

BOOK EXCERPT

Daylight was gone and a severe snowstorm was coming off the top of the mountain, driven by high winds. Many times we rescuers had to stop moving and hug the ice to keep from being blown off. Tired but guided by the light of the moon, we saw Cpl Pickens about 2,000 feet from the top. I was the first to reach him, finding him wrapped underneath two icy wet ponchos. Pick said something about never being so glad to see a White guy, and I responded we were just glad we found him in time.

His field jacket, liner, utility jacket, and the top of his long johns were pulled up underneath his armpits, exposing his entire mid-section to the bitter freezing cold as he lay exposed on the ice and snow. He couldn't feel it when I touched his stomach, and it was difficult and painful for him to move. He couldn't sit up. Using an ice axe and utility knife to sort of dig in, Pick was being eased down the mountain in a portable stretcher by four rescuers all tied into a 40-foot-long rope.