

traverse at about 3 p.m. because they knew it would take them hours to chop out enough space to stay for the night. That afternoon Lafaille also spent some time fixing 100m of rope above their bivouac site for the next day's climb.

On May 16 they completed their east-west traverse. The route now lay along a steep rock face that was technically very difficult. They had trouble finding a route here. About 40m below the east summit (8,026m), they moved westward along the north face. They crossed the middle summit area on the face and joined the normal north face route at a couloir at about 7,800m, climbed up the couloir, and at 10 a.m. were at last on the main 8,091m summit (26,545'). Half of their grand traverse had been done.

Now to get down safely. After half an hour on the top, they started out on their west-east return traverse. They took a different line on the face from the one they had just been using because they were very tired and the snow conditions were not good. In the middle of the afternoon they returned to their bivouac tent, stayed there an hour, then moved to a lower altitude to make a new bivouac on a small plateau at 7,400m. They were very weary, and there was no food and little cooking gas; their supper consisted of some biscuits with milk tea.

On the 17th they continued their return climb. They were still very tired, but at their bivouac of the 14th found their cache of food and gas; they spent two hours to have some food. Then back to Roc Noir and camp 3, which they reached at 4 p.m. Here there was a proper camp with a tent and more food, and they could be more relaxed. The next day, they descended all the way to base camp at 4,000m, where they arrived at the end of that morning.

Throughout their remarkable climb, they had used no bottled oxygen and experienced no accident or frostbite. "I was very happy," Lafaille said about his success on Annapurna after three previous attempts and his "bad experience" on its south face 10 years ago. (In October 1992, he and the noted French alpinist Pierre Beghin had been attempting an alpine-style ascent of the south face when Beghin fell to his death. Lafaille's difficult solo descent developed into a growing nightmare when a falling rock shattered his right arm.)

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *Nepal*

DAMODAR HIMAL

Gaugiri, first ascent. Jim Frush (then-president of the AAC) and I went exploring for an obscure 6,110m (20,046') peak called Gaugiri, which is in the Upper Mustang district northeast of the Annapurna massif on the Tibetan border.

We had an idea of roughly where the peak was from a trip to Mustang in the fall of 2001, but no one had ever attempted to climb the peak and there were no photos or description of it or its exact location. This was the first permit issued for a peak under the new regulations, and the first ever in Upper Mustang. It was one out of the list of 103 newly opened mountains, many of them unknown to mountaineers, ranging in altitude from 5,407m (17,740') to 7,349m (24,111'). Eighty-three of them are between 6,000m and 7,000m high. As we set out for Gaugiri from Kathmandu in mid-May, we didn't know whether we would be tackling something that was technically difficult or an easy walk uphill. But first we had to find it. We had the latest 1:50,000 maps, produced in 2000, from a detailed Finnish Meteorological Institute survey, but even these maps proved to have put some significant lakes in totally the wrong place, which caused us some problems. However, we found Gaugiri and

were pleased to discover a southwest ridge that would definitely not be just a trek to the top and decided to climb it.

From our base camp at about 5,400m (17,700'), we set out at 7:30 a.m. on 28 May in relatively good weather after some days of snowfall, and quickly reached and ascended the ridge. Most of it was covered by good snow, with some loose rock in places. Some sections were quite steep (45° – 55°). Unaccompanied by any Sherpas, we were on the summit at 1:20 p.m., stayed an hour enjoying the view, and were back at base late the same afternoon. It is a fun, classic route with no great difficulties. Our total time out from Jomosom was 20 days.

The mountain dominates its area as the high peak on a long southeast ridge. Its summit, on the border with Tibet, has dramatic views of the giant 8,167m Dhaulagiri I to the southwest, a wide panorama of Tibet to the north and east, and a range of glaciated 6,000m–7,000m peaks to the south.

PETER ACKROYD, AAC

Pokharkan, first ascent. Sherpa Panima Lama (51) and I (61) made the first ascent of Pokharkan (6,346m) on October 31. We climbed the north ridge via a route that is not highly technical. I selected this route because the south face is a difficult rock wall. Sherpas Pemba Cherin (58) and Suba Maju (55) were also part of our team. Pokharkan is northeast of Annapurna near the Tibetan border at latitude N24°48', longitude E84°13'. It is one of 103 new peaks that the government of Nepal opened to climbing in 2002.

We left Kathmandu on October 10, via Besidsal and Naru Khola, and set up base camp at 4,850m, north of Nagoru (4,500m), on October 19. From BC, we followed a moraine up a gentle ridge, and set up C1 at 5,360m, two days later. One week later, we set up C2 on a ridge at 5,700m, with the summit hidden from view. On October 30, we established C3 above a steep snow face, at 6,050m. The next day, Panima Lama and I reached the main summit, at 6,346m. The summit is really two peaks 100m apart, which are about the same height. So we climbed up a steep gully to the top of the left peak first, and then climbed the right peak too. We departed from base camp on November 3, and returned to Kathmandu via Thorang La and Pokhara, arriving on November 11.

KOICHI KATO, *Japan (translated by Tamotsu Nakamura)*

Pokharkan, first ascent of the south face. The Alpine Club Damodar expedition was led by Steve Town with Dick Isherwood as deputy. Other members were David Baldock, John Fairley, Toto Gronlund, Martin Scott, Pete and Sara Spillet, Bill Thurston, and myself. Our Sirdar and climbing Sherpa was Kaji, the fastest man up Everest. We approached along the Annapurna Circuit as far as Koto, from where we struck off north toward the Tibetan border and into the spectacular Naur gorge of the Phu Khola. Three days later we reached the village of Phugaon and began a reconnaissance of Pokharkan, which proved to be a far more complex mountain than the maps suggested.

A very long ridge running southwest from the summit to a pass west of Phugaon (which Tilman crossed in 1950) turned out to have several difficult rock steps. The southeast ridge, though shorter, also looked rugged, with a deep saddle between what we came to call Pokharkan Southeast (5,700m) and what was, in effect, the southeast ridge of Pokharkan II (6250m). The