

trek.) Search efforts continued until the bodies of Koshuta and Jones were spotted on the 12th at 4800 meters, four-fifths of the distance between the Cassin and West Rib. It appeared they had fallen roped together. They were buried at their location because of the difficulty a ground evacuation would encounter. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

Analysis

Koshuta and Jones attempted the traverse from the Cassin Ridge to the West Rib some time between June 5 and June 7. It is uncertain whether they were belaying, but it appears they were not when the fall occurred. Jones was obviously leading and dressed lightly while Koshuta was dressed much warmer. Due to this clothing difference, they probably had belayed sections of the traverse. If they had placed protection, their fall may have been stopped.

It will remain unknown what prompted the two to attempt the traverse, but a reasonable guess would suggest they needed off the Cassin because of the shortage in food and fuel and the possibility the severe weather on the 5th and 6th had damaged their tent. There are many other altitude related possibilities. In any case, they attempted the traverse.

They had been cautioned about the difficulties in attempting the traverse and about it not being a safe route for an escape off the Cassin. In light of this warning and the fact that there were seven strong climbers just 250 meters below them, a descent of the Cassin would have been the safest option. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)

CEREBRAL EDEMA, PARTY SEPARATED, INEXPERIENCE

Alaska, Mount McKinley

On May 27, 1990, a three member Sophia University expedition flew onto the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier of Mount McKinley to climb the West Buttress. The three inexperienced climbers reached the 5250 meter camp on June 11. Atuhiro Onodera (23) had a headache and no appetite upon arrival.

On June 14, the three went toward the summit, but at 5800 meters, Onodera was unable to continue due to a loss of balance, headache, and shortness of breath. He was left and his partners continued. While descending, a solo American came across Onodera and had to assist him back to 5250 meters due to his ataxia.

Onodera had no memory about the summit attempt, slept for most of the next two days, ate and drank very little, and had difficulty in walking.

By the afternoon of the 16th, the Japanese Wind Expedition examined Onodera and told the Sophia expedition they had to descend immediately. Since Onodera was having difficulty in walking, he was put on oxygen and taken from the NPS rescue cache and helped down the Rescue Gully to the NPS 4300 meter camp.

At 0200 on June 17, Onodera was examined by Ranger Scott Gill. Onodera was unable to perform the heel to toe test without falling down. He was put on oxygen for 45 minutes and seemed to improve immensely. After an evening at the NPS camp, he was able to descend under his own power and flown out from basecamp. (Source: Scott Gill, Mountaineering Ranger, Denali National Park)