



F. A. Stott

EVEREST FROM THYANGBOCHE

Summit cone seen about eighteen miles away

EVEREST: THE VIEW FROM THE BASE

by FREDERICK A. STOTT

THE GROUP WAS EVENLY DIVIDED—those whose first interest was in writing and those for whom the mountains came first. Perhaps twelve men in all, we were members of the Phillips Academy (Andover) faculty invited by Headmaster John M. Kemper to spend an evening with writer-mountaineer James Ramsay Ullman. Official chronicler of the 1963 American Everest Expedition, Ullman had lectured on Everest to the student body that morning.

First the writers held sway, for about an hour. Then talk turned to the mountains, and the tale of the successful American effort unfolded in a highly individual way. For the first time Everest and people who had attempted it were real and immediate. As we rose to depart, I turned to Ullman and said, "I would really love to see Everest with my naked eyes, and under my own power."

"But you can," he said.

That was the starting point, March 6, 1964. On Friday, October 29, 1965, we saw the summit of Mount Everest—from the base.

It wasn't all that simple, of course. First there was the question of whether or not Nan would like it, let alone whether the passing of days might wash out the imprint of one evening. At any rate Nan didn't say "no" when I first broached the subject while paused at a stoplight in the middle of Haverhill, Massachusetts. The subject kept cropping up in the next ten days until we made a trade: Nan would join me in an Everest trek if we could spend two weeks in Greece en route.

Agreed, with Nan's comments on the Greek mountains making it all the more palatable. In fact I magnanimously lengthened the Greek stay to three weeks, including the suggestion that an ascent of Mt. Olympus would be the perfect prelude to Everest. The three-week clause was quickly accepted; Mt. Olympus was not discussed!

Two points deserve early emphasis. The first is that we were not seeking to *climb* Everest. As news of our plan gradually spread, the constant question was, "Are you really going to climb Mt. Everest?" We, of course, replied: "No, we are only going to climb in to the *base* of Everest."

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That usually ended the conversation except for some bewildered head-shaking and the unspoken question, "Why in the world do they want to do that?" However, if the curiosity continued, then we carefully explained that Everest had been climbed by only sixteen men on four expeditions;¹ that any summit attempt required enormous skill and support in the form of supplies, personnel, and money; and, finally, that we were far more mountain lovers than mountain climbers.

This brings me to the second point. Nan and I are two fairly ordinary middle-aged Americans who live just off Main Street.

Aged forty-seven when all this Everest business began, I was a graduate of Andover and of Amherst College before serving in the Marines in World War II. Following that war, six years of business in California and New York preceded return to Andover in an administrative capacity. Nan, forty-two, has a sturdy State-of-Maine background. Her home town was Auburn, with summers at Friendship, the home of the famous sloop. She is a graduate of Smith College, but, prior to our life in California, her furthest point west was Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Save for my hitch in the Marine Corps, neither of us had been outside the continental United States. Travel enthusiasts we were not, at least based on the record. But neither were we strangers to the mountains. During my college summers I had worked for the Appalachian Mountain Club in New Hampshire's White Mountains. While Nan's background was the ocean, we had tramped many a trail together in California and New England. And two sons had joined us in love of the mountains—as soon as they could walk, and abetted by several earlier trips in my rucksack.

Four events in particular probably nudged us, unconsciously, toward Everest. The first was Nan's love of literature. Always a voracious reader, she had been accumulating a modest Himalayan collection for ten years. From Mallory to Hillary she knew the names, the deeds, and the rock and snow on which they had succeeded or foundered.

The second event was a four-day trip in 1964 with our older son Sandy in the Colorado Rockies. Third was the formal establishment of a Four Thousand Footer Club. My competitive nature,

¹ Ascents to the summit of Everest have been made as follows: May 29, 1953, Hillary and Tenzing Norgay (British); May 23, 1956, Schmied and Marmet; May 24, 1956, Reist and von Gunten (Swiss); May 1, 1963, Whitaker and Nawang Gombu; May 22, 1963, Bishop, Jerstad, Unsoeld, and Hornbein (American); May 19-29, 1965, four members of the Indian expedition. The Chinese claim that three members of their expedition in 1960 reached the summit from the Tibetan side has not been accepted by most mountaineers of the West.

abetted again by Sandy, would not rest until all 46 peaks were done. This we finished in 1964 also.

The fourth force was photography. The power of observation, and enjoyment, had long been enhanced by men like John Jay and Andover's own Gordon Bensley. The acquisition of a camera, and some experience, rubbed some of those powers off on me.

