

point of ca. 6600 meters on October 17 before strong winds and heavy snowfall forced an end to their efforts. (*High Mountain Sports* 212)

*Annapurna I, North Face, New Route, and All 14 8000ers.* This spring, Juanito Oyarzabal (or Oiarzabal, as it has sometimes been spelled), a 43-year-old Basque, climbed his 14th 8000er when he ascended Annapurna I (8091m), the tenth-highest mountain in the world. A man who has been scrupulous about his claims, Oyarzabal last year went back up to reach the highest point on Dhaulagiri I after realizing that he had gone to a false summit.

He and his team were forced to pioneer a new line up Annapurna I's north face from 5600 meters to the top because of frequent dangerous ice avalanching down the usual route to the right (west) of the line they climbed; the route they had to take was not completely safe from avalanches either, but it was much more so than others. "Annapurna is a very dangerous mountain—terrible," Oyarzabal reported.

Nonetheless he summited on April 29, when the mountain was still very dry, but it took him and his two Basque teammates eight hours to climb from their last camp at 7200 meters the very long distance to the top. His first 8000-meter success was on Cho Oyu in 1985; he had now summited 14 in 14 years on a total of 20 expeditions. He said he felt some relief at having done all 14, but no elation. He is not retiring: next year he wants to scale Everest without artificial oxygen. It seems to be extremely difficult for climbers to stop climbing.

This spring's other claim to have scaled all 14 of the 8000ers was made by Sergio Martini of Italy, who summited Everest from the north side on May 26 along with 12 others (and 11 from the south the same day). At the age of 49, he is the oldest person to claim all the 8000ers.

However, when he and his friend Fausto De Stefani were on Lhotse in the autumn of 1997, they reported that they had climbed to a point "very, very near" the summit but were unable to say how near it they had reached in very poor visibility, so their claim to Lhotse's summit is not accepted by many observers. Martini said now that he does not plan to stop climbing and perhaps he will return to the 8000ers, maybe including Lhotse.

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*Chhukung Ri, South Summit.* Yoshio Morikubo led an expedition that climbed Chhukung Ri, reaching the South Summit (5550m) on August 16-17. Further details are lacking.

*Ganchempo, South Face.* On Ganchempo (or Gang Chhenpo, 6387m), in north central Nepal, a team of six Swiss led by Karl Kobler and Christoph Jezler succeeded in making a new route to the summit. One member, Markus Baumann, and a Nepalese "Sherpa" named Shyam Prasad Pun climbed the south face and were on the top on October 15, between the end of the monsoon season's snows and the beginning of Indian cyclone's new snowfall.

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*Everest in the Pre-Monsoon.* This spring, 22 parties attempted to scale Everest from the north, 14 from the south and one from the east. A total of 117 people went to the summit of Everest from the three different sides: 48 from the north in Tibet via one of two standard routes which most climbers follow; 66 via the other standard route which begins on the southern side in Nepal; and three from the east, which, like the northern route, is in Tibet but is very seldom

attempted. The total number of summitters for this season is just one person short of spring 1998's record number for any single season.

Forty-seven of this spring's successful climbers had been to the top in earlier years, so the season's net gain was a total of 70 new summitters. Altogether, 878 men and women have now reached the world's highest point, starting with Hillary and Tenzing, and they have been to the summit 1,177 times. A total of 136 people have now made more than one ascent including the second person to have summited ten times, Apa Sherpa; on May 26, he equaled the record number of ascents first achieved in 1996 by the famous Ang Rita Sherpa, who now seems to have retired from high-altitude climbing.

About half of the 22 "parties" on the north side were not teams at all but only individuals or couples who were attempting the mountain independently of others above Advance Base Camp and who were assigned by their Kathmandu trekking agencies to the permits of teams who were glad to have some income from these independents' "memberships" but had no real responsibility for them. Eight of them never reached the top.

Some teams, especially those on the northern side where permits are considerably easier and less expensive to obtain, were ill-equipped to handle emergencies in terms of manpower, climbing equipment and supplies. When trouble arose, such as the disappearance or severe frostbite of members who could not descend alone, their groups were unable to cope. Other teams' leaders, climbing members, doctors and climbing Sherpas were then called upon to save people whom they did not know at all and for whom they had no responsibility except as one human being for another. A professional expedition leader and guide, New Zealander Russell Brice, who takes teams every spring to the north side, has found that year after year he must devote considerable time, expertise and plentiful supplies of oxygen and medical items to rescue people who do not belong to his teams.

Some of the new Everest records set this spring were as follows.

