

Himalayan News

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Also In This Issue

- Climbers Corner:
Trash cleanup on Everest 2
- Off the Beaten Track:
Kailash the Hard Way 3
- Club News 4
- Book Review:
Dark Shadows Falling 4
- Classified Section 6
- Himalayan Notes and
Travel Tips 7
- Mountain Quote 8
- Upcoming HEC Trips 8

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CLIMB OF COURAGE

By Tara Bishop

The Karakoram mountains of northern Pakistan converge at the political boundaries of India, China, and Pakistan. Here, more than sixty peaks rise above 23,000 feet within a 100-mile radius, to form the greatest consolidation of high peaks on the planet. The Karakorams include the infamous K2 (28,611 feet), the world's second highest mountain and one of the world's most difficult climbs.

When Greg Mortenson joined a 1993 K2 expedition, he prepared for the climb of his life. It was a long ways from his first climb — Mt. Kilimanjaro, at age eleven in 1969 — to K2. Despite overwhelming obstacles, the team summited after 78 days on the arduous west ridge of K2. The climb left Greg “physically emaciated and emotionally wasted.” He needed help to get back to civilization. Fortunately, two local porters helped him to a nearby village to recuperate. After being plied with goat’s milk and hospitality, his strength soon returned.

The two porters who helped Greg were Baltis, an indigenous people who first migrated to the Karakorams over six centuries ago from Tibet and Ladakh. Originally Buddhist, the Baltis converted to Islam during the Moghul insurgence in the late 1500s.

Greg’s stay in the village opened his eyes to the harsh reality and unforgiving

way of life that the Balti villagers face. In winter, they crawl into tiny basement dugouts and huddle together for six months; they are barely kept warm by smoky yak dung fires.



Greg Mortenson and Brent Bishop at an all girls school in northern Pakistan

Medical care is almost nonexistent. Broken bones go untreated, burns are left untreated, and diseases due to malnutrition are common parts of village life. Blindness and deafness are common due

to untreated chronic infections. Most staggering of all is the 35 percent infant mortality rate under age one, caused mostly by diarrhea-induced dehydration. Yet, despite all this adversity, the Baltis seem not only to accept their destiny, but embrace it; the harshness alongside the beauty. They are also acutely aware of the environmental constraints of their land, altered as it has been by a recent influx of foreigners and the fighting that is part of the nearby India-Pakistan conflict.

Climbers and trekkers have altered the socioeconomic system in many Balti villages over the last 20 years. Balti men provide the backbone for mountaineering expeditions, ferrying massive loads of gear to base camps. Men now regularly leave home, often during the most critical periods of planting and harvesting, to seek out jobs as porters that pay cash. Now, labor-intensive jobs formerly performed by men are done by

(Continued on page 5)

*Climber's Corner**Green Teams: Controversy over Removing Garbage from Everest*

By Carol Kauder

Sir Edmund Hillary openly admits that he left refuse at will on the slopes of Mt. Everest during his 1953 climb. Conservation was an alien concept at that time, and he was a pioneer in an untouched land. It never occurred to him that some day crowds would follow in his footsteps and that their litter, strewn from the base camp to the South Col, would become an unsightly distraction.

"It was an age of exploration. If it had been climbed, they thought no one would want to do it again," says Chris Naumann about the first generation of Everest climbers. Naumann took part in organizing a high-mountain cleanup effort, which has recently gained attention through Nike print ads featuring Brent Bishop, Nauman's climbing and business partner in Montana.

The efforts of Naumann and other Himalayan climbers are being praised by the media as photographs of the litter-strewn South Col are now an inevitable part of any Everest slide show, magazine article, or book, of which recently there have been quite a few. Yet some detractors say these trash-collecting programs are short-sighted and inappropriately designed from a Western perspective. The trash is perceived as a grave issue to those who see it, but the rest of Nepal suffers from far greater health and social problems every day.