At any rate, on the morning of Friday, September 10, 1965, Nan and I were packed for an 8:00 P.M. flight to Athens and three weeks in Greece. Then east to New Delhi and Kathmandu, Nepal—175 foot miles from Everest.

While we had been preoccupied with our own preparations and apprehensions, we were well aware of the India-Pakistan conflict (and the Chinese overtones), then in its third week. We knew also that there are only two routes into Nepal: through India or through China. China, of course, was out for Americans. Well-informed advisors said that India might well be out, too, at any moment, and then where would our dream (and nest-egg) be?

Finally at noon on that same Friday we paid proper heed to good advice and canceled our reservations—which left us all packed up with no place to go.

Or should we just go somewhere, anywhere?

We really were ready. Both of us had secured leaves-of-absence from our jobs. Somehow we had scraped up the cash from savings, loans, travel grant, extra job, and the continued use of a 1955 Ford.

Not only were we ready with adequate physical resources, but we were mentally prepared as well. We had the normal apprehensions of inexperienced travellers, plus a few special ones all our own. High on our special list was health. Two Andover physicians, Donald M. Clark and Julian Kaiser, had given us a four-hour short course in medical care. This they backed up with a medical kit which weighed twenty-five pounds. At this point Julian Kaiser said, "I think we had better develop a philosophy of risk," and we pared the kit down to ten pounds. I was as sure that Nan was competent in this area as I was sure that I was not, but I didn't quite dare ask her what she thought! Still we had our philosophy, our kit, and a reasonable hold on this apprehension.

All other equipment, too, we pared down. Assuming that we wore our heavy climbing boots and clothing, and that Nan carried at least ten pounds in her unweighed "handbag," we came out at exactly the limit, eighty-eight pounds.

So, ready indeed, but resisting the instinct to "do something," we sat it out. Two weeks later, with a cease-fire reasonably well

established, we took off. Greece—and Nan—suffered. Everest was waiting.

The plane we boarded in New Delhi, bearing the proud emblem of Royal Nepal Airlines, set the stage for departure from our kind of civilization. I cannot remember whether it was a DC-3 or a Dakota, but I do know that it was at least twenty years old. Every part of the interior showed it, right back to the tiny toilet in the tail which had a ceiling perhaps five feet high.

Still it flew well and steadily over the northern plains of India at a modest 150 MPH. No mountains came into view for the first three hours. Just flat brown plain, and an occasional meandering stream. Then suddenly up shot green-covered hills. In a matter of minutes they were level with us at 7,000 feet. In a matter of a few more minutes we were through the pass and dropping down into the lush yellow-green Kathmandu Valley—elevation, 4,423 feet.

We were met first by Elizabeth Hawley, *Time* and *Reuters* correspondent, who also assisted our "agent," Lt. Col. James Roberts, in arranging Himalayan treks. We were met second by A. S. Cleveland Fuller, alumnus of Andover and second secretary of the American Embassy. Impressed we were, only to discover that Fuller's real mission was to meet his wife's family coming in on the same plane.

With such chaperonage, customs proved speedy and we were soon piled into a sturdy Land-Rover bouncing along into the city, often through a path cleared only by a roaring motor and an incessant horn.

We found Kathmandu a mixture of old and new, East and West. Perhaps "hodge-podge" is a better word, though offense is not intended. What Kathmandu was not, the Hotel Royal was. This is the storied hotel of Nepal. From it all the modern Everest expeditions have departed. To it they have returned. Every reporter of these expeditions has faithfully included a vivid description of the Royal. We found just what we expected.

It was indeed an enormous old marble and crumbling concrete Rana palace. Surrounding the building were the unkempt survivors of once stately gardens. Inside not much had been attempted to adapt formal halls and large rooms for modern function. One striking exception was the Yak and Yeti Bar. Tucked in a pleasant corner behind a painted black outline of a yak and the "footprints" of the oft-sought and never-seen Yeti (Abominable Snowman), it is an attractive spot. Of course, we tested it by nightfall that first day.

Other efforts to modernize had been made in the areas of food and utilities. As to the food, it was both ample and tasty.

Utilities were another story. In theory, water was available from the tap at any hour. In fact, there were unannounced droughts, both frequent and of considerable duration. Calls for help produced a plumber whose prime qualification was the strength to lug a full ten-gallon water pail up to our room. This he would then hold at head height and pour into the toilet to produce a flushing action. Or, he would simply set the pail down and leave it to me to improvise. The electrician had different credentials, but clearly he came from the same school. Bad lights he fixed either by bulb-snatching or by jiggling the connecting wires. Occasionally the remedy was a kick at an offending base plug.

