

first climbed by an American team several years ago. Celestial Peak, however, is overshadowed by the highest peak of Siguniang, certainly one of the most beautiful 6000-meter peaks in the world. I spent over two weeks in this region, exploring and climbing by myself. Based out of the nearby village of Rilong, I made several trips up the Changping Valley. On my first outing I hiked past Celestial Peak and Siguniang Shan, establishing a basecamp at the head of the valley below three fine peaks. I made an advanced camp at 15,000 feet. Next day I climbed a moraine ridge to a glacier descending from two of the peaks. I climbed up snow and ice to the saddle separating the two peaks, then easily bagged each summit (heights about 17,500 feet). Later, during a period of unsettled weather, I made a camp below the west face of Celestial Peak. I had seen another fine peak to the west from the other summits, but now the weather limited my options. Nevertheless, I made an ascent of a peak just west of Celestial, via a rock ridge which turned to snow and ice. The summit appeared to be slightly higher than that of Celestial Peak (given 5413 meters). I set my sights on Siguniang but the weather thwarted my plans several times. Finally I approached the south face from the Changping Valley, a rather difficult thrash. I made a bivy at the base of the south face at 15,000 feet. Next day I climbed the right side of the face up steep snow and ice gullies, reaching the east ridge at approximately 17,900 feet. I continued up the east ridge and face on snow and ice, arriving at the top in deteriorating weather late in the day. The descent was epic — I was forced to make an unplanned bivy on the ridge before completing the descent the next day (I down-climbed the route I had ascended). The route itself was classic — a moderate climb but with great character. This was the third ascent of the mountain, and by a new route.

CHARLIE FOWLER, *unaffiliated*

TIBET

Mount Everest, Ascents and Attempts During the Pre-Monsoon Season. Sixty-seven climbers summited Everest from the Tibetan side of the mountain in the pre-monsoon (spring) season. Eleven teams, five of which were commercial expeditions accounting for 21 of the summitters, brought the grand total of Everest summitters from both sides to 608, after adjusting for climbers who have made more than one ascent. The success on the Tibet side was due to three very strong teams, plus strong individuals such as Anatoli Bukreev on other teams. All expeditions worked well together in what one leader called a “harmonious mob.” Another factor was the first complete ascent of the northeast ridge by a Japanese team under the leadership of Tadeo Kanzaki and Kiyoshi Furuno (climbing leader). Aided by an unusual-

ly large number of Sherpas (23), the team fixed 4000 meters of rope on the highest section, which was readily used by later teams. Finally and most importantly, the weather was incredibly good. Cloudless skies, light winds, and mild temperatures from May 11 to 17 and again from the 23rd to the 27th meant that anyone who had the strength and determination to go to the top had done so. "Most people who summited would not have gotten to 8300 meters in normal weather conditions on the north side," said one veteran Everest leader. "There would have been dead people everywhere if there had been a sudden drop in temperature or increase in the winds," he said.

It was during this period that Alison Hargreaves became the first woman to have made an unsupported ascent of Everest, which she did without bottled oxygen on May 13 from her high camp at 8300 meters in a little over seven hours. Hargreaves did not claim to have made a solo ascent — there were 182 climbers on the north ridge at the time she climbed it, and 33 more on the Japanese route that joins the north ridge very high up — but other climbers on her route concur that she can rightfully claim to have made the first unsupported ascent by a woman. By "unsupported" she means that she was an entirely self-contained unit above Advanced Base Camp, that she carried all her own supplies of tents, gear and food up the mountain, slept in her own tents rather than in camps pitched by or with others, ate her own high-altitude food which she cooked herself, and did not climb in the company of anyone else. The other climbers noted that she had refused invitations to come into their tents for a chat or a cup of their tea, staying outside to chat with them and drinking her own brews. After her ascent, her plans were immediate: she would go to K2, the world's second-highest mountain, a month or so later and to Kangchenjunga (third-highest) in the autumn or next spring.

Among the other firsts for countries were Argentina, Denmark, Latvia, Ossetia, Brazil, and Turkey. The first Taiwanese woman, Chiang Hsiu-Chen, summited this year, and Sherpa Babu Tshering became the first person to go from bottom to top twice in the same season. The fastest ascent of the Tibetan side was accomplished by Reinhard Patsheider (38), an Italian guide, who climbed without bottled oxygen from 6450 meters to the summit in 21 hours. Perhaps Marc Batard's 1988 record should stand, because his 3500 vertical meters was done at a rate of 167 meters-per-hour as opposed to Patsheider's 107 meters-per-hour.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Mount Everest, Northeast Ridge. The Nihon University Mountaineering Club and Alumni Association determined to mount an all-out effort to climb