

# The Mountain of Storms — Dhaulagiri, 1960

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LOOK HERE, Maurice, it's absolutely unclimbable, that Dhaulagiri! It's fiendishly difficult!"\* Those were the words of Lionel Terray in 1950 as he reported the results of his reconnaissance to Maurice Herzog.

Since the ascent of Dhaulagiri marks the end of the "Golden Decade" of the 8000 meter peaks, it might be well to deal briefly with the history of the peak known to European climbers as "Berg der Stürme" (Mountain of Storms). Dhaulagiri, contracted from Dhavalagiri, means "White Mountain" in Sanskrit. According to the Survey of India's most recent and official calculations, its height is 26,810 feet, or 8172 meters. More recent figures of 26,975 feet or 8222 meters are not official.

Based on the findings of the 1950 French expedition, in 1953 a Swiss team under the auspices of the Akademischer Alpen Club Zürich approached the great peak from the west, along the Mayangdi Khola. A base camp was established on the Mayangdi Glacier at 14,500 feet, at the foot of the north wall of Dhaulagiri which extends over a width of seven miles, with its black ledges, icefalls, névés and pear-shaped rock ribs. A first reconnaissance did not appear to hold out much hope for a successful ascent. The lower rock portion of the mountain is encircled by a glacier belt, the narrow névé terrace of which is guarded by enormous séracs. Above this terrace the mountain goes straight up for another 6500 feet, its steep slopes exposed to every avalanche and without any apparent possibility of establishing further camps. Despite this rather gloomy first appraisal, the men fought a very gallant battle and succeeded in reaching an altitude of just under 25,000 feet, to the left of the now-famous "pear" hanging from the west ridge. At this point the climb had to be abandoned because of dangerous snow conditions and extremely difficult terrain. On the way down three Sherpas slipped and fell 1600 feet, but miraculously they came to rest just above the séracs and escaped with shock and a few superficial scratches. Before the men started back, they carried out two

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\* Maurice Herzog, *Annapurna*, New York, 1952, p. 69.

reconnaissances on the northeast and southwest cols of Dhaulagiri, the former—the objective of the French in 1950—was reached after a long and dangerous ascent. The northeast ridge, starting from this col, appeared to be as difficult as the north wall recently abandoned. Another group went up to the southwest col. The panorama was stupendous, but the aspect of the south face of Dhaulagiri was one of the most horrifying the climbers had ever seen.

The following spring a large and well equipped Argentine expedition under the leadership of Lieutenant F. G. Ibañez attempted the mountain over the same route pioneered by the Swiss. At 23,600 feet, Camp VI was erected on a tiny platform which had to be blasted among limestone slabs lying like roof-tiles. As late as May 30 four Argentinians and five Sherpas climbed up through a rock and snow chimney to about 25,000 feet, where Camp VII was set up at the foot of the steep pitch that blocks access to the main ridge. The Tirolean-born Gerhard Watzl and the famous Sirdar Pasang Dawa Lama pushed on toward the summit on May 31. They surmounted the wall and emerged on the west ridge but encountered such difficulties there that they had to move out onto the ledges of the dangerous south face. Oxygen was used on this climb by Watzl. As late as five P.M. the two men were again on the main ridge, at about 26,000 feet, where they had to dig a cave in the snow for a bivouac—without sleeping bags or supplementary clothing. After a very bad night they were forced to retreat, fighting their way down in deep fresh snow. One Sherpa fell during this enormously dangerous descent but suffered only a bruised chest and a deep head wound. The leader, Ibañez, lost his crampons on the way down, which made the descent difficult and even dramatic. Ibañez stayed at Camp VI, awaiting crampons that were to be sent up from Camp V. When two Sherpas reached him the next day, his feet were so badly frostbitten that he was unable to put them on; in fact he could not move under his own power. A rescue party under frightful difficulties succeeded in bringing the sick leader down and off the mountain, but despite every attention Ibañez died at a Kathmandu hospital.\*

1955 saw another attempt over the north face by six Germans and four Swiss. Again Pasang Dawa Lama was Sirdar, but this expedition fared worse than its predecessors: Exceptionally severe snow storms and avalanche danger forced withdrawal at less than 24,300 feet.

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\* For further details about this expedition, see *The Mountain World*, 1954, pp. 71-81. For subsequent expeditions, see *A. A. J.*, 1955, 9:2, p. 175-6; 1956, 10:1, p. 140; 1957, 10:2, pp. 169-70; 1959, 11:2, pp. 323-4; 1960, 12:1, pp. 157-8.—*Editor*.

In 1956, a second Argentine team under Colonel E. Huerta reached an altitude of almost 25,000 feet.

On May 17, 1958, a Swiss team under Werner Stäuble established Camp VI at 24,800 feet, but violent storms and heavy snowfalls made all further progress impossible. Among the team members were Dr. Georg Hajdukiewicz and Max Eiselin, who expressed their conviction that the northeast ridge might offer better chances for success.