No matter. The Royal was rich with atmosphere and anecdote. We loved it, and our room, measuring at least 25' x 35', gave us plenty of space for the inevitable packing and repacking.

As the time to start walking drew close, we grew vaguely apprehensive that perhaps all was not quite well. Although Colonel Roberts was away on a major expedition to Dhaulagiri IV, his repute as the best man to arrange an Himalayan venture—be it major expedition or 40-day trek—had been amply borne out by eighteen months of correspondence and Elizabeth Hawley's greeting. Nonetheless something seemed to have happened to Kaley Lama. Veteran of many a trek, Kaley had long been assigned as our sirdar with responsibility for the other two Sherpas and the six to nine porters who would make up our expedition.

Elizabeth doesn't ruffle easily, and she sought information from many a source. All were dry. Kaley had vanished. No one knew where. No one expected him back. All of which was more than slightly disconcerting to this "middle-aged American couple" 12,000 miles from home.

"Let's move Jahman Tensing up to sirdar from #2 Sherpa," suggested Elizabeth, adding, "but you had better decide only after a formal interview."

So Jahman appeared at the Royal, and for the first time we tried out the roles of "Sahib" and "Memsahib" which were to be ours for the next five weeks. The fit wasn't easy at first, but Jahman's appearance was reassuring. He was well scrubbed and wore a blue and white checked shirt, clean pants, three gold teeth, and a big smile; we liked him instinctively. His credentials were good, too: member of three major expeditions whose leaders had all made favorable notation in the Himalayan Sherpa wallet he carried. His English was limited, but we were assured that #2 Sherpa, Lakpa Tsering, was even more fluent! So, "Jahman, you sirdar," and we shook hands.

Back to the packing, the Yak and Yeti Bar, and dinner. Then, during dinner, more word from Elizabeth.

7:00 PM, Friday, October 8th

Dear Stott Sahib and Memsahib,

Just to make the day complete, Kaley has turned up. He has mumbled difficult-to-understand explanations of his absence—amongst them, a claimed misunderstanding about dates. He wants to go with you.

I have told him to turn up at the Royal Hotel tomorrow morning and you will decide whether he goes or not. I'm inclined to tell him to go to hell, but he can be (very) helpful to you if he puts his mind to it, which he almost certainly will do.

Best,
Elizabeth

Well, we wrestled with that one for a good hour. Which was better, the original first choice or our improvised lineup? What sort of pecking order exists among Sherpas? How would Jahman, and Lakpa too, react if the roles were suddenly reversed again? Furthermore they, with nine porters, had already gone ahead to sort our gear and loads.

Nan finally resolved the dilemma with some straightforward Western logic. "We have made an agreement with Jahman," she said, "that 'he sirdar.' We have shaken hands on it. We should keep it." We did.

So early Saturday morning we piled back into the Land-Rover and took off for the road-end some twenty-five miles away at Panchkal. As we pulled away from the Royal's whitewashed entrance, Elizabeth pointed out a green-sweatered Nepali left behind and quietly watching. "There," she said, "is Kaley Lama."

For twenty-five miles and almost three hours, we bumped and ground our way along the "Chinese Road" to Panchkal. Only a Land-Rover or Jeep would have made it in that good time. The "Chinese Road" is a joint China-Nepal project which will eventually connect Kathmandu and Tibet. Involved are Chinese money, engineering, and supervisory personnel and enormous quantities of Nepalese labor. Occasionally we saw a truck or a bulldozer. Mostly it was pick, shovel, wheelbarrow, and basket all carried or wielded by Nepalese men, women, and children.

It was on the road that we joined our Sherpas and porters under a hot midday sun. And it was over six miles of the road that we would walk that first afternoon. For, said Jimmy Roberts's route sheet, "it is advisable to walk at least the major portion of this stage as a preparation for the stiff day's climb which follows."

We sought the shade of a large peepul tree, munched at a picnic lunch, and waited for our team to trudge up the dusty red road. Jahman came first. He had on the same blue and white shirt with a favorite red-visored cap seated snugly on his head. As he



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ANG PASANG, NO. 3 SHERPA

walked, his body swayed with a lateral motion which seemed half as great as the forward motion. Sturdiness and reliability appeared obvious characteristics. Shortly we were to discover that Jahman also had a considerable talent for cooking. A good straight-arrow type, we concluded.

