

Denali National Park and Preserve

1999 Mountaineering Summary



The Challenge of McKinley: Good Decisions Lead to a Season of Zero Fatalities

".....the mountain's other challenges, beyond technical mountaineering, came to the fore: perennial arctic conditions above 10,000 feet – constant cold at subzero temperatures; sudden storms, blinding snow, hurricane winds, causing wind-chill factors well below minus 100 degrees; tents and equipment ripped, lost, buried; trails laboriously broken, then erased by drifts, to be found and broken again by people breathing and pumping like hummingbirds, counting to ten between each step climbers exhausted, disabled or dying from altitude sickness or hypothermia; the loss of a mitt or a wet sock the difference between life and death. All of this beyond avalanches, falls, crevasse disappearances, and the terrible toil of simply moving upward in air nearly devoid of oxygen."

--Bill Brown, A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region

In 1991 historian Bill Brown described some of the difficulties mountaineers face in climbing North America's highest peak: Mt. McKinley. It was also the last year that no one died on the mountain. That is, until this year. This past climbing season is the second time since 1991 that the mountain did not claim any lives. "That is the kind of news we want to see more often in future mountaineering summaries," said South District Ranger J.D. Swed. "The statistic is even more impressive when

you consider that 1,183 mountaineers attempted to climb the 20,320-foot high peak this year."

Weather continues to be a significant factor in summit bids in the Alaska Range.



Most climbers attempt to scale the 20,320-foot high Mt. McKinley via the West Buttress Route.

Unrelenting high winds contributed to a summit rate of less than 20% during the month of May. Later in the season, stretches of moderate weather allowed more mountaineers to reach the top of McKinley. This raised the overall summit percentage for the season to 43%. The historical summit rate dating back to 1903 remains at 51%.

As if spring conditions on the mountain are not challenging enough, some climbers still aspire to summit the mountain in the winter. This past winter, mountaineering activity on Denali saw intense cold weather and high winds. This led to an early retreat for three expeditions. Although no climber summited Mt. McKinley this past winter, one tenacious Japanese soloist spent 57 days in attaining the summit of Mt. Foraker, although not in time to be considered a

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What's Up?

The annual mountaineering summary contains information on significant search and rescues in the Alaska Range, research and resource studies, notable ascents and new routes, and several articles on life at the top of North America. Our goal is to keep you informed on "what's up" in the past year and what you can expect in the coming year. **Note:** There is no change in the registration process or the special use fee in the 2000 climbing season. —Jane Tranel, Editor

This summary is also available at our website:
www.nps.gov/dena/mountain



The Challenge of McKinley

(Continued from page 1)

winter ascent.

Historian Bill Brown noted the following: "that the pioneer climbers incrementally discovered the way up, made their ascents, and came back to tell their stories is a testimonial to grit, frontier improvisation, and luck." As we close the books on the past 20th century's history of mountaineering, we will continue

our work towards a trend in fewer rescues and fatalities into the next century. That way tomorrow's climbers can also bring their stories back from the top of North America.

Positive Trends

In 1999 climbers came to Denali from 39 different countries:

37% were international climbers (438)

21% were on guided expeditions (246)

53% of the international climbers reached the summit

41% of the guided climbers reached the summit

Mountaineering in Denali National Park and Preserve has increased dramatically over the years. In 1984, 695 climbers attempted to climb McKinley and this past year that number almost doubled to 1,183 climbers on the mountains slopes. In 1995, the National Park Service started a three pronged approach to attempt to reduce the number of accidents and deaths and to support those efforts using funds paid by climbers. This program consists of a sixty day pre-registration requirement, a climbing special use fee, and a preventative search and rescue and education program.

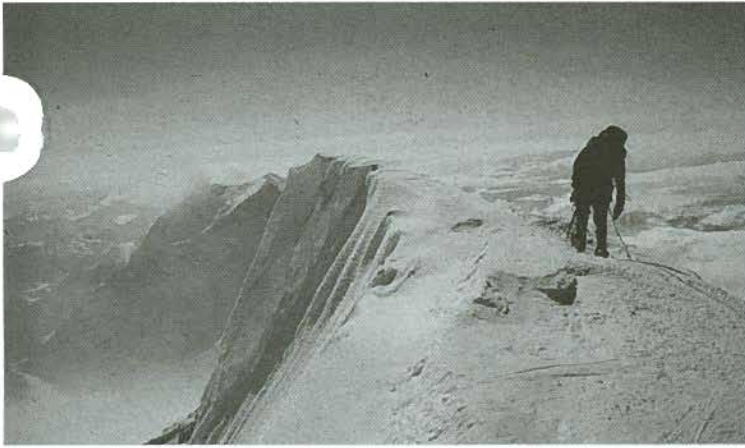
The statistics on page three compare five years of stats before the program and five years after its implementation in 1995. These numbers indicate a positive trend and one we would like to see continue into the next century of climbing in Denali National Park.

The statistics on page three hold some very interesting details. For example, from 1990 through 1994, Denali averaged 12 mountaineering rescues per year. After the implementation of the 60-day pre-registration requirement and with an aggressive education

program, the average number of major rescue missions decreased by 23.2 percent. This is also a good trend considering the number of climbers on the mountain increased by 10% during that timeframe. Fatal accidents also decreased from an average of four per year to two fatalities per year.

The historically high number of international fatalities has been disturbing. Since the implementation of the current program, a dramatic reduction in the number of foreign rescues and fatalities has occurred. We believe our increased educational campaign in foreign languages and the 60-day pre-registration period have been key elements in this reduction. Besides saving of life and limb, the overall reduction in search and rescue incidents has the all-around benefit of reducing risk to rescue personnel, mountain guides and climbers alike.

While it may be a bit early to draw any statistical conclusions, we believe that this program is off to a great start. This three pronged approach will continue to emphasize "safety over summits."



-NPS Photo

"...that the pioneer climbers incrementally discovered the way up, made their ascents, and came back to tell their stories is a testimonial to grit, frontier improvisation, and luck."

-Historian Bill Brown



"There is no change in the registration process or the special use fee in the 2000 climbing season."