1959 was the year of the Austrians. Based upon the recommendations made by Dr. Hajdukiewicz and Max Eiselin, a strong team under the leadership of Fritz Moravec for the first time reconnoitered the northeast ridge above the northeast col. They established a series of camps, with the highest, Camp VI, at 24,250 feet. On May 25 Karl Prein and again Pasang Dawa Lama—his third attempt—pushed on toward the summit, but severe winds prevented their climbing higher than 25,250 feet. Attempts on the two following days were equally unsuccessful. About a month earlier one of the team members, Heinrich Roiss, had fallen into a crevasse near Camp II and died before he could be extricated. Upon returning from the mountain, Pasang Dawa Lama declared the peak "unclimbable."

This brings us up to 1960, when a predominantly Swiss team was formed under the leadership of Max Eiselin. The other Swiss were Ernst Forrer, Ernst Saxer (pilot), Jean-Jacques Roussi, Albin Schelbert, Michel Vaucher, Hugo Weber and Emil Wick (co-pilot and mechanic). From Austria came Kurt Diemberger, who had scaled Broad Peak with the late Hermann Buhl; from Germany, Peter Diener; from Poland, Dr. Georg Hajdukiewicz and Adam Skocylas; I alone represented the U. S. A.

For the first time the government of Nepal granted permission to use a light-weight airplane for landings of men and supplies on glaciers and snow-fields, a Swiss-built Pilatus-Porter PC-6, with a Lycoming engine, especially designed for high-altitude flights and landings. Since we hoped to track down "Abominable Snowmen" from the air before and after the assault on Dhaulagiri, the plane was christened Yeti. Six men reached Nepal aboard the Yeti, five traveled from Europe by boat, Roussi was already in Kathmandu as a member of the Swiss Technical Aid Group, while my wife Sally and I traveled by air across the Pacific.

According to plans worked out in Switzerland, the Yeti was to fly men and equipment to the village of Tukuche, situated in the Kali Gandaki valley between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. There, at about 9000 feet, everything was to be stored, so that in the event of some mishap to the airplane all materiel could be carried by porters across Dapa Col and

French Col to Base Camp on the Mayangdi Glacier. In case of too much snow for local porters, an alternate plan called for repeated landings at the base of Dhaulagiri's East Glacier, where we would establish an "acclimatization camp" at about 13,000 feet. From there we would make minor ascents up to 18,000 feet. During this acclimatization period of about three weeks, the Yeti would make frequent landings on the north-east col to build up Advance Base at 18,700 feet. By April 20, at the very latest, all men would be well acclimatized and firmly established on the northeast col.

The first reconnaissance flight on March 23 was magnificent. After flying past the Ganesh Himal, Himalchuli, Manaslu and Annapurna II, we came so close to the terrifying ridges of Machapuchare that we felt like reaching out and touching the mountain. Annapurna I, "La Grande Barrière" and the Nilgiri Peaks towered above us as we winged across the Kali Gandaki toward Dhaulagiri, but when we rounded Tukuhe Peak to the north, the mists closed in and we obtained but a brief and incomplete view of the north face of Dhaulagiri: What we did see, flying at 18,000 feet, was awe-inspiring and even frightening. Max Eiselin urged our pilot to turn around and get out of there while we could. Back over the Kali Gandaki, we circled the village of Tukuhe several times at scarcely more than roof-top height, but to our great disappointment there were no feasible landing fields to be seen. What had appeared to be level and smooth from up high turned out to be full of rocks, stone hedges and cultivated fields. In case of emergency a crash-landing could be made, but we all agreed that this was no suitable base for aerial support.

Bhairawa on the India-Nepal border was to be our staging area, since all equipment had arrived there by truck. Unfortunately it proved to be ill suited to the purpose. The heat and mosquitoes were terrible and the afternoon sandstorms almost unbearable. The Yeti's landing gear was damaged on its first setdown, but our capable mechanic Emil Wick was able to repair it within two days.

On March 29 Max Eiselin, Kurt Diemberger and Ernst Forrer went in on the first flight to Dhaulagiri. They hoped to land on the northeast col and establish our first camp there. Both Georg Hajdukiewicz and I were convinced that 18,700 feet was far too high for acclimatization purposes, but Kurt and Ernst were confident of their ability to take it. As it turned out, they changed their minds somewhat during the flight in and decided to land north of Tukuhe Peak at 17,000 feet on Dapa Col, called Dambush Col by Maurice Herzog. Saxer made a perfect landing on a gentle snowfield. Kurt and Ernst were left there to acclimatize. The Yeti made

a second flight that day to unload additional supplies. In the days to follow, more men and equipment were flown in.

Bhairawa was not only a place of misery for us, but the tricky winds again damaged the Yeti—while it was tied to the ground—and caused further delay. Max finally agreed to move our operations to Pokhara near the base of Machapuchare before the men got seriously ill from the heat and the plane permanently disabled. In two commercial DC-3 flights everything was transferred to Nepal's lovely lake district.

In the meantime, the Yeti continued its flights to Dapa Col, but reports from there were far from good. Kurt and Ernst suffered so greatly from the altitude during the first few days that they could hardly move, unpack, cook or even eat. When the Yeti circled their camp on a supply flight, they could not even come out of their tent to meet the plane. After landing, the pilots shouted at the top of their lungs, but receiving no answer, they walked up to the camp and opened the tent. The two men were in their sleeping-bags, barely able to lift their heads. The lack of acclimatization was all too obvious. Nevertheless, more men were flown in.

