

this stretch of weather. Ascent rates of 2100 meters in four or five days may leave some individuals feeling fine, but can cause serious illness to others. A slower ascent rate tailored to the individual on the expedition who is having the most difficulty can prevent the onset of serious altitude problems. The general rule of ascending only 300-400 meters per day once above 3000 meters is a good one. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

SLIP ON SNOW/ICE, CLIMBING UNROPED, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, FAILURE TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Alaska, Mount McKinley

On May 19, 1985, the 13-member German guided party, led by a guide named Zehleitner, began their ascent of the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley. Following a fast ascent, six days to 5250 meters, the party left for the summit from their 5250 meter high camp at 0400 on May 26. The party's entire ascent was made unroped and using ski poles rather than ice axes. Nine members summited around 1200 and then began their descent, reaching Denali Pass at 1445. Just down from the pass, party member Bernard Pfeffer (38) slipped on a small ice bulge. The fall was first seen by assistant guide Martin Anwender when Pfeffer was about ten meters downhill. Anwender yelled at Pfeffer, but he did not appear to respond as he cartwheeled down the slope approximately 200 meters. Pfeffer was traveling unroped with his ice ax on his pack. Anwender quickly descended and found Pfeffer's body contorted (possibly from descended multiple fractures) and with no sign of life.

Another member of the party, Karl Wimmer (36), descended and reported the incident to Ranger Roger Robinson, who relayed through Hackett that the German party was to bring the body down to their high camp and continue to lower it down to 4350 meters.

Ranger Scott Gill arranged for an 0730 callback time the next morning. On May 27 Zehleitner informed Gill that Anwender and he would begin lowering the body down the rescue gully at 0830. Ranger Gill, VIP Dan White and Brandt Hannah of the Medical Camp began ascending to meet Zehleitner. Gill's party reached the descending party at 5050 meters. They both descended with the body, arriving at 1130. Lowell Thomas, Jr. of Talkeetna Air Taxi was contracted to make the body pickup with his Helio Courier. He landed at the camp at 1100. and was back in the air with the body at 1200 and continued to Talkeetna. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

Analysis

This was guide Zehleitner's fourth trip on Mt. McKinley. His guiding practice of ascending very rapidly (seven days to the summit) and not using ropes or ice axes is a style that has been contributing to an ever increasing number of accidents. In addition, this was an illegally guided expedition. One wonders about the level of experience of the guided individuals. And given the briefing which this party—as well as others checking into the Talkeetna Ranger Station—received, where the details of ascending slowly and the use of rope, crampons, and ice axes are covered thoroughly, one also wonders why there is such disregard for following the recommendations. (Source: J. Williamson)

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING, FATIGUE

Alaska, Mount McKinley

On May 28, 1985, Raymond Weinrich (30) and Charles Wolf (34) had climbed up to 5250