

Left to die at the top of the world

The British climber David Sharp suffered a slow, painful death on Everest in May. As he lay dying, 40 climbers passed him by. Did their lust for the summit override their humanity? Peter and Leni Gillman investigate

A few days before Christmas last year, David Sharp sent an e-mail to a climbing friend in Katmandu. "I'm (stupidly) contemplating a final (final) attempt on Everest," Sharp wrote.

The friend, the New Zealander Jamie McGuinness, had been on Everest with Sharp when he failed in an attempt in 2003. Sharp had failed again in 2004, vowing not to return. Yet McGuinness was not surprised that Sharp was intent on a third try: "David knew he could do it, but he still had to prove it." Another climbing friend, Richard Dougan, says that where Everest was concerned, "David had stars in his eyes."

For Sharp to consider a third attempt says much about both the lure of the world's highest peak and a streak of stubbornness in Sharp himself, particularly as frostbite had cost him several toes in 2003. In May, Sharp, 34, paid a far higher price. He almost certainly reached the summit. But during his descent he died of cold, exhaustion and lack of oxygen in the scant shelter of a rock alcove on the crest of the mountain's northeast ridge.

There have been numerous deaths on Everest – almost 200 at the last count – but this was a spectacularly public one. Some 40 climbers, bidding to reach the summit via the north side of Everest that day, all passed Sharp during their ascent and descent, stepping within a few feet of his prostrate but still sentient body. It was a desolate place to die, ravaged by wind and cold, overlooking the slopes of Everest's monumental northwest flank. The manner of his death was equally disturbing. Climbers describe how his hands and arms were deformed by frostbite; how, when he was hauled to his feet, he was unable to stand; and how he was finally left to die alone.

Sharp's death led to anguished debate in the climbing world and the international press. Mountaineers of the stature of Sir Edmund Hillary have weighed in, complaining of the "horrifying" attitudes it revealed. The 40 or so climbers involved stand accused of putting their own summit ambitions ahead of saving Sharp's life. Such is the draw of Everest that the climbers involved are drawn from nations across the world, including Australia, New Zealand, Lebanon, Turkey and the US. Interviews with many of them, however, present a more complex picture than the accusations allow.

From one interested party, meanwhile, there has been only pained silence. That is David's family – his parents, both in their sixties, and his younger brother, Paul – who have recoiled from the media furore as they contend with their grief. From the accounts of friends, David emerges as a personable young man, close to his parents. He relished new challenges and, crucially, he was a loner who backed his own judgments.

There are contradictions too: a trained scientist renowned for his analytical thinking who, despite himself, was lured back time and again to Everest. So is this a parable of climbers passing by on the other side? What do the climbers have to say for themselves? To those questions may be added a third: was Sharp so blinded by the stars in his eyes that he took a risk too far?

David Sharp was born in Harpenden, where his father worked as an analyst at a chemical company; his mother had been a laboratory assistant. His father's work took him to the northeast of England, where Sharp attended Guisborough's Lawrence Jackson school and Prior Pursglove sixth-form college. His physics tutor, Steve Honeysett, remembers him as one of the brightest half-dozen students he taught: "He was an individualist even at that age. He was a quick, clear thinker with a penetrating mind." At Nottingham University in 1993, Sharp got a first in mechanical engineering. He also took up climbing. As a lean six-footer, his physique gave him the ideal combination of light weight and a long reach. He honed his climbing skills in the Lake District and roamed the fells near his home.

Sharp's fellow climbers liked to joke that he was a rocket scientist. It was close to the truth: he found a job in the defence industry, specialising in target systems. He also extended his climbing activities. In 2001 he joined a small commercial expedition to Gasherbrum II, at 8,035 metres the 13th highest Himalayan peak. Henry Todd, who led the expedition, remembers a "shy, retiring" man who was "socially not particularly adept – very much a loner". The expedition was hit by bad weather and turned back at around 7,700 metres. Todd was left uneasy about Sharp's climbing ability. Although determined, Todd says, "He wasn't a tremendously safe climber and he wasn't good at decisions."

