

not properly outfitted for snow and cold, and the Frenchmen had to devote their energies to helping these poor people to survive.

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Everest in the Pre-Monsoon Season. Everest overwhelmingly dominated Nepal's climbing scene this spring. Half of the 30 expeditions that went to Nepal came to Everest 40 years after its first ascent. Of the 429 men and women who went climbing above their Nepalese Base Camps, 294 were concentrated on Everest. Eighty-one of these 294 climbers, over a quarter, managed to reach the summit from Nepal and nine more got there from the northern slopes in Tibet. In about six weeks, more climbers summited Everest than in the 26 years from May 1953 to September 1979. On one day alone, May 10, 40 men and women, a record number for a single day, got to the top. This spring's unprecedented number of successes brought the grand total of all Everest summiters to 496 individuals in 575 ascents. (A number of climbers have reached the summit more than once.) Another unprecedented total was that of the total number of successful women, fourteen, one of whom, India's Santosh Yadav, was the first of her sex to make a second ascent; their triumphs in one season nearly doubled the previous total of women atop Everest: 16 since 1975. And another: of this spring's 90 summiters, 22 had been to the top before in previous years, and one, Ang Rita Sherpa, now made an historic *eighth* ascent. All the Everest summiters made their climbs by standard routes, via the South Col to the southeast ridge on the Nepalese side and via the North Col from Tibet. The few expeditions that attempted other routes either gave them up and went home or changed over to the South Col route and succeeded. None even attempted new routes.

At the foot of the Nepalese side, Base Camps for 15 teams were set up close together. Their approximately 200 Buddhist Sherpa climbers, cooks and other staff performed their usual rituals upon arrival in March and early April. On the 40th anniversary of Everest's first ascent on May 29, 1953, more teams signed up than in any previous season. Twenty were granted permits although only fifteen arrived. (Last spring 12 groups came and sent 55 people to the summit.) This large number was also due to mountaineers' eagerness to make their climbs before a steep increase in the fee charged by the Nepalese government goes into effect in the autumn. This rises on September 1 from the present \$10,000 for a team of one to nine members, plus \$1200 per additional member, to the new charge of \$50,000 for up to five members, \$10,000 for the sixth and seventh members each, and no more than seven members permitted. Furthermore, only one team will be given permission for each of Everest's four climbing routes in Nepal. Most of this season's 15 teams were crowded onto the single standard route leading to the southeast ridge. Several were commercial groups with professional mountaineers guiding inexperienced clients. Some had special motivations: the leader of an Australian team, Tashi Tenzing, is a grandson of Tenzing Norgay, who hoped to pay tribute to his illustrious

grandfather by following in his footsteps: with him was a nephew of Tenzing Norgay, and on another expedition was his niece. Others, both foreigners and Nepalese, aspired to be the first persons or the first women from their country to reach the top of the world or to achieve other historic "firsts." By and large, the teams got on well together and helped each other out in times of crisis. They joined in assisting in bringing the dead down off the mountain. Basques rescued a Briton, who would have died, and Tashi Tenzing talked down via his walkie-talkie two Americans whom he could see from afar were in difficulty finding the correct line to descend. But there was occasional friction as well. For the second successive year, Russians were charged with theft, helping themselves to oxygen bottles at the top camp, where their owners might have been put in danger when oxygen was badly needed; taking four pairs of high-altitude boots from a Korean camp and mats from a British tent and selling them in a village well below Base Camp. (A trial was held by some teams' government-appointed liaison officers in Namche and a Russian was found guilty in the case of the stolen boots.)

