

major wind. The temperatures also seemed higher than normal, causing an increase in rockfall. It was decided that Lyle and I would be the first summit team. We left Base Camp early on July 17. All members were in Camp I; Jay and Alan went down to rest in Base Camp, while Matt and Ron would help Lyle and me move up to Camp III. We reached Camp II-A on July 20 and Ron turned back due to an increasing problem with severe headaches, even though he had been to Camp II earlier. It started snowing that night and stormed for six days. Unfortunately Camp II-A was very exposed to the wind. Radio contact was lost with the lower camps because of an electrical storm, and use of the radios resulted in electrical shocks. We sustained average winds of 55 mph for this period. On July 27, as the storm was breaking up, we attempted to go down, but could not find the fixed lines due to severe snow loading. On July 28 we decided to carry to Camp III and retrieve extra rope to use for an alternate route back to Camp II. Matt, being wasted from the storm and two weeks in a row at 7000 meters, decided he should go down. We fixed ropes down as close as we could to Camp II and Matt descended safely on very precarious slopes. Lyle and I moved up to Camp III on July 30, only to find that the ravens had eaten our cache. Apparently there was so much snow in the valley that the birds were forced to forage on the upper wind-blown slopes. We radioed down to Jay and Alan, who were on their way up now to attempt the summit, to bring more food. On August 2 the four of us moved to Camp IV which was placed on the north ridge where the two ridges merge at 7800 meters. The upper slopes looked wind-blown and the weather was fine. The next morning we awoke to increasing winds and a large lenticular cloud above our camp. Lyle, Alan and Jay decided to try for the summit in hopes that the clouds would blow off. They reached 8100 meters before turning back in deteriorating weather. That night the storm started for real and snowed off and on for four days. Our retreat was hampered by avalanches and deep snow, but we managed to reach Camp I on August 5. We were helped down by Matt and Ron who had been cleaning up the lower mountain. The Northwest Ridge is a very long route, but offers some very good climbing, safe camps and is free from the crowds.

JOHN CULBERSON

*K2, Ascent and Tragedy.* In late May, the American team of Rob Slater, Scott Johnston, Jack Roberts, Richard Celsi and Michael Toubbeh arrived in Pakistan and proceeded via the Karakoram highway to Skardu and then on to K2 Base Camp. The remainder of the climbing team, which included Kevin Cooney and British climbers Alison Hargreaves and Alan Hinks, arrived in Islamabad June 12. The first group established an Advanced Base Camp at the start of the Abruzzi Ridge and Camp 1 at 20,000 feet by the time

the second group of climbers arrived in Base Camp on June 25. Toubbeh, the team physician, departed with trekkers for Skardu the following day. The reinforced team quickly established Camp 2 and, during sporadic breaks in the poor weather, worked with Dutch team members and high altitude porters to fix lines through the Black Pyramid and establish Camp 3 at just under 24,000 feet on July 15. The team planned to use Camp 4 only as a temporary resting point on their way to the summit. After resting in Base Camp for three days, the team made several aborted summit attempts due to poor weather conditions. At one point, it snowed for 11 consecutive days. While the weather appeared reasonable just down the glacier on Broad Peak, storm conditions persisted above 7000 meters on K2. The entire team made a push to clear the fixed lines and prepare the camps for one more summit attempt. Johnston and Cooney created a trench to Camp 3 and dug out the tents there, which were destroyed under seven feet of fresh snow. Then, along with the remaining team members except Slater, they called for porters to begin the hike out on August 6 due to commitments at home. Slater planned to stay and make another attempt along with a New Zealand team which had also established camps on the ridge. At the last minute Hargreaves decided to stay and climb with Slater and the Kiwis as well.

On August 13, Slater and Hargreaves left Camp 4 for the summit in good weather at 1 a.m. Along with members of the Kiwi team, they joined up with four members of a Spanish team (one of whom turned back later in the morning) below the Bottleneck. Radio calls to Base Camp indicate that between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m., all seven climbers in this international team summited. A fierce wind began blowing out of China at about 8 p.m. that evening and none of the summit climbers was heard from again. Two Spanish climbers who had survived the night at Camp 4, but sustained severe frostbite, found articles of clothing belonging to Hargreaves at about 7400 meters during their descent the next day. They could also discern three distinct tracks coming off the summit ridge and a body was visible in the distance. It is surmised that the climbers were literally blown off the mountain.

On a positive note, the American team was able to clear approximately two tons of accumulated trash from Base Camp, and established a biologically safe method to dispose of human waste on the glacier.

KEVIN COONEY

*K2, Ascent and Tragedy.* A seven-member Spanish expedition led by Jose Garces attempted K2 by the south-southeast spur. The account of their successful and subsequently tragic expedition as told to Xavier Eguskitza appears earlier in this journal.