Sharp returned to the Himalayas in 2002, this time to attempt Cho Oyu, an 8,201-metre peak near Everest. He joined a commercial group, Project Himalaya, led by Jamie McGuinness, a New Zealand climber and guide, who remembers him as "very skinny and lean – but generally strong at altitude". A team from Northern Ireland was also attempting the peak. In contrast to Todd, they found Sharp "likable, friendly and intelligent", says Richard Dougan. Dougan, who spoke at Sharp's memorial ceremony in Guisborough in July, adds: "He loved a challenge. He was climbing mountains to find his true direction and goal." Dougan agrees that Sharp came across as a loner. Although he was companionable, with a liking for sharing travellers' tales, most people found him "the type of person who would always take one step back – you couldn't get to know him".

Sharp reached the summit of Cho Oyu with McGuinness. But for Dougan and the Irish team there was a bitter outcome: one of their climbers died after falling into a crevasse. Dougan had been planning to attempt Everest with the colleague who died, and invited Sharp to take his place. Sharp readily accepted.

And so Sharp arrived at Everest in April 2003. The team, which was attempting the summit from the north, spent much of its time waiting for the arrival of the "weather window" in late May that gives climbers their best chance of success. Sharp and Dougan were the fittest pair and were accorded the summit bid. There was an unsettling prelude: soon after reaching the crest of the northeast ridge, they passed a location that has become one of Everest's most notorious memorials. In 1996 an

Indian man struggling to descend through a storm died in a rock alcove beside the climbers' trail. His body, identified by his green boots, has remained there ever since. "You could see every detail," Dougan recalls (the body is one of dozens littering Everest since it is not feasible to bring them down).

Dougan remembers the exhilaration of pushing out along the shattered rock of the northeast ridge. Sharp "looked strong and alert – he seemed at ease". But it was bitterly cold and Sharp had incipient frostbite on his cheeks and nose. He was also having trouble with his oxygen apparatus. Midway between the two key landmarks of the First Step and the Second Step, Sharp decided to turn back. Selflessly, he urged Dougan to press on alone, but he too gave up shortly afterwards. When Sharp removed his boots that night, he was dismayed to see signs of frostbite. He eventually lost one big toe and half a smaller toe. "He never moaned about it – he just got on with it," Dougan says.

During waiting spells on the expedition, Sharp had talked about the direction of his life, telling Dougan he intended to become a teacher. Dougan, who works at an adventure centre in Northern Ireland, had told Sharp about "the rewards of working with children. Possibly that had rubbed off on him".

Sharp's ardour to climb Everest remained undiminished. He returned the following year, joining a French-Austrian group making its attempt from the north. Its leader, Hugues d'Aubarede, found Sharp "an original, independent person". Even so, he was astonished when Sharp announced two decisions. He intended to make his attempt alone, and to do so without using oxygen equipment. Climbing solo vastly magnifies the risks, since the climber has no partner to share decisions or to offer help in case of trouble. Climbing without oxygen equipment worsens the odds, since barely 1 in 10 of those reaching Everest's summit manage without it. Those dispensing with oxygen equipment mostly do so on ethical grounds, regarding it as a form of cheating – a view that Sharp shared. "I'm one of those nutters who don't really approve of the use of oxygen equipment," he e-mailed an Australian climbing friend, Tony Bragg. "My philosophy is that if you want more oxygen, climb a lower mountain."

D'Aubarede recalls that Sharp "defended his ideas very firmly". But Sharp rejected his advice that he should acclimatise by descending periodically to base camp, rather than spend all his time at high altitude. Sharp, he says, was an "enigma" who "gave the impression of being remote from the realities of everyday life and of living in another world".

In the event, Sharp set off on his attempt with d'Aubarede and three companions, but quickly fell behind. While d'Aubarede reached the summit, Sharp turned back below the First Step. Sharp put a positive gloss on his attempt in his e-mail to Bragg: "It was a really strong performance." He added: "Don't think I'll be back to the big E, as, with O₂ and good weather, I have no doubt that I can reach the top, hence the challenge isn't really there." It was not what he told d'Aubarede. "He told us several times he would return as he wanted to reach the summit."

The following year, Sharp resigned his defence job and took a teacher-training course at Nottingham. He then went globetrotting in South America and Asia. But Everest

still nagged at him, and shortly before Christmas he dispatched his fateful e-mail to McGuinness announcing his “final (final)” attempt.