On April 2 I went up on the second flight of the day with Michel Vaucher. Peter Diener, who had gone two days before, was in such bad shape that he was flown down again. For a few hours I felt fine and immediately broke out my cameras and started working. By now the camp was well-stocked, and Kurt and Ernst were in fair condition, having done most of the work for the unacclimatized. The weather and the sunset were exquisite, and I began to think I had been wrong. Then, despite Georg's pills, the splitting headaches and terrific thirst began. Even the Sherpas did not feel well and failed to make enough tea and soups to provide us with the three to four quarts of liquid a day one is supposed to drink at high altitudes. During the next days most of us lost everything we tried to eat or drink and spent a good part of each day in our sleeping bags with awful headaches. It was apparent that our acclimatization camp was too high. Two of our seven Sherpas, Nima Tenzing and Urkien I, caught pneumonia and had to be flown down to Pokhara.

Nevertheless, Kurt and Ernst did become acclimatized, and on April 4 the first flight was undertaken to set up Advance Base on the northeast col. Here, at 18,700 feet, the Yeti established not only a camp but a world record for high-altitude landings.

Since both of my movie cameras had been giving me trouble, and on April 5 stopped working altogether, there was nothing to do but return to Kathmandu to try to get them repaired. Max, who had a cold and backaches, in addition to the miseries of insufficient acclimatization, de-

cided to fly with me to Pokhara, where we met Peter Diener and Georg Hajdukiewicz. Georg had flown down earlier to look after his patients. Three of our Sherpas, Urkien I, Nima Tenzing, and my old friend Ang Dawa IV, were at the Pokhara Hospital. The expedition appeared a shambles.

When I got back to the Hotel Royal in Kathmandu, my wife was utterly dumbfounded but delighted to see me. After a bath (in three inches of water) and a scotch (the first thing I was able to keep down) I began to feel human again.

I sent my cameras by courier to Calcutta with instructions for their delivery to the American Consulate for repair. After nearly a week without news of them, a telegram arrived from Andy Kauffman, who happened to pass through Calcutta at the time, suggesting that I come down there myself to get things organized. On April 11 I flew to Calcutta, rescued the cameras from the Consulate where they had been "tabled" and rushed them to a photo repair shop.

On April 13 I returned to Pokhara, where Ang Dawa met me at the airport. "Bad news, Sah'b. Yeti finished!" Shortly after dawn that day an explosion occurred soon after take-off and a cylinder head blew off. Oil splattered all over the windshield, and Ernst Saxer, Emil and Adam—the latter had been flown down from Dapa Col after he lost consciousness and suffered temporary amnesia from the altitude—were barely able to land.

This seemed a nearly fatal blow to the expedition. A new engine would have to be flown in from Switzerland. What with delivery time, customs, red tape, and limited facilities for installation, the plane was going to be out of action for about a month. We had no choice but to forget the plane and revise our assault plan drastically and instantly. Saxer, Ang Dawa and I would try to reach Dapa Col via the shortest route possible, up the Kali Gandaki valley. Adam, our liaison officer M. B. Shershen and fifteen porters would bring up the remaining loads via the Mayangdi Khola, the traditional approach-march route. My group would travel light and as fast as possible.

On the morning of April 14 Saxer, Ang Dawa and I started out with four coolies. We had no radio contact with our friends on the mountain, but before we left we requested All-India Radio to broadcast periodic messages telling of the plight of our plane and recommending to the men on Dapa Col that they begin to remove the supplies from there and establish Base Camp on the Mayangdi Glacier. Meanwhile, the seven men at Advance Base on the northeast col—Ernst Forrer, Kurt Diemberger, Albin

Schelbert and four Sherpas—were to be urged not to wait for us but to prepare the route up the northeast ridge.

We began our race against time, tense but not dispirited. In the beginning it was an easy walk up a broad valley, but the heat was considerable, and both Saxer and I got blisters on our heels. We were packing sizable loads after all, and since no approach march had been foreseen, our boots were far too heavy. The people we met along the trail were marvelous. To many foreigners, the Nepalese are known as "The Smiling People." They greet you with hands folded in steeple fashion, like acolytes in a European cathedral. At night they gathered silently around our campsites. We slept mostly out in the open, and occasionally on the front porches of their small houses. The villagers are used to expeditions passing through and cheerfully provided lodging and tea. We climbed steadily, past the little half-Hindu, half-Buddhist villages with prayer flags flying and prayer wheels whirling. Once in a while we paused at a stream to take a swim. We passed files of Tibetan refugees. Often, Ang Dawa would disappear into a house and come out winking at me and asking, "Chang?" The quality of this local brew varied, very good sometimes, not so good at other times.

We would climb as high as 10,000 feet and then descend again to 4000 feet. I began to dream all day long of beer—a foaming beaker of dark, cool Löwenbräu. In the evening light we could make out the outline of Dhaulagiri and Tukucho Peak. On our right was the huge mass of Annapurna, with the ever-present cumulus cloud that boils and swirls around it. Dhaulagiri became more and more distinct. We saw the icefall of the East Dhaulagiri Glacier, steep, heavily crevassed, dangerous-looking. What seemed so white and pure and serene from a distance became menacing as we approached. That was the route, a dangerous, almost suicidal one, tried by the French in 1950.

