

on a summit attempt. We were off at 10:30, each with two oxygen cylinders. On wind crust we made good progress up the steep slope, feeling fit despite the three nights in Camp IV. At 26,250 feet we reached the steep couloir that cuts through the summit cliffs and lies at about a 50° angle. This was not ice but firm snow. Halfway up, just before the crux, we each left an oxygen cylinder. Then the couloir narrowed and steepened; it was smooth rock and for 150 feet we had tricky rock climbing on crampons. About 150 feet below the summit I suddenly felt terribly weak and had to drive myself to go on. On the top I was horrified to find that my oxygen was all gone, the cause of my sudden weakness. Ladreiter's was also finished. It was five P.M. The weather was glorious except for clouds to the east. The descent was a struggle. The wind picked up and stung our faces like needles. Because of the steep angle and the lack of oxygen, we had to belay down the whole couloir. Night came on but we continued in the moonlight. Tears froze in our eyes. We estimated the temperature at —40°. Exhausted, we reached Camp IV at 1:30 A.M. In the tent we discovered we had frozen faces, hands and feet. The rest of the descent was a torture. After our arrival in Base Camp, the doctor decided on a helicopter evacuation. Ladreiter has lost several fingers on his right hand and six toes. I have lost all my toes. On May 10 a second pair, Klausbruckner and Exnar, reached the summit.

WOLFGANG AXT, *Österreichischer Alpenverein*

Lhotse, Polish Ascent. An expedition from Gliwice was the fourth to climb Lhotse (27,923 feet), following the original route and establishing the regular number of high camps. Three parties got to the top, including one oxygenless one, Andrzej Czok and Jerzy Kukuczka, on October 4. On the same day the peak was also climbed by Zygmunt Andrzej Heinrich and Janusz Skorek. Five days later, on October 9, the summit was reached by Janusz Baranek, the leader Adam Bilczewski, Stanisław Cholewa and Robert Niklas. The latter is a West German who has lived in the Polish Tatra Mountains.

MAREK BRNIAK, *Klub Wysokogórski, Kraków, Poland*

Kusum Kangguru and Nuptse. A plan emerged to climb several peaks that would not only offer interesting climbing but would also enable the members to acclimatize sufficiently to tackle Everest in alpine style. Georges Bettembourg (French), Michael Covington (American) and I (British) planned to climb Kusum Kangguru, whilst Alan Rouse and Brian Hall were busy on the British Kangtega Expedition. All five climbers arranged to meet up at Everest Base Camp around October 10 to 15

to try the west ridge of Mount Everest in alpine style. This plan did not quite work out—although some of it did. After a three-day walk from Lukla, Base Camp was established for Kusum Kangguru on grass at the snout of the Kyasha Glacier. Bettembourg, Covington and I then began to climb the north buttress of Kusum Kangguru. We reached the north summit on September 16 after three days of mixed climbing over the rock and snow of the 3000-foot buttress. We continued on but did not climb the final twenty feet owing to the delicate nature of the cornices laden with fresh monsoon snow. Although this was the first ascent of the mountain, several expeditions had launched themselves at this route. Wherever the snow cover was thin, Japanese fixed rope was in evidence, usually attached to drilled anchors. This rope detracted from the enjoyment of a superb alpine climb. We descended the same route and moved around to Khumjung and eventually reached the Everest Base Camp towards the end of September. Our object was to climb the north face of Nuptse directly to the main summit without Sherpa support and in alpine style. This would be a new route and the second ascent of Nuptse. We had moved in this direction in 1977, but unfortunately, after the royalty had been paid, I broke both ankles and Paul Braithwaite smashed his thigh, both on The Ogre. With only one good leg between us, we withdrew. In 1978 Covington, Joe Tasker and I attempted the north face, but were beaten back by nine feet of snow in one storm and six in another. The German Everest and Polish Lhotse expeditions were well advanced in their respective climbs. We easily climbed the Khumbu Icefall with the help of ladders fixed by the Germans and went on to establish Camp II in the Western Cwm and to check snow conditions on Nuptse and also on the south buttress of Everest. Just as the reconnaissance was complete, two members of the German expedition died from exposure above the South Col. Covington, who was out of action from a severe intestinal infection, volunteered to accompany the American wife and child of Ray Genet down from Base Camp to the Syanboche airstrip. Bettembourg and I, meanwhile, went up to the Lho La in order to inspect the west ridge of Everest and to view the north buttress of Nuptse from the side. With the help of 300 feet of Yugoslav ladders already in place, the "pass" was reached in six hours from Base Camp. The west ridge was in reasonable condition considering it was just into the post-monsoon period. Interesting views of the north ridge and tantalizing glimpses down the Rongbuk Glacier made this a worthwhile visit, although rockfall made it a dangerous one. Brian Hall and Alan Rouse arrived from Kangtega on October 7 and the next day went up to Camp II in the Western Cwm to acclimatize. Covington saw the bereaved wife off to Kathmandu and then remained in Namche Bazar to marry Chumjee Sherpani. The Sherpa marriage ceremony was completed by mid-October, after several colourful days and after copious amounts of chang had been drunk. On October 14, Rouse,

