

snow to make a tiny campsite, just big enough for the tent, at 26,500 feet. In the middle of the night an avalanche poured down from above, crushing the tent and burying all three. I dragged myself out, pulled out Renshaw, who had been pushed off the ledge by the snow and was held, poised above a 10,000-foot drop, only by the tent fabric. Tasker, deeply buried, was for a time unconscious. Still in stocking feet, we dug him free. Before there was time to put on boots and gloves, a second avalanche swept over us. Tied to a rope, I held onto Renshaw, preventing his being knocked off. Tasker, buried again, had to be dug free. When dawn came, we started down to the previous campsite. On July 14, with no abatement in the weather, we descended an alternate route on snow-covered rock. It took six hours to descend the 700 feet to our earlier Camp IV. On July 15 one last terrifying snow slope led to the top of an ice wall, down which we rappelled. After the rappel, I clipped into an old Japanese rope. An avalanche knocked me down and broke two of the three strands. From there it was a gruelling 7000 feet to the bottom of the mountain. We decided to go back for one more try, taking six days of food. So far we had had two good days in July. We reached Camp I on July 22. By the time we were at Camp II, it was snowing. On July 24 we got to the shoulder at 24,700 feet and spent the next three days waiting for the winds to subside and the snow to stop. July 28 dawned not perfectly clear but better and we decided to go up. We found a much safer campsite on a prow of rock, 500 feet lower than our previous high point. The next day winds kept us in this camp at 26,000 feet. On July 30 we were up at one A.M. ready for a summit attempt. The winds were as powerful as the day before and the visibility poor; we had been on a diet of less than 1000 calories for the last few days. We had to go down. The snow conditions were bad, perhaps worse than previously, but knowing the route, we were able to reach the foot of the mountain, exhausted, late that night.