The tragic deaths of Mrs. Pasang Lhamu and Sonam Tshering (noted below) were unfortunately not the only fatalities on Everest. Three other men also died, all on the Nepalese side, all from falls, and two in descents from the summit. The first was Lobsang Tshering Bhutia, a 41-year-old nephew of Tenzing Norgay and like his famous uncle, a mountaineering instructor in Darjeeling. It is speculated that he became confused when his oxygen supply ran out, that he wandered off the correct line onto steep ground, fell and broke his skull. In the next week, two members of a Korean expedition perished in falls on separate routes. One, Nam Wan-Woo, ascended his team's original southwest face route, which he and his teammates had tried to scale and abandoned on May 5 at 8450 meters because of unstable snow. He was not an expert climber but he went up this difficult, steep face alone, nonetheless. He was seen to fall. A trail of blood was discovered leading to a bottomless crevasse. The other, An Jin-Seob, after they shifted to the South Col route, came down the southeast ridge from the summit, lost his way and fell on the very steep blue ice of the south pillar. There was very nearly another death on Everest. Briton Harry Taylor had been four times to Everest without summit success, as recently as last December. He was back again, climbing without artificial oxygen. He made it to the top this time, at about 10:30 A.M. on May 10, after having left his British team's South Col camp at eleven o'clock the previous night. He got into deep trouble on the descent. Others had seen him going up not wearing his goggles. He later swore that he had them on all the time—probably an indication that he was suffering from cerebral edema. Going down, he fell into a small crevasse and lost a crampon. He was now snow-blind and extremely tired. Not far above the South Col, he fell again, this time down an ice slope. He managed to arrest his slide but could no longer progress. He was out of sight of his teammates, who were camped on the col, getting ready for their own ascent the next day. Finally, at about ten P.M., he started shouting for help. His calls were heard and heeded by Basques on the col. They got to him at 10:30

and in 15 minutes they had him down to the col and inside a British tent. The Basques said that he was in such extreme condition that he would have died in about a half an hour if they had not rescued him. He was suffering from snow-blindness, hyperthermia, cerebral edema, dehydration, exhaustion and frostbitten nose and toes. Once he was delivered to the British, they took care of him. Rebecca Stephens stayed to look out for him instead of trying for the summit the next day. (She did summit a few days later, the first British woman to do so.) After Taylor refused for some time to have oxygen administered, she finally told him to shut up and shoved an oxygen mask onto his face. Thus, he made an oxygenless ascent but not an oxygenless descent. He was not fit to go anywhere on the 11th. John Barry stayed with him while Stephens descended. On the 12th, the two men started down, and on the 14th, Taylor got to Base Camp. He was evacuated by helicopter from there to Kathmandu and caught a flight to England the same day. His next stop was a British hospital.

After the ascent by Mrs. Pasang Lhamu and her party on April 22, no one summited from Nepal until May 10, but then it seemed that everyone succeeded at once. Harry Taylor had been the first to set out for the top. Others also began their ascents late on the 9th. The first to arrive was American Alex Lowe, who was making his second ascent and got there about 9:30 A.M. By the time the last man, Russian Aleksei Mouravlev, arrived after one P.M., an astonishing total of 40 men and women from Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, India, South Korea, Lithuania, Nepal, New Zealand, Russia and the United States had made it successfully on that single day. Some had to wait their turn at the foot of the Hillary step and again for those ahead of them to finish taking pictures and move off the limited space on the very top. Again, a similar situation developed on May 16, when the summiters totaled 29 people from India, South Korea, Nepal, Russia, Spain and the United States. Amongst the many summit "firsts" on Everest were: the first Irishman, Dawson Stelfox; the first Finn, Veikka Gustafsson; the first Lithuanian, Vladas Vitkauskas (He arrived in Kathmandu with his own gear early in the season looking for a team to attach himself to for a payment considerably less than the full permit fee. After having talked to several teams, Vitkauskas became a "member"—but a silent and independent one—of Pasang Lhamu's expedition); the first Taiwanese, Wu Chin-Hsiung, a member of a Sino-Taiwanese expedition, which represented the first mountaineering collaboration between mainland China and the island nation; the first women from Britain (Rebecca Stephens), Korea (Kim Soon-Joo, Ji Hyun-Ok and Choi Oh-Soon) and Nepal (Pasang Lhamu); the youngest woman, 19, Indian Radha Devi Thakur; the oldest woman, 47, American Dolly Lefever; the first woman of any nation to make her second ascent, Indian Santosh Yadav; the first person to make his eighth ascent, Ang Rita Sherpa, who is still getting to the top despite his advancing years. (He is at least in his late 40s. No other person has summited more than five times, and no non-Sherpa more than three.)

