

team then returned to camp at 17,200 feet. On June 29th, an NPS patrol led by Ranger Kevin Wright contacted Mlinaric at 17,200-foot camp and offered assistance and medical help. NPS VIP physician Sven Skaiaa noted full-thickness frostbite on his fingers and advised him of the seriousness and possibility of amputation. All help was declined. Kristina Marjanovic went solo to the summit on the 29th, leaving Mlinaric in camp by himself. On June 30th, Mlinaric again declined assistance in the morning. They said they would descend the ridge using their own resources. After attempting to break camp in excellent weather on the afternoon of June 30th, the team came to the NPS camp and requested help in getting down the mountain. The Park Service team consisting of Ranger Kevin Wright, volunteers Nick Armitage, Weston Morrison, Roanna Wick and Sven Skaiaa, made a plan to leave the next morning if conditions were favorable. On the morning of July 1st, Dr. Skaiaa dressed the patient's fingers and prepared him for the descent. The Park Service team short-roped Mlinaric down the ridge from 17,200 feet and lowered him down the fixed lines, reaching 14,200-foot camp in the afternoon. He was re-evaluated by Park VIP and paramedic Rocco Pergola. On the morning of July 2nd, the Park Service Lama helicopter transported Mlinaric to basecamp where he was transferred to an air taxi and then taken to Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage.

Analysis

The initial frostbite was caused from removing gloves during very cold and windy conditions. This is one of the most common causes of severe frostbite on Denali. Most patients report being surprised at the speed of onset and resulting severity of their injuries. Mlinaric's injury may have worsened due to remaining at high camp rather than descending during the first available opportunity. He denies that any refreezing occurred during that time; however, the delay in seeking medical treatment could affect the degree of permanent damage to his hands. (Source: Kevin Wright, Ranger, Denali National Park)

SUDDEN DEATH ON SUMMIT

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

This Alpine Ascents International climbing expedition flew into the base camp of Mount McKinley on June 20th with two guides and six clients, one of whom was James P. Nasti (51), a first time client of that company. The two guides were Michael Horst (lead guide) and Suzanne Allen (assistant guide). The expedition departed base camp early in the morning of June 22nd and arrived at the 14,200-foot camp on the evening of June 28th. The trip to 14,200 feet was uneventful with the exception that one client was sent back, at his request, to base camp on June 25th. The expedition conducted one carry of food and gear on July 1st to acclimatize, then moved to the

17,200-foot camp on July 2nd. The group rested at high camp on July 3rd and planned their summit attempt for the following day. Horst stated that the summit day temperature at high camp was estimated at 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit and with light winds.

Following breakfast and hot drinks the two rope teams departed at 1050, arriving at Denali Pass at 1200. From there the teams climbed one hour at a time, taking a 15-minute break between each stretch. The guides stated they evaluated each climber's physical and mental condition every hour. The entire group was thought to be doing well. After arriving at the Football Field (19,600 feet) and resting they began their climb to the summit at 1800 and arrived there at 1905. The clients did not have packs on at this time since they had cached them on the Football Field and, at the direction of the guides, had put on additional layers of insulated clothing for the summit attempt itself. One of the clients, Mark Novak, who was a close personal friend of Nasti, stated that he thought most people, to include himself and Nasti, were overheating from the exertion and clothing layers, but neither he nor Nasti made any attempt to ventilate. Novak also stated that the ridge itself was windy, with a corresponding drop in temperature, but maintained that they both were still overheated when the incident occurred.

The expedition was traveling as two rope teams: the first, being lead by Horst, reached the summit at 1905. The second rope, being lead by Allen, was estimated to be ten minutes behind. Just below the summit of Denali there is a small flat bowl approximately 20 feet in diameter, and after reaching this point Horst began retrieving the rope and bringing in his clients. The clients were arrayed on the rope behind Horst as follows: Sean Carver, James Nasti, and Mark Novak. Carver reached the location where Horst was, and as Horst continued bringing in the rope, it went tight. Horst continued to give encouragement to the remaining two climbers but did not get any response from Nasti. He could only see Novak and after asking him what was going on, Novak said, "Jim is on his back and unresponsive." Novak later attested that Nasti was right at the edge of the bowl when he slipped down vertically approximately three feet from the track. Nasti began plunging his ice ax and kicking his crampons into the slope in an attempt to regain the track when he suddenly slumped forward onto the head of the ax, rolled over onto his right side and then to his back, and then slid down about two feet. He remained face up with his head pointed downhill. It was at this time that Horst asked Novak what was going on. Novak was the only person who witnessed this event. The other rope team was still out of sight and the other two climbers, Horst and Carver, were out of visual sight of Nasti.