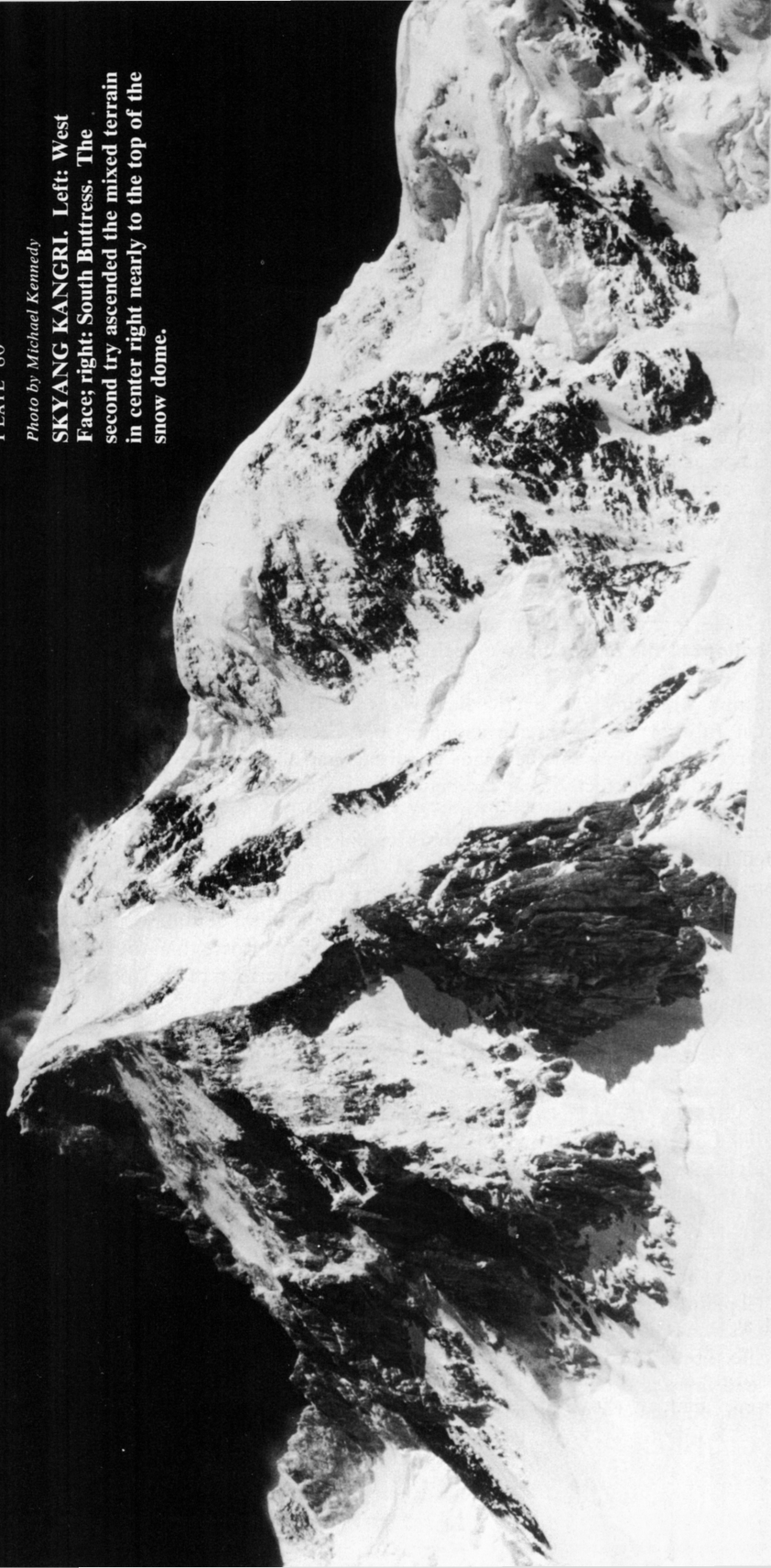
PETER BOARDMAN, *Alpine Climbing Group*

Skyang Kangri Attempt. Our lightweight expedition, consisting of Jeff Lowe and me, attempted Skyang Kangri (7544 meters, 24,750 feet) alpine-style. May 27 saw us in Dasso, May 30 in Askole and June 6 at the site of the French Base Camp at the foot of K2. The porters on the approach performed very well. The French Base Camp was a shock. An area the size of a football field was littered with cans, broken crates, gas cylinders and all manner of debris. On June 8 our liaison officer Captain Tariq Ihtisham and I carried loads to 18,500 feet on the upper Godwin-Austen Glacier and established our Advanced Base Camp opposite the northeast ridge of K2. Two days later Jeff and I carried another load there and on June 12 we both moved up to camp. For acclimatization, on June 14 we started up the Japanese route, the east ridge, reach-

PLATE 80

Photo by Michael Kennedy

SKYANG KANGRI. Left: West Face; right: South Buttress. The second try ascended the mixed terrain in center right nearly to the top of the snow dome.



ing 21,000 feet before turning back on the 15th in bad weather with much new snow. Then, on June 20, we went back to our original objective, the west face. The face rises 6000 feet above the glacier, with 1000 feet of easy glacier walking, another 2000 feet of moderate snow-and-ice and mixed climbing and a rock headwall the rest of the way. We were to attempt the prominent buttress in the center of the face. We spent five hours on June 21 reaching a good bivouac in a bergschrund at 20,000 feet. On the 22nd we continued up moderate snow-and-ice slopes with several mixed pitches at the end. We bivouacked at the start of the upper buttress at 21,700 feet. My gut feeling of dread continued and I felt compelled to retreat, which we did after a single pitch on June 23. In retrospect, we still disagree about the feasibility of the climb. The limestone rock, contrary to our expectations, was very soft, crumbly and crackless. We returned to the mountain on July 2 and attempted the south buttress, starting at 19,000 feet. We bivouacked on the night of July 3 in hammocks at 20,000 feet, having climbed a number of easy snow-and-ice pitches interspersed with harder mixed ones on the lower third of the buttress. On July 4 we continued through the major difficulties of the route, a 1000-foot rock band between 20,500 and 21,500 feet, bivouacking again in hammocks. The hard pitches had been F8 and F9. Late that night it began to storm. Having completed the greatest difficulties, we decided to continue to the crest of the east ridge, climbing through knee- and sometimes waist-deep snow. We reached the final rocky outcrops and again bivouacked in hammocks at about 23,200 feet. Jeff felt nausea and we rested for the day in our hammocks, hoping for an improvement in Jeff's condition and in the weather. He, however, developed altitude sickness, with signs of pulmonary edema and so we had to retreat again. Jeff was so weak that he felt unable to climb the few hundred feet to the east ridge. We had to rappel diagonally into a large gully that bounds the right side of the south face and then along easier, but very avalanche-prone slopes toward the "Cat's Ears." We spent the night of the 7th in a crevasse, the 8th at the Cat's Ears and returned to Advanced Base on the 9th. I had been without food for two days, but Jeff had been unable to eat for close to five. We returned to Base Camp on July 10, where Jeff made a rapid recovery.

MICHAEL KENNEDY

Broad Peak Attempt. We were at Base Camp on July 9 but were held up by five days of bad weather. Shortly after that Georges Bettembourg, Patrick Vallençant, Jean Louis Estienne and Denis Conte placed Camps I and II at 17,725 and 20,675 feet and headed up toward Camp III but were driven by the weather down to Base Camp for five more days of storm. They reascended and placed Camp III at 23,000 feet. More tries were made in doubtful weather. Bettembourg and Vallençant got to