There were two Everest teams that were notable non-starters. One was a Russian-Ukrainian-French team for the southwest face direct. The other was a

clean-up party, which was supposed to go as high as the South Col to remove the accumulated rubbish of earlier years, especially empty oxygen cylinders, broken tent poles and one or two dead bodies. First it was to be a French team led by Philippe Royer, who in February said he was organizing an expedition costing \$740,000 that would provide Sherpas with lightweight sleds to pull the junk down the mountain. Then in April came the news from Vancouver that a Canadian group headed by Joe Cadham was entering the scene with two helicopters to lift the debris from the col. Soon afterwards, Royer dropped out, citing differences with the Canadians and asserting that there is no helicopter that can do the job. The Canadians actually came to Nepal. Two climbers went to Base Camp, but plans for them and 30 Sherpas to move up to the col to make the rubbish ready for being lifted off were never put into effect after arrangements for the helicopters' insurance were not completed in time to start work. Finally they went home, saying they wanted to come back next year.

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Mount Everest, Nepal Pre-Monsoon Summary. 6 *Nepalese* led by Mrs. Pasang Lhamu Sherpa, Summit reached on April 22 by Mrs. Pasang Lhamu Sherpa and Sherpas Sonam Tshering, Dawa Tashi, Lhakpa Nuru, Pemba Nuru, Nawang Thile. Pasang Lhamu and Sonam Tshering died on the descent; 23 *Americans*, 1 *Canadian*, 1 *South African* led by Todd Burleson, Summit reached on May 10 by Americans Alex Lowe, John Helenek, John Dufficy, Wally Berg, Canadian Michael Sutton and Sherpas Apa, Dawa Nuru, Chuldin Temba; 14 *South Koreans* led by Miss Ji Hyun-Ok, Summit reached on May 10 by Miss Ji Hyun-Ok, Miss Kim Soon-Joo, Miss Choi Oh-Soon and Sherpas Ang Dawa, Ang Tshering, Sona Dendu, Rinzin; 8 *Australians*, 1 *Macedonian*, 1 *Indian* led by Tashi Tenzing, Summit reached on May 10 by Australian Michael Groom, Indian Lobsang Tshering Bhutia, the second of whom died in a fall on the descent; 9 *Britons* led by John Barry, Summit reached on May 10 by Harry Taylor and on May 17 by Miss Rebecca Stephens and Sherpas Ang Pasang and Kami Tshering; 14 *Indians* and 2 *Nepalese* led by Miss Bachendri Pal, Summit reached on May 10 by Indians Miss Dickey Dolma, Miss Santosh Yadav, Miss Kunga Bhutia, Baldev Kunwer and Sherpas Ongda Chiring, Na Temba, Kosang Dorje, Dorje and on May 16 by Indians Miss Radha Devi Thakur, Rajiv Sharma, Miss Deepu Sharma, Mrs. Savita Martolia, Miss Norbu Dolma, Miss Suman Kutiyal and Sherpas Nima Dorje, Tenzing, Lobsang Jangbu, Nga Temba; 6 *Americans* originally led by Paul Pfau, who became sick and never reached Base Camp and passed leadership to Michael Sinclair, Summit reached on May 10 by Miss Mary (Dolly) Lefever, Mark Selland, Charles Armatys, Pema Temba Sherpa and Moti Lal Gurung and on May 16 by Michael Sinclair, Mark Rabold, Phinzo Sherpa, Dorje Sherpa, Durga Tamang. Climbing co-leader Dan Aguilar selflessly assisted in the evacuation of the bodies of Mrs. Pasang Lhamu Sherpa and Lobsang Tshering Bhutia and so gave up any chance for the summit; 7 *New Zealanders*, 1 *Briton*, 1 *Frenchman*, 1 *Finn* led by Rob