

Everest, Ascents, Attempts and Tragedies via the Western Cwm in the Pre-Monsoon Season. The scene on Nepal's side of Everest was not one of unmitigated joy despite all the summit successes. Four men died. The Base Camp area was crowded with 268 climbers plus their Base Camp staffs. They belonged to an unprecedented total of 13 expeditions. One team, the British Joint Services Everest Expedition, acted as mediator amongst the others from time to time and early on suggested areas where teams should sleep, where toilets should be and where a path should run between the various expeditions. This last suggestion was made after Spaniards and Netherlanders threw stones at each other for walking through their camps. American and New Zealand expedition leaders complained about Russians pushing ahead of them on a climbing route for which the Russians had no permit, doing so in violation of their repeated promises to wait briefly for those who did have permission to move up first, and in contravention of the Nepalese authorities' instructions to stick to their own more difficult route; the result of this conflict was that eight Russian summiters and their leader have been banned from entering Nepal again for five years. The Russians complained that the American and New Zealand leaders were making large profits conducting incompetent clients whom they charged US \$35,000 each, that this was merely business, and that the American leader was no gentleman in the language he used. The British made a formal complaint about a Czechoslovak who "was wandering all over the mountain; he asked if he could climb up our ropes to the west shoulder. When I said, 'No,' he came up anyway." A New Zealander, whose commercial expedition caused much of the long delay for others having to wait their turn to ascend the Hillary Step, complained of "the most frightening time of my life" when he was descending the step. Indians were ascending roped to each other but belayed to nothing else. One of them, who kept slipping, was grabbing him for a handhold "and I could see myself falling down the southwest face tied to four Indians." A Chilean who reached the summit from the Nepalese side complained of the rudeness of other Chileans whom he met on the top. They had come from the Tibetan side and greeted him with epithets instead of a friendly welcome. He had been ready to congratulate his compatriots, the first South Americans to the summit and only the second successful team on their climbing route, the steep east face to the South Col. (See their report in the Tibetan section.) A general complaint by well-organized, well-financed teams was that others climbed on their backs. The wandering Czechoslovak, Russians, French expedition members and a Briton who was not really anyone's team member were mentioned as climbers who would never have made any progress on the mountain, and some of whom would have perished. There were charges that the Russians helped themselves to other people's food and tents. A Netherlander refused entry to his small tent to a Russian who said he couldn't find his tent at that camp; the Netherlander said later that there was no Russian tent at the camp and that he had no idea what became of the Russian. Actually, an American took the Russian into his tent. When a Frenchman became seriously ill from the high altitude, his radio-less team's leader asked the British to send word down to Base Camp on

their radio and to supply his oxygen-less team with three very expensive bottles of oxygen, medicines, a stretcher and much of the manpower to carry the sick man down the exceedingly difficult Khumbu Icefall to Base Camp. The British reckoned that only five of the 13 parties on the mountain were truly equipped for the task. All except one of this spring's summiters used artificial oxygen. The exception was Ang Rita Sherpa, who went to the top on May 15 for his record-breaking *seventh* ascent of Everest and who says that he has never used oxygen on the mountain. All but one of the successful teams from Nepal climbed by the way of the standard route up the Lhotse Face and the southeast ridge. The team that did not follow the normal route was a group of Spaniards, mostly army men, who peacefully (they were not the stone throwers) and happily climbed the south pillar alone, joined the southeast ridge above the south corridor to the right of the pillar and sent three Spaniards and two Nepalese to the summit on May 15, when altogether 19 climbers went to the top. There has been considerable comment on the massive number of participants, some of whom, from the Russian and an unsuccessful Indian expedition, were not even on their teams' membership lists approved by the Nepalese authorities. An Italian visitor to Everest Base Camp said it was difficult to move amongst the tents at what looked like a fairground. May 12 saw a grand total of 32 people from five expeditions on the summit of Everest between 10:30 A.M. and one P.M.: six Americans, four Russians, three Indians (including a woman), three New Zealanders, two Netherlanders, the first Belgian woman, the first Israeli, the first Hong Kong Chinese and 11 Nepalese, who were there chiefly to help the foreigners. The largest number of Everest summiters in any previous season was 31 on four different days in October 1990. This season altogether 55 people reached the summit, also on four days, from the Nepalese side, while three more climbed to the top from Tibet. The Everest summit figures assume that all claims were correct. This spring, doubts were expressed on whether four climbers went to the summit on May 14, a day when the weather was not good, but others including Americans are confident that they did. (A claim by the Russians that they had first attempted their assigned route, the southwest face, and had reached 7250 meters on April 6 was, however, greeted with nearly universal disbelief amongst other teams.) And others wondered whether an Indian party of three had really managed to get all the way to the top on May 10, another day of bad weather; they stoutly assert they did. A negative is that four lives were lost, although the toll was small for such a large number. Two members of an unsuccessful and somewhat disorganized Indian expedition, leader Deepak Kulkarni and Raymond Jacob, died of exhaustion and exposure after they had failed to reach the shelter of their highest camp on the South Col. They had been climbing extremely slowly through snow and wind during the day and into the night of May 1. They were discovered the next morning, barely alive. Jacob was lying in the snow some 30 meters from their camp; Kulkarni was hanging on the fixed ropes a bit farther down. For the other Indian team, a well-organized group from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, all went well, with summit successes on two different days, until the last day when they were descending to Base Camp. Sher

