

The first and only ascent of this peak occurred in May 1994, when Major A Abbey's Indian Army expedition repeated Reggie Cooke's route to Kabru III, and then traversed to both Kabru II (their Kabru III) and Kabru IV (their Kabru South).

*Climbing fatalities in Nepal.* Besides the seven deaths on Everest, two other climbers died last spring: American Jay Sieger and Ukrainian Vladislav Terzyul. They had gone to the top of Makalu together and were beginning their descent. Sieger apparently died when his head struck some rocks, but the body of veteran 8,000m summiter Terzyul was not found, so what caused his death is unknown.

No deaths occurred in summer, and remarkably few deaths occurred during the autumn: only one on Cho Oyu and two on Annapurna I. Cho Oyu has a history of very few fatal accidents: only 35 climbers have perished on it—an extremely small death toll considering the thousands of men and women who have been on the mountain and roughly 1,500 who have reached its summit. But this autumn a young Spanish Basque, Xabier Ormazabal, climbing independently and going for the summit alone, died while he was descending after having reached at least 8,100m and perhaps the top.

Another independent climber, Eloise Barbieri from Italy, had become acquainted with Ormazabal and was the only person who knew much about his movements. She watched him through binoculars as he went for the summit on October 13, a very windy day. He was entirely alone on the upper reaches of the mountain while the weather worsened. She saw him reach the summit plateau at about 8,000m, disappear out of sight for an hour and a half, and then reappear. This time span is fully consistent with his having reached the highest of several small peaks before coming back into sight, which he did at 1:00 p.m. Two hours later he had descended about 200 meters and then sat down for an hour, resumed his decent, but now moved down only a few meters at a time, intermittently falling over. At 5:30 p.m., when night fell, he had descended to about 7,700m. On the next day, falling snow made it impossible to see anyone or anything from afar; on the day after that, the 15th, when he had not come into camp, a searcher went up to look for him. His body was found at 7,550m.

The only others to die this autumn were two Japanese who were killed by avalanche on the notoriously avalanche-prone north face of Annapurna I, 8,091m and the world's tenth highest peak. The mountain has the worst ratio of deaths to summiters of any of Nepal's eight 8,000ers: 56 people, including this Japanese pair, have died on it, and more than half of these (29) were on the north face, while only 131 climbers have ever reached the top.

The Japanese who died were a four-member team's leader Michio Sato and teammate Hideji Nazuka, who were at 6,200m on October 10 when a big block of ice suddenly broke loose from the glacier on the feature known as the Sickle, fell onto a sloping snowfield, and set off a major avalanche. This mass of snow and ice carried Sato and Nazuka 500 vertical meters with it. Their bodies were recovered an hour and a half later.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, AAC Honorary Member, Nepal