

Ridge route, plus five others via the south pillar to the South Col, whereas only 55 summited from Tibet's north side.

The oldest woman ever to reach the top, 50-year-old Anna Czerwinska from Warsaw, Poland, succeeded on May 22. This was her fourth bid to reach the top but her first time from the south, and she followed the South Col-Southeast Ridge route.

This spring there were nine men over 60 years old vying to take the title as the oldest person atop Everest. The winner was a Japanese aged 63 years, three years senior to the previous record-holder. The Japanese, Tosio Yamamoto, summited three days before Czerwinska, on May 19. On this same day, another Japanese from a different expedition, 61-year-old Kazuya Konno, went to the top via the same northern route. Their predecessor as the oldest, who succeeded from the south side just one year ago, on May 12, 1999, was 60-year old Lev Sarkisov from the Georgian capital of Tblisi.

The fastest ascent of Everest was accomplished by a well-known Nepalese Sherpa, Babu Chiri (or Babu Tshering, also known as Ang Babu), aged 33, who, on May 20, dashed from his south-side base camp at 5350 meters to the summit in the record time of 16 hours and 56 minutes. The previous record for the fastest ascent of Nepal's southern side was 20 hours, 24 minutes, which was set by Kaji Sherpa on October 16-17, 1998.

Babu Chiri left base camp at 5 p.m. on May 20 and climbed through the night to arrive at the top at 9:56 a.m. He had two camps above base where he stopped to rest, drink liquids and change out of sweat-soaked clothes and, at the highest one on the South Col (7900m), to put on down clothing for the final summit push. From the Col to the summit he was accompanied all the way by his brother, Dawa, also already an Everest summiter, and by two other Sherpas for much of the last part.

At about 8500 meters, he was "so tired and going very slow" that he took a half-full bottle of oxygen that Dawa was carrying as extra supply and continued to the top with its help. This was Babu Chiri's tenth ascent of Everest.

Two other men had already accomplished this feat before him: Ang Rita Sherpa and Apa (or Appa) Sherpa. Now Apa became the first person to reach the summit eleven times, making his historic climb also from the south side on May 24 at the age of 39. He told some Kathmandu reporters that this spring's ascent was perhaps his most difficult one because of heavy snowfall, strong winds, and the unpredictability of the weather.

Two Sherpa women set Everest records amongst Nepalese mountaineers. On May 18, 27-year-old Lhakpa Sherpa became the first Nepalese woman to survive her summit success. The first Nepalese woman Everest summiter had also been a Sherpa, Pasang Lhamu, but she tragically died soon after she started her descent.

One day after Lhakpa's success, another Sherpa woman, Pemba Doma, also 27 years old, went to the top with a Swiss-led expedition by the North Col-Northeast Ridge route and thereby became the first Nepalese woman to scale Everest from Tibet.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Everest, First Complete Ski Descent.* In the post-monsoon, Slovenian Davo Karničar was the first person ever to descend by skis from the very top of Mount Everest to base camp; he accomplished this feat on the Nepalese side of the mountain without once removing his skis, and without artificial oxygen below the South Summit. He had already successfully skied down one 8000er, Annapurna I, five years before.

On October 7, he climbed Everest's normal route on the Nepalese side, reaching the sum-

mit at 6:45 a.m., making use of bottled oxygen; a Slovenian teammate and two Nepalese Sherpas summited at about the same time and went down on foot. At 8 a.m., he pushed off alone from the top on skis. He dropped the oxygen equipment and its six kilos of weight 20 minutes later at the South Summit (8748m). His biggest problem was a steep section just below the Hillary Step. He passed the Step beside fixed ropes along one side of it, but when he came to a difficult part below it, he had to descend one step at a time with his skis sideways to the mountain. At 8:40 a.m., he was down at the South Col at 7900 meters, where his Camp IV was located and where he picked up a three-kilo camera to mount on his helmet. Other cameras were placed at several spots along his route.

Karničar reached Camp II (6500m) at 11 a.m., where he stopped to drink something and to wait for movie cameras at base camp to be ready for his final descent. At 11:30 a.m. he was off again. At 11:50 a.m., he passed Camp I (6000m) at the top of the famous Khumbu Icefall. The impenetrable Icefall, with its gaping crevasses and huge unstable towers of ice, would be impossible to overcome, so he didn't try. Instead, he bypassed it by skiing along its very edge at the bottom of Everest's southwest face and Lho La. He moved here just as fast as he safely could and fervently hoped that a falling serac would not happen to arrive at the same place at the same time as he. Finally, he was at base camp at the foot of the mountain (5350m) at 12:40 p.m. Total elapsed time: four hours, 40 minutes. He had had no sleep from the time he started his ascent from Camp IV toward the summit at 10:30 p.m. on October 6 until his return to base camp on the 7th, and there the merry celebrations with the champagne flowing postponed his sleep for a lot longer.

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*Ama Dablam, Possible Variation and Traverse.* Ama Dablam (6812m) attracted 12 expeditions in the spring, 11 of which attempted the standard Southwest Ridge route. Of the only three that succeeded, one, from New Zealand, went up an exceptional way. The team climbed via the northeast spur to the north ridge, making a series of bivouacs along the ridge to the summit. They then descended the standard route. All five of the New Zealanders, including the leader, David Crofts, gained the top on May 4 on difficult rock and ice, sometimes mixed, all good quality, and Crofts described their ascent as "a pleasure." They had made the first ascent of their mountain this season after most of the other Ama Dablam expeditions had already left the mountain.

David Crofts does not consider his team's route a new one. Whether it is or not depends on how you define a new route. What is certain is that they used a very seldom-climbed route and made the third traverse of the mountain from north to south.

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*Kangtega, North Face, New Route.* From May 20-28, Valeri Babanov established a new line on the north face of Kangtega (6799m). His efforts ended at 6600 meters on the northwest ridge, where he connected to a line climbed by a Japanese team in 1979. A full account of his climb appears earlier in this journal.

*Lobuje East, East Face Couloir, Ascent and Observations.* Andy Gresh and Steve Su climbed Lobuje East via the East Face Couloir in October. Though the route is praised in *Trekking Peaks of Nepal* as a good couloir route, Gresh and Su found it to be very, very thin and quite