

Mount Everest, 1952

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IN the spring of 1952, a Swiss expedition under the auspices of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research made its first bid for Mount Everest. Although the summit of Chomolungma (29,141 ft.) was not reached, the performance and achievements of the Swiss team were outstanding, far surpassing even the most optimistic expectations. In the course of this first serious attempt from the Nepalese side of the peak—the British reconnaissance party under Eric Shipton in 1951 were forced to turn back at about 20,000 feet—the Swiss succeeded in pushing through the enormously difficult and dangerous icefall of the upper Khumbu Glacier, which in the past had sealed off the mysterious Western Cwm. Mallory had been very much intrigued by it when he saw it from Lho-La in 1921. The huge crevasse, which traverses the glacier from the west ridge of Everest all the way across to the nearly vertical ice walls of Nuptse, was crossed by means of an elaborate rope bridge, made possible by the outstanding ice technique of Jean Asper. The Western Cwm, a big question mark for over thirty years, was thoroughly explored and traversed, and the 4,000-foot snow and ice wall leading to the South Col (25,846 ft.) conquered. Thus the strategically important jumping-off point for the final assault had been reached. After establishing Camp VI on the South Col, Camp VII (ca. 27,550 ft.), consisting of one tent only, was set up on a tiny rocky platform on the S.S.E.-ridge of Everest. On 28 May 1952, Raymond Lambert and Sirdar Tensing pushed on ahead to a

point not far below the South Summit at an estimated height of 28,250 feet, which is in all probability the greatest altitude* ever reached by man on this earth! By then, however, complete exhaustion, failure of oxygen equipment, and the threat of the approaching monsoon forced the Swiss team to retreat.

But actually the Swiss expedition was not ended in June, but merely interrupted for the duration of the summer monsoon, having been granted permission by the government of Nepal to resume its struggle after the monsoon. There had been many conflicting theories and opinions on the feasibility of an attempt during the fall and early winter months. The Swiss were determined to clear up the controversy once and for all, and to make their final bid for the remaining 900 feet, knowing that the British would try again in 1953, and the French possibly in 1954.

Although this was an entirely Swiss undertaking, I qualified for the team in view of my dual Swiss-American citizenship. I was asked at the very last moment to go along as mountaineer, still photographer, and cameraman-director of a documentary film. The request for my Nepalese visa was made at such a late date that I was held up for three weeks in Delhi, biting my nails and hoping for the best, while the others flew to Kathmandu and started the long trek toward Everest on September 10th, with some 275 coolies and 14 Sherpas. Eight more Sherpas joined the expedition at Namche Bazar.

Because of the heavy monsoon rains, the men ran into a great deal of trouble in crossing some of the large streams, and an abundance of leeches made their lives miserable. When crossing a 14,000-foot pass just before reaching the Dudh Khosi valley, two coolies died of exposure during a sudden and severe snow storm.

All this time I was still sitting in Delhi, drinking lots of cokes, lounging around the swimming pool of the Hotel Cecil, and playing tennis in the late afternoons, but nearly going crazy with the heat and the nervous strain of waiting.

Finally, on September 19th, I got word from the Nepalese Ambassador through the Swiss Legation in New Delhi that he had received authorization from Kathmandu to grant me a visa, but that I would have to start from Biratnagar on the Nepalese-Indian border, rather than fly to Kathmandu and start the approach march from there. I might add that it is largely due to the strenuous efforts

* Prior to the successful ascent of Everest, 29 June 1953.

of the Nepalese Ambassador to India that the second Swiss Mount Everest Expedition was made possible at all!