Horst immediately moved down to where Nasti was and upon arrival, found Nasti "completely unresponsive and not breathing". He further stated

that Nasti did not have a pulse but did have an open airway. Horst administered two rescue breaths and checked for response to verbal and painful stimulation. Nasti was still unresponsive so Horst began cardio pulmonary resuscitation. After a few cycles of CPR, Carver appeared, stated that he was an EMT, and took over rescue breathing while Horst continued compressions at a 15:2 ratio. After 15 minutes of CPR, Allen arrived and took over compressions; Horst in-turn radioed the National Park Service (NPS) patrol at the 14,200-foot camp and reported the situation. The mountaineering ranger at that camp (Kevin Wright) advised that they continue CPR while the physician volunteering with the patrol, Dr. Sven Skaiaa, was consulted. Within about four minutes, Wright radioed back and instructed them to continue CPR for an additional ten minutes. After the ten minutes had elapsed, Nasti was still unresponsive to verbal and painful stimuli, did not have a carotid pulse, and his pupils were fixed and dilated. The NPS ranger then advised Horst to discontinue CPR and to take care of his remaining clients.

The winds were increasing on the summit and after standing still for over a half hour it was imperative that the team descend. Further instructions were given to move the deceased away from the track and to cover and mark the body. Nasti's body was secured with his ice ax and a snow picket and the expedition returned to the 17,200-foot camp uneventfully.

Based on the location of the deceased, it was determined by the NPS that any retrieval attempts would require an expedition of at least six individuals solely dedicated for that purpose. To arrive at a point along the summit ridge that would allow a safe lower to the Football Field would require a 500-foot traverse along a steeply angled knife ridge. From there, multiple lowers would be required to reach the 17,200-foot camp. No such team was available on the mountain so the decision was made to postpone any retrieval attempt until the following year. At that time the situation would be readdressed as to its feasibility. Two additional Alpine Ascents International expeditions were at the 17,200-foot camp and were asked that if the possibility arose, to attempt a burial of the deceased, thus removing him from sight of other climbers or flight seeing aircraft. The leader of this attempt, guide Willi Prittie, departed the 17,200-foot camp on July 6th, accompanied by fellow guides Alex Everett, John Prudhomme, David Kratsch, Ian Wolfe plus their respective clients. These two expeditions attained the summit just prior to 1700, and after spending an hour and a half digging, buried James Nasti approximately two feet below the surface of the snow.

Analysis

Without an autopsy, the cause of death will never be known, but it should be noted that, according to family members and the medical information James Nasti submitted to Alpine Ascents International, he did not have any

known pre-existing medical condition or medical history that could have caused his sudden death. Nasti was also physically fit for the endeavor and had supplemented his normal weekly fitness routine with a specific six-month training program to prepare for the climb. After a careful expedition review, the NPS could not find any contributing factors to the incident. Furthermore, the NPS found that the guides' decision-making process and leadership was sound and consistent with accepted safe guiding practices. Through no apparent fault of anyone, this was a tragic ending to an otherwise a successful climbing expedition. (Source: John A. Loomis, Ranger, Denali National Park)

**SUDDEN DEATH – NEAR DENALI PASS
Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

At 2200 on July 7, Ranger John Loomis received a call on the emergency call out phone from ranger Kevin Wright at the 14,200-foot camp. Wright reported that he had received FRS radio transmissions from Peter Anderson (Rainier Mountaineering Guide) at 17,200 feet about a fatality on the Mountain Trip group while descending. Loomis contacted Helicopter Manager Dave Kreutzer and Ranger Joe Reichert and all met at the ranger station.

At 2304 we received a direct satellite phone call from Constantine (Con) Severis at high camp on the West Buttress. Severis confirmed that Pungkas Tri Baruno (20) had died near the rocks at the bottom of the traverse from Denali Pass (approximately 17,400 feet). At the time of this phone call, Severis had just returned to camp, so the rangers encouraged him to get food and water and call back at 2330. With the name of the deceased confirmed, Loomis began the public relations process of notifying the family. Unable to reach a person at the Indonesian consulate, he phoned the American embassy in Indonesia and was able to relay the information to them so that they could make arrangements to make the notification.

Severis contacted the ranger Search and Rescue room again at 2337. Rangers were able to learn that the team had reached the summit about 1600 that day. They had departed high camp at 0900 and it had been a smooth day until just before the incident. Pungkas was traveling slowly on the descent, reported Severis, but no slower than other tired clients whom he had worked with. The time of the incident was around 2000. Severis attempted to resuscitate Pungkas for 30-45 minutes where he had collapsed. With additional help from guides, Josh Kling (the second Mountain Trip guide) and Greg Vernovage (Alaska Mountaineering School) who had arrived from the high camp, they attempted to transport Pungkas back to camp, but due to the deep snow, lack of a sled, and fatigue they were forced to leave him.