Expedition waste accumulated over the years as climbers in pursuit of the highest summit decades after Hillary continued to abandon items no longer of use. To facilitate a fast descent, they left oxygen bottles, food packaging, and even tents on the mountain. Even efforts to hide garbage by throwing it into a crevasse above Base Camp backfired. Over time, the glacier spat the garbage out at the foot of the Khumbu Ice Fall, preserved in its original condition.

Only in the early 1990s did the tide turn toward conservation. In 1990, a New Zealand team removed approximately 4,000 kg of garbage from the popular Base Camp on the Nepal side. Another

group made a similar but smaller scale effort for the Tibetan base camp.

In 1993, the Nepalese government began requiring an "environmental deposit" of US \$4,000 in addition to the US \$50,000 permit for climbing parties on Mt. Everest. The deposit is returned to a climbing party after it shows it has packed its garbage out and made arrangements to return it to its country of origin. Not all parties bother to collect their garbage or their deposit, but the point is well taken. Most environmentally concerned visitors agree that the rampant disposal is at least on the decline on Everest.

However, the disposed items left by four decades of climbers previous to the age of ecologic awareness remain a problem. Members of the 1994 Sagarmatha Environmental Expedition (SEE) — including Naumann, Bishop, the late Scott Fischer and others — instituted a self-perpetuating program in which climbers pay sherpas extra for bringing garbage down while ferrying supplies up.

Naumann says the program was a way to do a good deed on the mountain while climbing it. It was a given that the program participants would be on Everest (and the other high peaks where the program has been put in place), so no one was endangering his or her life simply to collect garbage. Nor would the cleanup program add more numbers to an already crowded mountain. The group allocated a small portion of the expedition budget (which was funded entirely by the climbers) to pay Sherpas a bonus fee for the garbage they carried down. They were rewarded US \$2 for every 10 kilograms of garbage collected at Base Camp, and considerably more for bringing down high-altitude litter. The bonus fee was commensurate with the elevation from which the garbage was removed.

The Sherpas were eager participants in the program, and the organizers considered the effort a success. The program removed a total of 2292 kg of

paper, plastic, tin, glass, batteries, and oxygen bottles. Other expeditions familiar with SEE adopted the program, and the Sherpas spread the idea to other parties who were not familiar with the idea.

SEE burned what it could, took tin to a landfill, brought glass to be recycled in Kathmandu and had oxygen bottles shipped back to the United States. Because some of these bottles were relics, they garnered hundreds of dollars each from collectors. Naumann says that they found trash from as far back as a 1956 Swiss expedition.

Other expeditions brought the bulk of what they collected to local landfills, and this is the problem, says Barbara Brower, an American geographer who for 20 years has studied the environmental and social change brought on Nepal by tourism. The daughter of the monumental Sierra Club figure David Brower, she is no stranger to mountaineering and has great respect for it as a pastime. But she sees a traditional Himalayan way of life falling to pieces at the hands of tourism and says that trash at 26,000 feet is the least of the Nepal's worries.

"[Cleanup efforts] come out of our own affluent culture and our views of garbage," she says. "It's a feel-good way of supporting mountaineering." Rather than trying to mitigate the impacts of climbing, maybe foreign climbers shouldn't come at all, she suggests.

On the mountain, the garbage isn't harming anything but the aesthetic experience of climbers. However, it becomes a problem once it is brought down. "There is a huge solid waste management problem in the Kathmandu Valley," she says. "Garbage that is basically ecologically inert (at high altitudes) is way better than garbage that is removed and brought to a place that has no adequate way of dealing with it."

The money involved in cleanup programs could be better spent elsewhere, says Paul Lachapelle, a resource conservation graduate student in Montana

(Continued on page 8)

Off The Beaten Track

Kailash the hard way: Traveling from Kashgar to Lhasa

By Jamie McGuinness

Jamie McG and Suzy B had more adventure than can easily be imagined when they hitched across Tibet from Kashgar to Lhasa as part of Kathmandu to Hong Kong the long way.