Lakpa Tsering came next. Twenty-five years old, he was the younger brother of Mingma Tsering, the favorite sirdar of Sir Edmund Hillary. Lakpa, too, had been with Hillary, and for several weeks in 1963 he had served as Lady Hillary's personal Sherpa. Fine, we thought, immediately assigning him to the Memsahib.

Lakpa's English was indeed a notch above Jahman's. But just a notch. From more experience with English-speaking expeditions he had acquired a somewhat greater fluency, and for the most part served as interpreter. While we had our share of misunderstandings, we had a pretty full share of understandings as well.

Number three Sherpa was Ang Pasang. He, too, had been with Hillary in 1963, as a cook boy. A friend of Lakpa's and from the same high altitude Sherpa village of Khunde, Ang Pasang had "happened" along at just the moment our organization was in disarray. Clearly number three in the pecking order, he was equally clearly happy with his spot. Whether it was packing water for half a mile, detouring several miles to replenish supplies, or starting the pre-dawn camp fire, Ang Pasang performed with ready grin and without complaint.

Like our other two Sherpas, Ang Pasang was married. In answer to questions about his background, Lakpa mentioned that his wife was twenty-eight. "What," I said, "Ang Pasang is eighteen, and his wife is twenty-eight?" "Esss" came the answer midst an explosion of laughter. Maybe, we thought, we have stumbled on the Nepalese custom of a wife having two husbands, one of whom is much younger so that she will have a young husband handy when she grows old.

Last in line came the nine porters, each carrying sixty pounds in a cone-shaped pack basket. For all porters the weight was the same: sixty pounds. Nor were packs weighed on scales, for of these there were none. Jahman simply gauged the weight, thus guaranteeing fair practice, and we never heard protest of unequal loading.

All the porters were men. All were under 5'1" tall. All weighed less than 130 pounds. And all were barefoot. Not exactly the sturdiest looking group to our Western eyes. Moreover they ranged in age from a sixteen-year-old to a grandfather of five who had never before been either a porter or this far away from Kathmandu. Four feet and seven inches tall, he had been recruited by the head porter's stories of adventure, plus the statement "Sixty pounds much fun."

Like all our starting porters, "grandfather" stayed with us for twelve days until we started up into the higher and colder country. His parting comment told all, "Enough fun. Never again."

Last in line came head porter Lal Bahadur. Five feet tall, he peered out from beneath a shock of long jet black hair. Lal Bahadur had three essential pieces of clothing: a white dhoti (trousers of a sort), a bright blue shirt, and a scarf to wind around neck and head to ward off cold. He also had an irrepressible grin, a penchant for Memsahib's cigarettes, and a personality which included a generous slice of stage quality ham. In this area he paralleled, but never competed with, his Sahib. By the end of the trek Lal Bahadur had a strong hold on our affections.

All of this we were to discover later as we walked and lived

with our Nepalese. Under the peepul tree at Panchkal that first day we felt pretty lonely. There just wasn't much taste to that picnic lunch.

Our six miles of roadwork completed, we traveled only on footpaths for the next thirty-four days. And we settled into a way of life which was as regular as it was different from the life we had known. Surprisingly quickly we adjusted to the roles of Sahib and Memsahib. After an initial fleeting tendency to disdain the niceties offered us by the Sherpas, we came to accept them gratefully. The setting up of tent and cot, the placing of small table and folding chairs, the preparation of all meals, and the ever-present cup of tea at camp—all were welcome.

It took us longer, Nan in particular, to get used to a day which always began with the first lightening of the eastern sky. That started at 5:30 A.M. Much too early, she thought. But then our whole day had side-slipped several hours to coincide with the sun. There was no alternative. We were up and ready for the trail by 6:30 A.M. Not fed, but with enough Nescafé, crackers, and jam inside to hold us for three hours until breakfast. These three hours were essential to a good day, enabling us to put in four to six miles before the heat built up. This it did when the sun shone, which was two-thirds of the time, particularly at the lower elevations.

The mid-morning breakfast was often an elaborate affair. Food ranged from pancakes (pan-sized and fully an inch thick) to onion omelets, dry cereal and hot "millik," and cheese. Occasionally delicacies such as liver, dahi (yak curds, and very good), potatoes, or fruit juice made an appearance. The only thing wrong with the fruit juice was that it always appeared at the end of a meal. Protests didn't work. So we adapted by stowing it in our canteens for later. And always "Nescoffee" to wash all down. There isn't any such beverage as coffee; just "Nescoffee."

Another four to six miles followed breakfast. Usually these were the tougher miles because the day was warmer, the body wearier, and the stomach too full. This was the time of day when Nan more than once silently vowed to "throw these damn boots away when we are done, and never look at them again." (Footnote: she has them on as I write this sentence.)