The oldest person to the top was Lev Sarkisov, who lives in Tbilisi and holds both Georgian and Armenian citizenship. He waited to make his summit bid until he would become the oldest on May 12 and thereby beat by exactly one day the previous record-holder, Ramon Blanco, a Spaniard resident in Venezuela, who on October 7, 1993 set an age record of 60 years and 160 days. Sarkisov became 60 years and 161 days old on his summit day.

The longest stay at the top was achieved by 33-year-old Babu Tshering (or Babu Chiri, as he now spells his name) Sherpa, who spent 21.5 hours on the very top or tucked into a tiny tent on a platform immediately below it. He declared in advance that his long stay was intended to establish "a new glory for Nepal and to encourage Nepalese and foreign climbers to conduct such courageous adventures." He used no artificial oxygen throughout his entire climb and, an exceedingly strong man, he now reached the summit in his eighth ascent (since October 1990) with two highly experienced Sherpa companions at 3:30 p.m. on May 6, after all other climbers had abandoned their attempts that day because of strong wind and fresh snowfall. His two Sherpa friends helped him to make a platform for his tent and prepare to remain there for his intended 20-hour stay, and after an hour they left him alone with his tent, mattress, cooking gear and a walkie-talkie.

Thomas and Mrs. Tina Sjogren, the Swedish leaders of the expedition who employed him to help gain the summit themselves, monitored his condition by talking with him hourly throughout the night from 9 p.m. onward (he had at first switched on to the wrong waveband). Babu spent an hour and a half chatting on his walkie-talkie with Sherpa friends, being interviewed by government-appointed liaison officers and packing up most of his belongings. He kept the valuable tent but left his mattress, somewhat to the annoyance of ecologically-minded summitters who

came after him, but the mattress proved he got there. He was still in good health, and indeed went again to the top on May 26 with the Sjogrens for his ninth time atop Everest.

The first people to have summited from all three sides were two members of an Indian expedition led by Mrs. Santosh Yadav, herself the first woman ever to have summited Everest twice (see note on page 375). The first woman to go to the summit from both south and north sides was Miss Cathy O'Dowd of South Africa. She had summited from the Nepalese side in May 1996 in the last ascent of a month that was notorious for its fatalities in a sudden storm about two weeks earlier. Now this May she has gone to the top from the north side on May 29, again on the last team to reach the summit, and found Babu Tshering's mattress still there, three weeks after he had abandoned it.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Mount Everest, Altitude Survey.* In the spring of 1999, Boston's Museum of Science, the National Geographic Society and a number of very generous individual donors fielded a scientific expedition to Mount Everest, with five basic objectives.

1. To determine, as accurately as possible, the precise altitude of the summit of Mount Everest, using the latest Trimble 4800 Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) Receivers.

2. To coordinate every detail of this GPS work with both the United States' National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) and China's National Bureau of Surveying and Mapping, as a new altitude for Mount Everest is a matter of international interest.

3. To create a special geological collection (as planned by Dr. Kip Hodges of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) as an important part of the Mount Everest Geologic Map Project, on which he and Dr. Michael Searle of Oxford University have already made significant progress.

4. To set up weather-monitoring equipment on bedrock at Everest's 7891-meter (25,889') South Col, Camp II and Base Camp for MIT's Media Laboratory, under the direction of Dr. Michael Hawley.

5. Jeff and Kellie Rhoads were to climb with our party and make as complete as possible a film of what was done and how. This was not in any way related to our budget, and all of the expenses and profits related to their work were a gamble taken by American Adventure Productions. This arrangement made it possible for us, at no cost, to get a video record of exactly what our team accomplished in the field.

In order to secure a very precise new altitude for Mount Everest's summit, as well as to have a good headquarters from which all of this work would be well coordinated, we set up Base Camp in early April at an altitude of 17,600 feet. Our team had reliable, constant communication by radiotelephone with the "outside world" as well as with our teams above on the mountain. David Mencin of Boulder, Colorado, was in charge of this coordination. Charles Corfield of Palo Alto, California, was science manager of the expedition.

On May 3, the leader of our party, Pete Athans, his assistant guide, Bill Crouse, and five experienced Sherpas reached our South Col camp with a plan to spend one full day there before moving up to the summit. These Sherpas were Chewang Nima, Phu Tashi, Dorje, Gyalgen and Nga Temba. May 4 was spent setting up a good camp and operating one of our Trimble 4800 GPS receivers at this critical location for at least 48 hours.

With excellent weather, they all reached the summit of Mount Everest at 10 a.m. on May 5. The conditions there were just about as perfect as we could have prayed for: -26°F, cloudless skies and a light breeze. The GPS Receiver was planted firmly in the summit snow at