—were along with gear to provide assistance if necessary. The aircraft arrived on the scene at 5:15 a.m. The Cessna returned to the Mountain House while Okanek landed to pick up Currens and Tackle. At 6 a.m. both were transferred from the helicopter to the Cessna for the flight to Anchorage. Okanek returned to pick up Logan and Stump, while Buchanan and Newville flew back to Talkeetna with Jim Sharp. All arrived in Talkeetna by 7:30 a.m. Currens, Tackle, and Hudson arrived in Anchorage at 7:30 a.m. and Currens was taken to Teamsters Hospital. (Source: Robert Gerhard, Mt. McKinley National Park)

### **Analysis**

It is interesting to note that Tackle was able to downclimb 1,200–1,500 feet and ski ten miles unroped down the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier to the Mountain House solo without incident, a feat similar to that of Shinohara described in the previous accident narrative. When the climbing party consists of two members and one is seriously injured, the resources of each are tested to a much greater extent than if each had at least one companion. (Source: J. Williamson)

## **SLIP ON SNOW**

### **Alaska, Mt. McKinley**

Sang-Don Ko (30), Ii-Kyo Lee (24), Hun-Kyu Park (30), and Un-Young Kim (45) were members of the Korean Mount McKinley Expedition. Before the start of their climb they joined forces with Harry Maringas and Yung Chu of the Korean-American Expedition. The six planned to climb the West Rib route and flew from Talkeetna to the Southeast Fork on May 15, 1979.

By May 29, the group had reached the 14,000-foot level on the West Rib route. On this day, Ko, Lee and Park decided to push for the summit while the other three moved the high camp to the 15,500-foot level. Ko, Lee, and Park left for the summit with