Carrying packs which weighed fifteen pounds (Nan) and twenty-five pounds (Fred), we could move at a slightly faster pace than the porters and usually reached the campsite by 3:00 P.M. The rest would pull in within the hour. We probably could have pushed further ahead, but early in the trek we learned that the trail, obvious as a highway in places, had an alarming tendency to vanish or turn in an illogical direction. This lack of

trail sense on our part never ceased to amaze me. In America I always prided myself on a good sense of direction, and the route we were following for the first sixteen days to Namche Bazar was a major trade route. True, there were some new directional hazards. Signs, for instance, didn't exist. We saw but one in thirty-five days, and that pointed, in Nepalese, to a Swiss cheese farm miles away from our route. Passersby had difficulty with our fragmentary Nepalese and often responded to questions with a bewildered silent look. That didn't help much either. So it was wise policy to stick fairly close to Sherpa or porter.

If the early morning reveille took some adjusting to, bedtime was far worse for both of us. Dinner was usually over by 5:00 P.M., never later than six. By that hour the sky was dark. And there we were for the night. All eleven and one-half hours of it. Just the two of us. Alone.

We had lanterns, when there was enough fuel. We also had candles when the wind was gentle. And, after an exchange of views on our health, the weather, food, the day just past and the day ahead, well . . . we had four books. They were: *Schoolhouse in the Clouds* (Sir Edmund Hillary); *Mount Everest* (Toni Hagen, G. O. Dyhrenfurth, Ch. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, Erwin Schneider), rather stiffly translated from the German original; *Across the Coral Strand* (John Masters); and *Decision at Delphi* (Helen MacInnes). Even with limited light and reasonable reading habits, we soon ran out of books.

It simply is not easy to change a bedtime hour of forty years based on electricity to one based on the sun. Obviously we had to try. Obviously we had to succeed, at least partially. But it wasn't easy.

Equally difficult in the adjustment was one's personal toilet. For women, particularly the only female in an "all-male locker room," shrubbery is a must. Yet for the first few days shrubs were hard indeed to come by. Wood being the only source of fuel for cooking, forests just were not part of our countryside until we were several days distant from Kathmandu. In turn this called for improvisation, and a bit of bravado too.

So went our life for the first five days. Ten to twelve miles a day; up and down, and up again; slightly gaining in altitude. Skies holding big fluffy cumulus clouds, but no rain. It all seemed a matter of dogged routine until we would fetch up to the base of Everest.

Not only were we pushing ahead at a steady rate, but we had also passed our first scary bridge described by Jimmy Roberts as "rather a shaky chain bridge, but not difficult."

Every narrative of the Himalayas delightedly describes the



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THE STOTTS ABOVE NAMCHE BAZAR, AT ABOUT 13,000 FEET

hazards of crossing steep gorges and fast flowing rivers on precarious bridges. Rope bridges, chain link bridges, cantilevered bridges, suspension bridges—all speak of real peril and a personal trial of one's fibre. We were not immune to this indirect inoculation. Bridge-crossing was our number two apprehension.

In this regard I also recall my conversation with the U.S. Peace Corps physician, Dr. Stephen Joseph, whom I had visited in Kathmandu in search of reassurance that neither bridges nor forded streams would prove too difficult for Nan. He listened thoughtfully, then replied with candor, "I'd be worried too." Clearly he had evidence in mind.

We hadn't talked much about bridges, knowing full well that Shaky Chain Bridge lay smack in the middle of Day #5. We didn't talk at all as we made a "long pleasant descent, latterly through a pine forest." From well above we could hear a river, then see it. Down we marched, steeply.

Lakpa led. Up he walked, without hesitation, took a chain link in either hand, and moved slowly and rhythmically across to the far side, one hundred feet distant. Dropping his pack, he returned for the Memsahib, and together they edged their way across. Meantime a small cluster of waiting Nepalese had gathered at either end, and they loosed an appropriate cheer as Nan touched the far bank.

In turn the rest of us—porters, Sherpas, and Sahib—all crossed without incident. Some of the porters balked at taking their loads across, but there were others more adept at hand to pick them up.

The climax came in a matter-of-fact way just as we were leaving. Going in the opposite direction was a farmer, with a goat in tow. At the bridge threshold he paused, but only long enough to grasp the goat by the forelegs and swing him up over his shoulder. Then on to the bridge he stepped, the goat dangled passively, and both were on the opposite bank within five minutes.

