DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE
1994 MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY

For the third consecutive year, a new record has been set for the number of mountaineers venturing up Mount McKinley. A multitude of 1,277 climbers attempted the mountain during the 1994 season with 575 (45%) successful mountaineers reaching the summit. This year was also a tragic reminder of the 1992 season relating to severe weather and the margin of safety above 14,000 feet. The month of May persisted with fierce weather conditions causing most of the accidents resulting in three deaths and many rescues on Mount McKinley. The climbing season concluded with a total of seven fatalities involving 20 separate rescues in Denali National Park & Preserve. These accidents consisted of climbing falls, cold injuries, and high altitude illnesses.

Illegal guiding was again an issue in Denali National Park with the NPS taking legal action against numerous illegal guides. Two men attempting to illegally guide on Mount McKinley deserve special mention. One American guide was fined $500.00 and not permitted to enter an Alaska national park, without prior notice to rangers, for three years. A German guide was turned over to the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service. He was arrested, spent the night in jail, and was later deported to Germany. Regardless of nationality, guides not employed by Denali National Park licensed concessions, and bringing clients to Mount McKinley or Mount Foraker, are breaking federal law when they do so. Rangers will continue to aggressively enforce guiding regulations.

NEW REGULATIONS:

Beginning in 1995 climbers on Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker will be charged a mountaineering program fee of $150 per climber. This will offset mountaineering administrative costs such as prepositioning and maintaining the high altitude ranger station at 14,200 feet on the West Buttress route, mountaineering salaries, education materials directed at reducing the number of accidents, transportation, and supplies. Climbers for Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker will be required to register a minimum of 60 days in advance. By requiring advance registration, the Denali mountaineering staff can provide information to prospective mountaineers on hazards, and how to prepare, equip, and schedule their expedition. It also provides time to discuss requirements concerning resource issues such as littering and human waste disposal. Information packets containing new regulations, new registration forms, and fee payment procedures are available by contacting the Talkeetna Ranger Station.

STATISTICS:

In 1994, 1,277 climbers, assembling 303 expeditions, attempted seven different routes on Mount McKinley. This is a 15% increase in the total number of climbers over 1993. Forty-five per cent (570) of the mountaineers were international climbers from 21 countries. The United States had the most climbers at 707, England (74), Switzerland (58), Germany (51), Japan (51), Korea (50), Spain, (27), France (27).

The West Buttress route saw 1,067 climbers, consisting of 83% of all traffic. The West Rib had 68 climbers attempting the upper section from the 14,200-foot basin, with only 36 starting the complete route from the Northeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. The Muldrow Glacier had 50 climbers attempting Mount McKinley from the north side of the park. Twenty-three climbers chose the South Buttress route. This was a significant increase compared to the past four years. There were 302 guided clients and 16 solo climbers. The longest expedition lasted 36 days. The average was around 18 days.

RESCUE:

Twenty major search-and-rescue missions were conducted this year involving 31 climbers. Fourteen of the 31 climbers (45%) needing rescue were foreign. Overall, two per cent of the climbers attempting McKinley required rescue.

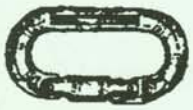
MEDICAL:

The 14,200-foot ranger station, staffed with both Volunteers-in-the-Park (VIPs) and mountaineering rangers, treated approximately 45 climbers who were afflicted with frostbite, AMS, HAPE, and HACE.

Frostbite: 30 climbers were treated for some degree of frostbite. Of these: 21 were superficial; 9 were more severe and involved some tissue loss.

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS): 93 climbers reported symptoms of AMS; 66 were mild or moderate cases; 27 were afflicted by High Altitude Pulmonary or Cerebral Edema.

SAFETY:



Mountaineering rangers, guides, and climbers are increasingly concerned about the impact of over one thousand climbers annually using the West Buttress route. The impact of human waste and trash is significant to health and safety. A great safety concern is the fact that over 90 climbers at one time were ascending on the Headwall fixed lines above 14,000 feet. Overcrowding is also a serious issue at the 16,200-feet camp, which often commits unacclimatized groups to ascend to the higher camp.

NEW ROUTES and NOTABLE ASCENTS:

The Kichatna Spires had four new routes climbed and one first ascent.

o On July 1 Mt. Jeffers (8,000 feet) had a new route climbed via the West Face by Jonathan Allen & Douglas Hall.
o On July 1 Jay Smith and Steve Gerberding climbed a new route on the West Face of Mt. Jeffers.
o On July 8 Flattop Peak (8,400 feet) had a new route on the Southeast Buttress climbed by Michael Pennings and Douglas Hall. o On July 16 Mt. Nevermore had a new route climbed via the Northwest Face by Douglas Hall and Douglas Byerly.
o On July 8 Stalagmite Spire, (first spire South of Flattop) had a first ascent by Jonathan Allen and Doug Hall.