On the morning of the sixth day we reached Tukucho, a prosperous, Tibetan-looking village. Most of the prayer-flag bedecked houses are two or three stories high, solidly constructed of stone. There must be a great need for firewood, judging from the vast quantities neatly piled on the rooftops. Each house has at least one courtyard, and some have several.

Sun Bahadur, the "boss" of the Pokhara porters, had agreed to go all the way after we had outfitted him with our spare clothing, but the others were paid off and sent back on their way. After wasting a whole day trying to round up new porters—most were scared of the mountains—we succeeded in signing up three tough looking characters to carry at least as far as snowline on the way to Dapa Col.

On the seventh night after leaving Pokhara we camped at 13,500 feet. At eleven the following morning our porters could go no farther: there was too much snow. Because our equipment was on Dapa Col, we had no shoes or warm clothing to give them. We paid them off, deposited what equipment we could not carry, and toiled up toward Dapa Col. Soon it began to snow hard, and the going got tough. Sun Bahadur, showing signs of altitude sickness and extreme fatigue, would drop in the snow every five minutes, stretch out and fall asleep. He would never have awakened without my constant prodding and friendly persuasion, yanking him to his feet to keep him alive and moving. The altitude began to fatigue all of us. At six o'clock on April 21 we finally reached Dapa Col. All our friends—Max, Michel, Peter, Jean-Jacques, Hugo, Georg, Urkien and Nima Tenzing—were there. I fell into my tent and sat for half an hour just staring in front of me. We had made it in eight days from Pokhara.

Max and the others had not received the radio messages. They had guessed that the plane was out of action but expected that Emil Wick would be able to make repairs. Now the full impact of our news hit them. The shuttle service across French Col toward Base Camp started in earnest. On April 23 Saxer volunteered to return to Pokhara to attend to the Yeti. Ernst started down with Sun Bahadur—who was still sick as a fish—and two Sherpas were sent down to bring up the loads we had abandoned earlier. Max, who wanted to expedite the plane repair, also left, expressing the conviction that we had enough ability and experience to run the show without him.

On the morning of April 24, shortly before seven A.M., Hugo, Jean-Jacques, Peter and Michel left with back-breaking loads to establish Base Camp. The rest of us followed on the 25th. The trek toward French Col was a long and arduous one, with several steep ups and downs. When we reached the 17,300-foot col around one o'clock, we added to our loads from the previously established cache. It was very cold, windy and bleak. Heavy cloud layers kept us from seeing anything but the very base of Dhaulagiri's north face. We looked down into Terray's "Unknown Valley." The Mayangdi Icefall which guards the approaches to the northeast col looked terribly broken-up, worse than the Khumbu Icefall. Soon it began to snow hard. We neared Base Camp thoroughly chilled and wet to meet a Gurkha porter and Adam Skocylas, who had left our liaison officer in charge of the fifteen porters and raced ahead to meet us here. That night we eleven slept in four small tents.

The next morning Peter and Hugo began to pick their way up the icefall, or rather to the extreme right of it, to establish Camp I on the way

toward the northeast col. At last the expedition was once again properly deployed. We were no longer scattered from the northeast col to Dapa Col to Pokhara to Calcutta. It still remained for some of us to carry out a shuttle service between Base Camp and Tsaarabon at timberline, where the fifteen porters of Adam's column had dumped their loads. No amount of coaxing could persuade them to go any further. There, incidentally, we found, cut in the birch trees, the seal of the 1954 Argentine expedition.

The scenery, for the few moments we could pause to enjoy it, was fantastic. Dhaulagiri's snow plume extended miles into the dark blue sky. Standing on the Mayangdi Glacier, the landscape around us seemed more threatening and dramatic than the Everest region. We looked for the grave of Roiss, the Austrian who stepped out of his tent on the northeast col and fell into a hidden crevasse.

On April 29, we made our last shuttle-run between Tsaarabon and Base Camp. About two hours below camp, we were met by two Sherpas who had been sent down from the northeast col to help us. According to a note from Peter, everything was going extremely well. Camp III had been established at 21,650 feet, and Camp IV at 23,100 feet. Some loads had been carried up to about 24,400 feet, the future site of Camp V. According to the Sherpas, everybody was in good health, although there was an acute shortage of sleeping bags, down-jackets, socks, and such important items as sugar. Many vitally needed stores were still on Dapa Col. There was nothing to do but continue the tough grind of carrying loads from there to the northeast col. And yet, by May 1 we were almost as far as the Austrian expedition of 1959 on May 28.

On May 4 I was just preparing to make another foray back to Dapa Col when suddenly I heard the low, familiar hum of the Yeti flying very high. It didn't see us because Base Camp, with its yellow tents, was hard to pick out from the yellowish rocks of the lateral moraine. We watched it proceed toward the northeast col, where it apparently landed. We saw it again flying back to Dapa Col, where we assumed it would pick up supplies and return. We were ecstatic. Everyone jumped up and down with joy. No more Dapa Col for us. Now we too at last could move up and join the others in the battle for Dhaulagiri.

