



The Tragedy of Un-sane Communication

In 1982, the news media reported the tragic death of wildlife photographer Carl McCunn.

McCunn left Fairbanks, Alaska in March 1981 to take wildlife photos north of the Arctic Circle. He took meticulous care in selecting supplies, including a diary to chronicle his adventure. Though he had prepared a travel plan, he did not file it with authorities and made no provisions to be picked up.

In the fall of 1981, McCunn lost most of his food supplies while crossing a frozen lake that suddenly gave way. Even though starving and suffering from frostbite, McCunn continued to write in his journal. He searched the skies for a rescue plane.

At one point, McCunn was almost saved. He heard an airplane and waved his orange sleeping bag to catch the pilot's attention. After its first pass, he stopped waving the bag because the plane was on wheels and couldn't land. When the plane passed a second time, he raised his right hand, shoulder high and shook his fist. "It was like a football cheer — hooray, I've been found," McCunn wrote in his journal.

When the plane failed to return, McCunn looked at the distress signals printed on the back of his hunting license and had a chilling realization. The "football cheer" that to McCunn meant good fortune in being found was the hunter's signal for
"ALL OKAY—DO NOT WAIT!"

When his remaining supplies were depleted, McCunn wrote a final note to his father and shot himself.