

Perdue and Dong waited for all parties to depart high camp and did some clean up and reorganization of the cache prior to beginning their descent at 1830. Perdue and Dong assisted in a lowering from the base of the head wall during their descent and still managed to make it to the 14,200-foot camp within an hour of the Annapurna expedition. Again, at 14,200 feet, the Annapurna group requested a tent and required assistance from NPS staff to set it up. During this time the patient who had been lowered to 14,200 feet was evacuated via Lama helicopter, at which point Slawskie stated that he wanted a helicopter evacuation and claimed to have insurance that could cover it. He was informed that evacuation decisions were strictly based on need, not personal desires.

The group left to descend to basecamp the following day. It was only discovered after their departure that they had left a full gallon of fuel in the Ranger camp. They arrived at basecamp sometime that night and were discovered the following morning by the basecamp ranger, Karen Hilton, to be sleeping in the fuel tent.

Analysis

From start to finish, this expedition showed a total disregard for their own safety and others. Their unwillingness to put aside their personal goals in light of their clear inability to deal appropriately under adverse conditions indicates that the only way to impress upon them the seriousness of their negligence was to issue them citations for Disorderly Conduct and Tampering. Hopefully, this will send a clear message that such behavior by anyone will not be tolerated.

FALLING ROCK

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

The Alaska Mountaineering School (AMS)-8 expedition led by Rob Gowler flew to basecamp on the southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier on June 10. The group progressed steadily up the West Buttress route. Even with several long delays due to weather, the entire team reached the summit on June 26. On the 27th they departed high camp planning to descend to basecamp. They spent a six hours at the 14,200-foot camp and continued their descent at 2110 in three roped teams of four with a guide at the rear of each team.

At 2140, as the first roped team was rounding the toe of Windy Corner, they heard a loud crack and an enormous quantity of rocks came cascading down, striking the first three climbers on the first rope team. Guide Steve Grillo was the fourth person on that roped team and felt a strong tug on the rope as he was on the ground in self-arrest position. Once the rocks stopped falling the first three people on the rope, Mark Morford, Gerb Islei, and Clint West were all seriously injured. Gowler witnessed the event and immediately started calling for help on his cell phone. His initial attempts to call the 14,200-foot and 7,200-foot ranger camps were not answered, so he called the basecamp manager who notified ranger John Evans and then

called AMS head quarters in Talkeetna to alert people that he had three serious injuries and needed a helicopter as soon as possible.

By 2205, rescue personnel at 14,200-foot camp, at basecamp and in Talkeetna were all mobilized for the rescue effort. Ranger Joe Reichert was incident commander. By 2311 the Park Service contract rescue helicopter (Lama) and a twin engine Navajo piloted by Erik Dinklewater of Talkeetna Aero were both in the air headed toward Windy Corner.

At 2326, a patient update was transmitted from para-rescue man David Shuman to the 14,200-foot camp. One person, Clint West (47) was deceased, Mark Morford (47) had a femur and wrist fracture and Gerd Islei (56) had several broken ribs, a collapsed lung, and a ruptured disc in his lower back.

An air rescue evacuation ensued.

Analysis

While traveling in mountainous terrain has certain inherent risks, the rockfall danger on the West Buttress route has never been a significant concern. This team was in a position that many are in during the course of the climbing season. They were traveling at night, when cooler temperatures and frozen conditions make it safer to travel. They were very unlucky. No other known fatalities have occurred due to rock-fall on Mount McKinley. We all hope that rock-fall in the Windy Corner area does not become more common. (Source: All Denali accounts are edited from reports written by various Denali National Park South District Rangers)

(Editor's Note: There were a few other incidents on Mount McKinley and one in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park during the climbing season. Two were medical problems—an acute abdomen and a case of HAPE—and one psychological problem, in which a client was threatening to harm himself and others in the group. When the parents of that person were contacted, they did not express any surprise.

There was one plane incident on the Ruth Glacier—a crash on take off. There were no injuries.

On May 4, Jason Harper, c. 28, was dropped off at Windy Ridge for an attempt on Mount Sanford. When the pilot returned to pick him up on May 9, he was nowhere to be found. After 12 days of searching and finding no trace, the presumption is that he perished.

On June 27, the body of Thomas Gary Cole was discovered at a cache site at the 17,200-foot level. An examination of the records indicated that he died June 19, 1969, of pulmonary edema at this camp. On July 1, his body was reburied at the 14,200-foot level.

There are approximately 34 other climbers that have not been recovered from the slopes of Denali. Depending on the location, other climbers may or may not have the misfortune of coming across these remains. Bodies that are found in remote areas should not be disturbed until professionals can get to the scene to determine who the victim was and preserve any evidence around the site.

This was a very unfortunate discovery for all of those involved. We are pleased to have left Mr. Cole's body in a location of his choosing, and that in the end one of his last requests, to remain on the slopes of Mount McKinley, was granted.)

FALL ON ROCK—ATTACKED BY BEES

Arizona, Camelback Mountain, Hart Route

Dear Climbing Community: My name is Jeff, and I am the climber who survived this incident. I want to try to clear up what happened to let all the climbers in the area know what to be wary of and where. I have been climbing for over ten years, but I live in Michigan, which is devoid of outdoor areas, and only get outdoors about once a year. This was Keith's first time climbing outside. That is why we were doing an easy route, listed at 5.2 in the Phoenix area *Climbers Guide*.

We had reached the belay at the top of the third pitch and were having a great time when the bees hit, just a few at first, and then suddenly they swarmed us. As we were trying to decide to go up or down, I looked up and saw what I believe to be the nest about ten feet above us and to the left. Seeing them above us, I decided we were best to go down. By this time they were hitting us very hard and it became difficult to see or even breathe, as they would fly into my mouth every time I opened it to take a breath. All this was compounded by the fact that I AM allergic to bees; however, as stated in other entries some people are only allergic to certain varieties of bees, and I am one of those people. Being from Michigan and having no prior exposure to the bees of the area, let alone the Africanized bees, I feared for my life and knew we had to get down as fast as possible.

At the time we were in the middle of changing over gear to do the last pitch and had the anchor in and were clipped to it but the rope was in a pile to be back-fed for the next pitch. I sent Keith down to the last ledge as I lowered him hand over hand to it. When he has safely reached it I slapped the rope into the anchor, thinking it would at least be a failsafe as we descended, as I did not feel I had time or the ability to set up a rappel with the bees now stinging my eyes. We down-climbed to about halfway between the first and second pitch when we ran out of rope, either from being at the end or from the rope tangling as we descended. I do not know. At this point we were only twenty feet above the belay ledge and up only seventy feet or so. Feeling we were in serious danger from the bees and on easy climbing, I told Keith that we would have to untie and down-climb the rest of the way and he agreed. We untied and I told Keith to go and I would be right behind him. He only made it about ten feet before he fell. He hit the belay ledge and rolled/bounced off and disappeared out of my sight.

I down-climbed the rest of the way and began blindly running around trying to get the bees off and find Keith at the same time. I never found