The next morning as we were climbing up steeply between the icefall and threatening cliffs of the "Eiger," an impressive promontory of Dhaulagiri, we kept looking and listening for the Yeti, but it never came. For a few seconds we thought we heard a faint motor noise from the direction of Dapa Col, then nothing. We were deeply concerned.

On May 7 a jet plane suddenly appeared from the north, swooped over us at Camp I and skimmed across the northeast col in a matter of seconds. At first we thought it to be Red Chinese and that World War III had broken out without our knowledge, but then we recognized the plane as an Indian Air Force Canberra. Soon a second jet plane screamed overhead. They were obviously looking for the Yeti. Now we really worried about our pilots. That evening we established radio contact with Max Eiselin at Camp II. The signal was very weak, but he told us that he had come in on yesterday's first flight and that he was all alone there. The rest of the men were at the higher camps. As to the fate of the Yeti, he knew no more than we did.

In the late afternoon of May 8 we reached Camp II at last, after a tough day of moving up through the upper icefall with colossal loads. While the two Poles and I carried at least 60 pounds each, some of the Sherpas must have lugged as much as 100 pounds. Albin, Ernst, Kurt and the Sherpas Nawang Dorje and Nima Dorje had come down for a brief rest, after a first daring summit attempt on May 4. Here is Ernst Forrer's account of the preceding days:

“. . . To our horror we discovered that this was already the month of May. It wouldn't be long before the monsoon would hit us with all its might. Camp IV had been established at 23,100 feet, but we wanted to carry one more tent to the vicinity of the summit, so that we might profit from even the very briefest period of good weather. Despite heavy winds and blowing snow, our two Sherpas Nima Dorje and Nawang Dorje brought us additional equipment and supplies from below. Then they disappeared again in the heavy fog and moved down the steep ice wall to Camp III.

“During the night the storm was severe. The wind tore at the walls of our tent, while we held on to the supports with all our might in constant fear of being blown off our tiny platform. But after a frightful night, the following morning was magnificent. The thin air was clear as never before. The biting cold made us shiver. A good-weather sign. Our rucksacks were heavy, much too heavy for this altitude. And yet this morning, on May 2, we gladly carried them toward the heights above. We intended to climb up to about 24,500 feet and establish Camp V there. One tent and other gear had already been taken up.

“A short rock wall, then a lofty snow ridge, and we reached our future campsite. We discovered remains of last year's Austrian expedition: Torn tents, an ice axe and one oxygen cylinder reminded us of their battle with the mountain. Between two huge rocks we succeeded in clearing a com-

fortable campsite. The location was well protected, and we had a feeling of security. Here we were going to rest for a day to gather new strength. How wonderful it felt to relax! Albin and I were in excellent form, though Kurt suffered a bit from slight snow blindness. We dozed and dreamed about the next day.

"Some 2500 feet above us loomed the summit of Dhaulagiri, the 'White Mountain'—the goal of seven previous expeditions. We looked at it in the clear light of evening—a beautiful, lonely, immensely alluring sight. Would we be the chosen ones? At first idly, then with growing audacity, we began to speculate on a daring strike, a final dash over the last 2500 feet. In high excitement we made our decision.

"I slept well during the night, until Albin awakened me at three A.M. with a gentle poke in the ribs. The weather was clear. In cramped and careful haste we prepared ourselves. Three men in a two-man tent, putting on reindeer boots and crampons and trying to cook breakfast on a butane cooker, are anything but comfortable. Furthermore, a thick layer of frost had formed overnight on the inside of the tent, and as we shifted about, we constantly scraped our noses against it. Again and again, the icy stuff broke off in sheets and dropped on us.

"As we stood outside in the first rays of the sun, we decided to attempt the summit in a direct line across a steep snow slope. We started out, but very shortly we were breaking in up to our hips. It was a mistake; there was no chance to advance here. We had lost valuable time which we sought to make up by regaining the ridge in a tricky traverse. The weather deteriorated rapidly; Dhaulagiri was rallying against our surprise attack.

"A quick glance at the altimeter showed us we were a few feet below 25,000 feet. The climbing became difficult: we were on steep rock, affording almost no purchase, covered with a layer of fresh snow. I had always imagined the ascent of an 8000-meter peak as nothing more than a strenuous but technically easy snow climb; but here I learned differently. At last the difficult rock wall lay behind us. To safeguard our retreat, we drove in a piton and placed a fixed rope. As we continued climbing, things began to improve, and we made excellent progress up a snow ridge.

"Then the dreaded summit weather gathered and burst on us. We found ourselves enveloped in turbulent clouds and air currents. In the dim, diffused light we could make out what looked like a secondary summit. We went for it. A violent storm awaited us there. Wind-lashed ice crystals stung our faces like needles. In a matter of seconds our eyes, beards and noses were sheathed in a thin layer of ice.

"We realized there was only one thing to do: to go down. But the climb was not in vain—we had learned an important lesson. Camp V was not high enough for a successful assault on the summit. The weather on Dhaulagiri never remained favorable for more than four to six hours. We realized, as we clawed our way down, that another tent must be placed at about 25,600 feet."

