

Lhakpa Gelu, Apa confirmed, had been there not much later. The ministry's verdict was not given immediately, but no one doubts Apa's evidence.

Lhakpa Gelu set up a brass Nepalese flag on an iron pole at the summit. As long as it stands, it can provide proof of success for anyone having a photo taken of himself standing next to it. The 1975 Chinese tripod provided proof for nearly a decade, and Lhakpa Gelu's flag was doing the same this spring.

* Another first, but on a much less serious note: the first person to play a guitar on the summit, Vernon Tejas from the U.S. He strummed his 1.4kg instrument very briefly.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *Nepal*

Everest, summer and autumn attempts with ski and snowboard. In stark contrast to the spring season, when 69 teams swarmed on the north and south sides of Everest, there was only one expedition on the entire mountain in the summer and just one other in the autumn, both of them American, and both with plans for ski and snowboard descents. Unfavorable snow conditions thwarted their attempts. The summer team consisting of Jimmy Chin and Stephen Koch were on the north side of the mountain and their activities are reported in the Tibet section of this Journal. In the autumn five Americans and six Sherpas, led by Wally Berg, nearly made history when they narrowly failed to make the first November ascent of Everest. Team members left the South Col on November 1 for their final summit attempt and by 8 a.m. had reached the South Summit. Here, they were "blasted by very abrupt strong winds" and forced to descend. Back at the Col they found all three tents had been torn apart.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *Nepal*

Nuptse East I, south face, pre-monsoon attempts. Immediately to the south of Everest is the jagged Nuptse, which has numerous summits with no easy access from its southern flanks. By coincidence, independent teams of highly-skilled European mountaineers, one led by Hans Kammerlander from Italy's South Tirol, and the other led by Valeri Babanov of Russia, came this spring to attempt the first ascent of the southeast pillar that leads directly to the 7,804m unclimbed peak known as Nuptse East I. This line is technically extremely demanding.

Kammerlander with Konard Auer, Alois Brugger, Wilfried Oberhofer, and a German camera crew arrived rather late, and seeing the Russians well-established on the pillar, opted for a line up the face to the left, more or less in the vicinity of the 2002 American-Canadian-Slovenian attempt. Ropes were fixed on the lower section and the team gained the upper section of the southwest-facing spur. They eventually established a high camp at 6,900m, before being driven down by very strong winds.

Babanov had made an unsuccessful solo attempt on the pillar in the autumn of 2002 and this time was accompanied by Vladimir Suviga. The Russian pair arrived in April and again established ropes on the pillar, this time surmounting the difficulties and reaching the top of the pillar at ca 6,400m, then continuing up snow slopes to establish a tent at ca 6,700m, before they, too, retreated in the high winds and stormy weather that also affected Kammerlander's team. When the weather cleared Babanov and Suviga left base camp late on May 4 and regained their high point. They then pushed on up to the final ca 400m mixed buttress. However, above 7,000m the weather turned poor with snow and strong winds. Ground down by the cold (estimated to