-JD Swed, South District Ranger

Positive Trends

BEFORE						
YEAR	TOTAL CLIMBERS	FOREIGN CLIMBERS	TOTAL SARS	% FOREIGN SARS	DEATHS US	DEATHS FOREIGN
1990	1002	337	3	67%	2	1
1991	935	404	5	100%	0	0
1992	1070	436	22	67%	1	10
1993	1108	468	14	73%	1	0
1994	1277	570	20	45%	1	4
TOTALS	5392	2215	64	70%	5	15

AFTER						
YEAR	TOTAL CLIMBERS	FOREIGN CLIMBERS	TOTAL SARS	% FOREIGN SARS	DEATHS US	DEATHS FOREIGN
1995	1220	475	12	41%	4	2
1996	1148	474	13	47%	0	2
1997	1109	423	10	20%	0	1
1998	1166	465	9	67%	2	1
1999	1183	438	9	44%	0	0
TOTALS	5826	2275	53	43%	6	6

A Win-Win....Win

The partnership between the National Park Service (NPS), the Air National Guard 210th (PJ's) out of Kulus Air Force Base, Anchorage, and the U.S. Army 123rd Aviation Regiment (Sugarbears) from Fort Wainwright, Fairbanks, is one that taxpayers and outdoor enthusiasts can be proud of. The partnership allows these agencies to share information and technology, training, equipment, transportation of personnel, supplies and materials. In short this teamwork expands opportunities for each agency.

It all started innocently when the military became involved in rescue work back in 1949. Captain Searle of the Army's 74th Rescue Squadron performed the first helicopter landing in support of a rescue on Denali. It would be another 16 years before the next military helicopter rescue on Denali occurred. The military has been involved in missions on Denali and in Alaska ever since.

As helicopters became more commonly used in military and civilian rescue work, their missions on Denali increased. In 1973, after a tragic military aircraft crash at the 14,000-foot level on Mount Sanford, the Army created the HART (High Altitude Rescue Team). This team specializes in rescues of downed military aircraft at high altitudes. Their first civilian mission took

place on Denali in July of 1976. The team landed a helicopter at the 17,200-foot level on the West Buttress and rescued injured climber Hanspeter Trachsel. The team was also instrumental in high altitude rescues the following two seasons.

In 1982, Dr Peter Hacket received assistance with his high altitude medical research from the HART pilots and crews. They transported equipment for a medical research camp at the 14,200-foot level on the West Buttress. Over the next eight years, the team continued to transport and retrieve several tons of supplies and medical gear each climbing season. In 1991, the HART was unable to assist the park because all their military resources were dedicated to the Persian Gulf War effort. That same year the NPS contracted with a private operator to provide high altitude helicopter support. The HART continues to act as backup to the NPS Lama Helicopter in responding to high mountain rescues. In fact once the Gulf War ended the HART returned with their valued assistance the following year.

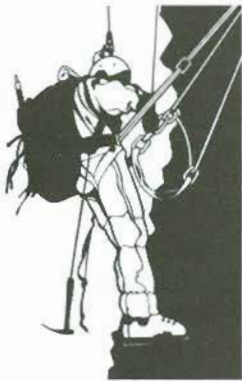
So how does this partnership work? The NPS facilitates the HART training of pilots in high altitude landings in the Alaska Range within Denali National Park. For three weeks each April, NPS rangers, HART crew members and pilots train in winching techniques, high-altitude precision pilot techniques, communications, rescue techniques, glacier travel and safety, remote fueling procedures, and mountain orientation. An important part of the pilot landing training takes place when the 14,200-foot ranger camp is delivered by helicopter to the West Buttress. Camp supplies are loaded into large cargo nets and hooked externally below the CH-47 Chinook helicopters. The nets are then gently placed onto the glacier at the 14,200-foot basin. The difficulty of working at high altitude when not acclimatized requires that slingloads be used.



-NPS Photo

The crews on the U.S. Army Chinook helicopters have been instrumental in many rescues in the Alaska Range. They are shown here delivering the camp to 7,200-feet.

A Win-Win....Win (Continued)



Every spring rigorous rescue training takes place.

The two tons of equipment stays put until the first patrol arrives in May.

Then the arduous process of putting the camp together can begin.

That isn't all it takes to set up camp on McKinley. Another mission during that period of time for the HART and NPS rangers is to place 2,000 gallons of fuel for the Lama at

the 7,200-foot landing strip. Another ton of supplies and materials is also needed at the 7,200-foot base camp. Once delivered, it's time for rangers and volunteers to put the camp together. Two thousand gallons of Jet A fuel is transferred from internal fuel tanks to rubberized bladders called "Roll-A-Gons." The fuel and remote fueling system is set up and tested for immediate use. Once this work is completed the pilots, crews and rangers are ready for the season to begin.

The Air National Guard 210th ParaRescuemen (PJ's) have also utilized Mount McKinley for years as training ground in arctic mountaineering techniques. The PJ's are widely known for their statewide rescue efforts which are coordinated through the Rescue Coordination Center. The Alaska Air National Guard PJ's and crews are widely regarded as outstanding in their field by military and NPS personnel.

Starting in 1992, the NPS invited the 210th to join their mountain patrols. Ever since, two PJ's have been joining each of the four patrols on the mountain. Rangers and PJ's now train together each year prior to the climbing season, sharing knowledge and experience. This gives the eight PJ's an opportunity to train on harsh mountain terrain each year. It gives the NPS patrols two additional pro-

professionals to assist in rescues. The 210th helicopter pilots often fly medivac missions from the 7,200-foot base camp during the year. Their pilots also receive permission from the NPS to make practice landings at that location. During that practice, NPS rangers and volunteers are transported to and from the mountain to start or end patrols. This provides training opportunities and lowers the transportation costs to the NPS. C-130 pilots and crews often circle the mountain during rescues to assist with searches, provide communications and give weather updates.

All of this movement of supplies, materials, fuels, and training takes a great deal of coordination. This coordination gives all the agencies an opportunity to communicate before the busy climbing season begins. This allows our crews to work more efficiently when an actual rescue is underway. It also provides knowledgeable, professionally trained rescuers to assist volunteers and other mountaineers during rescues. Without this three-way partnership, each agency would be forced to expend shrinking budgets to get the training, equipment and transportation needed for their staff. Tens of thousands of dollars are saved by this relationship. Visitors to the park and to Alaska are better served if they need assistance. We are proud to be a partner in this win-win situation.



-NPS Photo

It takes several days, and good weather, to set up the ranger camps at 7,200 and 14,200 feet on McKinley.

In 1999 the average age of male climbers attempting McKinley was 36 and the average age of females attempting the mountain was 35



What's Up Doc?

We would like to recognize the contribution of mountaineers who serve as volunteers for the National Park Service at the 14,200-foot and 7,200-foot ranger camps during the climbing season. In particular, we would like to recognize the doctors who leave their own practices for a month to be of assistance to the sick and injured climbers on Mt. McKinley. They treated over 65 patients for minor and major ailments at the 14,200-foot ranger camp this season. A high percentage of those patients were treated for varying degrees of frostbite and High Altitude Mountain Sickness.

