with the 10m nearest to the Dablam heavily covered with debris and indistinguishable from the slope above: on the surface there was no evidence of Camp 3 having ever existed. We moved down the route to a safer area, where I radioed a distress message to Clive at base camp. We then descended, arriving back at Camp 2 shortly before dusk. At 4:30 p.m., a further avalanche, witnessed from base camp, again struck the site of Camp 3. Subsequent helicopter survey revealed no sign of life, though some debris was seen through binoculars, spread out ca 500m below the camp.

I believe that the initial avalanche was caused by part of the Dablam collapsing. This changed its structure, and subsequent snow avalanches from the slopes above were directed rightwards (south) onto the camp. Why the initial serac fall from the Dablam hit Camp 3 instead of following its presumably normal channel down the west face is still unclear. In initial reports several critics noted that this site has, on occasions, become too cramped, with many expeditions operating together on the mountain, forcing some teams to pitch away from the shoulder. However, I can confirm that the site was definitely not overcrowded, nor were tents situated too far to the left. In the 10 days prior to the accident there had been intermittent but certainly not heavy snowfall on the mountain, and during my ascent to Camp 3 I found the ridge to be quite firm.

I have set up a website where it is possible to make donations that will give assistance to the wives and children of the deceased Sherpas. The Himalayan Trust has agreed to act as the conduit for these funds. Please visit www.justgiving.com/amadablamwidows

STEPHEN GANDY, *UK*

Editor's note: This incident has raised the number of deaths on Ama Dablam from 11 to 17, although well over 3,000 climbers have now been on the mountain since its first ascent during the calendar winter of 1961. Before last autumn only one death had resulted from avalanche: in 1979 Ken Hyslop was killed when part of the Dablam broke while he was attempting the first ascent of the west face with fellow New Zealanders, Merv English, Geoff Gabites, and Peter Hillary. The latter was quite badly injured.

Everest. The majority of notable events on world's highest mountain took place on the Tibetan side. See that section of the *Journal* for more details.

Everest, an uncommon post-monsoon ascent and partial ski descent. Only a handful of climbers go to Everest in the autumn season because everyone knows that very few succeed in the short climbing period between the end of the monsoon rains in September and the onset of the fierce jet stream wind in October. The last ascent of Everest in the post-monsoon season was made in 2000 by a team of Slovenians led by Davo Karnicar. They needed the mountain in very snowy condition, and in early October Karnicar became the first person to descend on skis in one continuous run from the very top of Mt. Everest to base camp.

However, veteran Himalayan climber Wally Berg, owner of a business that organizes and conducts climbing expeditions, and four times Everest summiter, felt he knew how to succeed: for a seven-member team, take plenty of supplies (88 oxygen cylinders) and Sherpas (13 climbing Sherpas plus cooks and bottle-washers), go relatively early, get the camps set up, and wait for favorable weather in which to make the summit attempt. His plan worked: five members with nine Sherpas reached the summit on October 18, after having sat through continuous

snowfall over several days. Three of the summiters skied major parts of their descent but broke the journey to sleep in their highest camp at the South Col. The expedition members and Sherpas consumed the contents of 84 oxygen bottles during their six-week effort, and the Sherpas fixed a total of 3,800m of rope.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *AAC Honorary Member, Nepal*

Lhotse south face, winter ascent (not to summit). On December 27, our six-member expedition from the Tokai Section of the Japanese Alpine Club finally climbed the south face of Lhotse (8,516m), though the successful party was not able to continue up the last section of the summit ridge due to the lateness of the hour. It was our third attempt. In 2001 we had aborted the climb at 7,600m, while it 2003 we had reached 8,250m before having to give up.

When we were defeated in 2003, I personally felt that I wouldn't be going back: for one thing, the rock fall was just too dangerous. However, in 2005 I joined a team from the Gunma Federation on Nanga Parbat and talked about Lhotse with one of the members, Noriyuki Kenmochi. He was very enthusiastic and the result was that I found myself organizing a third attempt.

On September 3, 2006, we left Japan for Xixabangma, in order to acclimatize for our Lhotse attempt. Despite heavy snow, all members reached to the main summit on October 9. After a rest in Kathmandu, we traveled to Lhotse base camp at 5,200m, where we met a Korean party led by Lee Choong-jik. They also planned to attempt a winter ascent of the south face. Fortunately, the Koreans were very friendly and good-natured, so we decided to conduct a joint operation and open the route together. In the end we would fix 5,700m of rope.

The face was in very snowy conditions but on November 18 we started climbing and on the 21st established Camp 1 at 5,900m, in exactly the same spot as 2003. Thereafter, we were harassed by strong winds: not the fierce winds you find in mid winter but still strong enough that on November 28 Atsushi Senda and Toshio Yamamoto were blown 10m across the face at an altitude of 6,800m. Fortunately, they were clipped into fixed lines. Advancing the route proved very difficult and the strong wind caused powder avalanches and rock fall, which often threatened our load-carrying Sherpas and caused several casualties.

Despite the brutal conditions, we managed to set up Camp 2 at 7,100m on December 1 and five days later establish a temporary Camp 3 at 7,300m. We'd hoped to finish the route by Christmas Day, after which, in a normal year, cold and violent gales make climbing almost impossible. However, last year the monsoon lasted longer, meaning that true winter was also late in its arrival. Even so, strong winds after December 6 prevented any climbing until the 13th.

One of the reasons for the 2003 failure was the site of Camp 3, which that year was placed 150m lower than planned. Takahiro Yamaguchi, Ngawang Tenzi Sherpa, and I took charge of pushing the route out to 8,000m, where we eventually established the 2006 Camp 3. On the 21st Noriyuki Kenmochi, Atsushi Senda, and Pema Tsering Sherpa took over and began the final push for the summit. They were joined by Ahn Chi-young of the Korean expedition. As in 2003, the final prow was avoided by the couloir on the right. In three days Senda's party reached 8,200m, then Yamaguchi, Pemba Choti Sherpa, and I took over.

On December 26 we found an old fixed rope high in the couloir. This was a major surprise, as I hadn't realized anyone had climbed in this couloir before [these originated from Polish expeditions in the 1980s—Ed.]. The last part was a vertical rock wall of 20m with no cracks. It was impossible to climb. I'd imagined that the couloir would give a direct route to