Sharp added a crucial detail: he had decided to sign up with a Katmandu company named Asian Trekking. Asian Trekking is towards the low end of the range of companies that cater for Everest climbers, charging around \$7,000 to \$8,000 for a basic service, including oxygen equipment, food, a space in base camp, and the Chinese government permit. At the top of the scale are companies who charge their clients \$40,000 or more for high-grade food, professional guides, ropes fixed along the route to increase safety, and a Sherpa to accompany them to the summit and back. McGuinness runs Project Himalaya, which offers a midpoint service for around \$22,000. When he heard from Sharp, McGuinness made him an attractive offer: for \$1,000 more than he was paying Asian Trekking, Sharp could join the expedition McGuinness was organising. But Sharp, the loner, turned him down.

“He recognised it was a very generous deal,” says McGuinness. “But he would be tied into working with the group and could not do things independently. He felt he was strong enough and sensible enough to stay out of trouble.”

When Sharp arrived at Everest base camp, the scene could hardly have been more different from the glorious solitude the Everest pioneers had known. Ascents of Everest, from both the north and south sides, now run into hundreds every year. Scores of tents from several dozen expeditions were dotted across the grey moraine. One large group consisted of climbers, guides and Sherpas from Himalayan Experience, a company known as Himex, which is run by Russell Brice, a tall, gruff New Zealander in his early fifties. Brice, who was to play a key role in the dramas surrounding Sharp’s death, arouses strong emotions in the climbing world. A minority view him as a figure with an unhealthy amount of power, lording it over base camp. Far more agree with Steve Bell, a director of the rival company Jagged Globe, who says that Brice’s “professionalism and integrity make him the most respected person in the profession”.

Brice’s record is formidable: 166 of his clients have reached the summit of Everest, and every one, bar an Italian who died snowboarding down the north face, made it back safely. He has been prominent in instilling order among the climbers congregating at base camp, above all by using his Sherpa team to fix safety ropes the entire length of the route. Brice requests a levy of \$100 per climber from other expeditions for the use of his ropes, and most pay. Those who don’t, says Brice, are “cheapskates”.

As the climbers waited for good weather, Sharp paid visits to McGuinness in his mess tent. “He was relaxed,” McGuinness recalls. Sharp discussed his options for the climb, including the vexed question of whether he would use oxygen equipment. Despite his previous ethical objections, he had purchased two cylinders, but was still undecided whether to use them. Sharp also insisted that, with his teaching career looming, this would be his last attempt.

The weather window that Sharp and the other climbers were hoping for came in mid-May. All eyes were on Brice’s group. Among his guides was Mark Woodward, a fellow New Zealander who had already summited on Everest twice. “The forecast

was looking decent,” says Woodward. “We decided to go for an early summit.” Two Himex teams, totalling three dozen clients, guides and Sherpas, began moving up the line of camps, while Brice stationed himself on the North Col at 8,000 metres, from where he could monitor his teams’ progress.

By May 13 the first climbers were poised in the highest camp, at 8,400 metres. Sharp joined them, pitching his tiny tent among the shattered rocks and snow terraces below the northeast ridge. Above lay a mile-long ascent to the 8,850-metre summit. The most formidable obstacle on the ridge is the Second Step, a daunting rock buttress climbed with the aid of a ladder first placed by Chinese climbers in the 1960s. The exposure can be nerve-shattering, as climbers try to ignore the yawning drop to the Rongbuk glacier two miles below. At a reasonable estimate, Sharp could reckon on taking eight hours to get to the summit, and four to return. He had finally decided to carry his two oxygen cylinders, which would last between 8 and 12 hours.

Sharp left his top camp around 11.30pm on the night of May 13. It is one of the paradoxes of the story, and a precursor of the coming disaster, that out of more than 30 climbers on the north side that day, almost none saw or recognised him during his ascent. The only firm sightings are by Bill Crouse, a US guide working for Himex. (Crouse did not know Sharp, but identified him later from descriptions.) Crouse first saw Sharp at the Exit Cracks, the point where climbers reach the crest of the northeast ridge, around 2am. He encountered Sharp for a second time at 11.30am below a buttress known as the Third Step. “I asked him to look out while we descended, as he was a bit in the way.” The timings are crucial. While Crouse and several Himex clients were descending from the summit, Sharp was still on his way up. Later, Crouse saw Sharp moving slowly up the final snow slope, making it likely that he reached the summit around 2.30pm on May 14.

