

UNITED STATES

FALL INTO CREVASSE, CLIMBING UNROPED

Alaska, Alaska Range, Idems Peak

On March 24, Karoline Frey (27), a German graduate student at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, died after falling 90 feet into a crevasse while snowshoeing down a glacier about 45 miles south of Delta Junction.

Martin Stuefer was one of three friends on the ski trip Sunday with Frey. Stuefer said the group decided to ski and snowshoe to the summit of Idems Peak. They made it up easily and retraced their steps back down. "There was no sign of danger when we went up," he said.

Frey was leading the way down when the snow gave out, Stuefer said. She fell through an opening about three feet in diameter hidden by a snow bridge. Stuefer said he and the two others in the group, Tim Dennenbaum and Tina Din, could see no sign of Frey after she fell.

"I looked down the crevasse and I couldn't see the bottom. We cried down and we never got an answer."

The group had neither cell phone nor radio. Leaving Dennenbaum and Din at the scene, he skied down the mountain, drove to Pump Station No. 10 of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, and asked workers to call for help.

Troopers initially responded in a helicopter but were unable to land on the glacier. At 9:30 p.m., the Alaska National Guard landed, found the body, but were unable to recover it that evening. The Alaska Mountain Rescue Group resumed the recovery effort Monday.

Frey was buried beneath several feet of ice and it took four hours to dig her out, said Soren Orley of the rescue team. (Source: From an article in the *Anchorage Daily News* by Anne Marie Tavella, March 27, 2002.)

Analysis

It is not a good idea to travel unroped on a glacier, especially if one is not familiar with it. (Source: Jed Williamson)

AVALANCHE—BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDING, POOR POSITION

Alaska, Mount St. Elias

On April 7, John Griber was carefully working his way down a 45-degree ice face on Mount St. Elias. He turned at the sound of a "swish" above. Forty to 50 feet away, he saw companion Aaron Martin (32) off his skis on his side and sliding. Griber watched for 30 seconds as Martin slid hundreds of feet and out of sight. Then the snowboarder yelled for the second skier in the party, Reid Sanders. There was only silence.

Pilot Paul Claus of Ultima Thule Outfitters in Chitina on Friday reported spotting a body about 3,000 feet below the peak, with a string of equipment tracing the route of a fall. Claus, a noted Alaska Bush pilot, planned to return to see if a body recovery was possible. Griber and a fourth climber, Greg Von Doersten, were rescued by a National Guard helicopter Wednesday.