Not until September 24th could I leave Delhi by plane for Patna. There I was joined by SherpaAng Dawa, who had waited for me in Kathmandu all this time and had brought 15 coolie loads of food and equipment with him on the plane. [*Patna to Joghani by rail: Limitations of space force deletion of the interesting account of the journey from Joghani on the Indian-Nepalese border to Namche Bazar. This strenuous journey in the damp heat, at a diagonal to the main valleys and ridges, covered much the same route as the Houston party in 1950. It involved river crossings, including the Arun, three passes of about 10,000 feet, down again to 1500 feet, and up to 12,000 feet. Finally on October 14th at Namche Bazar, the narrative continues. Editor.*] We paid off the Dingla men and left the next morning with thirteen coolies from Namche Bazar: “. . . We leave at 7.30 A.M. Wanting to be alone for a while, I walk at my normal speed. Soon I am way ahead of the heavily-laden coolies, enjoying myself thoroughly. First slightly uphill, along high slopes, then down and across the Dudh Khosi, and uphill steeply toward Thangboche. The mountains all around are incredibly high and beautiful, although the light is pretty flat. At 11.45 I arrive at Thangboche, about 13,000 feet high, a most beautifully situated lamasery. Surrounded by mountains, including the world's highest, it sits on a small plateau, high above the valley leading toward Namche Bazar and points south. It is very cloudy and the ceiling is at about 24,000 feet. The upper reaches of Nuptse, Lhotse and Everest are hidden from view. Soon some of the Lamas come out, watch me take pictures, and invite me to lunch. One Lama brings me the list of names of the first and second Swiss Everest expeditions, and asks me to add my name to those of the other six members. Am I pleased to have at last come this far! After quite some time Ang Dawa and some of the coolies arrive, and each is blessed by one of the Lamas, while I sit on the steps of a large Chorten, both Leicas in readiness for the clouds to lift. Later one of the Lamas invites Ang Dawa and me to tea, an experience I will never forget. He shows me pictures of the Dalai Lama, the high Lamas at Rongbuk and Thangboche lamaseries, and one of himself, taken by Elizabeth Cowles during the Houston's reconnaissance trip in 1950.—We leave at 2.00 p.m. for a short walk to Melingmo, where

we stop to spend the night at a farm house. Again I have a chance to observe a Nepalese family and their guests in their home, an experience I wouldn't want to miss for anything. That is one of the advantages of being the only white man travelling with a small number of coolies. . . ."

The next day, five minutes out of Melingmo, I came around a bend in the trail and stopped dead in my tracks: Mount Everest was ahead, looming incredibly high above the Nuptse-Lhotse ridge! I can't describe my feelings, but seeing the highest mountain of our planet suddenly before one's eyes has a tremendous impact, particularly on a mountaineer. After I caught my breath and took some pictures, I continued along the winding trail with a new determination. Then on through Pangboche—the most beautiful spot I have ever seen—Pheriche, Phalong Karpo, and Lobuje (15,744 ft.), where we camped the night of October 17th. The next morning “. . . the ground is covered with heavy frost. We leave Lobuje at 7.00 a.m. The coolies are in excellent form, and we move at a good pace. Mostly over a moraine, at times to the left of it. I begin to feel the altitude, but manage to take a number of pictures. We arrive at the campsite of the old base camp shortly before noon, and decide to rest and eat something. Then on we go up and down over the lateral moraine of the Khumbu Glacier; then right through the middle of it, crossing many glacier streams, small seracs, etc. Reach Camp I (17,220 ft.) shortly before 2.00 p.m. I am rather exhausted and mighty glad when my friends Arthur Spöhel and Ernst Reiss come running down the last slope to welcome me and take the ruck-sack off my shoulders. Much excitement over seeing each other after such a long and eventful time. I thought our trip not exactly easy, but they really had troubles because of the final days of the monsoon!

“Lunch in luxury; then we look after my equipment, tent, etc. Arthur and Ernst are real friends, the way they look after me. Later in the afternoon Gabriel Chevalley and Tensing return from a trip to Camp III. Gabriel and I embrace each other; we are both very much moved. More talk, and general get-together.