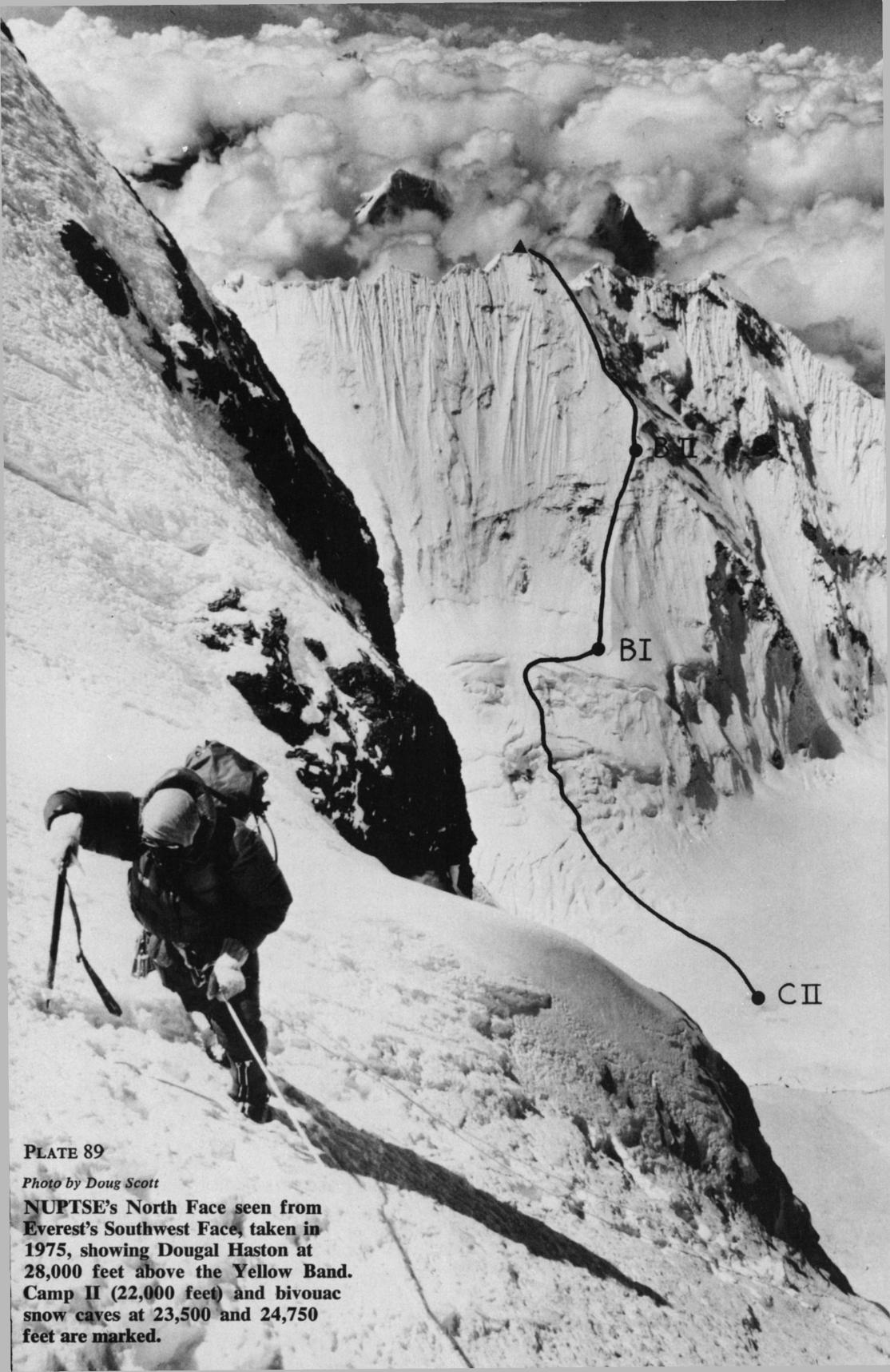


PLATE 89

Photo by Doug Scott

NUPTSE's North Face seen from Everest's Southwest Face, taken in 1975, showing Dougal Haston at 28,000 feet above the Yellow Band. Camp II (22,000 feet) and bivouac snow caves at 23,500 and 24,750 feet are marked.

Hall, Bettembourg and I left Base Camp for Camp II. By this time the Germans and Poles had withdrawn. The top of the icefall was already breaking up and was, in fact, quite dangerous. Camp II was reached by late afternoon and the next day tents and supplies were reorganized to withstand the strong winds howling down the Cwm. Food boxes from the German expedition were a welcome reserve to the twelve days of food we had carried up. On October 15 Rouse, Bettembourg and I reconnoitred a route through the icefall at the foot of the north face. We left a total of 250 feet of rope hanging down five short cliffs which had been climbed with pegs. On October 16 all four set off through the icefall and on up to the base of the prominent snow-and-ice spur, an obvious feature of the north face. There we dug a snow cave into the bergschrund at 23,500 feet. The next day we climbed 1000 feet with the climbing gear and left two climbing ropes fixed for the night. On the 18th we left the comfortable snow cave and set off, carrying three days' food. By late afternoon we had reached the top of the spur and after another 1000 feet of climbing, we found a terrace of snow suitable for another snow cave at 24,750 feet. On the 19th, after climbing steep snow arêtes, we reached the summit (25,850 feet) at 