Mount Hunter was busy this year with 22 expeditions attempting the mountain. This resulted in two major accidents with two fatalities and four people seriously injured. There were two impressive and creative first ascents on the technically demanding North Buttress:

o Scott Backes and Marc Twight in one long 72-hour push climbed a new route called "Deprivation" to the right of the "Moon Flower Buttress."
o Veteran climbers Michael Kennedy and Greg Child climbed a new route to the left of the Moon Flower Buttress called the "Wall of Shadow."

On Mount McKinley, the entire South Buttress was climbed for the first time by Tahoe Rowland, Tom Whalen, Marcus Brown, Mark Aspery, and Ron Bauer in May. also Mike Vanderbeek

o In May Tyson Bradly and John Montecucco made the first ski descent of the rarely climbed Wickersham Wall. They made a unique approach by ferrying loads up to each higher camp and then

skiing back down to their camp, in effect, skiing the route bottom to top.

The "Ramparts" located west of "Little Switzerland" had a first ascent of P6840 via the Southwest face:

o Climbers Billy Shott and Steve Gorhman ascended this 1,700-foot granite wall (5.10 A2) which lies west of P6850, first climbed by Fred Becky and Clay Wadman in 1991. This was the second known ascent in the remote Rampart Range on record.

Accidents/Incidents:

Fall, fatalities in Ruth Gorge: On April 24 Walker Parke and Todd McCann fell 1,100 feet while descending the North East Ridge of Mt. Wake within the Ruth Gorge. Parke, McCann, and Michele Morseth took one day to climb 1,800' to their first camp at 5,600' on the route. The following morning the group decided to abandon their climb due to poor snow conditions. At the bottom of their second rappel, Parke lost his balance and fell 20 feet into McCann, who was setting an anchor, but not clipped in. The two climbers fell together and came to a stop at the bottom of the couloir. Morseth was directly across from McCann and witnessed the sequence of events. McCann had multiple traumatic injuries, yet was still alive. Parke was killed instantly from multiple trauma.

Jack Tackle and Bill Belcourt were near the scene and heard McCann's call for help. Tackle and Belcourt administered emergency care to McCann and began evacuating him. He died during the evacuation. Meanwhile Morseth retrieved the ropes and descended difficult terrain alone. Tackle and Bellcourt returned to the scene to assist Morseth back to their camp. The morning of April 25 Tackle and Belcourt evacuated Parke's body.

Mt. Hunter avalanche, fall, assisted evacuation: On May 5 Andy Carson and Charles Crago were injured when they were swept 800 feet in an avalanche while climbing the NW Basin Variation route on the West Ridge of Mt. Hunter. Carson suffered bilateral tib-fib fractures, and Crago suffered chest injuries. They were evacuated off the mountain by other climbers in the area. A fixed wing aircraft flew them to an Anchorage hospital.

AMS/HACE, helicopter evacuation: On May 13 Mautezio Fasano, a member of the Italian "Sesia 94" Expedition, became hypoxic at 16,200 feet. He was lowered by his expedition to the ranger station at 14,200 feet and treated by a doctor. Fasano was diagnosed as suffering with AMS /HACE and flown by the NPS Lama helicopter to the 7,200-foot Kahiltna Base Camp. He was then transported by fixed wing to a Anchorage Hospital.

Frostbite, HACE, fall from Denali Pass, fatality, helicopter evacuation: On May 14 Pauline Brandon and Richard Tyler were on their descent of Mt. McKinley when they both fell from or near the 18,000-foot level (below Denali Pass) on the West Buttress. They came to a stop at the 17,200-foot level where they lay unconscious. Sometime later, on May 15, Tyler regained consciousness. He found he had frozen fingers and was unable to walk. Tyler attempted to make verbal contact with Brandon but was unsuccessful. Climbers nearby spotted the pair and provided assistance. Tyler was evacuated off Denali in the NPS helicopter. He was flown from the 7,200-foot base camp to Alaska Regional Hospital by the Alaska Air National Guard. Brandon was evacuated later on 5/15. Tyler lost all digits of both hands from frostbite. An autopsy was performed on Brandon, listed the cause of death as hypothermia with an underlying diagnosis of Cerebral Edema.

Seizures, helicopter evacuation: On May 16 John Merrigan was climbing the West Buttress when he began experiencing what appeared to be Grand Mal seizures at 7,800-feet on the Kahiltna Glacier. He was evacuated by Alaska Air National Guard helicopter.