Since this proved to be our most difficult bridge, a generalization or two may be in order. Altogether we crossed about thirty bridges whose span ran from twenty feet to a maximum of 500 feet. They were either chain link, suspension, or cantilever type. The vertical drop was at most fifty feet. In no instance did we or any member of our party encounter anything approaching serious difficulty. Based on the foregoing the conclusion is reached that Himalayan bridge crossing is a considerably overdrawn hazard.

However, before so concluding let me enter some qualifications. The first is that our experience was limited to one area of Nepal, much of it heavily traveled. Further, there was ample evidence of considerable recent construction: the Swiss bridge over the Dudh Kosi (1964) and half a dozen or more further upstream resulting from Hillary's efforts. Finally we were trekking during the dry season, with all rivers a far cry from the monsoon torrents. I would also add a layman's opinion that at least three of the smaller bridges were excellent bets to go out with the next big rain.

So perhaps the fairest evaluation of the bridge business is that (1) we encountered no difficulty; (2) the bark of apprehension was far worse than the bite of fact. Proof lay ahead in the return trip when those porters whose packs had earlier been carried across "Shaky Chain Bridge" by others now moved across with packs and without hesitation.

No known hurdles lay ahead until we reached the higher altitudes. So we settled down at night in the manner to which we were beginning to get accustomed. There was plenty of good food, a level campsite, and the usual picture-book sunset. So we strolled to a knoll a short distance away to watch. Happening to look back, I saw a light which was either the largest lantern in Nepal, or trouble.

Trouble it was. A lighted candle had tumbled from its perch in the Sherpa tent. The tent wall caught and flared. By the time we arrived the fire was out, but not the emotions.

Jahman and Lakpa both had burns on their hands and wrists. Jahman's looked a bit unpleasant, so Nan set to with our medical kit. That was quickly done. But the ministrations to spirit was not that simple.

"What will Jeemy Robert say? Oh, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. . . . What Jeemy Roberts say?" We tried. Nan dreamed up the idea that Jimmie Roberts probably carried insurance. But this was clearly an incomprehensible idea. So we concentrated on more usual, if somewhat vague, terms of reassurance. And gradually things quieted down.

Morning light showed damage beyond our Sherpas' ability to repair, so the tent was stored in a nearby home for pickup on the way out. And we got along with two instead of three thereafter. Our real lesson was the danger of fire. Had this happened at 15,000 feet, had the Sherpas been asleep, or had water not been immediately available, the outcome could have been far worse than a case of ruffled feelings.

Shortly before departure from Andover, a good friend, historian Frederick S. Allis, Jr., had said to us: "What would you really like for your trip? Something you wouldn't get unless given?"

We thought, and soon came up with an answer—an altimeter. This was eminently satisfying, to me at least; the perfect companion for one who likes statistics and is constantly setting goals (and hopefully records) for himself. It proved a happy companion indeed. It was in use from the first day on, and we soon developed a ritual for it. At each significant elevation (and particularly where Jimmie Roberts' "Route Sheet" cited a specific height) we broke it out. Sherpas, porters and Sahibs gathered around. Lakpa and I established as the contestants. Each of us would pick a number. Then I held the case out level, executed a couple of "mystic" hand circlings, and ended by twice tapping the case lid. Invariably smiles and laughter broke out. Then the opening, the look, the happy winner, and a review of the score.

As of Day #7 the score stood at four wins each. At the finish of our game on Day #21, high up on a ridge across from Everest, we were tied with eighteen wins each. Immodesty compels admission that I won the tie-breaker.

But back on Day #7 we were just getting into the country where the passes (las) were up to 9,000 feet, and we could look ahead. There was Lanjura Pass, two days away and listed at "just under 12,000 feet." Here was clearly our next challenge and hurdle. How would we react to altitude? It had been one of our pre-trek worries. For if either of us had trouble with altitude, the Base Camp goal would be out. We had some favorable evidence to go on. Fifteen years before in California we had driven over-

night from sea-level to 12,000 feet without disastrous effect. And with older son Sandy in Colorado in 1964 I had gone to 13,000 feet with only a shortening of breath to show for it.

But this, of course, was 1965, and most emphatically both of us. So on we pushed toward Lamjura Pass, the weather turning bad for the first time. Showers gave way to partial clearings which showed snow on surrounding peaks.

Then, quite suddenly, we arrived at "just under 12,000 feet" with no real effect on either of us. Maybe we were going to be able to wear the mantle of the Himalayan mountaineer. But not for many a day and mile yet.

