

and McPeck concurred that Cloe was experiencing angina and should be evacuated as soon as possible. At 2116, Ranger Roger Robinson called the Talkeetna Ranger Station to inform them of the situation. Weather on the lower glaciers was somewhat marginal for flying, while remaining good at 14,200 feet. The NPS LAMA helicopter departed Talkeetna at 2024 arriving at 14,200 feet at 2302. Cloe was flown straight to Talkeetna where he was met by the Talkeetna Ambulance Service at 2340. Cloe was transported by ambulance to Valley Hospital in Palmer.

### **Analysis**

John Cloe would probably not have been permitted to join the guided party if he had disclosed his previous medical background. He put himself, the guides, and Park Service at risk because of his desire to climb Mount McKinley. Previous medical conditions should be seriously analyzed and disclosed before embarking on such endeavors. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger)

## **HAPE, ASCENDING TOO FAST, INADEQUATE FLUIDS**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

On June 18, at 1030, Lucas Vidal Proveda, leader of the Spanish expedition Grup De Montanya, reported to Ranger Roger Robinson at the 14,200 foot camp on Mount McKinley that a member of his expedition was ill. Robinson proceeded to their camp, where he found Alvaro Fernandez Ferrer (25) experiencing severe High Altitude Pulmonary Edema. Ferrer was non-ambulatory, therefore he was sledged to the medical tent where he was treated by Dr. Dudley Weider and VIP Scott Darnsey (EMT-2). The initial assessment at 1041 indicated that Ferrer had an  $SP_{O_2}$  of 37, a pulse of 133 and respirations of 44. Both lungs were nearly full. He was put on oxygen and an IV was started. The Talkeetna Ranger Station was notified, and it was determined that Ferrer should be evacuated as soon as possible. At 1301 the NPS LAMA helicopter landed. Ferrer was flown to the 7,200 foot base camp, then transported by Alaska Air Guard Pavhawk helicopter straight to Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage.

### **Analysis**

Ferrer and his party took just four days to reach the 14,200 foot camp. Ferrer admitted to drinking very little over the prior 24 hours. Lack of fluids and their fast pace directly contributed to the HAPE. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger)

*(Editor's Note: There was another HAPE incident this year. On the same day as above, a Japanese climber came into the 14,200 foot camp complaining of HAPE symptoms. This climber did not ascend too fast, but his age—58—and a detected heart murmur indicated a rapid helicopter evacuation.)*

## **FALL ON SNOW, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, ASCENDING TOO FAST**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Rib**

A ten-member British Army expedition "Summit to the Sea" checked into the Talkeetna Ranger Station for their briefing on June 2. Their original plan was to ascend the West Buttress, which they had changed to doing the upper West

Rib, assessed as an Alaska Grade 4. The Park Service recommended they stay to the West Buttress (Grade 2), since several members had very little glacier or ice climbing experience. They would make their decision once they reached 14,200 feet on the West Buttress. The expedition departed Talkeetna on June 4. On June 14, nine members moved into the 14,200 foot camp. One member had returned to base camp a few days earlier. They acclimatized three days at 14,200 feet before ascending to a 16,200 foot camp on June 17. Ranger Roger Robinson at the 14,200 foot camp recommended that they take one or two rest days at 16,200 feet before making their summit attempt. At 0630 on June 18, the expedition departed for the summit.

Upon departing that morning, member Gary Keep experienced signs of AMS. The other eight members continued ascending while Keep soloed back to 14,200 feet. Keep was examined by Scott Darnsey of the Ranger Patrol, where it was determined that Keep was experiencing AMS and dehydration. Keep was admitted into the medical tent at 1530, where he was administered oxygen, Diamox, and an IV. His condition improved, and he was released at 2400 on June 18.

The other members continued an extremely slow ascent up through the rocks of the upper Rib. By 1830, they had reached 19,000 feet, having only ascended 2,800 feet in twelve hours. Weather conditions remained good throughout the day. The first team of three, led by Martin Spooner (33), decided to deviate to the right of the normal route where a break in the Football Field cornice was found. This break could be attained by first ascending a 45–50-degree hard snow slope which led up to a 20-foot corniced section of ice that topped out onto the Football Field.

Spooner was in the lead with Phil Whitfield (?) second and Steve Brown (25) third as they approached the cornice at 19,300 feet. At 1920, Brown lost his footing and fell, pulling Whitfield and Spooner with him. They tumbled approximately 300 feet before being stopped by large rocks. These rocks prevented an 8,000 foot fall off the south face. The other two rope teams were approximately 30 meters lateral of the team that fell and were resting when the accident occurred.