Storm, assisted evacuation on West Rib: On May 17 an intense wind storm demolished the camp of a guided party on the West Rib. Mountain Trip, a licensed concession led by guide Rodrigo Mujica, were camped at 15,700 feet when the storm blew in. The wind speed during the storm was estimated at 100+ mph. Mujica radioed the ranger station, requesting a rescue. A rescue team attempted to wand a route from 14,200 feet to Mujica's group, but were forced back due to high wind and heavy snow. The rescue team reached the Mujica party at 15,900 feet on the West Rib when the weather allowed. Mujica was credited with saving his clients, and no one was injured.

Call for rescue, self evacuation: On May 19 an Italian party radioed the 14,200-foot ranger station requesting a rescue. A brief and intense storm blew away their tents and climbing gear. (This one storm resulted in two other incidents as well.) The Italians were above the ice arete at approximately 15,000 feet on the Cassin Ridge. The Park Service attempted to reach the party but were delayed by high winds. The Italians were able to descend the route on their own. The Park Service used the helicopter to perform a cargo letdown, which provided the Italians with climbing and survival gear.

Hypothermia, helicopter evacuation: On May 19 German climbers Paul Laeremans and Ingred Baeyens required rescue while descending the West Buttress route near Windy Corner. They were caught in extremely poor weather and became hypothermic. The NPS helicopter rescued them from 12,500 feet and transported them to base camp.

Storm, hypothermia, fatal fall, body recoveries: On May 22 Korean climbers Sang Myeung Lee and NPS Volunteer Kee Won Kim departed from 14,200 ft. on Mt. McKinley to climb a headwall 500 yards west of the fixed lines on the standard West Buttress

route. They completed the technically moderate 2,000-ft. route in 11 hours but finished in severe weather conditions. Concern for their safety prompted NPS to organize a search team from the 14,200-ft. ranger station camp. The rescue discovered Lee's body clipped to the fixed lines at 15,900-feet. Three hours of searching in whiteout conditions proved futile, and the search for Kim was suspended. The team descended to 14,200 ft. with Lee's body. The search continued with a helicopter and ground parties for 3 more days. On May 25 a guide radioed from 16,200 feet reporting that Kim's body had been found at 16,100 feet hanging in a rock band. Kim's body was recovered by the rescue team. Autopsies revealed both climbers died of exposure.

HACE, helicopter evacuation: On May 24 Japanese climber Shji Yoshida was stricken by HACE that left him in a unconscious state at the 11,200-foot camp on the West Buttress. Yoshida was rescued by the NPS helicopter. Yoshida was stricken quickly and very severely for being at such a relatively low altitude. Hypoxia from poor ventilation in his tent may have been a contributing factor.

Broken Hip, helicopter evacuation: On May 29 climber Francois Verhoeven broke his hip in a short fall while climbing near 16,500 feet on the West Buttress. Verhoeven was able to descend to the 14,200-foot ranger station where he was evacuated by the NPS helicopter.

Crevasse fall, helicopter evacuation: On May 30 climber Pat Liske was injured when he fell into a crevasse at approximately 13,600 feet while descending the West Buttress. Liske received blunt trauma to the chest. He was rescued by volunteer climbers and an NPS patrol. On May 31 Liske was evacuated from the 14,200-foot ranger station by the NPS helicopter.

Acute AMS, assisted self-evacuation: On the evening of June 1, Bennett Austin developed a moderate case of AMS while climbing between 19,000 feet and 19,500 feet on the West Rib route of Mount McKinley. His party called the 14,200-foot ranger station and were advised to administer Decadron and descend immediately. Austin's team climbed up to the Football Field, attempted to make hot drinks and eat, but then decided that they needed to keep moving. The group started descending the West Buttress route. Three NPS volunteers met the group at approximately 17,700 feet and assisted them to the 17,000-foot camp where Austin was evaluated. After six hours of rest and rehydration, the party descended to 14,200 feet, unassisted, where Austin made a full recovery.

Illness, helicopter evacuation: The US Army Denali Expedition was on their 9th day climbing Mt. McKinley (June 10) when member Jerry Jackson reported stomach pains to the 14,200-foot ranger station. He was diagnosed as suffering from an acute abdomen. Jackson was evacuated on June 11 by the NPS helicopter.

Fall, fatalities on Mt. Hunter: On June 10 mountaineers Patti Saurman and Chris Walburgh died, and David Saurman and Don Sharaf were injured, in a 1,700-foot fall while climbing the Southwest Ridge of Mount Hunter. Recent avalanche conditions and poor slope stability contributed to this accident. D. Saurman and Sharaf were rescued by park rangers and the NPS helicopter and flown to Anchorage where they were hospitalized. P. Saurman's and Walburgh's bodies were recovered on June 11th.

