

their due date of May 1. Arrangements had been made with the Park Service to lay out an X in the snow if they had an emergency situation.

For the next several days the weather remained poor (light wind and snow) with occluded visibility. Randall's condition remained unchanged. By May 4, he began to show a marked improvement.

Metcalf felt that once Randall could manage by himself, he could leave and descend for help. It was imperative that something be done since they were out of food. In 1982, they had both climbed the Southeast Ridge, and Metcalf felt he could get down in two days of careful climbing.

During the day of May 4, Jim Okonek of K2 Aviation made a search along the ridge. Due to intermittent clouds, he was unable to see anyone, but Metcalf thought he was observed and decided to wait another day before descending. On May 5, at 0900, Okonek and Ranger Jon Waterman spotted the pair and noticed an X laid out next to their tent. The weather was favorable for a rescue, so pilot Jim Porter from Evergreen Helicopters was contracted for the pickup. At 0940, Okonek and Waterman attempted several drops of food, fuel and a radio. These were made in the event the helicopter was delayed or unable to make the pickup. Okonek and Waterman returned to Talkeetna. At 1035 the helicopter (Alouette III) departed Talkeetna with Porter and Waterman. Ranger Roger Robinson departed shortly before with Okonek to fly cover. At 1230, the helicopter successfully made the pickup and returned to Talkeetna at 1310. Randall was taken to Providence Hospital in Anchorage where he was diagnosed as having HAPE, cerebral edema, pneumonia and a fractured right knee.

Analysis

Dr. Peter Hackett, who examined Randall in Talkeetna, stated that, "Because of the lack of oxygen to his brain, his coordination, judgment and reflexes were impaired. This undoubtedly contributed to his accident."

Metcalf and Randall have a long record of ascents in the Alaska Range, but this was Randall's first experience with HAPE and cerebral edema. Their route went much faster than anticipated, resulting in a quick rate of ascent, the main cause of Randall's sickness.

One can only speculate as to the reasoning for their not being roped on the descent. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denli National Park)

SLIP ON SNOW and RAPPEL ANCHOR FAILURE

Alaska, Mount Huntington

On April 16, 1983, John Tuckey (32) and Robb Kimbrough (28) flew to the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier to climb the East Face of Mount Huntington. On April 26, an advance base camp was established at 2190 meters on the Tokositna Glacier, below the East Buttress, with six days of food, leaving one day of food at base camp. By May 1 they had summited and began their descent of the Southeast Spur. The next day they arrived at the hanging glacier (2460 meters) below the South Ridge. They had depleted their supply of food and fuel, but were feeling strong as they continued descending on May 3. As Kimbrough mentioned, "We mentally felt the climb was over." The descent route took them down a steep ice chute, avoiding an

icefall between the 2100- and 2400-meter levels. Near the lower part, they encountered a 36-meter ice headwall. At 1800, Tuckey traversed over to some rocks to set up a rappel. In the process his footing broke out on the 50-degree loose snow, causing him to lose his stance and slide over the headwall. Kimbrough was unable to hold the fall and was pulled over the headwall after Tuckey. Below the wall they tumbled another 200 vertical meters down the 40- to 45-degree slope. Kimbrough sustained a concussion and a severely broken lower leg. They also lost three of their four ice axes.

Tuckey immediately splinted Kimbrough's leg and then dug out a sleeping platform. Due to their proximity to avalanche activity, they moved down the slope to a safer campsite the next day. Because their date for pickup was May 18, it was imperative that Tuckey go for help. On May 5, Tuckey made an attempt to ascend the 260-meter col between Mount Huntington and The Rooster's Comb. This would enable him to descend onto the West Fork of the Ruth. He attained the ridge crest and began descending to a point lower in the col. At 1400, he encountered a short snow cliff blocking his route. He placed a large snow fluke in the unconsolidated snow for a rappel anchor. Due to the nature of the snow, he was careful not to weight the rope heavily, using the ax as a backup. After the first several steps, the anchor pulled, causing Tuckey to fall. He tumbled down 300 meters of steep rock and ice, falling toward the Tokositna side of the col.