The moment when Sharp fulfilled his dream was also one of extreme peril. By any normal calculation, he was desperately late – Brice had insisted that some of his clients still aiming for the summit at 8am should turn back. After more than 12 hours on the mountain, Sharp’s supplementary oxygen would have been all but used up. His energy would have been sapped by the savage cold and he would also have suffered from the insidious effects of dehydration. Sharp now faced the mile-long return along the northeast ridge and an awkward descent through the Exit Cracks to reach his tent. Nightfall, which occurs at 6pm, overtook him long before he could do so. Utterly drained, he subsided at the alcove where the Indian climber with green boots had lain for the previous 10 years. It was at that location, known as Green Boots Cave, that the subsequent dramas were to unfold.

A few hours after Sharp reached the cave, the climbers making the next day’s summit attempts, some 40 in all, set off. Around midnight, two Turkish climbers passed the cave. One recalls that Sharp was “sitting in front of the cave next to the dead Indian climber”, seemingly busy with his rucksack. A Sherpa with the Turks told Sharp to stand up and get moving, but Sharp apparently “waved his hand to show that he was okay”. But when later groups of Turkish climbers passed the cave, Sharp was motionless. One recalls him “lying next to the Indian body” and thought he was “a dead body”. The Turkish leader, Serhan Pocan, was also convinced that Sharp was dead. Two Sherpas agreed, saying they would identify the body after they descended.

“We had absolutely no doubt,” says Serhan. “He was a dead body for us while we were climbing up.”

Among the Himex climbers, there are similarly diverse recollections. Some, like Max Chaya, a climber from Beirut, say they did not see Sharp at all. “It was dark, it was just me and my Sherpa – he wasn’t wearing a headlamp and my headlamp was quite slight.” Others, like the Australian Bob Killip, believed that Sharp was the dead Indian. “I saw a body on his back with a rope running across his hand. So I flicked it off him and walked around. I thought I was seeing the dead Indian climber. It was pretty traumatic walking past bodies. I just bowed my head and paid my respects and kept going.”

The most troubling account comes from the New Zealand guide Mark Woodward, who estimates that he, along with three climbers and several Sherpas, passed Sharp around 1am. He was “sitting almost on top of Green Boots,” Woodward says, “curled up in a foetal position. His nose was black with frostbite and he had very thin gloves on and he had no oxygen”. Yet he was still alive. As Woodward tells it, the climber and cameraman Mark Whetu, who was filming the ascent, shouted at Sharp. “Whetu kind of yelled at him, ‘Get going, get moving,’ that sort of thing.” Woodward went so far as to shine a head torch into Sharp’s eyes – “There wasn’t even a flinch of his eyelids.” And so the group carried on. “I was just like, ‘Oh, this poor guy, he’s stuffed,’ ” Woodward says. “We pretty much considered that he was, if not dead, then not far off it. We all looked at him and realised he was pretty close to death and continued on.”

Six hours passed, during which the temperature sank to around -30C. From accounts of his condition, it is likely Sharp was suffering from both hypothermia and hypoxia, or lack of oxygen – and possibly also the high-altitude ailment known as oedema. These could also explain the fluctuations in his condition seen by the climbers who passed him, which were about to become even more marked. It is possible that as his hypothermia deepened, he made a partial recovery from hypoxia, regaining consciousness while his limbs continued to freeze, as the next testimonies suggest.

Around 7am, an hour after daybreak, a group of Turkish climbers who had turned back from the summit reached the alcove during their descent. Among them was Serhan Pocan, who had previously been convinced that Sharp was dead. Pocan was horrified to see Sharp’s arm move. “I was really afraid,” says Pocan, who tried to help Sharp. “We made him upright and tried to give him some hot drink but he couldn’t drink it. His nose was completely frozen deep inside. His hand was frozen as a rock. He was able to open his eyes but couldn’t say anything.” He checked Sharp’s oxygen cylinders and found they were empty.

Pocan was preoccupied with his wife, who had suspected altitude sickness and was being assisted by two Sherpas. Pocan made two radio calls: one to his fellow climbers descending from the summit, asking them to look out for Sharp; the other to an expedition that had summited the day before. It then dispatched four Sherpas, who, Pocan hoped, could help his wife and perhaps Sharp as well. But the Sherpas were exhausted from their previous efforts and were unable to get higher than the top camp.