Many thanks to the following doctors who helped out this past climbing season: Bob Desiderio, Mark Harrington,



-NPS Photo

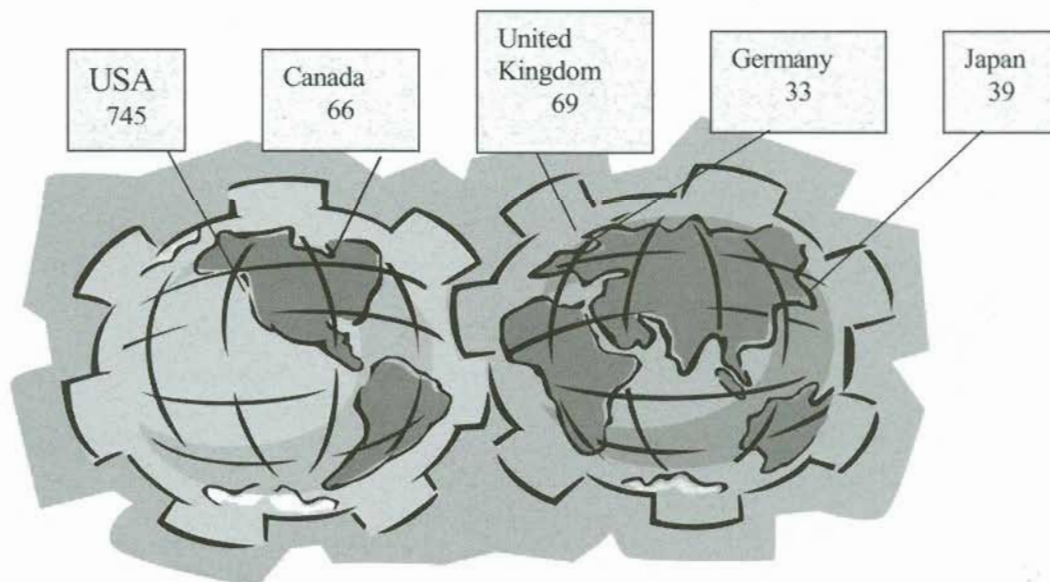
Unfortunately some climbers suffer from frostbite in their attempt to scale Mt. McKinley. They are fortunate to have the medical help of volunteer doctors while on the mountain. Doctors staff the camp at 14,200 feet on McKinley each climbing season and offer treatment to injured climbers.

Adam Adamski, Jeff Paffendorf, and Tim Hurtado.

It's A Small World After All

Not surprisingly, in 1999 most of the climbers attempting to scale McKinley came from the United States. American climbers represented 63% of the total number of climbers on Mt. McKinley. The remaining 37% (438 climbers) represented mountaineers from 39 different countries. The illustration below shows the number of climbers from the top five nationalities attempting to summit North America's highest peak.

In 1999 female climbers comprised 10% of the overall number of climbers on Mt. McKinley



1999 Denali Pro Mountaineer of the Year



The Denali Pro Pin design for 2000. Many thanks to Brenda Joyce, of Anchorage, who volunteered to design this year's pin.

Michal Krissak, of Slovakia, was attempting a solo summit of Mount McKinley this spring when he found a semi-conscious Japanese climber lying face down near 19,500 feet. With temperatures well below zero and no shelter, Krissak

knew the climber could not descend on his own. Slowing his own descent, and risking his own life, Krissak lifted the man to his feet and for several hours painstakingly eased him down the mountain to shelter and other help.

For this selfless act, Denali National Park and Preserve and Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI) have named Krissak the 1999 "Denali Pro Mountaineer of the Year". South District Ranger J.D. Swed noted that, "there were so many heroic efforts on the mountain by climbers that it was difficult to select one recipient of this award. Michal's physical and moral strength enabled him to single-handedly save another man's life. There is no more selfless act that one can perform."

In 1998, rangers partnered with PMI, a leading rope manufacturer, to begin a climber recognition program at Denali National Park and Preserve. The "Denali Pro" program is designed to recognize and reward mountaineers who reflect the highest standards in the sport for safety, self-sufficiency, aiding climbers, and practicing "no impact" outdoor ethics. This year rangers awarded over 60 individuals Denali Pro lapel pins. This past climbing season was the first time since 1991 that there were no fatalities, due in part to climbers helping each other.

Tragically, Krissak was just one year old when his father, Milan, died in a helicopter accident. His father was attempting to rescue a fellow climber in the High Tatra. The High Tatra's divide Slovakia and Poland, the highest and most majestic part of the Carpathians. In 1980, a Slovakian team completed a memorial climb on one of the more challenging routes on McKinley in his honor.

Several other climbers were nominated for this year's Denali Pro award including:

- Mike Mays and Gerard McDonnell, Anchorage: assisted five extremely fatigued climbers, one of whom was snow-blind. They guided them down from the summit ridge to the 17,200-foot camp in rapidly deteriorating weather conditions.
- Stuart Parks, Dave Lucey and Paul Berry: saved the life of a British climber. The three Anchorage mountaineers ascended from the 14,200-foot camp to Denali Pass in time to prepare the severely injured climber for a helicopter rescue.
- Josie Garton and Forrest McCarthy: volunteer patrol members at the 7,200-foot base camp during the busiest search and rescue period of the season. On a personal climb after their patrol ended, they abandoned their summit attempt to aid a climber with cerebral edema.

The sound decisions and selfless actions of these and many other climbers helped save lives and avoided costly search and rescue operations. "PMI is committed to promoting safe and no-impact climbing ethics," President Steve Hudson said. "We are proud to be involved in a program that promotes personal stewardship of the mountain, the national park, and of each other." PMI is located in LaFayette, Georgia, and many of their employees volunteer on rescue teams in that area.

(Continued on page 8)

"Michal's physical and moral strength enabled him to single-handedly save another man's life. There is no more selfless act that one can perform."

-South District Ranger

J.D. Swed

Mountaineer of the Year

(Continued from page 7)

Michal Krissak was presented a trophy on November 5 at a special ceremony during the International Technical Rescue Symposium (ITRS) in Ft. Collins, Colorado. A commemorative plaque will be on display at the Talkeetna Ranger Station.

The National Park Service is indebted to these exceptional climbers who went to extraordinary lengths to assist others. Additionally, the rangers heartily thank all of the patrol volunteers and all other 1999 Denali Pro pin recipients for a job well done!



