

today." One hour later, Miller said, "I don't feel so good," so Smith took Miller back to see Dr. Zafren at 2000. Miller was mildly ataxic and was told that he may have to go down. Miller returned to his camp and in one hour he became extremely ataxic. Miller was assisted back to see Dr. Zafren where he collapsed outside of the medical tent at 2115. Miller was diagnosed with extreme High Altitude Cerebral Edema requiring an immediate evacuation to a lower elevation. Ranger Roger Robinson requested the contract LAMA helicopter for the evacuation from Talkeetna. Miller's condition continued to deteriorate over the next hour. Miller was flown straight to Talkeetna where he was transported by ambulance to Valley Hospital in Palmer. Miller's condition improved dramatically upon descent to sea level, but it took him ten days to get back his coordination and most of his memory of the incident.

Analysis

Jack Miller had never ascended above 7,000 feet prior to his climb so his ability to acclimatize was an unknown. Most people will acclimatize to 14,000 feet if given ten days to reach this height. Miller should have confided with Blaine Smith his difficulty with acclimatizing. This life threatening evacuation could have been avoided since he could have descended with the other clients and guide on the 24th. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger)

AMS—NO INCIDENT

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

Kim Jae Suk and Park Jae Il (24) of the Korean Palgong Kyung Ju party ascended the Messner Couloir on May 28. Il became ill with Acute Mountain Sickness over half way up the route, requiring eighteen hours to reach the top at midnight. At 0105 on the 29th, Suk requested a helicopter evacuation for Il from the 19,400 foot level. Two other members in the Palgong party ascended from 17,200 feet on the West Buttress to provide assistance. Once they reached Il, they were able to determine that he could descend with their assistance. At 0340, they radioed out this information and that no rescue was needed. Il descended safely with their support.

Analysis

Here's a good example of team effort and self-sufficiency. With a little prompting, the rescue pair was more than willing to climb up through the cold hours of the evening to help a team member. In so many other rescues, climbers either give up or assume they will be rescued. It was a relief to see this Korean party work together to assist their ill person down. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger)

OFF ROUTE, FALL ON SNOW—UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, NO BELAY/PROTECTION

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

At 0800 on May 29, the "British Army Expedition" departed the 17,200 foot camp with three members: Dr. Martin Kitson, Paul Holmes, and expedition leader Mark Trevillyan (20s). Expedition member Matthew Yorke stayed in camp deciding not to attempt the summit. The "BAME" expedition had departed the 7,200 foot Kahiltna base camp on May 15 and had spent four days acclimating at 14,000 feet before climbing up to the high camp at 17,200 feet.

At 1400, Kitson decided to turn back and head to the 17,200 foot camp. Kitson was experiencing headaches and felt that his condition would worsen if he continued to climb higher. Trevillyan and Holmes continued on to the "football field" at 19,600 feet. Holmes said that at 1630 the weather closed in and the visibility became poor. They were descending from the "football field" when they got off route due to the poor visibility. Holmes realized that after sliding on the steep snow for about 50 feet and stopping that they were on the wrong route. Holmes said that at 1800 he and Trevillyan got together to discuss their predicament. They both decided at that time they needed to traverse off the snow slope they were on and attempt to get back on the West Buttress. The weather at the time was extreme, with ambient temperatures at -10 F and winds gusting at 30 MPH. After talking several minutes, they started descending and traversing when a snow slab under their feet gave way and both Holmes and Trevillyan began falling and then tumbling, smashing through several rock bands.

Holmes recalls waking up at 2130 with Trevillyan lying on top of him with their climbing rope and other gear tangled and wrapped around them. Holmes checked Trevillyan for a pulse and other vital signs. Holmes, a licensed British Army Medic, stated that Trevillyan failed to respond, was blue in skin color, had no signs of life after shaking him for several minutes and yelling his name, and had no pulse. After several minutes Holmes placed his pack below Trevillyan for a marker in case his body could be recovered. Holmes began shouting and attempted to crawl for help. Holmes said he was totally disoriented and unsure of his whereabouts.

At 2200, Climber Chris Eng of the "Eng Expedition" was looking for his partner when he heard Holmes shouting and started climbing toward him. Eng, who was totally disoriented also because of whiteout conditions, had been searching since 0800. He had followed a wanded trail to the bottom of the Messner Couloir and found two ski poles with large baskets. He assumed he was at the bottom of the fixed lines at 15,200 feet. Eng climbed toward the shouting and said that Holmes could barely walk when he first observed him. Climber Penn Burris found Eng and Holmes and started to lead them both back to the 14,200 foot Ranger Camp.

At 0100 on May 30, Burris, Eng and Holmes arrived at the 14,200 foot Ranger Camp. Holmes was examined by Dr. Ken Zafren and was kept at the medical tent overnight.

At 0930 on May 31, Holmes was flown by the NPS LAMA helicopter to the 7,200 foot Kahiltna base camp. He was then transported by a Pavehawk Air National Guard helicopter to an Anchorage hospital where he was admitted for several days. Trevillyan's body was recovered and flown off the mountain.

Analysis

Trevillyan and Holmes paid a heavy price for descending the Orient Express by mistake. They also committed another error that has injured many and has taken the lives of 29 climbers to date on Mount McKinley: they were roped together, descending on steep terrain, and had no fixed or running protection to stop their fall in case they could not self-arrest. (Source: Daryl Miller, Mountaineering Ranger)

FROSTBITE, WEATHER

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On May 31, a guided group of five clients led by Blaine Smith and Willy Peabody of Alaska Denali Guiding, was forced to spend the night out in a storm at 19,000 feet on