

### Analysis

Hane and Drake had previously climbed in the Alaska Range, and both were experienced mountaineers. They had prior knowledge of the poor snow and ice conditions before attempting their climb, including information regarding the two German climbers who had died in an avalanche several weeks earlier.

They climbed up to the 16,200 foot camp on the West Buttress, and were cautioned about the poor conditions on Mt. Hunter by the rangers. Their intended route was extremely dangerous objectively, with abundant rockfall, along with ice and snow avalanches cascading down on a routine basis.

The mechanism seems to have been that both climbers were hit by avalanche debris from above while rappelling the route. There are many unanswered questions, especially the selection of the route itself. Approaching the climb from the bottom, it would have been difficult for them not to notice the hundreds of craters from the rocks, and the huge ice hangers above them.

In 1996, Mt. Hunter had 20 expeditions attempt to reach the summit, with the results being no summits and four fatalities. (Source: Billy Schott, Mountaineering Ranger)

### FALL INTO CREVASSE, INADEQUATE EXTRICATION PROCEDURE

#### Alaska, Mount McKinley, Ruth Glacier

On June 16, all six members of the French "Wayne's World" expedition including Thomas Roques, Jean Jacques Peladeix, Jacqueline Peladeix, Michelle Pertuis, Jean Pierre Pertuis, and expedition leader Peter Dutrievoz were airlifted by helicopter from the Ruth Glacier after Michelle Pertuis (50) sustained injuries from a fall into and then extrication from a crevasse.

The expedition had planned ten days to travel from the Don Sheldon Amphitheater, down the Ruth Glacier, and to exit it by following Alder Creek to the Tokositna River where they were to meet guide Michael Overcast with a raft and float out to Talkeetna. On July 14, after being flown to the Mountain House air strip by Hudson Aviation, the group traveled by foot pulling sleds approximately one mile down glacier and made camp. On the 15th, the group continued down glacier and at 1300, Michelle Pertuis fell in a crevasse. Leader Dutrievoz reports that Michelle fell up to her waist and was extracted by the other rope team members simply by pulling her out without using any pulley system. Once out of the crevasse Michelle reported sharp pains in her upper left quadrant. The group made camp shortly after this incident near the base of Mt. Dickey. While at this camp Dutrievoz reports that Michelle tripped and fell which may have exacerbated her abdominal injury. On July 16, the expedition attempted to continue down glacier. Michelle was unable to carry any weight and continued to complain of sharp pain.

At 1250 air taxi Doug Geeting Aviation dispatch relayed that the pilot Doug Geeting, while on a scenic flight, had received a request for helicopter evacuation from a group on the Ruth Glacier. The Talkeetna Ranger Station contacted the Rescue Coordination Center at 1330 and at 1400 a Pavehawk helicopter was en route to the accident site. At 1509 a 185 Cessna contracted from K2 Aviation was launched as cover ship from Talkeetna with Pilot Richard Almsted, Ranger Joe Reichert, and Ken Zaffren, M.D., aboard. At 1530 the Air Force helicopter landed and picked up all six members of the expedition and flew them directly to Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage, where Michelle Pertuis was treated and released with thoracic and kidney bruising.

## Analysis

Expedition leader Peter Dutrievoz reported that Pertuis' fall into the crevasse was slow and nondynamic and that she did not experience any pain until she was pulled out of the crevasse. Injuries might have been avoided if more time and less force were used in extracting Pertuis from the crevasse.

Evacuation of all six members was not necessary. Dutrievoz stated he did not want to send Pertuis out alone due to her anxiety and language barrier and that group morale was too low to continue. Neither of these reasons would warrant evacuation of more than the injured person in most rescue situations in the Alaska Range. However, this appears to be a difference in perception by Europeans, who are used to frequent helicopter evacs (NB: 800 missions a year average out of Zermatt alone), and who have rescue insurance. (Source: Billy Shott, Mountaineering Ranger)

*(Editor's Note: This provides us with another example of why we should charge such parties for the costs of rescue.)*

## 16' FALL INTO CREVASSE—WITH WATER AT THE BOTTOM, UNABLE TO EXTRICATE—INADEQUATE PEOPLE POWER, HYPOTHERMIA

### Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On June 21, a guided party, led by guides Chris Morris and Stacy Taniguchi flew onto the Kahiltna Glacier to begin a climb of the West Buttress route. Among the seven clients was Dennis Gum. During the following 14 days the group progressed up to the 14,200 foot level. While camped at 11,200 feet and 14,200 feet Dennis Gum was having difficulties sleeping due to chain stokes breathing. Making a carry to the 16,200 foot camp on July 4, Gum became exhausted and decided to retreat. He was accompanied by Taniguchi to the 14,200 foot camp. On July 5, Taniguchi and Morris decided to have Gum leave the mountain. Due to the location of the team at 14,200 feet, it was not feasible to have a team descend with Gum and then attempt to return. So it was decided that Taniguchi would descend along with Gum, and depart the mountain as well.

Taniguchi and Gum departed the 14,200-foot camp at 1145 on July 5. By 1800 they were at the 8,000 foot level where Taniguchi decided to stop in order to rest, eat, drink and wait for the coolness of evening to firm up the snow. At 2330 it began to snow and Taniguchi decided to continue their descent to avoid losing the trail even though the surface snow had only a slight crust. The duo recommenced traveling at 0030 on July 6. They were both on snowshoes, with Taniguchi traveling in front. Whiteout conditions persisted as they followed the trail. Taniguchi remembers taking a break at 0430.

At some point during the following hour Taniguchi punched both legs through a snow bridge and was able to crawl out. He instructed Gum to maintain a tight rope and not to follow his tracks at that point. When he arrived at the hidden crevasse, Gum opted to attempt crossing several feet to the west of the trail and when he stepped onto the snow bridge it failed, sending Gum into the crevasse. Due to the weight difference (Gum is approximately 80 pounds heavier, and gear added another 40), Taniguchi was unable to arrest the fall. Gum fell approximately 45 feet and landed in water. Taniguchi was able to use a picket and ice ax to make an anchor, escape the belay and go to the edge to investigate. At first he could only make voice contact due to the darkness in the hole, so Taniguchi lowered a parka and mittens and instructed Gum to begin ascending the rope. The mittens did not fit and Gum could not make his ascending system work, so Taniguchi began