

Everest and safe and sane returns do not require oxygen, only climbs without bottled oxygen should actually be counted as successful.

No problem exists about who is the oldest woman atop Everest. That record was set in May 2000 by a 50-year-old Pole, Anna Czerwinska. This spring a Japanese woman 13 years older than she, Tamae Watanabe, went to the summit from Nepal's southern side on the busiest day, May 16. Her use of bottled oxygen was confined to climbing from her camp 3 at 7,300m (23,950') to the top and back to 7,300m plus sleeping two nights in camp 4 on her ascent and descent.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *Nepal*

*Cholatse north face new route attempt.* The Korean Alpine Club Cholatse Expedition led by Kang, Sung-woo departed from Seoul August 24. Team members were as follows: Shin, Dong-seok, Cho, Yu-dong, Ji, Jeong-deuk, Hong, Sung-woo, Hwang, In-sun, Kim, Chae-ho, and Lee, Young-joon, and myself.

We fixed ropes to 5,200m but were plagued by the weather during the entire expedition. The most paralyzing conditions occurred from September 21 until September 29, when we were inundated by heavy fog conditions, tent-bound by a deluge of rain, and left to ponder the thunderous sound of avalanches as the heavy wet snow blanketed base camp. Clear weather finally allotted us only time enough to clean the fixed lines, pack up ABC, and head down to Lukla.

Future climbers should note that the Shangri-la Trekking Map of the Khumbu region confuses the locations of Arakamtse (6,423m), Cholatse (6,440m), and Tawoche (6,542m). Arakamtse has been labeled as the mountain that should be Cholatse.

PETER JENSEN-CHOI, *Korea*

*Nagpai Gosum, Chinese military encounter.* My partner Jeff Lamoureux and I traveled to Kathmandu on September 5 to attempt a new route on 7,350m Nagpai Gosum. We discovered three different names for the mountain: Nagpai Gosum I, Cho Aui, and Pasang Lhamu Chuli. The third of these names was given after the death in 1993 of Pasang Lhamu Sherpa on her descent from the summit of Mt. Everest. The peak is now usually referred to by that name. The peak had three previously recorded ascents. One team ascended in 1986 from the north gaining the prominent north west ridge to the summit. The second and third teams followed the entire northwest ridge from its base near the Tibet-Nepal border in 1996.

On September 11 we flew to Lukla to begin our trekking route via Namche Bazaar, Tham, and Arye before arriving at basecamp. This is the standard trade route eventually crossing the Nangpa La on the border between Nepal and Tibet. On the 16th we arrived at our planned basecamp on the Sumna Glacier at approximately 5,100m.

Early on September 20 we left our basecamp to trek up toward the Nangpa La and have a better look at the planned descent route. After an hour or so of walking we had almost arrived at the yak herder's post of Lunag (approximately 13 km. south of the Tibet border) when we encountered someone in a military uniform carrying an A.K.-style firearm. He seemed startled by our presence and told us to sit down on the ground. He spoke a few words of English. Through motioning and broken words he told us he was Chinese military and repeatedly pointed at his uniform's emblems. He asked for food and water, which we gave him. Despite the strange encounter we continued up the valley.

After another hour I saw a different individual 100m in front of us dressed the same as the first. He jumped behind a large boulder when he saw us. We tried unsuccessfully to make verbal contact with him, but he did not come out from behind the rock. We were uncomfortable with the situation, so we turned around and headed back down the valley to the south. As we returned to Lunag we encountered the first individual again where we'd left him, and again we gave him food and water. We kept walking down valley for 10 minutes until we heard a shot. A little while later another bullet passed within feet of our heads. The two men were together, shooting at us from about 100m behind. We began to run but soon realized we couldn't continue with our packs on. After ducking behind a large boulder we ditched our packs and continued on. The two men continued to follow us firing shots at us. We ran for 45 minutes until we were able to hide for three hours in a side valley before returning to basecamp.

When we reached basecamp, our sirdar and local cook felt we must return to Namche Bazaar that night, so we packed up and hid our basecamp equipment. We traveled through the night and reached Namche the next afternoon, where we reported the incident to the military and to the police.

Two days later we returned to the site of the incident with the Namche police chief. En route we met a Tibetan refugee who had crossed the pass the evening before our shooting incident took place. He told us he crossed the pass with a group of approximately 20 other Tibetans but had been left behind because he was too slow. He also indicated that he was in our vicinity when the shots were fired because he could hear them and knew there were two foreigners in the area. He had been left near the 5,700m pass for three days without food or water and was making his way down toward Namche Bazaar. At the incident site we recovered shell casings that the police chief took back with him. We were able to recover all of the items from our base camp, however we were not able to recover our backpacks or their contents. Our liaison officer then requested we return to Kathmandu to report the incident to the Ministry and request a credit for our royalty to be used at another time. We also met with the U.S. Embassy and discussed the incident with the Consular General. We give a great thanks to the AAC Helly Hansen Grant for the support of the grant. We have yet to decide whether we will attempt this expedition again.

DAVID MORTON, AAC

*Khumbu, Nagpai Gosum I, background on the encounter with Chinese soldiers.* David Morton's experience was the first incident of this kind ever to befall any mountaineers within Nepalese territory. On the other side of the border not far from the Nangpa La were the tents of Cho Oyu expeditions' advance base camps. One of the leaders who was there at the time, Russell Brice, a New Zealander, explained some background to the incident. Three soldiers of the Chinese military—the People's Liberation Army (PLA)—were searching for a group of about 20 Amdos, Tibetans from northwest Tibet. Since the Nangpa La is an important escape route for Tibetans fleeing their country (usually to pass through Nepal to join the Dalai Lama in northern India), a unit of the PLA is permanently posted close to the Cho Oyu base camp on a highway.

The three soldiers found a woman lying down near the pass; she probably was a decoy, for when they went to look at her closely, they were unexpectedly attacked by Amdos, who hit them on their heads with rocks and stole two of their guns before escaping across the pass into Nepal. The three soldiers, two of whom were Tibetans themselves while only one was Han Chinese,