HAPE, helicopter evacuation: On the evening of June 11, Japanese mountaineer Kazuo Fukase developed a severe case of HAPE at the 17,200-foot camp on the West Buttress. Kazuo's party received instructions for medical treatment via CB radio from the NPS 14,200-foot ranger station. Using oxygen from the 17,200-foot NPS rescue cache and injectable Decadron administered by a climber/doctor on the scene, Mr. Fukase's condition stabilized by early morning when the non-ambulatory patient was evacuated from the 17,200-foot camp by the NPS helicopter. The oxygen and decadron may have saved his life.

Hypothermia, frostbite, assisted descent, helicopter evacuation: Victor Pomerantsev departed June 12 for a solo climb of the West Buttress. He arrived at 16,200 feet on June 16. A strong storm blew in over the evening which buried Pomerantsev. Two climbers, John Grieve and Bill Ross, discovered Pomerantsev outside of his tent suffering from severe hypothermia and frostbite on all ten fingers. They provided assistance for six days of stormy weather until they could bring him down on the 22nd to the 14,200-foot ranger station. During this time, the NPS attempted to reach their camp by ground and helicopter but were unable. During the evening of June 23, Pomerantsev was flown off from 14,200 feet by the NPS helicopter. Pomerantsev sustained significant tissue loss.

Chest Pain, helicopter evacuation: On June 23 climber Jim Pitre developed chest pains after climbing to the 17,200-foot camp on the West Buttress. Undiagnosed chest pain prompted his evacuation from 17,200 feet by the NPS helicopter. Pitre was flown to Anchorage where he was diagnosed with HAPE.

Abdominal illness, helicopter evacuation: On June 25 Richard Turnbull experienced acute abdominal pains at the 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress. He was assisted by team members to the ranger station and diagnosed as suffering from unknown severe abdominal pains. Turnbull was flown off by an Army Chinook helicopter.

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MOUNTAIN/ROUTE	EXPEDITION	CLIMBERS	SUMMIT
West Buttress	247	1067	493
West Rib	31	106	40
Cassin Ridge	6	14	2
Muldrow Glacier	6	33	18
Muldrow Gl. Traverse	4	17	7
W. Buttress Traverse	4	23	0
South Buttress	4	17	6
N.W. Buttress	0	0	0
American Direct	2	9	4
Ridge of No Return	1	3	3
East Buttress	1	8	0
TOTAL McKINLEY	303	1277	575
Mt. Foraker	14	36	0
* Mt. Hunter	14	37	14
* Mt. Huntington	1	2	0
* Mooses Tooth	5	20	3
* Other Mtns.	8	21	12

* These records represent the number of climbers who registered to climb in these areas. Since registration is required only on Mount Foraker and Mount McKinley, it is likely that other ascents occurred that are not included in these statistics.

Administrative notes for 1994:

o The South District staff consisted of:

South District Ranger:	J.D. Swed
Mountaineering Rangers:	Daryl R. Miller Kevin Moore Jim Phillips Roger Robinson
Administrative clerk:	Jama Daves
Student Conservation Aid:	Joe Reichert
Helicopter Manager:	Dave Kreutzer
Helicopter Pilots:	Bill Ramsey Doug Drury Ray Howell
Helicopter Mechanic:	Stan Bridges

o Volunteers-in-the-Park (VIPs) on Denali patrols:

James Litch	Lauria Ziemer
Craig Lubben	Mark Everett
Dexter Hale	John Mullen
Pamela Foyster	James Bianardi
Sherryl Small	James Cancroft
Mike Loso	Dave Oot
Rudiger Stuis	Kee-Won Kim*
Colin Grissom	John Tierney
Marlowe Eldridge	

These Volunteers are crucial to the operation of the patrols on the mountains and in search-and-rescue missions. This year we experienced the tragic death of Kee-Won Kim, the Korean Volunteer who joined our patrol on Mckinley. Kim had planned to write and speak of his work on McKinley to his countrymen in hopes of lowering the incidence of injury and death of Korean climbers. Kim made the ultimate sacrifice to assist his fellow man. We dedicate this Mountaineering Summary in his memory.

o To request mountaineering information and forms for registration, please contact the Talkeetna Ranger Station, P.O. Box 588, Talkeetna, Alaska 99676. Telephone: 907-733-2231
FAX: 907-733-1465

J.D. Swed
South District Ranger