One day in the middle of nowhere:

Awesome scenery, turquoise lakes, snowy mountains, and soft plains. The panorama outside is pure Tibet, indescribably beautiful in its stark, shadowless simplicity. I am happily being shaken apart, half hanging out the window of a truck because we are four in a 1960s cab for three, when I notice that the front wheel is getting wider. "Hello," I thought, "Wheels don't get wider." But try telling that to the driver when you don't speak Chinese or Tibetan. But through the miraculous powers of widening the eyes, frantically tapping shoulders, and yelling STOP!, we did halt approximately 3mm before the front wheel fell off.

The driver dumps a thousand nuts and bolts of a thousand sizes onto the desert and starts searching. Yep, we need the 1001th sized nut... So they modify one. When it is finally fixed the driver tightens the other front wheel for good measure, but busts the thread. We admire the lake and splendid panorama for another two hours while they dump out the remaining 999 nuts and bolts...

Another day in the middle of nowhere:

After a police interrogation and a day's recovery in Ali, we wait at the edge of town for a truck ride. No luck. Next morning, no luck either, so we walk. Half a day later we spy a person through our binoculars. Hello, it's another foreigner. Rather strange in the middle of nowhere. "What are you doing here?" we ask. "I have been waiting eight days for a ride." Only in Tibet.

We haven't the faintest clue where we are, but we walk along the valley, passing nomad camps and hoping that the alternate road is ahead. Well, that isn't exactly true because for the last 500km,

and the next 500, there isn't a road. The trucks simply go wherever their drivers feel like taking them, the reason we missed their shortcut. After three pleasant days of no vehicles we see trucks, stationary trucks. It is a woman moving house, so we perch on top of an ornate cabinet and thump along at a fourth-gear maximum of perhaps 25 miles an hour.

The only thing more glorious than the unimpeded panorama from the back of the truck is the picnic lunch. Share and share alike: a sack of flat bread appears, a leg of dried sheep, chicken in a barbecue sauce that she assures us is less than two days old, tsampa, and the inevitable



The Tibetan juxtaposition: A visit to the butcher in Shigatse

salt butter tea, brewed with a petrol blow torch that makes a lit Molotov cocktail look safe. Our dried apricots look rather meager beside all this, but no one cares. Smiles and laughter go a long way. You go a long way slowly in Tibet, so it's best to try to enjoy it!

Yet another day in the middle of nowhere: Our driver is hip deep in the frigid river and shaking his head. It is no longer possible to cross here. So our convoy heads across the plains, heading upriver. We ask at nomad camps about another crossing point. Two hours and many miles later, we find the perfect spot; our driver doesn't even wade in to check it. Everyone is jubilant. Half a day later we are on the other side at the place


we couldn't cross. Such is travel in Tibet.

One night in the middle of nowhere:

After weeks on the back of trucks, Shigatse is only five hours away and the drivers are well into a 24-hour driving marathon. It is 3 a.m. and we are happily asleep in the back on a bed of dried yak shit, — a present for his wife? — wrapped in borrowed sheepskin-lined overcoats, snug as a bug in a rug, as were the bugs, probably.

"Gya blyar byar police-y dza," - Obviously another police checkpoint. But this time the driver wants us to get out, walk through ourselves, and he will pick us up on the other side. We stagger off, watch the tail lights, disappear then let our night vision develop. We can feel the road under our feet, but can barely see the buildings as we shuffle along.

"Woof, WOOF, WOOF, grrr, Grrrr, GRRRR." We say "*!#@", "%^+*" and more. Tibetan dogs KILL the unknown. We stand as still as our adrenaline-charged bodies allow. They haven't yet worked out where we are. A few minutes later we pad away, and "Woof, WOOF, Grrrr, GRRRR," "*!#@" they have heard us again. Again stillness, and we exit a single step at a time to safety, fall in a ditch and sleep there. Shigatse was to be another day and another adventure away.

And the Kailash kora? Not only is a single circuit supposed to cleanse the soul of a lifetime's sins, it is also beyond doubt the most beautiful four-day walk in the world. 

Jamie McGuinness is author of Trekking in the Everest Region and Trekking in Langtang. Jamie spends more days a year trekking in the Himalayas than most people spend at work.