2:30 P.M. All the country to the west and south was now visible, with incredible views of Gaurishankar, Kangtega and many other fine peaks. The actual summit this year consisted of a huge "whipped cream roll" of a cornice. As it seemed in danger of collapsing, it was not ascended, but we could see Makalu behind. We descended in violent winds to the top snow cave, which had partly filled with wind-blown snow. Precipitation in the night gave concern for the descent. Luckily, there was not enough snow to avalanche and we reached Camp II safely at three P.M. Early on October 20 we descended the Cwm into the icefall. This was in complete chaos with giant chasms where none had been before. Leaning séracs had to be climbed with ice pegs and snow stakes, whilst we made several abseils down rickety flakes of ice. The central "eggshell" section was also broken about. It took from early morning until evening to negotiate. We finally staggered into Base Camp, which we found full of tourists. After a few days recovering from the Nuptse climb we turned our attention to Everest. The weather was now clear but very cold. We were reminded of the cold winds at the end of the Nuptse climb, when Brian had three fingers frost-bitten. The mist and snow blowing off the west shoulder of Everest indicated that westerly winter winds were now blowing from Tibet. We all felt it was too late for an alpine-style climb of the west ridge.

DOUGLAS SCOTT, *Alpine Climbing Group*

Kusum Kangguru, South Face. Takeshi Kanazawa, leader, Hideaki Naoi, Hajime Uematsu, Masanori Miyano and Tomooh Toyoda of the