Spooner sustained injuries to both his ankles, while Whitfield received lacerations to his head. Brown received head injuries and was suffering from severe shock, delirium, and lapses of consciousness. The leader of the expedition, Justin Featherstone (29), attempted to call the Ranger Camp with their CB radio, but found that their batteries were too weak. Featherstone decided that he and Bougard would stay behind with Spooner and Brown and wait for a helicopter rescue. The other four, including Whitfield, would descend to 14,200 feet to report the accident. The four remaining each had bivi bags, down jacket, one shovel, one stove, one liter of fuel, and one day's food. They dug into the ice and built a small trench below several large rocks. This gave them some protection, but after the first night, they were unable to relight their stove due to the cold and windy conditions.

At 2030, the other four, including Whitfield, Johny Johnston, Ian Hayward

and Nigel Coar, began their descent. They reached their 16,200 foot camp at 0030 on June 19. Hayward and Coar decided to stay at their camp while Whitfield and Johnston continued on down. At 0040, Whitfield and Johnston witnessed two Americans fall down the 45 degree snow slope on the West Rib known as the "Orient Express," coming to a stop at 15,800 feet. Whitfield and Johnston arrived at the accident scene at 0100 and provided assistance to the fallen Americans. Whitfield stayed behind with the Americans while Johnston decided to solo down for help. At 0220 Johnston reported both accidents to the 14,200 foot ranger camp. The Talkeetna Ranger Station was notified of the situation at 0240.

Weather conditions remained poor for a helicopter evacuation. A large ground team was assembled, first to evacuate the two Americans who were closer and more exposed. Once this was completed, a second plan would be developed to evacuate the British. During the American evacuation, Keep was escorted to his 16,200 foot camp with an NPS radio establishing a radio link from the ridge.

Brown's condition was deteriorating, so Featherstone decided the four would slowly begin their descent. All four attempted to descend, but Spooner experienced too much pain in his ankles to walk. Featherstone decided to take Brown down, leaving Bougard behind with Spooner. The foursome had only one rope, since their third rope had been damaged in the fall, so Spooner and Bougard opted to wait to be rescued. Unknown to Featherstone was the rescue operation of the Americans below his position. Weather at the 14,000-foot level and above began to improve so that at 1600, all four of the British climbers were observed through a spotting scope from the Ranger Camp. Shortly thereafter, Featherstone and Brown were observed descending. Brown was very unstable, requiring a constant belay and occasionally taking short falls. Weather improved enough to evacuate one of the Americans at 2230 by helicopter. At the same time, the two British were descending the "Orient Express," very close to where the Americans had fallen. At 2300 Featherstone and Brown fell 1,500 feet, ending where the Americans had landed at 15,800 feet. Featherstone had later commented that Brown had fallen into him, knocking him off his stance.

At 2300, Keep radioed from his 16,200-foot location to the Ranger Cap that they had witnessed the fall and would be providing assistance. Ranger staff also witnessed the fall. Plans were developed for their evacuation. Featherstone had broken his left leg in the fall, while Brown sustained additional head injuries. Brown was able to walk and decided to descend straight down the route to the 14,200-foot camp for help.

Brown's descent was observed from the 14,200-foot camp. It was apparent his judgment was impaired. A well marked trail led from their accident location to 14,200 feet, but Brown's decision to descend a direct course would lead him over an ice cliff and several crevasses. Brown was observed walking straight off a 20-foot ice cliff, then tumbling down a steep slope where he was buried in avalanche debris. He freed himself from the debris, then continued his descent. Not 30 seconds later he was observed falling into a crevasse. Brown

recalled that he attempted to climb 30 feet out, clawing with bare fingers and kicking with his crampons. Brown had lost his ice ax on one of his earlier falls, then lost his gloves on the fall down the Orient. After 30 minutes and several attempts, Brown clawed his way out to where he lay motionless by the lip of the crevasse. Eventually he stood up. Ascending rescuers shouted to Brown to stay put.