The Lebanese climber Max Chaya was the next to come upon Sharp. After a fast ascent, he had summited at 6am and reached the alcove at 9.25am. Sharp, he says, “was sitting down but his knees were bent upwards. His arms were like he was holding a football. He was wearing light blue gloves and his fingers were bent not the way they should be – they were frozen. I could see his teeth – his mouth was open. He was very unconscious”. Chaya tried to speak to him. “I don’t think he was hearing what I was saying.”

In a call timed at 9.30am, Chaya radioed to Brice at the North Col to ask what he should do. Brice asked him to describe Sharp’s condition. “I established that David was still alive but unconscious and that his arms were frozen to the elbow and his legs were frozen to the knees, and he had frostbite to the nose,” Brice stated in June. Tellingly, Sharp had removed his outer gloves and opened his jacket – irrational behaviour that comes in the late stage of hypothermia.

Brice had a raft of other preoccupations. He had just spent an hour persuading two slow-moving clients, both affected by frostbite, to turn back. They were being assisted by Sherpas, as was an amputee climber, Mark Inglis, who was reporting frostbite in his stumps. “I’ve got two clients in a very bad way coming down the mountain,” says Brice. “I have to look after those people and I don’t have the manpower or the oxygen or anything to be able to help another man at that time of the day.” Brice told Chaya to continue his descent. Chaya was distraught – “I remember that I cried a lot” – but complied.

Some 90 minutes later, the next group of climbers reached Sharp. Among them was the Australian Bob Killip, who had summited around 7am. “The only movement I could see was a slight movement in David’s arm,” Killip says. He had found the cold debilitating and suspected he was developing frostbite. He had also overheard the radio conversation between Brice and Chaya. “So when I got to David, I thought he was beyond help. I didn’t call Russ to go through the whole thing again. I felt I was not in a position to be rescuing this guy.”

Around 11.45am a Sherpa, Phurba, reached Sharp. He, another Sherpa and a Turkish climber, tried to administer oxygen. Phurba was wearing a helmet camera, which was later found to have recorded Sharp murmuring: “My name is David Sharp.” But when Sharp was hauled to his feet in the hope that he could be assisted down the mountain, he kept collapsing. The Sherpas moved Sharp a few feet into the sun and continued their descent. Mark Woodward arrived about 30 minutes later to find Sharp lying across the line of descent: “It wasn’t very nice seeing David knowing that he was still alive, just, and that he was still ultimately stuffed.” Woodward, who was helping the injured Himex climbers, carried on down.

The following day, May 16, climbers from a Korean team passed the spot on their way to the summit. A Sherpa radioed to a friend in the Himex team. “He confirmed that [the man] was still in the same place that Phurba had left him, and that he was no longer alive,” Brice reported.

Down at base camp, there was a disconcerting hiatus. After attending to his team’s casualties, Brice set out to discover the identity of the dead climber. By now the camp was awash with rumours that it was a climber from eastern Europe who had died. At

the Asian Trekking encampment, Brice described the rucksack Sharp had been wearing. An American climber confirmed it was Sharp's. Nobody in the Asian Trekking group was willing to inform Sharp's parents in Guisborough, so it fell to Brice to make the call. After introducing himself, he told them: "I've got some terrible news."

The furore that followed Sharp's death first focused on Brice. Could he have mounted a rescue when he first learnt about Sharp? The case that appeared to offer a parallel was that of Lincoln Hall, a New Zealander – also with Asian Trekking – who was given up for dead at the Second Step late on May 26. The next day, climbers found him delirious though alive, and after a massive rescue operation requiring five Sherpas and 50 oxygen cylinders, he was brought down safely. But there were two crucial differences: the overnight temperature was at least 20 degrees warmer, and Hall could walk. Brice stands by his decision that he was in no position to help Sharp, who – from Max Chaya's description – was "almost dead". Even so, it was a "hard decision" that required "balls" to make.

But what of the juncture eight or nine hours earlier, when climbers passed Sharp on their way to the summit? Could he have been helped then? Disturbingly, Brice says that had he known about Sharp then, he could have attempted a rescue. The terrain was difficult, particularly the Exit Cracks (an Indian climber died in a fall while descending the cracks on May 14). Even so, Brice felt that the chances were good: "We had fresh Sherpa guides and members, and ample oxygen. Since it was early in the season, the climbers could have returned for another summit attempt." But, he adds, since he had not known about Sharp, the question did not arise.