At the time of the fall, the weather was hot and sunny, and Tuckey was lightly clothed. He was knocked unconscious and didn't come to until 1800. Upon mental recovery, he noticed that he had fully dressed himself in warmer clothing, though he couldn't remember doing this. He had lost their only ice ax in the fall but was fortunate to have landed close to their previous tracks. He wandered wearily back to camp that evening, having sustained a concussion and minor lacerations. Sleeping for 12 hours that night, Tuckey made another attempt for the col in the morning. He proceeded back up the glacier, using a shovel in place of the lost ice ax. He experienced extreme exhaustion, traveling only a short distance before taking a break and sleeping intermittently for five hours. While Tuckey was away, Kimbrough crawled up the slope searching in vain for the missing axes. Due to the lack of an ax and the fall, they decided that the last resort would be to signal climbers from the col. Upon Tuckey's return, it became apparent that he had sustained a concussion. He slept another 20 hours and felt better the next day, May 7.

They decided to move camp back to the original site, up the glacier at 2200 meters, which would make the approach closer to the col. Tuckey left first, proceeding to the ridge, while Kimbrough dragged himself the half mile to the camp. On the ridge, Tuckey observed a plane taking off on the West Fork and attempted to signal it with a flare. The pilot was unaware of the signal. Later in the day, about 1800, two climbers, Dave Saiget and Jim Moehl, were returning from a carry when they thought they heard someone shouting, but disregarded it due to the windy conditions. Tuckey attempted to signal the pair by shouting, blowing a whistle and waving a dark inner sleeping bag. He returned to camp in the evening but was back on the ridge the next morning. On this day, at 1300, Moehl and Saiget were making another carry up the West Fork when they observed Tuckey waving and shouting, "We need help." Tuckey fired a smoke bomb which they both observed. Moehl and Saiget went to the Mountain House Airstrip and contacted Steve Hackett, a member of the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group. Doug Geeting with Talkeetna

Air Taxi arrived on a routine flight at 1450 and was informed of the situation. Geeting and Saiget flew over the col and observed the words “no food/fuel” and “broken leg” stamped out in the snow next to a tent on the Tokositna Glacier. At 1515, Geeting contacted Ranger Roger Robinson at the Talkeetna Ranger Station, who in turn contacted Park Headquarters. Jim Porter of Evergreen Helicopters was contacted for the pickup in an Alouette III. Geeting flew back to the Mountain House and gathered food and fuel for an airdrop, which he made at 1640. At 1643 the helicopter with Porter and Ranger Robinson departed Talkeetna. At 1725 the two climbers were picked up and flown to Providence Hospital in Anchorage. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

Analysis

Tuckey and Kimbrough felt the climb was over on the day of the fall, which probably contributed to the accident.

The two had left word with their pilot and the Park Service about their route and the date to be picked up. This was actually several weeks from the time of the accident. The fact that they left no specific dates could have led to a different conclusion had they been more seriously hurt. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

SLIP ON SNOW, ICE AXES IN PACKS, FATIGUE

Alaska, Mount McKinley

The four members of the Utah Exploration Society flew into the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier on May 4, 1983, to climb the Wickersham Wall on Mount McKinley. The expedition climbed rapidly and reached their high camp at 5000 meters on the Northwest Buttress on May 17. On May 19 at 0700, after a rest day, the four members, Rick Wyatt, Chris Noble, Kelly McKean and Evelyn Lees (25) headed for the north summit. At 1130, the group stopped at the 5580-meter level, where there were 30-knot winds and -25°C temperature. Lees and Wyatt decided to turn back while Noble and McKean kept going on toward the summit. As Lees and Wyatt started back to camp, they put their ice axes on their packs due to the very flat terrain in the 5400-meter basin. The terrain from here down to the 5000-meter camp was steeper (30–35 degrees), and the snow much harder. They did not take their ice axes off their packs before traveling on the slope and were not roped. On the descent Lees slipped and was unable to self-arrest since she did not have an ice ax. She fell 200 meters before stopping on the flat runout close to camp. In the fall, Lees broke her right ulna and possibly cracked her right pelvis. Wyatt was able to help Lees back to camp, arriving about 1800. Later that day Noble and McKean returned from the summit.

The group rested a day, and then, on May 21, moved toward the West Buttress route. Lees traveled without a pack and had to be lowered down the steep sections on her left side. They climbed to the 4800-meter camp on the West Buttress that night.

On May 22 Lees was lowered to the High Latitude Medical Research group at 4300 meters where Dr. Peter Hackett examined her. Hackett felt she had a possible stable fracture of the hip. The Utah Exploration Society team were willing to