

hazards out there,” she said. “We all had radios between us so we could notify them of the problem and tell them what to do and that’s what got the ball rolling,” said Snigurowicz. On the afternoon of May 27, two others reached the trapped climbers and provided them with a tent until they were rescued on May 28. Park officials said those climbers were crucial to the success of the rescue. (Source: Various reports, including one from Denali National Park)

Canada’s highest mountain measures in at 5,956 meters (19,541 feet), compared to 6,193 meters (20,320 feet) for Denali, the continent’s highest peak. In the 22 years since the park was formed in 1973, there have been 18 deaths, of which 11 have occurred on Logan and seven in others areas of the St. Elias mountains. The climbing season for Mount Logan usually begins in late April and runs to late June, before the warmer temperatures have a chance to destabilize snow and ice conditions. Mount Logan is notorious for its sudden snow squalls that blow in from the Pacific Ocean. (Source: *Whitehorse Daily Star*, Chuck Tobin; Jane Seyd, *North Shore News*)

AVALANCHE, WEATHER, UNROPED

Yukon, Kluane National Park, Mount Logan, East Ridge

J.A. (22) and her partner C.D. (34) began their expedition on May 27. They were scheduled to return by June 25. J.A. had previously summited the King’s Trench on Mount Logan at age 17, setting a record as the youngest person to scale the peak. She had also done the West Buttress on Denali. On May 31, J.A. was climbing at about 2,865 meters when a small avalanche swept her off her feet and down the East Ridge. The slide started about 20 feet in front of C.D., but missed him and hit J.A. instead. “It wasn’t a big one, but just enough to kick her off her feet,” said Rhonda Markel, Acting Chief Warden. J.A. fell 1,500 feet. The avalanche did not bury her, but it appears she died from head injuries. C.D. avoided the onslaught of snow and ice. He found his partner dead by the time he was able to reach her after descending from the 2,865-meter (9,400-foot) elevation.

The climbing team was not equipped with a satellite telephone. C.D. was unable to reach help for several days. Park officials only learned of the incident after J.A.’s partner waved down a Trans North helicopter.

Analysis

Markel indicated that it is likely that the rough weather climbers have experienced on the mountain so far this spring played a factor. She said there is an indication there was an abnormal buildup of wet snow on the ridge that came loose. Snow at that elevation would normally just blow off the ridge, but Markel suspects there was a buildup because of its heavy and moist condition. Markel said the thick layer of wet snow left by the storm likely caused or contributed to the avalanche. “I guess it was a pretty techni-

cal section. Why weren't they roped up? People are going to ask that. The reason is because of just what happened. They didn't want to pull each other off if something happened." (Source: No source cited)

(Editor's Note: In September, a solo climber on Mount Assiniboine did not return and no trace has been found as yet. Solo ascents on big mountains, especially in deteriorating weather, as was the case here, involve inherent risks.)