

and with good weather, and since they were only 450 vertical meters above their camp, it would have been a very rapid trip back to their high camp.

The decision to leave him because he was not feeling well and to continue on up to the summit is probably the single greatest cause of altitude deaths on mountaineering expeditions. A victim of altitude illness who cannot walk a straight line or appears to have pulmonary edema must never be left alone. The appropriate action is to descend immediately, and not to have the victim descend by himself.

The decision to not turn around on the ascent, and to bivouac at 5950 meters with an obviously very ill man may have been due, in part, to hypoxia. The fact that they couldn't find the trail down the next day, nor drag him down across easy terrain because they were in such poor condition, points to incapacitation due to altitude, exhaustion and other environmental conditions.

In summary, this case illustrates the classic causes of death due to altitude illness: (1) lack of recognition that a person is seriously ill; (2) leaving a sick person behind while the rest of the group continues on; and (3) the deteriorating condition of an entire group of climbers under extreme conditions. (Source: Dr. Peter H. Hackett)

## **FALL ON SNOW, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Alaska, Eklutna Glacier**

On July 13, five climbers were injured, one critically, in a 60 meter fall on Eklutna Glacier. The climbers, part of an 18-member international expedition, tumbled down the glacier on Saturday afternoon and were stranded until early Sunday morning. They were airlifted to Providence Hospital.

One of the five, 24-year old Jackie Feaver of England, was comatose and listed in critical condition with serious head injuries Sunday night.

Ying Ju Loi of Malaysia and Nicky Kime of England, both 25, were in satisfactory condition at Providence. Two other climbers, Australian Helen Philips (26) and Gavin Burke (23) of England, were treated and released from the hospital Sunday.

The five climbers were roped together and traversing a snow slide when one lost footing and fell, dragging the others about 60 meters down the glacier.

Two other climbers, Iain Bernstein and Vincent Diamond, left the scene about two hours later and hiked about 24 km to a park service cabin at Eklutna Lake for help.

Wolgemuth said a state trooper helicopter and a hospital helicopter flew to the glacier about 0230 on Sunday; the helicopters arrived at Providence with the climbers about 0430. (Source: Anchorage Daily News, July 15, 1990)

### **Analysis**

Mercer, a public relations specialist for Operation Raleigh, the London-based outfit that sponsored the expedition, said they were in good spirits. "They were just coming off the glacier," Mercer said. "One slipped, and the others went with them."

"They all had the correct equipment, helmets and crampons and so on, and each group has a medic and a qualified instructor with them. All the basic precautions were taken."

Mercer said Operation Raleigh is "a youth development program out of London" that takes young people between the ages of 17 and 25 on expeditions around the world. The program combines adventure and conservation work for its clients, who "pay their own way," she said. (Source: Anchorage Daily News, July 15, 1990)