“The sun goes down, and the cold sets in. I feel the altitude quite strongly, but my friends assure me that they had the same trouble during the first few days, as a matter of fact they still have some difficulty in breathing at the slightest physical exertion. Dinner around six in an open-air mess tent. Two sides are open, which is

EVEREST, SOUTH COL, LHOTSÉ, NUPSÉ

Camp I on moraine, lower foreground; Camp II half way up icefall; Camp III at top of icefall; Camps IV-VII above shadow on upper Khumbu Glacier and slopes of Lhotsé (center); Camp VIII at South Col

Courtesy of Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Zurich

(Taken from S. E. spur of Pumori at 20,000 feet)

Photo, N. G. Dyhrenfurth

nice in the daytime when the sun shines, but somewhat chilly at night. I am amazed at the luxurious service, as well as the meal, compared to our frugal days between Biratnagar and Camp I. After dinner we go down to the kitchen tent to sit around the fire and chat with Tensing, Ang Tsering (who went to Kangchenjunga with my father in 1930), and other Sherpas. Then to sleep. That is easily said, but not done, when spending one's first night at 17,220 feet! I at least have quite a time with headaches, coughing spells, insomnia, and periods of gasping for air. All in all, the night seems very long indeed! . . ."

The next few days were spent in getting acclimated, moving the necessary quantities of equipment and food up through the icefall toward Camps II through V, and trying to catch up with the main body of the climbing party. In addition, I worked like a madman with six different cameras, trying to make up for lost time. On October 24th, Ang Dawa and I moved up to Camp II (18,532 ft.), situated among huge crevasses and seracs, but quite safe from avalanches. On October 27th we joined Arthur Spöhel at Camp III (about 20,000 ft.), after having had quite a time with fallen seracs, collapsed snow bridges, and shaky wooden beams across numerous huge crevasses. Since I was the only photographer of the expedition, I had to spend extra time at each camp on picture work. At last, on October 29th, we were ready to join the others at Camp IV (about 21,500 ft.): ". . . A good night, comparatively. Five Sherpas are to move up to Camp IV to stay, three men will return to Camp III. We get started around 10.30 a.m. Ang Dawa and I move at the tail end. After about half an hour's crossing of the glacier toward Nuptse, Everest comes in plain sight, dwarfing everything around it, even Lhotse. What a mountain! I take some pictures of the Sherpas moving toward Everest. How small they look! I feel better today, although my pace is still quite slow. For the first hour and a half I manage to keep up with the Sherpas, but the last hour gets a little painful on the breathing. We reach Camp IV around 1.00 p.m., where Raymond Lambert and Gustave Gross meet me part way with the greatest cordiality and joy. It's been such a long time (September 6, in Delhi), and my arrival so uncertain that I, too, am very much moved by the reunion. Soon Gabriel, Arthur, Ernst and Tensing exit from their tents to greet me. It really feels like Christmas! Only Jean Buzio is missing to make the day complete, but he

Top: AT ABOUT 22,000 FEET

Bottom: MEMBERS OF SWISS EXPEDITION II

Left to right: Reiss, Buzio, Gross, Chevalley, Lambert, Spöhel, Tensing, Dyhrenfurth
 Courtesy of Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Zurich

Photo, N. G. Dyhrenfurth

and five Sherpas are very busy laying fixed ropes and chopping steps in the lower part of the 50-degree ice wall leading to the South Col. I have been watching the six tiny black dots in that huge face during most of the ascent from Camp III. . . .”

The struggle for the South Col had begun in earnest. Before the monsoon the Swiss had found the slope below it very long and steep, but apparently free from objective dangers. One major problem had been its great height—close to 4,000 feet from the “Bergschrund” to the top of the “Eperon des Genevois,” a rocky rib reaching as far down as the famous yellow band—and the impossibility of finding a suitable site for an intermediary camp. But the snow conditions were such as to permit the men to climb with crampons, without having to cut many steps. This time, because of the colder weather, shorter days, and increasingly heavy winds, most of the snow had disappeared, making way for bluish-green ice.