Down from Lamjura Pass we pushed to the pretty "Alpine" village of Junbesi. For the first nine nights we had camped out in tents. Always we had been near water. Often a small Village had provided food for bargaining, and shelter for the porters. There are no hotels or even their most rural equivalent outside the major cities of Nepal. The traveler simply stops at the nearest home, asks for shelter, and usually gets it.

The tenth night would be different for us. We were to spend it in the Sherpa home of "good friend Jimmy Robert."

And a good home it was, built in the conventional rectangular plan, with animals occupying the first floor and people the second. It was the one-large-room second floor which we were to get to know well. In this home signs of wealth were visible: a few panes of glass, numerous brass and copper pots along the wall away from the window. But common to practically all Sherpa homes, rich or poor, were the indoor open-hearth cooking area, a real dearth of light from all-too-few windows, and a blackening of the ceiling and higher walls by the fire's smoke. While all homes had fireplaces, none had chimneys. It was just like walking into a dimly lit bar from broad daylight.

Into such a home we tramped in Junbesi. Quickly a young boy of eight or nine was relieved from duties in the fields, and set about tidying up in a most ferocious manner. Clouds of dust rose as he swept the floor. As the dust settled, so did he to polish glass and cup. By 5:00 P.M. the rest of the family plus an indeterminate number of relatives or friends returned from the field. The matriarch then took over.

Into an enormous vat on the fire she heaped potatoes, green vegetables (cut up right on the dusty floor, of course) and other unnamed foods. Meantime she put out a steady stream of orders, to which small boys responded. She ran the show. Most of the elders sat, watched, and waited.

To our regret the Sherpas continued to treat us as special cases. We ate earlier, and not from the pot. But Nan counted

seventeen who did, including a young mother who nursed a baby at the same time. During the next two weeks, Lakpa, who was always with us at the end of the day, was increasingly prone to stress the advantage of "much good clean house." But after about four days in a row, Nan rightly divined that Lakpa was perhaps less concerned with our liking for his culture than he was with the greater ease of making the night camp indoors.

Altogether we spent nine of our thirty-five nights under a Nepalese roof. Some were relatively sleepless like the night in Junbesi. Others were quiet, homey, and downright cozy. Our peak indoor population nights came on the return trip when we had twenty and then twenty-one in the usual second floor room whose dimensions did not equal those of our room in the Royal.

Surprisingly both of these high-count nights went well. The pleasure of being inside may have been heightened by the sound of rain on the roof. But for us things went well as long as we saw just where everyone was sleeping before the candles went out. Then, from memory, and with a flashlight to help, we could chart the necessary course to the door.

Our inside night in Junbesi cleared the air for us on one count: we wanted more variety to our diet. Both of us drooled over the giant pot whose smells competed successfully against the overhang of smoke. Still Jahman and Lakpa were men to stay with a fixed plan. Someone had firmly implanted in their minds that Western stomachs were fragile instruments which required a few staples, and nothing else. They weren't prepared to venture. We had brushed against this fixation earlier in the matter of fruit. But just as we had them convinced that bananas and pineapple were good for us, we climbed out of that growing zone.

We had also made sorties into the firewater of the high country: "chang" and "rakshi." Chang, a sort of beer, is made from millet. It comes either hot or cold, thin or lumpy like a poorly prepared cereal. Rakshi, a distilled spirit of somewhat greater strength, can be made from corn, barley, rice, or potatoes. Either can be made overnight.

Obviously, when one heads out for more than a month in the mountains, liquor is limited. Moreover our instinct was to sample local products as much as possible. So by the end of the first week we had tried both chang and rakshi, and found them palatable. And each passing day made them more palatable.

The trouble in the drink department was, unlike that with food, that the Sherpas didn't believe their liquor was bad for the Sahibs. They simply couldn't locate a supply when we most desired it. And when they did obtain some, it was proffered at the oddest (to us) times of day: before breakfast, morning, noon, or

early afternoon—never before dinner at the end of the day's march. Although communications and supply gradually improved, we could never be sure.

But the real matter of the moment lay in the area of vegetables, green vegetables. In the first couple of days we had noticed the Sherpas cooking some chilies and a leafy green vegetable in with their mountains of rice. Remarking on how good it looked, we thought our own desire was clear.

Meals rolled by, but no "green spinach" adorned our plates. Meantime I was beset by the need for some sort of roughage—about the only ailment for which there was nothing in our medical kit. "Green spinach" should care for that. So I dropped the indirect approach and said flatly, "Sahib much sick. Need green spinach. Today!"