On May 9 we established radio contact with our liaison officer at Base Camp and asked him to head for Dapa Col as quickly as possible, in the company of two Sherpas and the Gurkha. We talked to him at hourly intervals, but once the men had passed the crest of French Col, all communication ceased. That same day our first summit team moved up to Camp IV. The men were chafing for another attempt after their near miss. Peter, Jean-Jacques, Michel and Hugo in the meantime had occupied Camp V.

On the late afternoon of May 10, after a long day of load-carrying between Camps I and II, we suddenly heard footsteps in the snow. Ang Dawa stuck his head in the tent, pale and shaken. He said that Urkien had come racing up the glacier shouting that Nima Tenzing had fallen into a crevasse while they were on their way down to Camp I. In careless Sherpa fashion, instead of keeping a safe distance apart with a taut rope, Urkien and Nima Tenzing had walked with loops of rope in their hands. When Nima slipped, instead of falling only a few feet into the crevasse, he hurtled 50 or 60 feet down before becoming wedged, dragging Urkien to the very edge of the crevasse. Urkien had jammed in his ice axe just in time, attached the rope to it and then raced uphill to get us.

Georg, Adam and I dressed quickly. Max offered to help in spite of his lack of acclimatization, but we persuaded him to remain at Camp II. With a small tent, hot tea and Georg's medical kit, we plunged down the mountain on two ropes. In 40 minutes we reached the crevasse. This narrow gash in the snow-covered ice was no more than three feet wide at the top. When we looked down, we could not see Nima. We called. Still conscious, he mumbled an unintelligible answer. At least he was alive, though terribly cold and obviously in shock. We anchored one rope and let it down with a loop for Nima to put his foot in, but apparently he was in no condition to understand what we wanted him to do. Georg rappelled down, since he alone had brought his crampons. The going was tough. The crevasse was so narrow that he risked getting stuck at any time. At 25 feet he very nearly did and had to stop. Cautiously I moved to the edge of the crevasse and, lying on my stomach, securely held by Ang Dawa, talked to Georg. He said he could faintly make out the shape of Nima below, apparently

lying face up, held in position by his breast-sling. There was nothing to do but get Georg up again. That was more easily said than done. He got no purchase on the smooth ice, and it was so narrow that his crampons were useless. We sent down a second rope with a foot-sling. But even then we had to haul him out by main force. We finally got him up to the edge of the crevasse, and no amount of pulling did any good. Ang Dawa and Urkien held my feet and lowered two-thirds of my body into the crevasse. At last I was able to get hold of Georg's right hand and pulled him out.

By this time, Nima was too cold and too near death to do anything to help himself. We tried in vain to free the rope by which he was hanging, the one Urkien had anchored with his ice axe, by attaching a second rope securely to it and pulling. The rope had cut some three feet into the edge of the crevasse and it was obvious we could not pull poor Nima out this way. I went down, chopped away at the ice and freed the rope. I placed an ice axe under it, but still we couldn't budge it. We sent the rappel rope all the way down to Nima again and shouted to him to get hold of it. This time he seemed to understand. We pulled on that rope, and he moved. Then, apparently, he lost his grip and dropped back. Finally we tried the main rope again and heaved and heaved desperately. And suddenly, it yielded. We almost fell on our faces. We dashed uphill with the rope as fast as we could, then dashed toward the crevasse and pulled again. We got Nima to the very lip of the narrow crevasse where hard pulling would risk crushing his ribs and suffocating him. He was almost a corpse, blue in the face and with shriveled hands. We had to act quickly. Georg came across unbelayed. We grabbed Nima and pulled him over the lower lip of the crevasse. We were close to exhaustion and tears, but we had saved Nima's life. Another ten minutes and he would have died. Georg gave him various injections of coramin and caffeine. It was too late to move up or down that night, and so six of us crept into the small tent, Nima with all our sleeping bags on one side, and five of us on the other. Sherpas are amazingly tough people. I do not think any of us could have survived those five hours in the crevasse.

On May 12 the two Sherpas returned from Dapa Col. They and our liaison officer had discovered the wreckage of the Yeti, a few hundred feet below our old acclimatization camp. They brought a note from Ernst Saxer: "Dear friends, on May 5, at 10:15 A.M., the Yeti crashed shortly after take-off. The stick actually broke loose. Emil and I are unhurt. We waited until the morning of May 7 here on Dapa Col. We cannot possibly come down to the Mayangdi Base Camp, since Emil is in rather poor condition. Tomorrow morning, the 8th, we will descend to Tukuche, since the fuel

and food situation here is serious. We hope to reach Pokhara on the 12th of May . . ." This, then, was the end of the Yeti. But at least our two pilots were unhurt. There was much to be grateful for.

Late that afternoon Michel, Hugo and Jean-Jacques came down to Camp II for a rest. They and Peter had been up at Camp V for several days, and when the others joined them there, things got rather crowded for nine men. It was decided that Peter, though greatly troubled by the altitude, would remain there, while three men would come down to gather new strength for a later summit attempt.