Book Review

Dark Shadows Falling

By Joe Simpson

(The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1997)

Reviewed by
Gabriela Greif



I had bought *Dark Shadows Falling* the most recent book by

Joe Simpson, the mountaineer and author of *Touching the Void*, the day before my departure to Nepal and Tibet, so it was waiting on my bookshelf when I returned. No book could have been better for the first sleepless (jet-lagged) nights after my return, with my mind still restless with the impressions, emotions, and encounters of a magical trip.

Although *Touching the Void*, the account of his fight for survival while climbing Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes, reads like the most unbelievable and harrowing of all true adventure stories, *Dark Shadows Falling* is more pensive. It is a mix of recent mountaineering history in which Simpson tells us about attitudes and philosophies clashing as climbing friends and expeditions fail or succeed in their attempts to conquer the increasingly crowded peaks of Nepal.

He contrasts the "only the summit counts" mentality that he finds in many of the players of modern mountaineering with the noble, caring brotherhood of climbers who make every attempt to assist a climber in trouble. The reader struggles with him to understand what pushes a climber so hard to reach the summit that saving or comforting others in trouble becomes irrelevant.

Simpson describes one shocking incident in 1992 in which a dying Indian climber lay exposed on the South Col of Mt. Everest, feebly waving his bare, frozen hand while other climbers filmed him from the security of their tents.

(Continued on page 6)

Himalayan Explorers Club News

By Scott Dimetrosky

PAKISTAN CLUBHOUSE MOVES

Heading to Pakistan this summer? Please note that the HEC Clubhouse has moved. The new address is House 14A, Street 63, F-8/4, Islamabad, Pakistan. Note that the e-mail remains the same at himexp@trango.sdnpk.undp.org. For detailed directions, please visit the Web page or contact Ovais Ashraf, the Clubhouse manager.

HEC PLACES TEACHERS IN THE EVEREST REGION

The HEC launched the **Volunteer Nepal Himalaya** program this past fall, with two participants living in the village of Chuserma (near Phakding) and teaching at the primary school in Sano Gumilla. Tsering and Ami were wonderful hosts, even building a separate house with a shower for the teachers! The response from the school was also wonderful, and a large ceremony was held for the teachers at the end of the program. There are currently five participants this spring. For more information on our fall and spring programs, please contact the HEC.

THANKS TO DIANE RITCHEY

Thanks to Diane Ritchey for her hard work in moderating HimalayaNet over the past year. Diane published over 25 issues of HimalayaNet, and under her tenure the mailing list grew to over 1,500 Himalayan enthusiasts throughout the world. I think we've all appreciated the ability to share Himalayan information with others - thanks Diane! (If you'd like to subscribe to HimalayaNet, please e-mail mail-request@hec.org, with the message subscribe himnet_Mail_List in the body of the message).

ELEVEN HEC MEMBERS SUMMIT ISLAND PEAK

The fall 1998 HEC Everest trip was a huge success this year, as all eleven members made the summit of Island Peak! John Benedict, who is 62 years old, was the oldest HEC member we know of to stand atop the 20,252 foot mountain! Pemba will be leading another Everest trek/Island Peak climb in October, 1999,

this time via the remote Arun Valley (see page 8 for details).

WHY WAIT? BECOME A NEXT-LIFE MEMBER

We'd like to offer our sincerest thanks to the following HEC members who have chosen to support the Club above the basic membership. Doug Thompson, in fact, took out his second life membership, elevating him to the ranks of a **Next-Life member** (based, of course, on the Buddhist belief in reincarnation). So why wait? Join now for your future reincarnations.