**-Photo courtesy of Steve Hudson
PMI President Steve Hudson, left, and South District Ranger J.D. Swed, right, congratulate Michal Krissak, the Denali Pro Climber of the Year, at an awards ceremony in Ft. Collins, Colorado.**

1999 Denali Pro Pin Recipients

*"Their sound decisions and
selfless actions helped save
lives....."*

*-South District Ranger, J.
D. Swed*



**-NPS Photo
Base Camp on McKinley is
located at the 7,200-foot
level on the mountain.**

Paul Berry
Daniel Bobrow
Michael Boland
Don Bowers
Tyson Bradley
Mark Cione
Karl Cotton
Alice Dial
Annie Duquette
Julie Faure
Brian Harder
Angela Hawse
Ryan Hokanson
Jim Hood
Bob Hornbein
Matt Howard
Jay Hudson
Lee James
Michael Johnson
Norm Johnson
Michal Krissak
Margriet van Laake
Dave Lucey
Stephen Mayerson
Mike Mays

Gerard McDonnell
Bok Oh
Sun Oh
Brent Okita
Brian Okonek
Stuart Parks
Mike Pearson
Matt Porter
Justin Rose
Tim Stageberg
Joe Stock
Richard Stotts
Jack Tackle
Artur Testov

1999 Volunteers (VIPs) on Mountain Patrols

Dr. Adam Adamski
Carl Brooks
Andy Byerly
William Culbreath
Dr. Bob Desiderio
Josie Garton
Joel Geisendorfer
Dr. Mark Harrington

Dr. Tim Hurtado
Dahr Jamail
Darin Jernigan
Gordy Kito
Eric Larson
Jay Mathers
Forrest McCarthy
Ely McCoy
Mike Nash
DJ Nechrony
Dr. Jeff Paffendorf
Mike Shain
Rod Willard

Alaska Air National Guard ParaRescuemen Volunteers (VIPs)

Simon Ferland
Lynn Grabill
Chris Keen
Martin Kimble
John Loomis
Eric Taylor

Roger Robinson Receives Prestigious Award

Last year, the American Alpine Club recognized National Park Service Ranger Roger Robinson with the "1999 David Brower Award" for his many years of selfless effort in environmental conservation. Roger has been a Mountaineering Ranger at Denali National Park since 1980 and has been instrumental in environmental preservation and conservation programs in Denali.

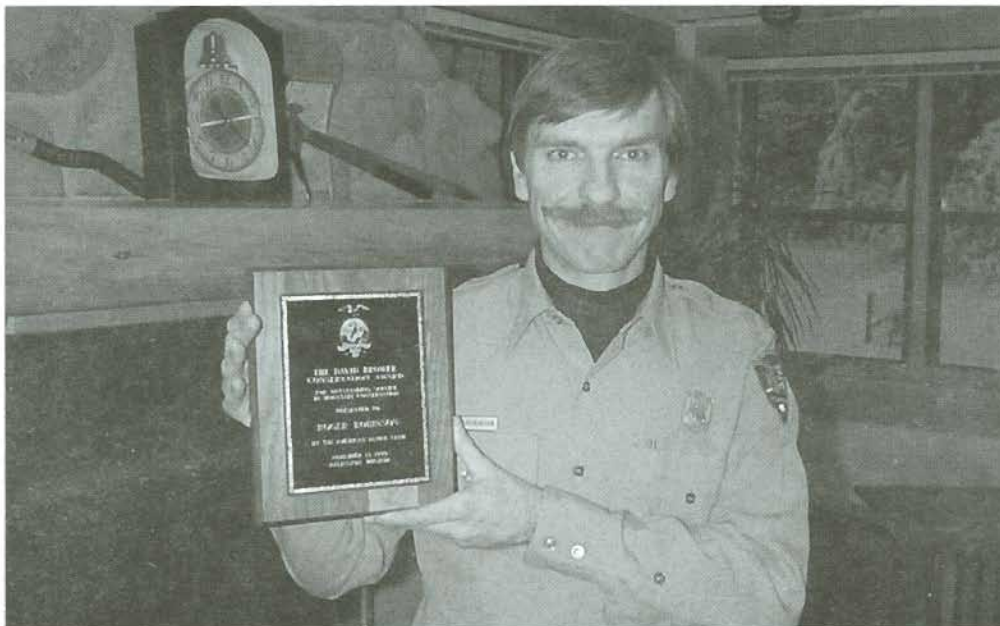
Roger is responsible for significant efforts to address the issues of human waste and sanitation on Denali. From 1975-1977 he helped initiate mountain cleanups. His efforts continued when he was later hired as a park ranger. He designed and constructed toilet facilities along the West Buttress route. He still tirelessly educates climbers about "Leave No Trace" practices.

Roger's other accomplishments include the development of a program to help track and recover fuel cans and pick up illegally discarded garbage left by

climbing parties on Denali. Roger also conducts orientation and educational programs for climbing expeditions that focus on environmental sensitivity on Denali.

Roger and the south district staff are currently working with park planners to address environmental issues and concerns in the Denali Backcountry Management Plan. If you would like to learn more about this effort please see the article on pages 17-18.

"Roger epitomizes what every ranger in the National Park Service strives for; a positive work ethic and concern for the environment. His coworkers, neighbors and every climber whom he has met would agree with me when I say we are fortunate to have him working at Denali," said Superintendent Stephen P. Martin.






-NPS Photo


Mountaineering Ranger Roger Robinson displays the "1999 David Brower Award" that he was given by the American Alpine Club. The group commended Roger for his many years of dedication to environmental conservation at Denali National Park and Preserve.







Mountaineering Search and Rescue Summary

There were nine major mountaineering incidents in 1999 involving 15 mountaineers. The National Park Service expended \$101,223 for mountaineering related search and rescue activities. The military spent an additional \$115,604 assisting in these incidents. The NPS staff, volunteers and helicopter operation saved eight lives this past season. (Lives saved are denoted by a  below in the description of the incident.)

Falls, West Buttress: On May 15, 1999, two Spanish climbers were air evacuated by the NPS Lama helicopter from the 17,200-foot high camp. The two climbers had fallen 500 feet the previous day while descending from the 18,350-foot level. Their injuries prevented them from descending any further and they requested assistance from the NPS. Lifeguard flew the two to an Anchorage hospital for treatment.  

Fall, West Rib: On May 19, 1999, an Italian climber fell 65 feet off a serac on the West Rib and injured his leg and chest. The climber had been filming the ski descent of his partner when the accident occurred. The injured climber was assisted by an American expedition that made contact with the NPS and assisted in readying the patient for air evacuation by the NPS Lama helicopter. Once off the mountain, Lifelight flew the climber to an Anchorage hospital for treatment. 

Frostbite-Hypothermia-Fall, West Buttress: On May 20, 1999, a British climbing team requested rescue from the summit plateau of Mt. McKinley when one of their members became incapacitated from frostbite and fatigue. That evening two members of the party were shorthauled from the 19,500-foot level. The third member of the expedition had gone for help but fell and broke his leg after falling from the 18,200-foot level while descending Denali Pass. On May 21, the third climber was found by an American expedition and shorthauled from 17,500 feet to 7,200-feet by an NPS ranger. All three members of the expedition were taken to an Anchorage hospital for treatment. Two of the members suffered permanent loss of tissue, fingers and toes due to their frostbite.   

