

We reached the top of the buttress at 1:35 p.m. on the 13th, spent an hour there, and then followed the sharp and broken ridge to the northwest summit, from where we planned to descend. However, visibility was zero, so we pitched the tent for another night and the next day made 20 rappels down the snowy west face to the glacier. Bad visibility again hampered progress, and we had to spend another night out in the valley before reaching base camp on the 15th. After an absence of 12 days, we were greeted by our much-relieved cook and interpreter. We were very pleased with our 1,100m route (1,250m of climbing), mostly because we were able to climb largely free. We named it *Carte Blanche*.

ALEXANDER RUCHKIN, *Russia*

Mt. Edgar, tragedy. In late May Colorado residents Jonny Copp, Micah Dash, and Wade Johnson lost their lives in an avalanche below the southeast face of Mt. Edgar (E Gongga, 6,618m). The face was a much talked about objective, which has received wide publicity due to photos published by prolific Japanese explorer Tamotsu Nakamura. With Nick Rosen of Sender Films, who with Johnson hoped to document part of the expedition for a National Geographic TV series, the three established base camp below the mountain in May.

Rosen returned to Colorado, and on May 15 the remaining three left their liaison officer to establish an advanced base camp. They returned to base, having cached gear and food at a suitable site, reported to be five hours above when carrying a heavy load.

On the 20th Copp, Dash, and Johnson moved up toward advanced base. Dash and Copp would attempt the peak, while Johnson remained in camp. Nothing was heard from them after that date. When they failed to return to base camp and then missed their flight home, on June 3, Rosen alerted authorities.

On June 5 Guo Jie and Li Zong Li, of the Sichuan Mountaineering Association, discovered a body at 4,000m on the route between base camp and advanced base. Two days later Ci Luo and Li Fu Qing, of the Chinese Mountaineering Association in Beijing, discovered a second body 300m distant. The rescuers were able to identify the first body as Copp and the second as Johnson. There was no sign of Dash, though rescuers later found some of his gear in the vicinity.

In the meantime four experienced American mountaineers, Eric DeCaria, Nick Martino, Steve Su, and Pete Takeda, who were close friends of the three climbers, had been busy arranging flights and obtaining visas in order to assist with the search. On the 11th they helped the Chinese remove both bodies from avalanche debris in a wide couloir leading toward the face. The search for Dash's body was eventually called off; the area, frequently bombarded by rockfall and avalanche, was deemed too dangerous, and by this time chances of locating Dash or his remains seemed unlikely.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*

Nyambo Konka (6,114m), east face, attempt. During the last week of April and the first week of May, a four-person New Zealand-American team, comprising Lydia Bradey, Kenny Gasch, Penny Goddard, and I, attempted the east face of Nyambo Konka. This beautiful summit lies just south of Minya Konka. During more than a fortnight of humping loads and climbing, we established two camps in the Bawang River Valley due north of Bawang Lake, then a further

camp in the east face cirque, and one more on the face itself. We climbed the east face and reached the summit (north) ridge, but it was heavily corniced and too dangerous to allow us to reach the top. Descending, we were caught in two substantial snowstorms, the first dropping a foot of snow, the second, two feet.

Two notes: (1) our Liaison Officer, Lenny/Chen Zheng Lin, purportedly of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Mountaineering Association, made our trip almost impossible, throwing up roadblocks at every opportunity. We advise climbers not to use him; (2) after our close calls with excessive snowfall, and the deaths of Jonny Copp, Micah Dash and Wade Johnson in avalanches just a couple miles away, it is clear that climbing in the Daxue Shan should be attempted only in very late fall or very early spring.

MARK JENKINS, AAC



The northwest face of Nyambo Konka (6,114m). The summit is behind and to the left. The New Zealand-American attempt reached the crest of the north ridge (left skyline) from the far (east) side, off picture to the left. *Pedro Detjen*



The unclimbed north ridge of Nyambo Konka from close to the New Zealand-American exit point from the east face. *Mark Jenkins*

SOUTH OF MINYA KONKA

Ren Zhong Feng (6,079m). On November 28 Martin Ploug and I, from Denmark, made the first ascent of Ren Zhong Feng, a little-known peak that was believed to be one of the few remaining unclimbed 6,000m summits in Sichuan Province.

We established base camp at 3,100m in the Gan Gou Valley northeast of the mountain, and a higher camp at 4,500m.



Lydia Bradey and large rucksack high on the east face of Nyambo Konka. *Mark Jenkins*