On May 13 the two Poles, two Sherpas and I carried food and equipment two-thirds of the way toward Camp III, in support of the first and second summit teams. This was our first foray up the northeast ridge, and we felt the lack of acclimatization. The weather had cleared somewhat, and I took motion pictures of the climb. There was not much wind, and even up high on the mountain conditions appeared calm. This meant to us that the great event probably was at hand.

The next day as we made our way through a snowstorm toward Camp III, we could make out directly above us four snow-shrouded figures who painfully and slowly groped their way down from Camp IV. When we reached Camp III Ernst, Albin, Peter and Nima Dorje were there, grinning broadly. They had made it!

This is Forrer's account of their day of triumph:

"The dawn of May 13 was clear and beautiful. It came none too soon for us; the night had seemed endless. We were six men squeezed into a two-man tent, a tiny shelter wedged under the overhang of a rock at 25,600 feet. Tense with the burden of our decision, we could have no thought of sleep. But when the first light of morning came, we were ready.

"At eight A.M. I roped up with Nima Dorje, and we started breaking trail. Kurt and Nawang Dorje followed close behind, and after them came Peter and Albin. Our route followed a narrow and exposed ridge. Snow conditions were treacherous, and we belayed with care. We had a lot of respect for the incredibly sheer south face on our left. There were occasional steep rock passages which required strenuous pull-ups, and we got extremely short of breath. Slowly but surely the summit moved closer. To scale an Eighththousander without oxygen is exhausting work. Our lungs labored close to bursting, and after nearly every step we needed a brief pause to pant for breath. And then, shortly before noon, we stood on the highest point of Dhaulagiri, at 26,810 feet, on the roof of the world! To the south clouds stretched in an apparently endless sea; to the north, like clouds themselves, were the countless snow peaks of Tibet and the

brown plains beyond, and quite near was Annapurna, the purgatory of Maurice Herzog . . .

"It was an extraordinary moment. After the long, long battle, here was peace. The sun was brilliant, the air calm. There was scarcely even a breeze up here—a miracle after Dhaulagiri's storms! It was hard to believe, but there we stood: six men on the summit of Dhaulagiri. Never before had so many stood on top of an Eighththousander."

Camp III was terribly cramped that day, thirteen tired and half-frozen men among two tiny, snowed-in tents backed up against an overhanging wall of ice. The weather was atrocious. After we deposited our loads, we left the second summit team with our good wishes and started across the precarious traverse toward the ridge. Peter was in bad shape. He had reached the summit only by superhuman effort. He was numb and half gone with exhaustion, and what he said did not make much sense. Ang Dawa and I roped him between us and took him down slowly, with many stops along the way. It was close to six o'clock when we reached Camp II and helped him to his tent.

Well after dark we heard Kurt's voice outside. In he came with Nawang Dorje, crusted with snow. They, too, were grinning all over. Nima and Nawang Dorje were not famous Sherpas, just young and eager. And now they had been to the summit of Dhaulagiri. Six men had made the summit so far. For the rest of us the challenge remained. Adam and Michel started up from Camp II on the 15th, but the altitude seemed to affect Adam more than the others; he climbed so slowly that we sent two Sherpas to fetch him back. He refused to come. He bivouacked out in the open halfway between us and Camp III, and the next day we watched as he resumed climbing ever more slowly. Michel, who had reached the safety of Camp III, finally had to come back down to help Adam. Still higher we could see clearly Hugo, Jean-Jacques and their two Sherpas move up the steep ice wall to Camp IV.

On the morning of the 17th we saw one dot leave Camp III and recognized Michel. Evidently Adam was not well and could move neither up nor down. He was waiting for Georg and me to go up. Through our binoculars we watched Michel toil up a 50° ice slope. His progress was painfully slow. We saw a man at Camp V looking down the northeast face of Dhaulagiri at Michel's slow advance. Obviously, Hugo and his party had not yet moved up to Camp VI, and we fervently hoped that Michel, with his tremendous will power, would catch up with them. His climb to join the men above was an amazing piece of stamina.

So now we had another team within striking distance, but also possibly a sick man alone at Camp III in rapidly deteriorating weather. Adam's condition had to be investigated. Georg and I made an attempt to reach him on the 18th, but were turned back; burdened by heavy loads, wading through fresh snow up to our knees, we decided to conserve our strength and dumped our packs. But the next day we tried again, accompanied by Ang Dawa and Nawang Dorje. Max Eiselin and Peter Diener decided to leave that morning for Pokhara.

Inwardly Georg and I hoped that, with luck, Adam would be all right and we would be able to make our own summit bid. Dhaulagiri on that day, however, was a mass of swirling snow and plumes that blew out for miles into the sky. Never had we seen the mountain so completely terrifying. The wind tore at us as we fought our way upward. Georg and I took turns breaking trail. Then we tired and sent the Sherpas ahead, but we had a hard time keeping up with them. Our feet congealed until they felt like paralyzed lumps of ice, and I grew really worried that we might end up with amputations like Lambert and Schneider. Incongruously, all I could think of was that this would mean no more tennis for me. The idea of tennis was idiotic, but it is the kind of thing one thinks of in these circumstances. It was a terrible ordeal, that climb. Our sun glasses filled with snow every few minutes. We had almost reached a point of desperation when our Sherpas suddenly appeared out of the storm to help us. Having deposited their loads at Camp III, they made the tricky and exposed traverse back to our side and now relieved us of our loads. As soon as we reached the camp, Ang Dawa took off our reindeer boots and started to massage our feet. At first they seemed utterly lifeless and white, but the long and steady massage gradually restored their circulation.