On October 31st, Dr. Chevalley, Spöhel, and several Sherpas were to continue the work in the ice flank. Since the rest of us were watching their progress through binoculars from Camp IV, I am using parts of Dr. Chevalley’s diary as an eye-witness account: “. . . Today it is Spöhel’s and my turn. I am quite anxious to experiment with the Draeger oxygen equipment. Spöhel, with Dawa Thondup and Ang Tempa on the rope, is already high up in the ice flank, followed by two rope parties of three Sherpas each further down. I am on the same rope with Da Namgyal and Ang Nima, oxygen equipment on my back, and face mask in position, having almost reached the ‘Bergschrund.’ Suddenly a yell from behind: ‘Sahib!’—and huge pieces of ice come hurtling down the slope. We throw ourselves forward. I am somewhat protected by the oxygen equipment and remain unhurt; Da Namgyal receives a piece of ice in his back. As soon as we can look up, we see the three rope parties above clinging to the slope, motionless. Mingma Dorje is hanging on the rope, held by his companions. I hurry to reach him, having to cut a thirty-foot traverse in the ice to get there. His face is bloody, his sun glasses smashed. He moans and hangs on the rope, unable to get on his feet. After some effort, and with the aid of a rope-pulley, I succeed in getting him on his feet and across to the fixed rope. Now we are able to transport him slowly and carefully down to the lower lip of the ‘Bergschrund.’ Just as we are all more or less bunched up below the ‘Bergschrund,’ the roped party

of Aila, Da Norbu and Mingma Sitar suddenly loses its footing, shoots down the bumpy, solidly frozen avalanche funnel, and comes to a halt 700 feet below on the far slope of a hollow! We had left Camp V at 9.00 a.m.; it is now 10 o'clock. The small ice avalanche, which caused the accident, came down from a great height through the couloir to the right. A huge ice block must have broken off from a serac on the northern edge of the Lhotse Glacier.

"The four injured men are placed on air mattresses and wrapped in blankets. Mingma Dorje has facial bruises and badly broken ribs; Mingma Sitar has a broken collar bone, injured ribs, and bruised thighs. Aila, who had been promoted from 'special coolie' to Sherpa, suffered serious facial injuries and dislocated ribs, while Da Norbu got away with minor bruises. . . ."

Later that day Mingma Dorje died of internal injuries, one broken rib had punctured his lung. My diary entries describe some of our feelings: ". . . Things look very grim indeed at this point. Mingma Dorje was the father of three children! Ang Dawa—who has not been able to sleep for the past four nights—has tears in his eyes, and so does Kirken, our cook. We all gather in the mess tent to talk things over. Tensing feeling terribly low, of course. Not only have we lost four of our best Sherpas, but what about the route to the South Col, which we all had considered long, strenuous, but safe? How are we going to persuade the remaining Sherpas to carry loads up this dangerous face? Tomorrow we will all get up early and go up to Camp V to discuss the situation with Gabriel and Arthur, to bring down the wounded men, and to bury Mingma Dorje. Ernst has made a small wooden cross—after I checked with Tensing as to its appropriateness—and we will bury him near here. A gloomy supper and after-supper get-together; we all feel awful about today's events and some of us begin to wonder whether this may be the end of our high hopes. If the Sherpas are demoralized and refuse to go on, we are licked. Everyone knows it, but we don't talk much about it. Raymond and Tensing retire early, the rest of us huddle together, finishing the cross and talking about mountain trips in the Alps. Around 8.00 p.m. we break up. The night is bitterly cold, and the mountains glitter in the bright moonlight. The icy places in the face below the South Col are plainly visible, but at night everything looks innocent and peaceful. I begin to have serious doubts as to the feasibility of our route, at least at this

time of the year. In Spring the slope was long and backbreaking, but contained hardly any ice. This time the dreaded ice-fall was somewhat easier, but the real difficulties are just beginning.—The moon is almost full, and the mountains look down on us in icy and dangerous silence. Looking back toward Pumori gives one the impression of having one's possible way of retreat cut off, we seem to be prisoners of the world's highest mountains!—Fast-moving clouds pass the summits of Everest and Lhotse; the spectacle is beautiful, but the intense cold drives me to my tent, and, despite a certain numbness, to my diary. . . .”