Fall, Thunder Mountain: On May 21, 1999, an American climber fell 200 feet fracturing both legs while attempting to climb a couloir on Thunder Mountain, a satellite peak of Mt. Hunter. His climbing partner was initially able to lower him 200 feet, but the severity of the fractures made them abort their descent and the partner went for help. The partner rappelled and down climbed 2,500 feet to the glacier airstrip and successfully flagged an air taxi pilot. A large rescue effort was organized including participation by the military, the Alaska Incident Management Team and 16-person multi-agency rescue team. The weather remained inclement for flying which delayed the rescue effort for 38 hours. On May 23, an NPS ranger shorthauled on a 200-foot rope below the NPS Lama helicopter and successfully rescued the American climber. The climber was transported via a Lifelight helicopter and treated for frostbite and multiple fractures. 

Mountaineering Search and Rescue Summary



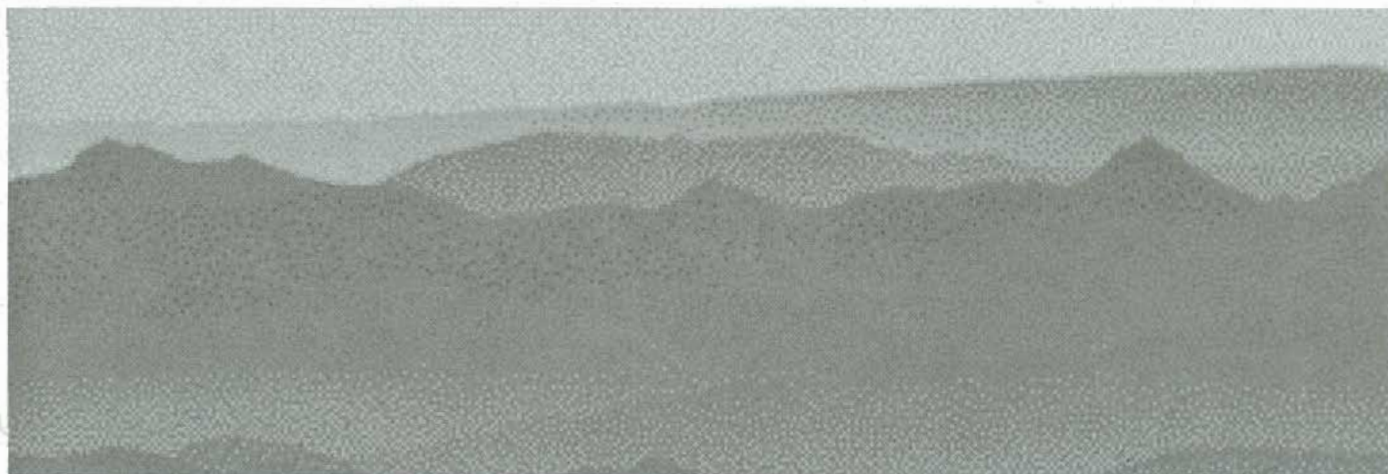
Frostbite, West Buttress: On May 25, 1999, a Japanese climber frostbit three fingers on each hand while attempting to reach the summit of Mt. McKinley. The climber was provided medical help at the 17,200-foot camp and assisted to the 14,200-foot ranger camp. He was evacuated five days later by the NPS Lama helicopter when weather permitted. He was flown off the mountain to Talkeetna and provided ground transportation to an Anchorage hospital.

HAPE, West Buttress: On May 31, 1999, while ascending Mt. McKinley, an American climber experienced HAPE and bronchiolar spasms. She reported into the 14,200-foot ranger camp where she was evacuated by the NPS Lama helicopter.

Fall, West Buttress: On June 6, 1999, an American soloist fell 100 feet at the 17,500-foot level of the West Buttress route. Due to the fall and his lack of experience, the soloist was escorted from the 17,500-foot level to the 7,200-foot base camp over a two-day period.

Lowerings, West Buttress: On June 16, 1999, South African and Taiwanese climbers were lowered from the 19,000-foot level on the West Buttress to the 17,200-foot camp. At the 17,200-foot camp they were treated by an NPS ranger for snow blindness and acute mountain sickness. The two climbers were then lowered to the 14,200-foot ranger camp where they received medical care. Both climbers remained at the camp until they were able to descend the mountain safely with the aid of their expedition members.

Crevasse Fall, Kahiltna Glacier: On July 5, 1999, an American climber fell into a crevasse at the 6,800-foot level on the Kahiltna Glacier. The climber's partner was not able to extricate him and radioed for assistance. NPS rangers at the 7,200-foot camp responded and extricated the climber.



A Pristine Mountain Environment?

Climbing in Alaska: pristine glaciers, countless unnamed peaks, miles of untouched wilderness....for some climbers an expedition into the Alaska Range is the trip of a lifetime. For many of those climbers their goal is to reach the top of North America - Mt. McKinley. Each year more climbers attempt to scale "the mountain." Increased numbers of climbers brings more impacts on the most well traveled routes on McKinley.

In 1998, the National Park Service initiated a new program to count the number of nights spent at specific camps along fourteen-miles of the popular West Buttress route. Over 1,000 climbers use this route each year in their attempts to

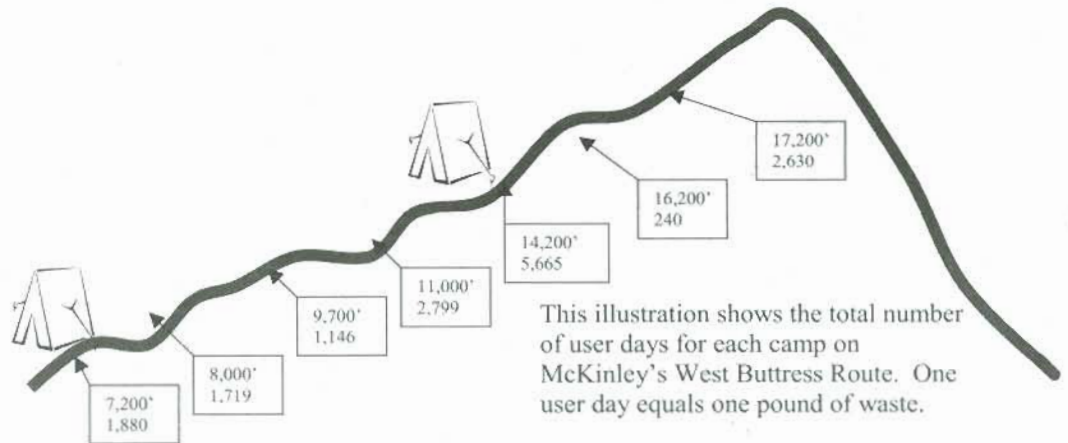
reach the summit. Information was compiled again this year in order to assess the acute problem of human waste and trash on the mountain.

