

Hassler and Roger Whitney. He leaves in the hearts of all who know him a warm feeling of affection.

F. WOODBRIDGE CONSTANT

MOHAMMAD AKRAM

1929-1959

(It is appropriate to include this obituary since Captain Akram was being proposed for membership.—*Editor.*)

When the 1958 American Karakoram Expedition requested the Pakistan Army to assign two mountaineers as members of the climbing team, one of the men they selected was Captain Mohammad Akram.

Captain Akram was a member of the 9th Class of the Pakistan Military Academy. Upon graduation in March of 1954 he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry and assigned to the 12th Frontier Force Regiment. In 1957 he successfully completed the mountaineering course at the Army School of Physical Training. It was his first contact with the mountains and he enjoyed it so much that he promptly volunteered to join the Hidden Peak expedition when the opportunity arose.

Akram was a quiet person who did not make a strong first impression. When the expedition was over and we had to say good-by to this man, who in the short space of a few weeks had become one of our closest friends, we wondered how we could have misjudged him so badly at the start of the trip. Perhaps it was his reserve. More likely it was the serious illness that incapacitated him at the beginning of the expedition. He had to remain behind at the Skardu hospital and when he arrived at our Base Camp after marching in with the Italian expedition to Gasherbrum IV, he was nine days late. But from that moment on our admiration and affection for him continuously increased.

Immediately he began to carry heavy loads of critical supplies from Base Camp to Camp I. When part of the route deteriorated so badly that it threatened to become impassable, he helped to shift the entire Base Camp two miles. Unfortunately when the rest of the climbers gathered at Camp III to make the final push, he had to stay at Base. With the limited time remaining no one thought that he would be able to climb high. Again we had underestimated the quiet Pakistani. During the crucial days when the expedition was driving for the summit Mohd Akram, together with Tom McCormack who had had to descend to Camp I, started up the mountain. Insufficiently acclimatized and climbing on sheer courage he reached Camp III on July 5 in time to see Pete Schoening and Andy Kauffman standing on the summit. The following morning he and Tom McCormack

climbed to Camp IV, 22,500 feet, and assisted in bringing down that camp.

Obviously Akram had his heart set on reaching the top of the mountain. But the nine days lost at Skardu were an impossible handicap. The weather was changing and we had to descend. The fact that he had tied the Pakistani altitude record did not impress him. He was not interested in records but in doing his share for the expedition. On the descent he raised his goggles during a white out and became snowblind. The next day when I squeezed medicine into his badly watering eyes he never complained, although in answer to a direct question he admitted that it was extremely painful.

Captain Akram was more than just a tough infantry officer. The evening conversations in the tent revealed that he was a highly intelligent, sensitive, and devout Muslim. He was always searching for the solutions to the great problems that confronted him and his country.

As the trip came to a close and there arose many complicated transactions in ending the expedition, we depended more and more upon him. We trusted him completely and that trust was never misplaced. Then when we finally realized what a truly outstanding person he was, the expedition was back in Rawalpindi and it was time to depart.

However, our contact was not over and the American members of the expedition regularly exchanged correspondence with him. In his first letter he wrote, "The days that we spent together were really wonderful and I will never forget them. The spirit and sincerity of purpose with which we worked together was another distinguished feature of our expedition. I hope that we shall not forget each other for the rest of our lives." This was how we all felt, but only Akram put it in writing.

In the summer of 1959 Akram was an Assistant Instructor at the mountaineering course. Meanwhile we began planning a joint American-Pakistan mountaineering expedition to Masherbrum. Akram was assigned to the party. His letters reflected his increasing enthusiasm for going back into the mountains with his old friends. His equipment was in order. Then there were no more letters. We began to wonder why he did not write. Had he changed his mind? In December we received a letter from the Pakistan Army. On November 3, 1959, Captain Mohd Akram had suddenly died from pneumonia.

Some day Pakistani mountaineers will stand on the summits of the greatest mountains in the world. Mohd Akram will not be there; but he will have led the way.

NICHOLAS B. CLINCH