The following day we buried Mingma Dorje, on a lateral moraine, about halfway between Camp IV and V, at 22,000 feet. It was a deeply moving scene, in the shadow of the summit of the world—Chomolungma had claimed one of her sons.

The next days were spent reconnoitering a route to the right of the dangerous couloir, through the steep but comparatively safe Lhotse Glacier. On November 4th, Gustave Gross and Jean Buzio established Camp VI at about 23,000 feet: “. . . Jean and Gustave plan to reconnoiter up to Camp VII tomorrow. But the pitons do not hold in the snow and ice slopes of the steep Lhotse Glacier. Long wooden pegs will be necessary to secure the fixed ropes for the Sherpas. Later, after tea and supper in my tent, I step outside to observe the candle light in their tent. At one time I even see Jean and Gustave as they stand briefly in front of their tiny castle, until the bitter cold drives them back in. The wind rises and the night promises to be rough. I try to make some entries in my diary, but the combination of fatigue and the tent rattling and moaning under the ever-increasing efforts of the wind soon make me give up. I sleep from 6.00 p.m. until 9.00 p.m., but from then on sleep is a rare thing, due to the ravings of the storm. I wonder how Jean and Gustave are making out on their minute platform, in the middle of the huge glacial face of Lhotse. I don't envy them! . . .”

The next day the two men were unable to continue toward Camp VII. They came back to Camp V, totally demoralized from the intense cold and wind. Their tent was nearly blown away during the night, they couldn't keep their feet warm, and neither of them slept at all. The ever-shortening days, extreme cold, and almost unbearable winds began to have a very serious effect on everybody's

morale, which had already been severely shaken by the recent accident.

On November 6th, Lambert and Tensing moved up to Camp VI, Reiss and Spöhel joined me at Camp V, while the others were at Camp IV. The weather conditions deteriorated rapidly: “. . . November 7th: One of the worst nights I have ever spent in a tent. Around 1.00 a.m. I am suddenly awakened by a terrible feeling of suffocation. The tent is nearly collapsed, and one of its walls and roof sides, loaded with snow, rests on my chest and face. Immediately I extricate myself from the sleeping bag, get fully dressed (which is not easy in the tiny space of the tent remaining to me), and fight my way through the tent flaps into the raging storm. The first thing I notice are two Sherpas deserting their almost totally collapsed tent to seek refuge in the larger and sturdier ‘Wico’ tent. I fight my way over to ask them for a shovel, but it’s no good. A brief inspection of Arthur’s and Ernst’s tent shows that they are in pretty fair shape. Finally, I find a piece of wood and start shoveling with all my strength to get the tent free before the weight of wind-packed snow crushes it completely. The storm is so violent that I have to seek protection frequently on the other side of the tent, which gives me a chance to breathe. At last the crushing wall of snow is removed, and I struggle to get back in the tent, which feels like paradise. My friends keep shouting through the storm to ask whether I am all right, and I assure them that everything is in the best of order. Some fun! Of course I am chilled to the bone—even the two sleeping bags fail to do their duty—but sheer exhaustion makes me sleep. . . .”

That day Lambert and Tensing established Camp VII at about 24,600 feet, while Reiss and Spöhel moved to Camp VI. On November 8th, Lambert and Tensing came down to Camp IV for a much-needed rest. Reiss and Spöhel went up the treacherous ice face to recover the pitons and fixed ropes we had left there since the accident, because we were running short of these important items. The night from November 11th to the 12th was the worst one yet. Chevalley and I shared a tent: “. . . I move in with Gabriel, around 2.30 p.m. We are glad to see each other, but he looks very tired from the previous stormy night, and I am just plain tired. From this moment on we are not leaving the tent until the next day—all our

'meals' are brought to us by a heroic Sherpa. The storm is of such strength that neither of us can sleep one minute. The noise of the rattling tent is like constant machine-gun fire. Even a free bivouac might be better than this! I can't remember *any* time in my life when I came closer to being driven mad. From time to time I turn on my flashlight. Looking at the beam of it as it touches the shaking tent walls seems to help us. Whenever I play the light over Gabriel's face, I see something close to madness in his eyes, like a hunted or dying animal. Added to this is the unpleasant fact that my head is lower than my feet, with the tent walls (in all their iciness) pressing down on my face, giving me a horrible feeling of claustrophobia. A thorough description of this night would read like something out of a psychoanalyst's notebook. . . ."

