

dangerous. The climb might be in better condition in the spring, because the monsoon snow would have a chance to melt and then freeze in the couloir.

BART PAULL

Kusum Kanguru, Southwest Buttress/Ridge, Variation. After alpine-style ascents of Cholatse and Lobuje East, Fredrick Wilkinson and I, both 20, descended to Thado Khosi from the Gokyo region of the Khumbu Himalaya in early November. We hoped to do either a new route on the southwest face of Kusum Kanguru (6367m) or repeat the *Dream Pillar* (Southwest Buttress/Ridge) route put up by Stephen Venables and Dick Renshaw in 1991.

After a few days of rest, we began our approach up the Kusum Khola drainage. On the first day, a logging trail led to the first major fork in the river. On day two, we were forced into the bamboo forests on the river's left side after a bit of riverside talus hopping. That night, we camped at a stream bed high up on the left flank of the Kusum Khola drainage. The following day, we reached the site of our base camp at 3900 meters on a rhododendron-studded ridge. From here, we could tell that a direct route up the southwest face would be more or less suicidal due to incessant rockfall, so we decided to attempt the brilliant-looking *Dream Pillar*.

After a day of rest, Fred and I made a carry to our Advanced Base Camp at 4800 meters and returned to Base Camp. A little more food and we were ready. We began the ascent on November 9. The climbing on the lower part of the route is characterized by about 1000 meters of mixed climbing—more or less good rock interspersed with snow of all qualities and consistencies. On day 3, after a short corniced ridge traverse, we began the upper section of the route. There was rock climbing of the highest quality on magnificent rock to about 5.9 (hard at this altitude!), and there was some excellent mixed climbing as well. We reached our highest bivouac, a little ledge barely big enough for our I-tent at about 6100 meters, on November 12 at the beginning of Kusum Kanguru's summit ridge.

Then the winds came. Our I-tent nearly ripped apart in heavy winds from Tibet that night. The next morning the wind was still howling and lenticular clouds speckled the sky. Fred made a very short reconnaissance above: all that was left was the snow of the summit ridge. Unfortunately, the winds made the knife-edge summit ridge too dangerous for us to climb—we would have been blown off. With less than a day's food left, we had little choice. We bailed. We descended to the route's base in a day and a half, making about 25 60-meter rap-pels off anchors in good rock and ice. This route is of the highest quality.



Fredrick Wilkinson on pitch 40-something, day 4, on Kusum Kanguru's Dream Pillar. High winds would deny the team a summit some 300 meters of easy snow climbing from the top. BART PAULL

Subsequent research revealed that we took a line independent of that of Venables and Renshaw on the first 900 meters of the route. The route Fred and I took climbs the center of the initial buttress, while the Venables/Renshaw line climbs the buttress's right-hand edge, some 300 meters to the right.

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Mera Peak Group, Ascent. In October, Michal Brunner, Jiri Svejda and I climbed the 1200-meter west face of a ca. 6200-meter summit in the Mera Peak group. The wall lies right above the village of Tangnang. We do not know if it was a first ascent or not. We climbed the north-west pillar; our grade for the most difficult spot was VII-, and ice to 70 degrees. The climb took six days.

TOMAS RINN, *Czech Republic*

"Real" Mera Peak, Attempt. In the 22 years that the trekking-peak system has been in use in Nepal, the highest of those peaks, Mera, has become hugely popular. The normal route to the 6470-meter summit is technically easy and attracts about 1,000 climbers annually. There has been only one problem: according to the peak list (1993 version) and the peak permit, Mera should be 6654 meters high. The height discrepancy has been attributed to Nepalese incompetence and just set aside.

A new set of topographic maps was published in 1996 by the Nepal Survey Department. On those maps, the name Mera indicates a mountain eight kilometers north-northeast of the location of the trekking peak, and is given an altitude of 6648 meters. Crosschecking the location coordinates of the Trekking Peak list against this map yielded a simple answer: expeditions for the trekking peak had gone to the wrong mountain! The official Mera is actually Peak 41, a fact supported by the peak list published in the 1985 *AAJ* (see pp. 109-141).

The "real" Mera Peak (Peak 41) is located on the watershed of Hinku Khola (on the west) and Hongu Khola (on the east). The height of the main (middle) peak is given as 6654 meters on the list and 6648 meters on the topographic map. The coordinates are 27° 46' 27" N, 86° 54' 40" E.

On April 20, a four member Finnish-American expedition gathered in Lukhla: Fred Barth and Clyde Soles from Boulder, Colorado, and Juha Saarinen and Petri Kaipainen (as leader) from Finland. The six-day approach was made along the standard route over Zatrwa La and along the Hinku Valley to Khare. Base Camp was placed about two kilometers northwest of the standard Mera BC at Khare.

Mera Peak (6654m) has not been climbed, and for a reason. Besides the mistaken notion that it is not permitted, it is also a difficult peak. The south ridge and the north face appear unclimbable; the east face might have some hard mixed routes. Our aim was to get to the upper basin of Khare Glacier and to gain access to the northwest ridge.

The route we tried to get to the upper basin was along the steep, 500-meter high Khare Icefall. Given our timetable and climbing strength (Clyde, suffering from pulmonary infection, had to stay behind), this route proved too slow. During the first day on the icefall, only 180 vertical meters were gained. The high point of 5280 meters was reached on May 2. Other, less dangerous routes to the basin might be found from the west over a less-broken glacier.