

ment carried by the NOLS expedition allowed them to contact help from a remote area. Expeditions prepared for the worst case scenario increase their probability of avoiding a disaster in the field. (Source: Denali National Park—Talkeetna Subdistrict Ranger Station)

### **UNKNOWN, CLIMBING UNROPED, PLACED NO PROTECTION, FAILURE TO TURN BACK, WEATHER**

#### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

On June 2, Karl Jendryschik and Jurgen Bruhm of the German expedition Saxonia 96, were separated from each other at Denali Pass. At 2252 Jendryschik contacted an NPS patrol at 17,000 feet and told them his partner Bruhm did not make it down from Denali Pass. Jendryschik thought Bruhm either fell or bivouacked at the pass. A ground and air search was suspended periodically because of weather. On June 14, the search for Bruhm was reactivated as the weather improved. Bruhm was not located and is presumed deceased. Rescuers hoped that Bruhm had survived a three day bivouac during the June 3 to 7 period. There was no evidence to support this theory except for a used chemical heat pack that could have been used by Bruhm during his bivouac with Jendryschik on June 2. According to an interview with Jendryschik, Bruhm was not accomplished in the skill of self arrest. Their exposure to big mountains and severe cold weather was shallow, and they felt extended.

#### **Analysis**

The Saxonian expedition overextended themselves in attempting the summit. The weather obviously was not optimal during their summit attempt and the forecast predicted higher winds, from what already could be considered as dreadful conditions. They should have turned back instead of attempting the summit.

The weather forecast is a weighty factor in making the decision on whether to go up or not. The forecast should also be interpreted as conservatively as one's nature permits. Whether having a radio would have helped them in receiving the weather forecast is unknown, as Jendryschik's English was poor.

Many falls have occurred at Denali Pass and will no doubt continue, until climbers use protection on this terrain. Pickets are very easy to carry and place on the traverse. Their use adds a tremendous safeguard for climbers descending the pass.

### **FALL ON SNOW, CLIMBING ALONE and HAPE, HACE**

#### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

Chihiro Sakamaki flew to the Kahiltna base camp on June 10 and immediately began climbing the West Buttress reaching the 14,200 foot camp within 10 days. By June 19, Sakamaki had established his camp at 17,200 feet. He began his summit attempt on the next day. Sakamaki reached approximately 19,000 feet and began descending for unknown reasons. During his descent Sakamaki fell around the 18,500 foot level in an area known as The Autobahn. He went a distance of 1000 feet, losing a total of 300 vertical feet. He was experiencing pain throughout his thoracic region, but was able to continue his descent.

On arrival at his 17,200 foot camp he contacted guide Vern Tejas and told him of his injuries. At 2120 Tejas contacted the base camp manager Annie Duquette and reported Sakamaki's situation. At 2133, Duquette contacted the Talkeetna Ranger station and reported to Ranger Kevin Moore. Ranger Daryl Miller, located at the 14,200-foot camp

was then given the message, and he contacted the 17,200 foot camp. It was decided that Sakamaki was seriously injured and would need evacuation. Weather conditions at this time were mostly clear at 14,000 feet and above, but cloudy with whiteout conditions below which prevented any flights until the next day.

Meanwhile, the "AAI 2" expedition, led by Mimi Bourquin, arrived at the Kahiltna base camp on June 4. The expedition reached the 14,200 foot camp on June 14 and had established a camp at 17,200 feet by June 18. The group was feeling and moving well. On June 19 the expedition made a summit bid. At 1500, after reaching the 19,000 foot level, client Debbie Sherman complained of a severe headache and began displaying odd behavior. Bourquin immediately descended with Sherman, who was ambulatory, and arrived at the 17,200 foot camp around 1750. Bourquin and Sherman continued descending and arrived at the 14,200 foot Ranger camp at 2100. Sherman was evaluated by medical personnel and held in the medical tent for continued treatment and observation. Sherman's condition continued to worsen with increasing periods of unconsciousness, ataxia, and confusion. Plans were made to evacuate as soon as weather would permit.

On June 21 at 0935, the Park Service LAMA helicopter departed Talkeetna. At 1021 the LAMA helicopter picked up Ranger Miller at the 14,200 foot camp and departed to pick up Sakamaki. At 1039 the LAMA helicopter returned to the 14,200-foot camp with Ranger Miller and Sakamaki, picked up Sherman, and continued to the 7,000-foot base camp. At 1123, pilot Jay Hudson took aboard Sherman, Sakamaki, and Paramedic Ranger Eric Martin, and flew to Talkeetna where both patients were transferred to Alaska Regional Hospital via Flight for Life helicopter. Sakamaki was treated for broken ribs and released after three days. Sherman was held overnight for observation as her symptoms of high altitude pulmonary and cerebral edema subsided.

### **Analysis**

The "AAI 2" expedition never gained more than 1000 feet per day, which is generally the safe rate of ascent in avoiding altitude illnesses. However, it is not uncommon for individuals to begin suffering from HAPE or HACE during or after a summit attempt regardless of how acclimatized they are. In addition, though small groups are statistically at more risk of obtaining an altitude illness from ascending too rapidly, large groups are also at an increased risk as members may be less likely to report early symptoms of altitude sickness.

The area in which Sakamaki fell has been the sight of numerous falls with injuries ranging from twisted ankles to head injuries. This section is not technically difficult but is steeper than surrounding terrain and often very icy. Sakamaki may have been able to avoid his accident simply by using more caution and slowing down, since climbing solo did not allow any type of practical belay. If Sakamaki had not been able to walk after his fall the consequences would have been far worse as there were few, if any, climbers descending behind him. (Source: Billy Shott, Mountaineering Ranger)

## **CRAMPON PROBLEM, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

On June 8, the "Love Mountain and Beer" party of three Japanese climbers flew in to climb the West Buttress. They reached the summit on June 21 at 1620 in very good weather conditions. They were several hundred meters from reaching their high camp