Even with conditions getting worse every day, the struggle for the South Col went on. On November 17th Lambert and Tensing reached the top of the Lhotse Glacier and placed fixed ropes across the couloir toward the yellow band, which joins the lower part of the "Eperon des Genevois." November 18th was a day of rest at Camp VII. On November 19th, Reiss, Lambert, Tensing, and seven Sherpas (Pemba Sundar, Ang Temba, Topkie, Ang Nima, Goumdin, Ang Namgyal, and Pemba) started off for the South Col. Raymond Lambert's diary gives a good account: ". . . Reiss and Tensing traverse the couloir and fix two hundred meters of rope, while I wait with the Sherpas on the uppermost terrace of the Lhotse Glacier. The weather is beautiful; we should be able to reach the South Col tonight, if everything goes well. Reiss and Tensing retrace their steps, and we reestablish the original rope teams. To save our strength, we three are using oxygen. We cross the couloir and continue on up through the steep bowl leading up to point 26,305 ft., which is slightly higher than the South Col. We climb at a fairly rapid rate, the snow is good, and the Sherpas follow closely behind. Higher up we pull ahead some distance, thanks to the oxygen. At 5.00 p.m. we reach the Col, where we select the same camp site as last Spring. The view is magnificent, but the wind and cold have increased tremendously. While we wait for the Sherpas and our tents, we try to free one of the tents which were left here in the Spring. The physical effort is almost too much at this altitude.

"At last the Sherpas arrive, and we throw ourselves upon the task of erecting tents. With great difficulty we succeed in setting up

five of them, but the wind keeps knocking them down, time after time. When finally two tents are ready for occupancy, the Sherpas pour into them; they are dead-tired, and cold. There is nothing we can do, they won't help us any longer. Reiss, Tensing, and I put up the other three tents, and each of us crawls in. The night has begun, and the wind blows ferociously over our camp at 25,846 ft.

"Thus the South Col has been reached for the second time this year, but at what a price! We have nothing to eat: it is almost too difficult to boil water. All we have is a cup of cacao. Tensing, the courageous one, brings it to us in our tent, where Reiss and I huddle together on one air mattress, each in his sleeping bag. And now a terrible night begins. Sleep is impossible, the wind shakes the tent, and the temperature sinks to forty degrees below; we are fighting hard to keep our feet and hands from freezing. We are fully aware that the wind's fury increases by the minute. Let's hope things will quiet down some after sunrise!—Time passes slowly. I have two candles lighted to warm our hands. We keep on talking, waiting for the new day to break. It is a terrible battle, and we need our last reserves for tomorrow, to establish Camp IX.

"Morning dawns, but the storm has lost none of its strength. Unfortunately the sun won't reach us until about 10.00 a.m., as it is still quite low behind the huge mass of Lhotse. Tensing joins us in our tent, and we confer. We could leave from here in an hour and a half, but Sherpa Goumdin is sick. We are waiting for tea, which is all we're going to have.

"At last we leave the tents, pack our rucksacks, and leave Camp VIII at 11.30 a.m. in the direction of the S.S.E.-ridge, to establish Camp IX. With a great deal of effort we cross the Col and begin to climb the glacier opposite the camp. We are moving very slowly. Our noses and fingertips lose all sensitivity. Despite our excellent equipment the wind penetrates everything. Even Tensing is seriously affected, and the Sherpas hardly move at all. At an altitude of about 26,680 ft. we are fought to a standstill. It is impossible to continue under these conditions, and at this altitude!

