

should be screened and denied permission to climb. This situation was an embarrassment to our education program and our credibility among climbers and the general public. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger) *(Editor's Note: It seems as though McCarthy must also have read Into the Wild... Several years ago, a young man wrote to this park and asked, "Is there snow on Mount McKinley all year round and will I have to make camps along the way?" The National Park Service has the same remedy as the U.S. Coast Guard for individuals who put themselves and others at risk. A citation for "Creating a Hazard" may be issued and may include a fine.)*

## **SNOW BLINDNESS, ACUTE MOUNTAIN SICKNESS**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley**

On June 15, both a South African McKinley expedition, consisting of Ian Bailey, Steve Camp, and Anthony Tonder, and a Taiwan Chen expedition consisting of Boa Hwan You and Mei Hsing Chen, returned to the 17,200-foot camp after reaching Mount McKinley's summit. The South African expedition had taken twelve days to summit and the Chen expedition had taken ten days. Both expeditions had experienced difficulty on their summit days and received assistance from another expedition while descending. Ian Bailey had begun to suffer the effects of snow blindness while descending from the summit and Boa Hwan You contemplated a forced bivouac while descending due to exhaustion and severe acute mountain sickness (possibly high altitude pulmonary edema). On June 16 at the 17,200-foot camp around 0900, contact was made with the two groups. Both Bailey and You were evaluated and treated by an NPS Ranger for snow blindness and AMS.

At 0110 the South African and Chen expeditions began descending from 17,200 feet to 14,200 feet with an NPS Ranger organizing the descent. Short rope, running belay, and lowering techniques were used to safely reach the 14,200-foot camp. Once in camp Bailey was treated for snow blindness by NPS personnel, given medical supplies, and released. Bailey, with his other two expedition members, completed their descent to basecamp and flew off the mountain on the 18th. Chen was evaluated at the 14,200-foot NPS camp and released while still suffering from exhaustion and mild AMS and residual effects of high altitude pulmonary edema. The Chen expedition recuperated for two days and completed their descent to basecamp.

## **HIGH ALTITUDE CEREBRAL EDEMA (HACE)**

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

The "Kiwi Denali" expedition included Richard Walshe, Andre Bell, Dave McKinley, and Pete O'Connor. On June 6 three of the members, including Walshe, Bell, and O'Connor, departed from the 17,200-foot camp en route to the summit via the West Buttress. During their ascent Bell separated from the group and descended to the group's camp at 17,200 feet by himself. Walshe and O'Connor, moving slower, continued and reached the summit by mid-afternoon. During their descent Walshe began to have difficulty walking. At

1630 an NPS patrol that had reached the summit ridge that afternoon caught up with Walshe and O'Connor during their descent. Ranger Michael Nash contacted the 14,200-foot NPS camp and relayed Walshe's condition.

Nash, his two patrol members, and O'Connor used short rope and running belay techniques to lower Walshe to Denali Pass. Walshe remained ataxic, stumbling and falling frequently, and was unable to care for himself during the three hour descent to Denali Pass. At Denali Pass an RMI guided group caught up with the lowering party and assisted with the traverse from the pass by setting additional anchors. At 2000 the NPS camp contacted several other guides located at the 17,200 feet and asked for assistance. Several guides ascended to the Denali Pass traverse and began setting fixed lines. Walshe was lowered down the fixed lines and arrived at 17,200 feet at 2400. Walshe was stabilized, evaluated, and found to be suffering from high altitude cerebral edema (HACE). Walshe was treated with Dexamethasone as per protocol, hydrated, and observed throughout the night. The following day, with the assistance of his three other expedition members, Walshe descended to the 14,200-foot camp where he was again evaluated and treated by NPS personnel. Walshe remained at 14,200 feet for 48 hours and completed the descent to basecamp with his team, returning to Talkeetna on June 19.

### **Analysis**

Neither You or Walshe reported having AMS symptoms prior to their summit day making high altitude pulmonary edema and cerebral edema unpredictable factors with the potential to cause disaster in the high mountains. All groups were fortunate that climbers in the area were able to assist in the descent from 19,000 feet. (Source: Billy Shott, Mountaineering Ranger)

## **FALL INTO CREVASSE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

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

On the morning of July 5 at approximately 0100 the "Death March 2000" expedition left basecamp to begin a climb of Mount McKinley. At 0330 Kelly Thomas (35) fell into a crevasse on the main Kahiltna Glacier at 6,800 feet. Thomas initially fell only to his waist, at which point he removed his pack and pushed it away from him. He then fell into the crevasse a distance of approximately 30 feet. Thomas' partner, Tim Lapham (33), arrested the fall, set up an anchor and attempted to haul Thomas out. Thomas was unable to ascend due to improperly tying his ascension system into his harness prior to falling. Lapham could make very little progress due to the amount of rope drag in the system. At 0430 Lapham contacted Annie Duquette at basecamp via the CB radio and requested assistance. Ranger Meg Perdue was awakened by the radio traffic and requested more information from the team as to location and injuries. Lapham was unsure of his exact location, but stated the Kahiltna Glacier two hours out from basecamp. Thomas was apparently uninjured.

At 0445 Perdue contacted Daryl Miller and advised him of the situation. It was determined that Perdue and Jamail would prepare to leave on a ground rescue, Miller would assess the possibility for air ops support and call back