We shared one of the two small tents with Adam that night. He seemed all right, though weak. He had been up here for four days alone. Despite sleeping pills, we slept very little.

The next day the storm gathered strength, and waves of flying snow threatened to crush the flimsy shelter. We thought of those above and prayed the storm would not sweep them down. At dawn, after another bad night, the snowdrift, solid as ice, had reached the very top of our tent. I could not shake it off, nor were we able to get out of the tent. Ang Dawa came to the rescue and started shoveling. In the heavy wind and snow it must have been hell for him.

Then, without warning, we ran out of butane gas. That was it. There could be no question of going higher without gas for cooking. At seven A.M. I fought my way outside, but it was blowing so hard that our chances

of making the traverse toward the ridge were zero. And yet, we had to go down if Adam was to survive. By nine o'clock conditions improved slightly, and we started our melancholy trip down, leaving two emergency oxygen bottles behind for the second summit team to use on its way down. Adam behaved strangely, like a sleep-walker, and had to be watched every step of the way. On the steep ice face, the storm doubled the danger. We had to drive our axes in and hold on for dear life. Sometimes the gusts of wind were so fierce that they almost tore us off the ridge altogether. Poor Ang Dawa carried my big movie tripod on top of a huge pack, a heavy and awkward load. I went last, as anchor-man, with Georg in the lead. I noticed Nawang Dorje was getting tired, weaving from side to side like a drunk. Adam kept falling time and again. Once Georg started a snow-slide, but we jammed in our axes and stopped his fall. We reached Camp II at last in the early afternoon. It was the end of our try for the summit. After weeks of incessant effort, we knew now we would not get another chance.

Two days later, on May 22, two exhausted Sherpas stumbled into our camp shortly before dark. Throughout all the storms of the past days and nights they had shared the two tents at Camp V with Hugo, Jean-Jacques and Michel. Now their food had almost run out, and the Sherpas were sent back down. Incredibly enough, the three sahibs still hoped to make a try for the summit.

On the 24th, long after dark, around nine P.M., I was lying in our tent, ready to go to sleep, when I heard voices. In the light of my flashlight Georg and I saw Hugo, Michel and Jean-Jacques coming toward us, weaving from exhaustion, their beards and faces crusted with ice. "How did it go?" we cried. Hugo answered: "O.K., we made it." "Terrific!" we exclaimed, "Who?" Hugo hesitated. "Michel et moi," he said. Quickly we pulled them into our tent, took off their wet clothing, and made them comfortable. Over plenty of hot drink and food, they told us their story. Jean-Jacques, poor fellow, had lost his ice axe. One of the Sherpas had taken it down with him. It was too risky to climb without one, and so, almost at the goal, he had to stay behind. But Hugo and Michel had made the summit all the way from Camp V at 24,400 feet, reaching the top at 6:30 in the evening! A climb of 2400 vertical feet to the summit and back to Camp VI in the gathering darkness, with careful belays along the exposed summit ridge! It was a stupendous achievement, perhaps one of the most remarkable in Himalayan mountaineering!

Now our expedition was truly a success. In spite of initial setbacks, the challenge of Dhaulagiri had been met in a way that left no doubt that the

"unclimbable fiend" could be climbed. Much credit for this success must go to the pioneering work of the ill-fated Austrian expedition of 1959. Their fixed ropes in the ice-covered rock wall above Camp IV saved our men much time and effort.

Now there was only the long way back down the Mayangdi Icefall, the wait for 35 porters at Base Camp—they reached us there on May 29, led by M. B. Shershen—and the all too well-known trek across French Col and Dapa Col down to Tukuche, where we arrived on June 1. The hike back to Pokhara was sheer pleasure, quite different from our desperate race after the Yeti's first failure. On June 8 we were all safely back in Kathmandu.

The snows of Dhaulagiri have been left far behind, but they can never be forgotten.

#### *Summary of Statistics*

AREA: Dhaulagiri Himal, Nepal.

ASCENT: Dhaulagiri, 26,810 feet, May 13, 1960 (Ernst Forrer, Albin Schelbert, Peter Diener, Kurt Diemberger, Nima Dorje, Nawang Dorje)—first ascent; May 23 (Hugo Weber, Michel Vaucher).

Two peaks northeast and southwest of Dapa Col, both 19,000 feet, early April, first ascents.

PERSONNEL: Max Eiselin (leader), Ernst Forrer, Jean-Jacques Roussi, Albin Schelbert, Michel Vaucher, Hugo Weber, Ernst Saxer (pilot), Emil Wick (co-pilot and mechanic), Swiss; Kurt Diemberger, Austrian; Peter Diener, German; Dr. Georg Hajdukiewicz, Adam Skocylas, Polish; Norman Dyhrenfurth, American.