Because of Spooner's and Bougard's position at 19,000 feet, and the fact that all able bodied rescuers at 14,200 feet had exhausted themselves over two long nights of rescues, the shorthaul extraction became the more logical choice of getting them off if the weather cooperated. When the weather began to improve on the evening of June 21, Jay Hudson was able to spot the pair at 2035, where they were standing and waving, to everyone's relief. Establishing a good communication link with the pair was imperative in order to perform this shorthaul mission. The initial cargo drop of radio and survival gear established this communication link. Once we could talk with the pair, we could judge their physical and mental capabilities, and get current weather conditions. The pair had previous training using a similar "Screamer Suit" (big diaper) in the military. This allowed the two to be extracted without a ranger involved in the shorthaul. Weather was the primary factor in retrieving both at the same time, since conditions were constantly changing for the worse. This had been the first time in many days that the upper mountain was calm. At 0248 on June 22, the LAMA helicopter held a hover at maximum power until the two were hooked in. Then a slow descent was made directly to the Ranger Camp. At this point the LAMA had to refuel at 7,200 feet then return. When the LAMA came back into 14,200 feet, the weather was already changing and it was fortunate that the pair got flown off. This shorthaul performed may be the highest shorthaul rescue mission ever performed in the world. Pilot Jim Hood did an exceptional job in the decreased light and high altitude conditions.

### **Analysis**

Here is a good example of an inexperienced party getting in over their heads by attempting too difficult a route. The "Summit to the Sea" expedition was advised in Talkeetna to stay on the West Buttress since half the party had very little glacier or ice climbing experience. While at 14,200 feet, they were advised to take several days to acclimatize at their high camp, since their summit day would be a long one. Because of good weather, they chose to make their summit push the next morning. Their lack of acclimatization became apparent when one member became ill on summit day and the rest required twelve hours to ascend just 2,800 feet over technically easy ground. The experienced members in the party should have realized that their slow pace was a good indication that it was time to turn around. To make matters worse, after a long day they planned to attempt a difficult corniced finish to the West Rib—a route seldom tried even by very experienced parties. On top of all these concerns they left an ill member behind in camp, who was then forced to solo down because of his AMS. To further their predicament, the leader descended with a person who was unstable, down a route notorious for its falls. Belays and fixed



protection should have been used. The leader was familiar with the route and conditions they had ascended the day before, which would have been the safer choice. Had they carried extra batteries for their radio, the pair could have been warned about the conditions in the descent route.

The two who survived four nights out in bivi bags were incredibly lucky. A strong will and determination kept them alive. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger.

## **FALL ON ICE, UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, INADEQUATE BELAY**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

William Finley (24) and Jeff Munroe (25) were injured in a 2,000 foot fall down the “Orient Express” section of the West Rib route on Mount McKinley June 18 at 0040. Both were descending roped together when they slipped on 45-degree ice around 17,800 feet, ending their fall at the 15,800 foot level. Finley sustained chest injuries while Munroe was knocked unconscious. Both men were lowered down to the Ranger Camp by a rescue team. Munroe remained unconscious through his evacuation on June 19. Finley was evacuated on June 21 by an Army Chinook helicopter. Both were transported to Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage.

### **Analysis**

Billy Finley and Jeff Munroe were the eighteenth and nineteenth climbers to have fallen down the Orient Express. They were only the third and fourth to have survived. They were very lucky the two British climbers witnessed the fall and could immediately provide assistance. The quick responses from Johnston, Whitfield, 14K rescuers, the NPS LAMA, and the 14K medical attention certainly saved their lives. (Source: Roger Robinson, Mountaineering Ranger)

## **HAND-HOLD CAME LOOSE, FALL ON ROCK, PLACED NO PROTECTION**

### **California, Yosemite Valley**

On January 26, Katherine Davis (31) was climbing on Supplication (5.10). She was leading a 5.8 approach to set a belay at a ledge when the rock handhold she was holding crumbled off the wall. At the time of the fall Davis was wearing a seat harness with gear, but was not clipped through any protection. Eric Pearlman, her partner, said that Davis pitched out and back as she fell, rotating 360 degrees head over heels. They estimated the fall to be between 25 and 30 feet. Davis fell onto a steep granite slope covered with heavy duff and soil. She landed on her feet and left side, then slid another 20 feet down a steep soil slope missing the talus. Pearlman stated that he was sure Davis had not lost consciousness because he heard her say, “I’m OK, I’m OK,” as she slid down the slope. After checking on Davis’ condition, Pearlman hiked out and reported the incident to Yosemite Dispatch, using the phone at the Arch Rock Entrance. Ranger Carol Mutch was the station attendant at the time. After making his report, he returned to Davis’ location to await rescue crews.

She was placed in a full body splint which was secured in a litter. A litter carry out team was assembled and, using several belay systems, the litter was