

*Skilbrum, Ascent and Tragedy.* A 17-member Japanese expedition made the second ascent of Skilbrum (7360m) via either the original Southwest Face route or the South Face (it is unclear which) on August 17. Eight climbers made it back to base camp on the Savoia Glacier, but on the 20th, an avalanche roared off nearby Angel Peak. The blast was great enough to destroy base camp, blowing climbers across the moraine. Six of the 17 were killed, including the leader, Hiroshima Mitsuo. (*High Mountain Sports* 183)

*K2, West Face, Variation.* In 1994, the Tokai Branch of the Japanese Alpine Club started its exploration of new routes to the summit of K2. After a long exploration, we came to the conclusion that, taking the West Ridge route of the 1981 Waseda University team up to 7800 meters, then climbing up to the left, we would move onto the west face at the altitude of 8000 meters. We expected the greatest difficulty at this point moving on to the west face. We calculated that, once we got on to the upper part of the west face, we would be able to reach the North Ridge, just beneath the summit, by climbing one snow wall, and then another above it. The new route was estimated to be about 800 meters long from the 7800-meter point to the summit.

On May 5, ten days before our departure from Japan, Kazuo Tokushima, who had been preparing for the expedition as our leader, was killed in an avalanche while walking along the Karasawa Valley of Mt. Hotaka in the Japan Alps. It was then decided that Osamu Tanabe should take his place and become leader.

On May 16, our party left Japan as scheduled, and on June 4, our caravan started from Tongal. On our way, in Paiju, we stopped to help the Himalayan Green Club members with their reforestation activities. On June 10, we set up our base camp at 5150 meters, whereas base camp usually is set up to climb K2 by its normal route. It had been our plan to make the 5500-meter point on Savoia Glacier our base camp site, but the change was compelled by troubles with our porters.

On June 14, we set up advanced base camp and began a reconnaissance to find a route to move up the mountain. We soon were forced to halt our reconnaissance, however, when we received a call for help from the Shizuoka Broad Peak Expedition team, which had been hit by an avalanche on June 16. We aided them in their search for those in distress, and were able to recover two bodies on June 18.

On June 20, we resumed our climbing, but were unable to advance very far due to inclement weather. With the beginning of July, however, the bad weather changed and the Baltoro area was blessed with what many felt to be the finest weather in 20 years. Taking advantage of this, we were able to advance at a faster pace. We proceeded up to the 7800-meter point, taking the Waseda University West Ridge route except for the rock wall around 6900 meters. There we chose to take a right-hand course since we thought it would be easier to transport our gear via this new way. On July 16, we managed to climb through a tunnel-like gully less than 50 centimeters wide. From there we climbed along an unknown route. Referring to Mr. Saburo Hiroshima's aerial photographs, we stretched our route toward the left, and found an ideal Camp V site on the shoulder of the West Ridge pinnacle area at a height of 8000 meters. From the shoulder, it was possible to descend onto the snow-covered west face in two pitches.

On July 18, the first advance party, Tanabe, Suzuki, and Nakagawa, set up Camp V, and on July 19, started for the summit. Climbing left from one unstable wall to the next on the west face, we reached a col on the northwest ridge at about 8000 meters. Fear of avalanches would have made this area the most dangerous leg of our climb if we had had bad weather, as