

morning and afternoon sun. Although both were aware of the unstable conditions and recent slide activity, they chose to continue down the open face. Gambling with this route, rather than attempting another more stable, protected one (the Northeast Ridge), set the stage for the accidents which followed.

Although both climbers now recall the slope on the ascent as having been solid and frozen, their summit register entry complains of sloppy snow. The freezing level was high at the time of the accident, probably staying above 2500 meters during what passes for night in the Chugach in early June.

After Doyle's first fall, Norquist attempted to move him to safety, but did not clear him completely from the many slide paths. Neither climber carried an avalanche transceiver and they had only one shovel. They were not equipped for avalanche conditions. Doyle survived burial in the second avalanche through luck, fortitude and the perseverance of his partner.

Norquist made two difficult decisions, concluding that he must leave Doyle alone and injured on the snowfields of Bold Peak. He had to have great willpower to complete the 19 hours of strenuous physical and emotional activity required to save Doyle and get help for the evacuation. The rescue effort by the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group, coordinated with the Alaska State Troopers, was simplified by Doyle's miraculously stable condition. From the time Norquist first contacted the Troopers, it took less than four hours to complete the evacuation. (Source: Steve Brown and Ken Zafren, M.D., Alaska Mountain Rescue Group)

## **HAPE, FROSTBITE, PARTY SEPARATED, INEXPERIENCE, WEATHER Alaska, Mount McKinley**

On June 10, 1990, at the top of the West Rib (5975 meters) on Mount McKinley, Miroaki Ito (38) died from pulmonary edema. Ito had been left here, since he was feeling poorly, while the other six members of the KTK expedition went for the summit. Upon descent from the summit, two members got lost in poor visibility and descended the popular West Buttress route to the NPS 4260 meter camp. The others remained at the 5975 meter camp in extreme wind and cold, with very little gear, in hopes of locating their two countrymen.

By morning on June 10, Ito was near death and three others were severely frostbitten. A ground team was organized along with air support to help rescue the KTK expedition. By late afternoon Ito had died, and the frostbitten members of the KTK expedition were being evacuated to the 4260 meter camp where their extremities were rewarmed.

On June 11, Kiyoteru Hashimoto (25), Shin Kashu (41), and Takashi Nishikawa (36) were air lifted by Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the NPS camp, as they were unable to walk due to the severity of their frostbite. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

### **Analysis**

The team set out on an apparently good day from 5500 meters and fixed rope to 5950 meters. Mr. Ito developed cough, a staggering walk and shortness of breath, which are obvious signs of severe altitude illness. One member of his group was an experienced Himalayan climber and it is hard to understand how he did not recognize the seriousness of Ito's condition. At that point, descent would have been very easy on fixed lines

and with good weather, and since they were only 450 vertical meters above their camp, it would have been a very rapid trip back to their high camp.

The decision to leave him because he was not feeling well and to continue on up to the summit is probably the single greatest cause of altitude deaths on mountaineering expeditions. A victim of altitude illness who cannot walk a straight line or appears to have pulmonary edema must never be left alone. The appropriate action is to descend immediately, and not to have the victim descend by himself.

The decision to not turn around on the ascent, and to bivouac at 5950 meters with an obviously very ill man may have been due, in part, to hypoxia. The fact that they couldn't find the trail down the next day, nor drag him down across easy terrain because they were in such poor condition, points to incapacitation due to altitude, exhaustion and other environmental conditions.

In summary, this case illustrates the classic causes of death due to altitude illness: (1) lack of recognition that a person is seriously ill; (2) leaving a sick person behind while the rest of the group continues on; and (3) the deteriorating condition of an entire group of climbers under extreme conditions. (Source: Dr. Peter H. Hackett)

## **FALL ON SNOW, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Alaska, Eklutna Glacier**

On July 13, five climbers were injured, one critically, in a 60 meter fall on Eklutna Glacier. The climbers, part of an 18-member international expedition, tumbled down the glacier on Saturday afternoon and were stranded until early Sunday morning. They were airlifted to Providence Hospital.

One of the five, 24-year old Jackie Feaver of England, was comatose and listed in critical condition with serious head injuries Sunday night.

Ying Ju Loi of Malaysia and Nicky Kime of England, both 25, were in satisfactory condition at Providence. Two other climbers, Australian Helen Philips (26) and Gavin Burke (23) of England, were treated and released from the hospital Sunday.

The five climbers were roped together and traversing a snow slide when one lost footing and fell, dragging the others about 60 meters down the glacier.

Two other climbers, Iain Bernsten and Vincent Diamond, left the scene about two hours later and hiked about 24 km to a park service cabin at Eklutna Lake for help.

Wolgemuth said a state trooper helicopter and a hospital helicopter flew to the glacier about 0230 on Sunday; the helicopters arrived at Providence with the climbers about 0430. (Source: Anchorage Daily News, July 15, 1990)

### **Analysis**

Mercer, a public relations specialist for Operation Raleigh, the London-based outfit that sponsored the expedition, said they were in good spirits. "They were just coming off the glacier," Mercer said. "One slipped, and the others went with them.

"They all had the correct equipment, helmets and crampons and so on, and each group has a medic and a qualified instructor with them. All the basic precautions were taken."

Mercer said Operation Raleigh is "a youth development program out of London" that takes young people between the ages of 17 and 25 on expeditions around the world. The program combines adventure and conservation work for its clients, who "pay their own way," she said. (Source: Anchorage Daily News, July 15, 1990)