The total number of user nights this season was 21,701. Out of 318 groups attempting to climb Mt. McKinley, 271



-NPS Photo
The pits: Rangers and volunteers dig holes for pit toilets at base camp, 14K and 17K.

expeditions reported the total number of nights spent at each camp. The graphic below outlines those figures.



Waste Not Want Not

Trash and human waste remain a significant problem on the popular West Buttress route on Mt. McKinley. A solution for this difficult problem is still being researched.



-NPS Photo
With over 1,000 climbers on McKinley each year, trash is a serious issue.

The abandonment of caches, illegally dumped trash, pit toilets and piles of human waste are topics that may not make the front page, but are equally important in the discussion of managing

the mountain. The NPS has made efforts to improve the conditions along the major routes by installing a new toilet at the 11,000-foot camp. At the end of the season when the glaciers are at their optimum melting stage, NPS rangers and volunteers continue to collect a significant amount of abandoned caches and trash.

The responsibility for achieving a pristine wilderness environment ultimately lies with each and every mountaineer.

Yes, You "Can"

Denali National Park initiated a fuel can monitoring system this past season to record the number of fuel cans being used and illegally discarded on the



-NPS Photo
On a clear day you can see forever: Mt. McKinley as seen by visitors taking shuttle buses out the park road.

mountain. The ultimate goal of this project is to ensure that all fuel cans used on expeditions are removed from the mountain.

While some data collection took place in 1998, this year's concerted effort to track the cans met with considerable success. During the registration process expeditions were assigned a can number which was then written on every gallon of white gas carried out of the Kahiltna base camp where fuel is stored.

We hope climbers will assist us in these efforts in the years to come.

New Routes and Notable Ascents

Mount Foraker: Joe Terrevecchia and Steve Larson spent 10 days creating a new 7,000 foot line to the right of the Infinite Spur route on the south face of Mt. Foraker.

Bear Tooth: Jim Bridwell, Terry Christensen, Glenn Dunmire, Brian Jonas and Brian McCray spent two weeks climbing 5,000 feet on the first ascent of the east face. The climb is roughly rated 5.9, WI4, A3+.

Mount Barrille: Soloist Valeri Babanov climbed 3,000 feet on the Northeast Face on Mt. Barrille establishing a new line. The climb is rated VI, 5.10, A3

Mount Foraker: In March, soloist Masatoshi Kuriaki made a solo ascent of the Sultana ridge of Mt. Foraker.

McKinley: Ed Hommer reached the summit of Mt. McKinley using two-prosthetics below the knees.

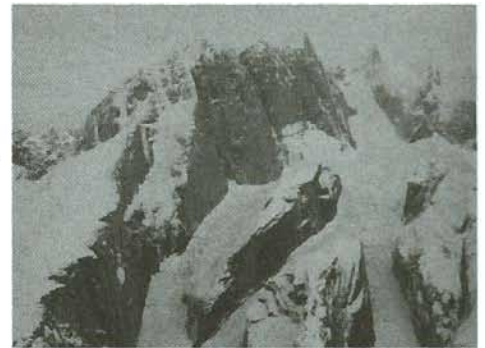
The Year of the Tooth

Good weather during the 1999 season allowed mountaineers to enjoy technical ascents on peaks at lower altitudes in the Alaska Range.

Always a popular objective, the Moose's Tooth in the Ruth Gorge received added attention this season. Early in the season "Ham and Eggs," a 20+

pitch grade 4 gully climb, received its second reported ascent. It was first climbed in 1975. This season numerous parties ascended part of this route. One climbing team descended it after completing the entire West ridge. "Ham and Eggs" offers quick access to the true summit of Moose's Tooth, allowing most mountaineers this season to reach that vantage point. The route is well equipped with piton and nut anchors for the 17 separate rappels on the descent. Most parties complete the route in one long day.

Also on Moose's Tooth, "Shaken-not-Stirred", the 1997 route on the face, received three more ascents. In addition, at least 20 mountaineers successfully completed the classic West Ridge route on Moose's Tooth.



-NPS Photo
Good weather during this past season allowed mountaineers to enjoy technical ascents on peaks at lower altitudes, like the Moose's Tooth, in the Alaska Range.

"Always a popular objective, the Moose's Tooth in the Ruth Gorge received added attention this season."

Once Upon A Time

As this century comes to a close we thought you might like to see some of the notable highlights from the pages of the history of mountaineering in Denali National Park and Preserve. The following books were used to research this timeline: *Mt. McKinley The Pioneer Climbs*, by Terrace Moore; *Denali Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, by Bill Brown and *Mt. McKinley Icy Crown of North America*, by Fred Beckey.

Date/Historical Highlight

- 1794 The first recorded reference to Denali in the journal of British explorer George.
- 1889 Prospector Frank Densmore refers to Denali as "Densmore's Mountain" when traverses within 65 miles of the mountain.
- 1896 Prospector William Dickey names Mt. McKinley for Presidential nominee William McKinley of Ohio.
- 1899 First overland all-American route to the Interior via the Yentna and Kichatna Rivers by 1st Lt. Joseph Herron's Army expedition. This same year, Herron names Foraker for U.S. Senator J.B. Foraker.
- 1902 USGS geologist Alfred Brooks first explores the area on a mapping expedition, traveling through and eventually naming Rainy Pass.
- 1903 Judge James Wickersham, and 4 team members, attempt to climb Mt. McKinley. They start from Fairbanks and eventually reach the 10,000 foot level on the mountain.
- 1903 Dr. Frederick Cook and 5 team members attempt to climb Mt. McKinley. They reach approximately 11,300 feet and complete the expedition by circumnavigating the mountain.
- 1906 Dr. Cook claims to reach the summit of Mt. McKinley, ascending in 8 days and returning in 4 days.
- 1906 *Harper's Monthly Magazine* publishes Dr. Cook's article about reaching the top of Mt. McKinley with photos from the "summit" and a map of the route taken.
- 1910 Sourdough Expedition, climbs the north peak of Mt. McKinley, planting a spruce pole on top. Two expeditions, the Mazama Mountaineering Club of Oregon and the Explorers Club, set out to disprove Dr. Cook's claim of reaching the summit of Mt. McKinley.
- 1912 The Fairbanks Daily Times expedition led by the newspaper's editor, Ralph Cairns, attempts to climb Mt. McKinley, reaching 9,200 feet. The Parker-Browne expedition starts in Seward and travels by dog team to Mt. McKinley, reaching the 20,000-foot level before retreating.
- 1913 First ascent of the south summit by Stuck, Harper, Karstens & Tatum.
- 1932 Joe Crosson, first pilot to land an aircraft on the Muldrow glacier in support of a climbing expedition.
- 1934 First summit of Foraker, led by Charles Houston.
- 1942 Seventeen-man US Army Alaskan Test Expedition, including Bradford Washburn, sets out to winter test army equipment.
- 1947 Barbara Washburn is the first woman to summit Mt. McKinley
- 1951 Brad Washburn pioneers the West Buttress route.
- 1952 First European team, from Spain, to ascend Mt. McKinley.