Brice's remarks shift responsibility back to the climbers who passed Sharp that night. It is, agrees Jamie McGuinness, "such a contentious issue". McGuinness says he can envisage climbers "so focused on getting to the summit" that they preferred not to consider that a stricken climber could be helped. But he considers the inexperienced Turkish climbers less culpable in this respect, by implication, than the Himex guide Mark Woodward, or the climber and cameraman Mark Whetu.

The Turks, in fact, said either they did not realise that Sharp was in trouble, or they thought he was dead. As for Woodward, he is the one climber to acknowledge that he knew Sharp was in trouble, but concluded that he was beyond help. "Hindsight's a wonderful thing," he says. "It seems a pretty heartless thing to say [but] it just appeared such a hopeless situation. With hindsight, if I was placed in that situation again, my response would be mostly similar. Maybe if Sharp was more vocal or more lucid, people might have done more to help him. Because he couldn't speak for himself, nobody knew who he was with and trying to get that information from anybody else around or lower down the mountain would have been quite time-consuming. There's few people who understand just how extreme life is when you're in the death zone and it really is survival – you're there on borrowed time. It's like seeing somebody mortally wounded on a battlefield and you're a long way from the medic." That, he adds, is "the cold, hard reality of that environment".

Sharp's death opened up fault lines in the mountaineering community. Despite Brice's protestations, he was criticised by mountaineering websites that talked of the conflict between "independent" climbers and the commercial expeditions. Others accused

Brice of playing the role of a Lord of the Flies, deciding who lived or died. Brice insists that he could not have helped Sharp, and points out that he has mounted more than a dozen successful rescues in the past. He has also brought down more than a dozen bodies – “all very thankless work”. He recalls that the Asian Trekking climbers had not paid to use his ropes, and that another of its climbers died shortly after Sharp – a Brazilian who returned from the summit and died in the supposed safety of the top camp. He intends to lobby the Chinese authorities to insist on minimal safety standards for all climbers attempting Everest from the north. He adds that if Sharp had been carrying a radio to call for help, “we might have been able to get him down”. Debate in the climbing world has also focused on Sharp.

There are two ideological strands in mountaineering that lie together uneasily. The first is to stress personal responsibility for one’s own fate. The other is a group ethic, whereby loyalty and mutual assistance are viewed as overriding values. Those who decide to climb alone are effectively waiving their rights under the second heading as part of the rewards available under the first. Sharp displayed ambivalence in his attitude towards the risk he was undertaking. He tried to reassure his mother by telling her, she has related, that “you are never on your own – there are climbers everywhere”. It was the counterpoint of his insistence to McGuinness that he wanted to be free of obligations to other climbers. That may even have motivated his final, fateful gesture to the first Turkish climbers that he did not need their help – an act that stemmed from the selflessness he had previously shown.

The same duality was evident in Sharp’s decisions during his summit bid. When he reached the Third Step, Sharp of all people should have been able to do the maths. He was already far beyond his previous high point and into unknown territory. He had been climbing for around 12 hours and would not reach the summit until mid-afternoon, leaving him fatally vulnerable during his descent to the cold, lack of oxygen, dehydration and exhaustion. But then mountaineering is about things other than mathematics. Sharp had failed on Everest twice in two years, the second time swearing not to return.

The Everest pioneer George Mallory – who was also a teacher – also failed twice in two years, also swore not to return, also did return, and also promised that this would be his last attempt. In 1924 he went for the summit with his partner Sandy Irvine, even though he estimated the odds at 50:1 against. He was not seen again until his body was found in 1999 – not far from where Sharp was to die. Sharp was fully aware of the legends of Everest, which are part of the allure that drove him on, coupled with his love of challenges, his desire to prove himself, and his predilection for acting alone.

Brice met Sharp’s parents in London in June, returning a handful of their son’s possessions. At the parents’ request, Brice had donated the rest to local Tibetans. They also thanked him, Brice reports, “for not putting other people in danger to try to rescue [their] son”.

Back on Everest, Sharp’s body now lies beside the climbing route, next to the Indian in green boots. Jamie McGuinness, who passed the site a few days after Sharp died, recognised him from his clothing and rucksack. “I pulled away his backpack, which was covering his face, expecting to see him,” McGuinness says. “Instead there was

just snow there. I brushed away a little bit of snow but his head was bent right back. I didn't want to dig in the snow, so I just left it at that."