Supporting Members

Dorothy Adamson, The Netherlands
Mathew Arthur, Oxfordshire, England
Jim Ashburn, Statesville, NC
Katrine Bosely, Boston, MA
Joe Bozzuto, Denver, CO
Ely Brand, Denver, CO
Lawrence Brown, Ph.D., Larchmont, NY
Jeff Brown, Huntsville, AL
Nicole Canavelli, Puteaux, France
William Casazza, Avon, CT
Peter Charlesworth, Hove, Sussex
Gary Cummings, Miami, FL
Amanda Dimmock, Brisbane, Australia
Ken and Cindy Dowling, Englewood, CO
Michelle Ehm, Mill Valley, CA
Erika Elias & Glen Boyd, Seattle, WA
Judith Glyde, Boulder, CO
John Hughes, Washington, DC
Bob Kay, San Matteo, CA
Brad Lechman, Portland, OR
Sean Mannion, Middletown, WI
Betty Molloy, Santa Cruz, CA
Richard Pollack, Wyandotte, MI
Terry Richter, Los Angeles, CA
Mark Ross, Denver, CO
Gordon Stafford, Basalt, CO
Amelia Stevens, Leverett, MA
Bonnie & Alan Stewart, Boulder, CO
Marc Tabereaux, San Diego, CA

Contributing

Bill Kilpatrick, Los Angeles, CA
Leon Tokatlian, Pelham, NH

Next-Life

Douglas Thompson, Hanover, NH

(Climb, Continued from page 1)

the village women and children. Centuries-old sustainable ways of life that rely on local renewable resources have been lost in pursuit of cash.

When Greg asked about a school, the embarrassed villagers reluctantly led him up a hill to a place where eighty children sat in the dirt diligently doing their lessons without a teacher. Their teacher

“Greg won the Pathans over and was freed. They showed their admiration with a barrage of gunfire and a 5,000 rupee donation”

was in the next village that day, as the village could not afford to pay a full-time teacher’s pay of \$1 a day.

Ironically, only miles away on the Siachen glacier, Pakistan and India each spend over \$1,000,000 per day on an absurd decade-long war. Every morning, barefoot children watch multimillion-dollar helicopters and fighter jets fly overhead to the war area.

Yet, despite abject adversity, the children’s spirits were high and they delighted in their studies. Even with no outside help, the community was determined to educate its children. When they asked Greg for help with education, he agreed.

Fundraising was the first priority. Greg’s ardor did not immediately translate into dollars. Anti-Islamic sentiment still prevailed in the United States after Operation Desert Storm. Several appeals and slide shows yielded only \$2,000. He still needed \$10,000 more to build the school. To support himself, he sold everything he owned, including his house, his car, and his climbing gear.

Then Greg’s luck turned. Dr. Jean Hoerni, a Swiss climber and microchip pioneer read about Greg’s quest and called him. Jean had been in the Karakoram several times, and knew what Greg was up against. “What the hell are you doing building a school in an Islamic region near a war zone without a penny to your name?” Jean asked. Greg replied that he had a promise to

fulfill and would start the project even if he did not have enough funding. Impressed with Greg’s tenacity, Jean offered to fund the entire project.

High-altitude construction in such an inhospitable place is a daunting task. Before the school was built, a 282-foot suspension bridge had to be constructed for supplies to reach the village. The community rallied, full of initiative and ingenuity, and built the bridge quickly in 1995.

The success of this first mission encouraged Greg’s enthusiasm and respect for the Baltis. He gradually learned the Balti language, an archaic Tibetan tongue that has no script. With that tool, he could further appreciate the ancestral traditions of the Balti.

Picture Not Available

First grade school girls in northern Pakistan

Unforeseen challenges ensued: Greg had to engage in intense discourse with Shiite Muslim scholars, under the direct auspices of Iranian ayatollahs. Pakistani intelligence agents were also initially skeptical of Greg’s motives, watching his every move.

At another point, Greg was abducted at gunpoint by fierce Pathan tribesmen armed with AK-47s. They, too, did not believe that Greg had come all the way from “America” to help children in a remote village. With patient dialogue over eight days, Greg won the Pathans over and was freed. They showed their admiration for Greg with a barrage of gunfire and gave him a 5,000 rupee donation.

Greg’s undaunted efforts paid off. After three years the school was completed in 1996. Jean died only a month later, but


not before he and Greg established the Central Asia Institute, a nonprofit foundation, to continue community projects in underserved Central Asian mountain villages.

By November 1998, Greg had raised funds for and established a phenomenal track record of successful projects: building nine schools and five potable water systems, planting thousands of trees, establishing two women’s vocational training centers and setting up environmental education workshops for teachers.