Singh, who had been a cook at Camp II and had helped carry loads although he was really not a climber, slipped on a tilting ladder about 20 meters from the bottom of the Khumbu Icefall. He had a nylon sling tied around his waist that he had attached to the safety rope along the ladder. When he fell, it pulled tight like a noose, ruptured his kidney and broke his back. The fourth man to die with an Everest expedition on the Nepalese side was a 43-year-old Nepalese, Subba Singh Tamang, who was cook at Base Camp for a Spanish team. He never went above Base Camp, but he suffered a fatal heart attack.

A summary of all this activity via the South Col follows. *15 Indians* led by Hukam Singh: summit reached on May 10 by Prem Singh, Sunil Dutt Sharma, Kanhayalal Pokhriyal and on May 12 by Lopsang Sherpa, Miss Santosh Yadav, Mohan Singh Gunjyal, and Nepalese Sange Sherpa and Wangchuk Sherpa; *5 New Zealanders, 5 Americans, 1 Belgian, 1 Israeli, and 2 Hong Kong Chinese* led by Rob Hall: summit reached on May 12 by New Zealanders Rob Hall, Gary Ball, Guy Cotter, Americans Ned Gillette, Douglas Mantle, Randall Danta, Hong Kong Chinese Cham Yick-Kai, Israeli Doron Erel, Belgian Miss Ingrid Baeyens, and Nepalese Sherpas Sonam Tshering, Ang Dorje, Tashi Tshering, Apa and Ang Dawa; *10 Netherlands* led by Roland Naar: summit reached on May 12 by Roland Naar, Edmond Öfner, Dawa Tashi Sherpa and Nima Temba Sherpa; *19 Russians and 1 Pole* led by Vyacheslav Volkov: summit reached by Aleksandr Gerasimov, Andrei Volkov, Ilia Sabelnikov, Ivan Dusharin on May 12 and by Sergei Penzov, Vladimir Zakharov, Yevgeni Vinogradsky and Fiodor Konyukhov on May 14; *13 Americans, 1 Briton and 1 German* led by Todd Burleson: summit reached by Americans Skip Horner, Louis Bowen, Vernon Tejas, Dawa Temba Sherpa and Ang Gylzen Sherpa on May 12 and by Peter Athans, Todd Burleson, Hugh Morton, Briton Keith Kerr and Nepalese Lhakpa Rita Sherpa, Gopal Man Bahadur Tamang and Dorje Sherpa on May 15; *17 Spaniards* led by Francisco Soria on the South Pillar: summit reached on May 15 by Francisco Gan, Alfonso Juez, Ramón Portilla, Lhakpa Nuru Sherpa and Pemba Norbu Sherpa; *5 Chileans* led by Mauricio Purto: summit reached on May 15 by Mauricio Purto, Ang Rita Sherpa and Ang Phuri Sherpa; *2 Czechoslovaks, 1 British, 1 Russian* led by Miroslav Šmid and Mrs. Dina Šterbova: summit reached on May 15 by Briton Jonathan Pratt; *6 Frenchmen* led by Denis Chatrefou: high point of 7900 meters reached between May 14 and 18; *15 Indians* led by Deepak Kulkarni: high point of 8750 meters reached on May 12; *6 Spaniards and 1 American* led by César Pérez de Tudela and Juan Luis Salcedo: high point of 7400 reached on May 4; *10 Spaniards* led by Albino Quinteiro: high point of 8000 meters reached on May 13.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

Everest West Ridge Attempt. Our British Services Everest Expedition was composed of Majors Bronco Lane, N.G. Williams, C.D. Spencer, R.C.A. McAllister, Lieutenant Colonel M.G. Bridges, Captain S.P. Lowe, Sergeants C. Barnes, T. Moore, Lance Corporals Angphula Sherpa, Lalitman Limbu, Flight