-NPS Photo
Lenticular clouds near the summit are a sure sign of high winds.

Once Upon A Time

- 1953 Nine climbers attempt Mt. McKinley, 3 reach the summit.
- 1954 The first ascent of the South Buttress from the Ruth glacier.
- 1959 A party of four climbs the West Rib of McKinley.
- 1960 Bradford Washburn publishes a topographic map of McKinley.
- 1960 First party to camp on McKinley's summit, Meiji University team, on May 14 to May 15.
- 1960 An Italian party led by Ricardo Cassin is the first to summit McKinley via the Cassin Ridge.
- 1962 Forty climbers attempt Mt. McKinley, 25 reach the summit.
- 1963 The first ascent of the North Peak via the Harvard Route on the Wickersham Wall.
- 1963 The first traverse of the mountain from the Muldrow Glacier to the Kahiltna Glacier.
- 1967 Art Davidson, Dave Johnston & Ray Genet make the first winter ascent of McKinley.
- 1970 First solo ascent of McKinley by Naomi Uemura.
- 1970 First all-female ascent of Mt. McKinley.
First ski descent of the mountain by two Japanese climbers.
First female Native American to reach the summit, Betty Menard.
- 1973 203 climbers attempt Mt. McKinley, 108 reach the summit.
- 1976 First solo ascent of the Cassin Ridge.
First hang glider descent.
- 1979 First dog team ascent of Mt. McKinley by Susan Butcher, Joe Redington, Brian Okonek, Ray Genet and Robert Stapleton.
Six hundred fifty-nine climbers attempt Mt. McKinley, 283 reach the summit.
- 1982 Dr. Miri Ercolani is the first woman to solo, and the Denali Medical Research Project begins operations at the 14,200' basin.
First winter solo climb by Naomi Uemura, he disappears on the descent.
- 1988 Vernon Tejas is the first climber to ascend Mt. McKinley in the winter and survive.
Donald Henry, age 71, is the oldest man to reach the summit.
- 1992 Oldest husband and wife team, Norm & Kip Smith, ages 64 & 62, summit Mt. McKinley.
- 1993 Joan Phelps completes the first blind ascent of Mt. McKinley.
- 1994 A record one thousand two hundred seventy-seven climbers attempt Mt. McKinley, 702 reach the summit.
- 1995 Youngest female to reach the summit, Merrick Johnston, age 12.
Daryl Miller & Mark Stasik make the first winter circumnavigation of Mt. McKinley.
- 1998 Youngest male to reach the summit, Kim Young Sik, age 12
First ski descent of the Wickersham Wall, Adrian Nature
- 1999 Highest short haul rescue by the Lama helicopter is made at the 19,500 foot level.



-UAF Collection
Members of the 1909-1910 Sourdough Expedition were (left to right): Charley McGonagall, Pete Anderson, Tom Lloyd (seated), and Billy Taylor.

Total Number of Climbers by Route

Route Mt. McKinley	Number of Parties	Number of climbers	Number of parties that summit	Number of climbers that summit
Cassin Ridge	4	8	1	2
East Face	1	1	0	0
Messner Couloir	3	4	3	4
Muldrow Glacier	5	26	1	12
Muldrow Glacier Traverse	1	3	1	3
North West Buttress	1	2	1	2
Orient Express	1	2	1	2
Pioneer Ridge	1	4	0	0
West Buttress	263	996	141	444
West Buttress Traverse	5	34	2	6
West Rib	18	60	7	18
Upper West Rib	13	40	6	15
Wickersham Wall	1	2	0	0
TOTALS	318	1183	164	508

1999 Mt. McKinley

Statistics:

318 Expeditions

1,183 Climbers

43% Summit Success Rate

Most active day on Mt.

McKinley: June 3, 508

Climbers

Most Active Day on the

Summit: June 4, 44 Climbers

Top Ten Days on the Mountain

(numbers on climbers on

McKinley):

June 3: 508

May 31: 492

May 27: 484

May 25: 455

June 4: 434

May 22: 424

June 13: 397

June 8: 395

June 11: 383

June 7: 379

Planning for the Backcountry of Denali National Park and Preserve: A Message from the Superintendent

Denali is an internationally significant national park with outstanding opportunities to view wildlife and mountain scenery and to experience wilderness. We would like to continue providing the range of opportunities that exist today. We need to work with the public to determine the best way to continue providing a variety of visitor experiences. We also need to recognize Denali's unique legislative and administrative guidelines that require preservation of the park's resource values.

This new management plan, which we will develop with ideas and comments from the public, will provide the guidance we need to manage the back-

country of Denali for the next 15-20 years. Existing planning documents like the 1986 General Management Plan (GMP) did not address some of the issues of most concern today, such as rapid increases in commercial and non-commercial recreational uses. There are also new types and levels of use today in certain parts of the park that were not anticipated when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was enacted in 1980 or when the GMP was completed in 1986.

We look forward to working with you in this endeavor.

-Stephen P. Martin, Superintendent

Did You Know?

- The park's backcountry management plan was originally published in 1976 and does not cover the 4 million acres added to the park by the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).
- Previous planning documents (1976 Backcountry Management Plan and 1986 General Management Plan) do

not adequately address the rapidly growing levels and types of uses.

- Laws and policies require the National Park Service to manage recreational and other uses to protect resources and to prevent conflicts among park users.

Backcountry Vision Looks Forward

The backcountry management plan will follow the general direction established in previous planning documents for Denali such as the 1986 General Management Plan, the 1997 Strategic Plan, and recently completed development concept plans. The Strategic Plan and other current planning documents state that:

Denali is a vast area that provides visitors of all abilities with opportunities

for superlative, inspirational experiences in keeping with its legislative mandates. Over the long term, preserving the wilderness and its continually evolving natural processes is essential to ensuring continued opportunities for outstanding resource-based visitor experiences.

"Denali is an internationally significant national park with outstanding opportunities to view wildlife and mountain scenery and to experience wilderness."