“Over time, I’ve learned that there is only one way to ensure a project’s successful viability and self-sustainability,” says Greg, “It must be started at the community grass-root level with local initiative and be run entirely by community committees. The Baltis’ ingenuity and resilience never cease to amaze me.”

In 1997, Greg and his brother-in-law, Brent Bishop, initiated Pakistan’s first porter training program. The Program emphasizes conservation, hygiene and sanitation, first aid, and crevasse rescue.

Greg and Geoff Tabin, M.D., a Vermont ophthalmologist and climber, are also working to establish a comprehensive eye care program for the Karakoram region.

When asked why he keeps going back, Greg replies, “The Balti people inspire me. They are proud, happy people, despite their hardships. Nepal and Tibet receive support from hundreds of organizations. It is time we start to give something back to these magnificent people, who openly share their spectacular mountain home with us.” 

For more information contact the Central Asia Institute, 617 South Fifth Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715, or call (406)585-7841. The CAI focuses on community project development and requests that all travel inquiries be directed to the HEC Pakistan Clubhouse. Tara Bishop is a mother, clinical psychologist and Greg’s wife.

Classified Section

TREKKING PARTNERS

Looking for trekking partners for part or all of an extended Himalayan trip. Will include Pakistan (possible Karakoram traverse near K2), Tibet (Mt. Kailash and Lhasa), Nepal (Everest region). Dates are July-Dec 1999. Call Gordon at (970)927-9637.

CLIMBING PARTNERS wanted for technical climbs in Himalaya Nov 12 - Dec 15, 1999. This is my first trip to Nepal. I have climbed extensively in Colorado and Utah and am climbing Rainier in August. Not interested in climbing K2-like epics but would like something moderately challenging. Please e-mail John at kokinis@cs.utah.edu or call at (801)534-0871.

GUIDES

Pakistan with Pakistanis: **Concordia Expeditions**, your premier connection to Pakistan, offers superior and affordable adventures to K2, Hunza, Snow Lake, Chitral, and the Karakoram Glaciers. Contact Concordia Expeditions, PO Box 4159, Buena Vista, CO 81211 (719)395-9191, info@concordiaexpeditions.com, http://www.concordiaexpeditions.com.

Explore Himalaya: Join us in fall 1999 on Cho Oyu (only \$6,500!). Can also arrange individual/group holidays to all destinations in Nepal, India, and Tibet. High altitude treks & climbing, mountain biking, and white water rafting. Full/part services for mountaineering expeditions, cultural tours, and wildlife safaris. Contact Suman Pandey, PO Box 4902, Kathmandu, Nepal, Fax: 977-1-252 115, e-mail: adventur@mos.com.np

Join the **Himalayan Explorers Club** in the Himalayas! Pemba Sherpa leads Everest trek and Island Peak climb via the remote Arun Valley and Island Peak (September 1999). Jamie McGuinness, author of two Nepal guidebooks, leads the Classic Everest Trek (May 1999) and more.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer on a farm in Ladakh through the **International Society for Ecology and Culture's Farm Project.** Ladakh (sometimes known as "Little Tibet") is a predominantly Tibetan Buddhist region in the extreme north of India. Volunteers live and work with a Ladakhi family on a traditional Ladakhi farm. Farm stays are a minimum of one month, and are available throughout the summer. Volunteers are responsible for transportation to and from Leh, a \$150/£100 placement fee, and a small fee of 20 rupees (about 70 cents) per day, to be paid to the host family in exchange for room and board. If interested, contact ISEC, PO Box 9475, Berkeley, CA 94709; or call (510) 548-4915.


Teach in a Sherpa school near Mt. Everest with the HEC's **Volunteer Nepal Himalaya** program. Includes homestay with Sherpa family. Upcoming programs include Sept-Dec 1999, Feb-May 2000, and Sept-Dec 2000. For more information, please contact the HEC at info@hec.org or call (303) 998-0101.

(Dark Shadows Falling, Continued from page 4)

The book contains numerous anecdotes about victims of storms, altitude sickness, and lack of experience, as well as powerful images of unburied corpses lying among empty oxygen cylinders that would not leave my mind.

