

materials. By 1905 the ground team reached Bohanon. After a quick survey, he was diagnosed as having possible pelvic and thoracic spinal injuries. Bohanon was unable to walk and was lowered five 85-meter lengths down before being dragged back to the medical camp.

At 2135 Mountaineering Ranger Scott Gill and pilot Ron Smith landed in a Bell 412. Bohanon was evacuated and flown to Humana Hospital where he was diagnosed as having an avulsion fracture of his right hip (trochanter) along with multiple contusions. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

### **Analysis**

Soloing is always a risky game. In this particular situation it could have either prevented the accident if there were two climbers paying close attention, or caused a double accident. Bohanon was extremely lucky that some people were watching his progress, and for the speed in which an evacuation took place. A 450-meter fall down the Messner Couloir, and a little more than three and a half hours later he was in a helicopter! Catching crampons on back straps and slings dangling from harnesses is not uncommon, but one must remember the consequences when on a steep slope. This particular accident had occurred earlier, but he could not pinpoint where the strap was that was catching his crampon. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

## **FROSTBITE, DEHYDRATION**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley**

On June 16, 1987, Franziska Bracher (27) and Ivan Seeholzer, (24) from Switzerland, began their attempt for the summit from the 5200 meter camp on the West Buttress. Two other members of their party turned back because of the cold temperature that night. (It was  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$  on the summit.) Bracher and Seeholzer returned from the summit at 1000 the next morning, and Bracher stated she had not felt her toes for hours. Her feet were not intentionally thawed, but gauze was placed between her toes and she was given pain medication.

She walked and was lowered to the medical camp where she was treated. At this time I asked if Seeholzer had any frostbite and he said no. But when he took off his boots, several toes were deep purple. He was also treated. After some rest days, they descended to base camp and were flown to the hospital in Anchorage. Bracher lost only the tip of one toe. (Source: Ralph Moore, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

### **Analysis**

Bracher and Seeholzer neither ate enough nor drank enough on their summit day. Full overboots are much warmer than supergaiters with ensolite between the crampons and boots, and are recommended even during the warmer part of the climbing season to provide adequate protection against the cold, as low temperatures and high winds can occur at any time. The decision to continue for the top despite loss of feeling in their feet was not a good one. (Source: Ralph Moore, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

*Editor's Note: A similar case occurred to an individual from the Harvard Outing Club in August. The climber was carrying the overboots which would have prevented frostbite, but he didn't take the time to put them on.*

## **LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, FULL PACK AND STEEP SLOPE**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley**

On July 3, 1987, Piotr Jankowiak (35), of the four-man Polish Denali Expedition, fell almost 800 meters to his death while descending the Messner Couloir. Jankowiak and his partner Jezierski (29) had summited and descended to their 5725-meter camp when, after resting, they opted to descend the Messner to the 5200-meter level instead of ascending 60 meters to the ridge and descending via the West Buttress.

They decided to glissade the 30- to 40-degree gully. Snow conditions were soft and quite stable. Jankowiak was 50 meters in front. He hit a hard patch of snow or ice and lost control at the 5250-meter level and fell to the 4450-level.

His partner cut over to the West Buttress and ran down to the 4300-meter basin, met his partners, and with two Americans climbed up to Jankowiak, who had died from multiple trauma. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

### **Analysis**

The pair felt confident in descending the steeper route versus climbing up and going down the West Buttress. The big mistake was obviously glissading down a steep slope with variable snow conditions with a full pack, particularly with such a nasty runoff. Roped versus unroped is always a big dilemma. In this case with glissading it would most likely have cost them both their lives. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

## **AVALANCHE, POOR POSITION, ATTEMPTING TO ASCEND TOO FAST**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley**

A Ranier Mountaineering, Inc., group began a guided ascent of the West Buttress on July 1, 1987. On July 7, the group moved from the 3330-meter level to 3850 meters—below Windy Corner—in a whiteout. Their plan was to go around the corner to the 4250-meter camp, but one member was having altitude problems.

At 0530 on July 8, a slab avalanche released just below the bergschrund to the east of camp on the West Buttress proper. It was 20 meters wide and ran 100 meters, covering four of the five RMI tents with a meter of debris. The two guides were able to get out in one minute and dug out one other tent. The third tent's occupants dug themselves out. The occupants of the tent that had not been hit by the avalanche were not immediately aware that everyone else was buried, but once they investigated, they quickly began probing and digging. One of the occupants of the remaining tent took