*—Stephen P. Martin,
Superintendent*

Backcountry Management Plan: Allocation of Uses

The backcountry management plan should allocate individual, group, and commercial uses, and the levels of those uses in different parts of the park. This will allow for visitor enjoyment avoid conflicts among users. The bottom line remains; to protect park resources. The following uses should be discussed:

- Overnight uses such as hiking, camping, and backpacking
- Day uses such as hiking, picnicking, camping, photography, and sightseeing
- Climbing, mountaineering, and glacier travel
- Skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing
- Dog sledding and skijoring
- Stock use and pets
- Subsistence use (where potential conflicts between subsistence and recreational uses occur)
- Other consumptive uses such as sport hunting and fishing
- Mechanized, but non-motorized, uses such as bicycles

"Nature steps into all situations and one control or another automatically appears. Adjusting is a continuous process. Many people are talking and writing about the human population explosion in our midst, fearing space for ourselves and for nature is disappearing alarmingly. Perhaps we should continue the balance of nature."

—Adolph Murie

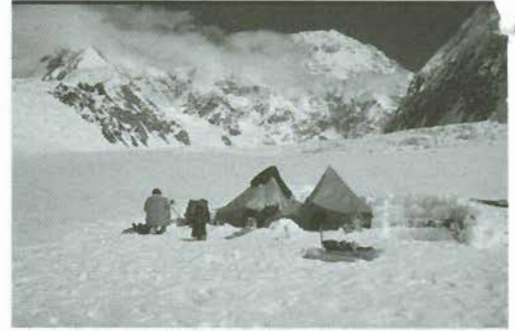
Visitor Experience

The backcountry management plan will:

- Define and describe visitor opportunities for solitude and the need for minimal park administrative presence.
- Discuss information, education, and orientation activities (publications, backcountry desk and exhibits, National Park Service programs, and trip planning information).

To obtain information about this planning effort you can have your name and address added to our park mailing list.

You can call Mike Tranel, Park Planner, at (907)683-9552 or write the park



-NPS Photo
Most climbers start their journey up McKinley with an air taxi flight to base camp at 7,200-feet on the Kahiltna Glacier.

- Non-motorized boating: kayaks, rafts, canoes
- Motorized uses including snow-machines, motor boats, personal watercraft, ORVs, and ATVs, and other motorized activities
- Aircraft landings
- Aircraft overflights (begin cooperative planning to address safety concerns and visitor experience)
- Hang gliding, parapont, and base jumping



NPS Photo
There are area businesses under permits with the National Park Service that offer winter visitors dogsled trips into the park.

at the following address:

Denali National Park
P.O. Box 9
Denali Park, AK 99755

Who's Who on the South District Staff

Staff

- South District Ranger
- Lead Mountaineering Ranger
- Administrative Technician
- Mountaineering Rangers

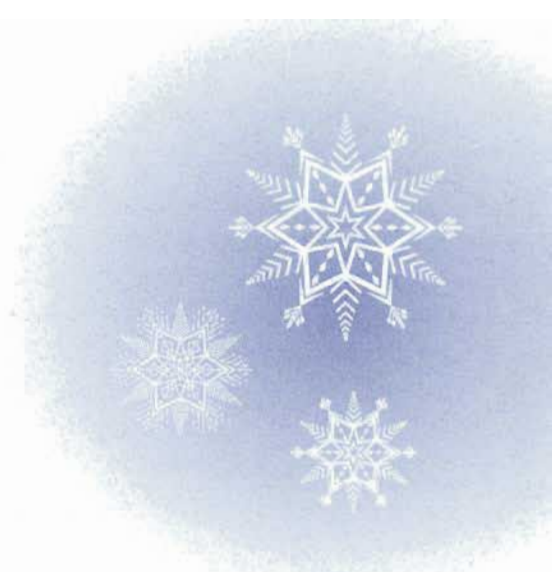
- Helicopter Manager
- Helicopter Pilots

- Helicopter Mechanic
- Lead Visitor Use Assistant
- Fee Collectors

- Interpretive Rangers

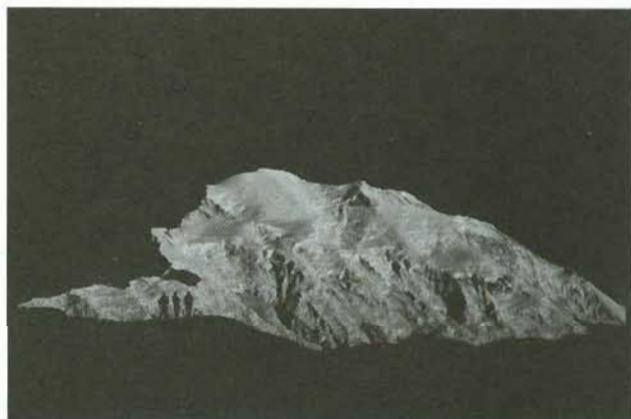
- SCA
- Information Officers

J.D. Swed
Daryl Miller
Miriam Valentine
Kevin Moore
Joe Reichert
Roger Robinson
Billy Shott
George Beilstein
Meg Perdue
Dave Kreutzer
Jim Hood
Carl Cotton
Ray Touzeau
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Website: www.nps.gov/dena
Email: DENA_Talkeetna_Office@nps.gov



-NPS Photo Brad Ebel

*“Courageous steps....in stirrups of
patience.”*
-Ernest Shackleton, Antarctic Explorer
*An early 1900s description of how he led his
expeditions.*



DENALI NATIONAL
PARK AND PRESERVE

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World Class Climber, First Class Man: A Tribute to Alex Lowe

The mountaineering community has lost one of its most respected climbers. World-class mountaineer Alex Lowe was swept away in an avalanche on Shishapangma, October 5, 1999, in Tibet. Alex served as a volunteer for the National Park Service on a mountaineering patrol in 1995. He assisted in two remarkable rescues on Mt. McKinley that season that exemplified his courage and his compassion for fellow climbers.

On June 9, 1995, Alex and two other NPS volunteers were airlifted from the town of Talkeetna (sea level) to 19,500 feet on McKinley in an attempt to rescue two Spanish climbers stricken with high altitude sickness and frostbite. The rescue team reached the Spanish climbers at 19,200 feet but one of them was too weak to walk. Alex carried the severely weakened climber on his back from 19,200 feet to 19,500 feet. They were all evacuated by Army helicopter.

Less than a week later on June 14, Alex and another NPS volunteer climbed from the 14,200-foot ranger camp to 19,400 feet in one push. They made this extraordinary effort in order to assist two Taiwanese climbers who were unable to descend to lower elevations due to frostbite and hypothermia. Alex lowered one of the climbers by himself to the 17,200-foot high camp.

Alex inspired many mountaineers, and was deeply respected not only for his climbing ability but also for his compassion and service to others.



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