Another troubling event the author describes is the now infamous blizzard of 1995, when a number of porters were left to fend for themselves, while their clients bought their way out of disaster with helicopter flights, their main concern seeming to be that they make their international connections. Remembering how I worried about canceled flights and bus schedules during my own trip, I wondered whether I could be any different than the people thinking of nothing else but their own rescue and their trip back home.

Although Joe Simpson is clearly unhappy with the way that the Himalayas are treated, he is as much seduced by the majestic peaks and blue skies as anyone else who has been trekking or seen the "Everest" movie. Because he is a mountaineer, we get to read about his climbing adventures. His vivid narrative describing his hike through the Khumbu valley to the Pumori base camp gave me such a vivid impression that I thought I had been there. Having to turn around below the summit does not diminish his love and adoration for the serenity and beauty of the peaks, and his words become poetry.

However, the most haunting image in the book is when he closes with the memory of his struggle for survival. And we feel that his compassionate plea to offer a dying climber the comfort of company, even if rescue attempts are futile, are the sincere feelings of a man who knows how it feels to be left for dead. This book is neither easy nor cheerful, but it is food for thought for anyone who loves the Himalayas and cares about more than reaching the summit. 

Himalayan Notes and Travel Tips

Immigration Office Moves

For some inexplicable reason, the Kathmandu immigration office has moved from the Thamel district, where the majority of tourists stay, to Baneshwor (on the way to the airport). Cabs to the new office cost about 200 rupees roundtrip. Entrepreneurial trekking companies are now offering to do the paperwork for about a \$10 service charge.

New Everest Collectors Pen

In the latest Everest mania, Krone, LLC has just released a new "Sir Edmund Hillary Mount Everest Pen." Rocks were collected from the summit of Everest by Todd Burleson, which were then mounted in the caps of the pens. The brochure states that "The Krone Limited Edition Everest Pen is a lasting tribute to those who would dare to dream the greatest of dreams, to stand on top of the world." Order soon: only 1,088 pens were produced at the bargain price of \$1,400 each. Call (847)215-0011.



Sherpa Speed Record on Everest

On October 16, 1998, Kaji Sherpa of Nepal made a 20-hour, 24-minute "dash" to the top of Mount Everest, making it the fastest ascent ever recorded from the Nepal side. Kaji reported afterward that, "I did this for Sherpas, for Sherpa pride. [It is] important for Sherpas to be known."



Cornell Offering Nepali Language

Cornell University will be offering an intensive summer course in Nepali. The six credit course runs from June 7-July 16 in Ithaca, New York. The course also includes lectures, films, and cultural activities. Financial aid is available. Application materials are available from the South Asia Program, 170 Uris Hall, Cornell, and amp18@cornell.edu, (607)255-8493.

HEC Members Develop Master Plan for Bandipur

Bandipur, a remote village of about 3,000 people at the head of a beautiful valley south of Dumre, two hours drive east of Pokhara, has stunning views of the Annapurna range. The stagnant village may see a resurgence as a result of a Master Plan prepared in October-November 1998 by Ralph and Pam Rosenberg from Colorado Springs. The objectives of the Master Plan were to provide a blueprint to guide the improvement of the village infrastructure, increase revenue generating opportunities, improve self-sufficiency, and attract tourism. Contact Ralph or Pam at ralphpam@aol.com, 719-598-5418, for more information.

Female Mountain Guides

Looking for a female mountain guide? Our Clubhouse recommends Three Sisters Adventure Trekking. Contact them at Lakeside, Khahare, PO Box 284, Pokhara, Nepal, Tel: 977-061-246066.



Messner Muddies Myth of the Yeti

Speaking at the Frankfurt (Germany) book fair, mountaineering legend Reinhold Messner announced that, contrary to popular myth, the Yeti or Abominable Snowman is not a humanoid ape, but a large bear. Messner, who unveiled his new book *Yeti*, said he had not believed in the Yeti but changed his mind after he came face to face with a dark creature one night in 1986 while hiking in a remote forest of eastern Tibet. "I came across this indefinable, big, stinking exotic animal. It's clearly a Tibetan bear, similar to a grizzly but with longer hair," Messner said. It can grow up to 3.4 metres and lives at heights of between 12,000 and 18,000 feet.