"We deposit most of our loads and descend toward the Col. The Sherpas insist on continuing on down to Camp VII. We are forced to retreat. If we do not help Goumdin, he will freeze to death in a very short time. Reiss, Tensing, and I distribute his load amongst us and tie him into our rope to keep him moving. The

other six Sherpas have already started the descent. With enormous effort we finally reach point 26,305 above the South Col. and start the long descent through the bowl. Fortunately the steps are in good condition and correctly spaced. The men are strongly affected by the altitude and are lacking their usual steadiness. One slip would be fatal for an entire rope team!

“At last we reach the couloir and shortly afterwards the Lhotse Glacier and Camp VII. We have used up our last ounce of strength and are utterly finished! . . .” End of quotation from Chevalley’s diary.

This was the first and last try for the summit. Neither the Sherpas, nor any of us were in any condition to continue the struggle. Even if we had withdrawn to Camp IV or perhaps even to Camp I to recuperate, the winter monsoon storms were just around the corner, the days got even shorter, and the cold more intense. Besides, we were rapidly running out of food items for the highest camps. We had to admit defeat. To fight it any longer would have meant certain death for many of us. As it was, we had to consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have reached the South Col at this late date and to have effected an orderly retreat from the mountain and the Western Cwm without any further losses. The route between Camp III and Camp I was extremely dangerous: Most of the seracs were ready to cave in, with hundreds of small and large ice blocks along the way as ample proof! It was almost a miracle that nothing ever did happen to the Sherpas who had to go up and down frequently, changing the route almost daily.

On November 25th we were all back at Camp I, glad to be alive and in adequate health. The next day Spöhel, Gross, Ang Dawa, Ang Nima, and I made a reconnaissance climb as far up the South-East Spur of Pumori as we could safely go without getting into extremely difficult and dangerous ice climbing. There I made panoramas and telephotos with five different cameras from a point several hundred feet higher than the one reached by Eric Shipton’s men in 1951 for the same purpose.

Some notes from my diary: “. . . At 2.30 p.m. we begin the descent. Everybody has gotten thoroughly chilled; my hands are numb as usual after a long work-out with cameras at this altitude and time of year. We practically run down the mountain to escape the wind, and thanks to Arthur’s finding a better route home, we

arrive at Camp I at 4.00 p.m., just in time for tea! We are all pretty tired, but happy with what we have seen and accomplished. Gabriel is extremely relieved to know that we have finally succeeded in photographing the entire Western Cwm. Lots of coolies have arrived from Namche Bazar—tomorrow is the big day of our departure from here. It is very cold and windy—while having tea, the kitchen tent collapsed—and the poor coolies huddle together for warmth. Supper time finds all of us around Ang Tsering's fire, but the thick smoke soon drives me to my tent, where all cameras are waiting to be cleaned and loaded for tomorrow. Besides, the diary needs attention. The wind is dying down, the coolies are talking and singing, and the ice underneath the tents is cracking. Tomorrow is the big day! First stop Lobuje, where things will be green! After these weeks of nothing but snow and ice, this means a great deal to us, we began to feel like prisoners of Everest and Lhotse. . . ."

Though all of us were exhausted from the long struggle with the mountain and happy to be on our way home, a strong feeling of nostalgia entered our hearts and minds, increasing with every day's march we put between us and the mountain. On December 7th, shortly before reaching Junbesi, we had a last view of Everest, its huge plume of snow extending far to the South. Gabriel and I had walked together at the rear of the column and spent nearly two hours there, sitting below a Chorten, looking at the mountain with longing and wondering whether we would ever see it again. The great peak had been a terrible antagonist, but now we felt we were taking leave of a good friend.

On December 18th the expedition reached Kathmandu, after a wonderful return march through the hills and valleys of Eastern and Central Nepal. On New Year's day our Air India Constellation landed us safely in Geneva.

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