

Survival Stories

Surviving in the Wilderness

Think about these following questions before you read the text:

- 1 Are you interested in going on an extreme outdoor adventure?
- 2 What, in your opinion, is the most important factor to survive in an extremely cold environment: your mental strength or your body strength?
- 3 If you did not have any food left, would you eat dog meat?

What does it mean to survive in the wilderness? When you are on your own away from civilization, anything can happen. Here are two stories of how people managed to survive disasters while they were exploring nature.

Story # 1: Reid versus the avalanche

In June 1992, Gustavo Reid, a twenty-five-year-old National Outdoor Leadership School instructor, was on vacation in the Alaska Mountain Range with his friends Mat Vail and Tommy Walter. The three started their long **hike** up the mountain. Their goal was to climb 17 400-foot Mount Foraker in three days, but as they were about to reach the top, a storm moved in, and they got into serious trouble.

The avalanche **knocked** Reid and his partners 700 feet down the face. When Reid woke up five hours later, he was hanging from his **rope**, suffering from two fractured vertebrae in his neck, a broken shoulder, and a fractured ankle. He reached over to Walter, who was hanging on a rope close to him, but his friend's face was fully masked in ice. Then, he realized Walter was dead. Reid started looking for his other friend and found him a few hours later. Vail was also dead.

During the next five days, Reid had to shut out all thoughts of his dead friends in order to stay positive and to survive. He carefully started coming down the mountain, alone. It was very difficult.

"I just had to keep my eyes open and ignore the pain," remembers Reid.

After reaching base camp, he still had to cross a dangerous five-mile glacier, with no way to rescue himself if he fell into a crevasse. Surprisingly, he made it. Today, the thirty-seven-year-old Reid constantly emphasizes safety in his courses.

"I don't talk about my personal story a lot, only if students ask me," he says. "But if you do get in trouble, anything that gets in the way of success has to be eliminated – emotion, fear, pain. It's the mental things that will be an obstacle to your survival."

Story # 2: The Ice Zone

"Charles Loubier was a gentle person who turned into someone incredibly hard to kill," says veteran Antarctic guide Donald Bertin. In the summer of 1912, Loubier, a thirty-year-old Australian geologist and explorer, led a team of twenty-five scientific men to eastern Antarctica. Loubier set off with world ski champion Pedro Metz to explore the glacier from their base camp, in Commonwealth Bay. It was very difficult.

After six weeks, the two men and the twelve remaining dogs (who were carrying their supplies) were only a quarter of the way to the glacier, so they decided to stop the expedition and go back home. The day they decided to go back, their six strongest dogs, and the food **sledge** fell and disappeared into a crevasse. Loubier and Metz only had a supply of food for one week, no food for the dogs, and a **journey** of five weeks in front of them.

They started their long way back, killing the **weakest** dogs one by one for food. What Loubier and Metz did not know is that eating the dogs' livers was making them sick because the livers contained too much vitamin A. The overdose caused deep **strips** of their skin to peel off. Three weeks later, Metz was dead.

Loubier continued. He made it to "Aladdin's Cave," a small camp nine kilometres from base camp, where very strong winds stopped him for a week. Finally, the **weather** calmed down, and Loubier made the steep hike down to camp. But when he finally arrived, he was too late: the ship coming to pick up his team and bring them back to Australia had left six hours before.

Loubier was very lucky because a small group of men had waited for him in case he returned. Loubier and the other men stayed in the camp until the ship came back for them – ten and a half months later!

Smart

Words

hike = walk

knock = push

rope = a strong cord

sledge = a vehicle for snow pulled by animals

journey = a trip

weak = not strong

strip = a long narrow piece of something

weather = temperature