Solar Sisters Looking for Participants

HEC member Stephanie Davis has recently set up an admirable new program called Solar Sisters. Solar Sisters is not only bringing solar power to villages, but also developing local enterprises and educational opportunities for women. They are offering a ten day program where participants sponsor and actually help install solar power in villages. For more information contact Stephanie Davis at the Himalayan Light Foundation for more information: Tel: 977-1-418-203, Fax: 977-1-412-924, hlf@mos.com.np

Sad Season in the Solu-Khumbu Region

The Khunde hospital in Nepal reported on three tragic losses this past November. According to the hospital, "This year is said to be a black year in the Solu-Khumbu. No weddings and no new houses to be built. The repercussions in the community seem significant. There is an unusual, almost palpable uneasiness. Losar will be of special welcome this year."

Shyam, Headmaster of Khumjung School. Shyam, the headmaster of Khumjung school for 32 years, collapsed on his way home from the market with a probable heart attack.

Captain A.G. Sherpa. Captain Ang Gyalchen from Thame was killed when the plane he was flying with cargo crashed into the hillside above Jorsalle. Some witnesses reported that they saw smoke coming from the plane. He was known in so many circles for his good deeds and kind heart.

Ang Tendi Sherpa, Thamserku Trekking. An Asian trekking helicopter flying from Lukla to Jiri crashed after shutting some Belgian tourists towards Mera peak with building clouds. On board was Ang Tendi Sherpa from Pangkongma, owner of Thamserku Trekking and the elected representative for Solu-Khumbu.

Mountain Quotes

“Be Gentle on My Curves”

“Better to Be Mister Late than Late Mister”


Warnings for truck drivers and buses to slow down on the Manali to Leh road in Northern India. The warnings are written in English, but most of the truck drivers speak Hindi (and are illiterate, in any case). The road crosses three imposing passes: the Rohtang La (13,078 feet), the Baralacha La (16,010), and the Tanglang La (17,582 feet). Statisticians have estimated that a fatal road accident is somewhere between 15 and 20 more times more likely in India than in the United States.

(Garbage, Continued from page 2)

who has lived in Nepal, first as a student working for the American Embassy and later working to mitigate water pollution.

“The perceived issues that the climbers see are not that important at all. They are important from a Western standpoint. They pale in comparison to the real issues in that area,” he argues. “You fly into Kathmandu and see the sewage, solid waste issues, infant and maternal mortality — the issues are so much grander in scale than a couple hundred oxygen bottles at the top of this mountain.”

What bothers Brower is “the idea that it is our right to travel to these places just because we want to.” Now climbers are imposing their cultural sense of cleanliness on the peaks as well, she contends, causing Nepal to bear the burden.

“People think of mountains as wilderness and garbage as anathema. It’s a more complicated story,” she says. 

Visit the Himalayas with the HEC!

Everest Region (with Island Peak) via the Arun Valley

Pemba Tsering Sherpa follows the original approach to the Everest region, used by Bill Tilman in 1950. The route has grown in popularity since then, but is still far less crowded than the Jiri approach, and provides a true glimpse into rural Nepali life. Once in the Khumbu region we climb Kala Pattar (18,373 ft), Island Peak (20,252 ft), and spend a night with Pemba’s family!

Trip Dates:

October 20 - November 17, 1999 (\$1,990)

K2 Trek and Gondogoro Climb

Join Masood Ahmad on a visit to the Karakoram, the “throne room of the mountain gods.” The route follows the Baltoro glacier to Concordia, with breathtaking views of Masherbraum, Broad Peak, and K2. The group then ascends the Gondogoro La (19,489) to the Hushe Valley.

Trip dates:

June 27th, 1999 to July 21, 1999 (\$3,500)

July 25, 1999 - August 18, 1999 (\$3,500)

Off the beaten track: Kailash the hard way (Page 3)

In This Issue...

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