Repeated several times for emphasis, and whenever we passed a farmer's patch, this message ultimately got through. Green spinach we got. In fact, at one time it appeared at four meals in a row!

Let not the foregoing infer a lack of quantity or quality. Never was this so. Jahman was a good quartermaster and a good cook. Particularly tasty were his morning egg-and-onion omelet and his soup (usually a variant of chicken) at supper. Chapattis were another specialty. Although they were best of all hot, we nonetheless grew so fond of them at any temperature that Nan always tucked away eight or ten in her pack for later consumption. We even came on two of these pancake-like pastries in her pack in our Kathmandu hotel three days after the trek was over. They were still tasty, and eaten.

Chickens deserve a special word. Not only did they provide eggs, but they were the supper meat two out of three days. For us any hen or rooster has had personality from the time our son Peter acquired one of each shortly after he had seen "Guys and Dolls." He promptly named the rooster "Big Julie" and the hen "Nicely-Nicely," and they lasted as members of the family in good standing for one year.

Chickens are perhaps the most prevalent creature in Nepal. Every household has a few, and we passed uncountable numbers on the trail riding in wicker baskets atop porters' loads. Bargaining for one or more chickens became a daily ritual. Jahman would approach the owner, and a flurry of conversation would result, accompanied by much hefting of the bird to determine weight and the amount of muscle. The owner named a price. Too much. Silence for several minutes. Jahman then countered with a lower price. More silence, often with both bargainers turning away. But ultimately agreement was reached. As Westerners we observed,

but never joined, the bargaining. Our mere presence had undoubtedly raised the starting price by two rupees.

But once a "Julie" or "Nicely" had joined us, he spent the rest of the day jouncing along atop some porter's pack to which his feet were lashed. At nightfall Lal Bahadur discreetly did him in, and one hour later there was the supper's centerpiece. Sometimes tough, sometimes tender, chicken was the meat for each of the last twelve days on the trail. And what was on the menu of the Annapurna Hotel the evening we returned to Kathmandu? Chicken, of course! But the friendly Swiss innkeeper, upon hearing our tale, quickly switched us to beef.

If bridges had been our number two apprehension, health held first place. Andover's doctors, Donald M. Clark and Julian S. Kaiser, had organized a superb medical kit and had patiently gone over its application with us. But you don't go through medical school in a day.

Elizabeth Hawley had quite properly added her bit to this concern as we bumped over the road to Panchkal. "Remember," she said, "if anything happens, you will have to take care of yourselves. Try to take care of the Sherpas. But let the Sherpas take care of the porters. And don't worry about natives you meet on the trail."

For the first ten days nothing arose more serious than the tent fire burns, a slight cut on a porter's toe, and my afore-mentioned need for green spinach. The eleventh day, following our night at Junbesi, dawned gray and chill. By mid-morning rain was falling steadily and we saw nothing of what the Route Sheet happily called "the real mountain country." On we slogged. My diary entry for the day reads in part:

"There's only one word for today—slog, grim, dreary, dismal, or grismal. Take your choice. I choose *grismal*." So did Nan.

There wasn't much talk on the trail, and by mid-afternoon none of any sort from Nan. This is usually a sign that I have committed some *gaffe*, or that she is not well. In this case it was the latter. At 4:00 P.M. we finally dragged into the courtyard of the Takhsindhu monastery with "feet soaked and spirits (if any) at shoe sole level."

Two monks appeared, and negotiations got underway for the use of quarters for the night. These were speeded up by the statement, "Memsahib sick; must have roof." Quickly we were led into the end room of a long one-story building. The Sherpas sprang into action and within fifteen minutes a roaring fire was going and Nan was snuggled down inside two sleeping bags with a thermometer tucked under her tongue. It read 101 degrees, and rocky and bony she felt. So out with achromycin. A good sleep



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AMA DABLAM (22,494 ft.) AS SEEN FROM KUNDE

and a twenty-four-hour layover did the rest. What we will never know is whether shelter would have been provided had not all of the student lamas been away. We later learned that Hillary's wife had been denied shelter at this same monastery.

Where the kit was of more use was with passersby on the trail. Requests for help came most days, sometimes as many as half a dozen. We followed a policy of giving aid where we felt we had any competence, of declining ("not doctor") anything else, and in one or two critical instances giving some pain relief coupled with the severest of injunctions to "go to doctor."

In this latter category we came upon a young boy with a badly infected hand toward the end of our fourteenth day. He had cut it several days before while cutting wood with his kukri. Infection had set in, and with two members of his family he was seeking help. Since neither sanitation nor first aid as we know it exist in Nepal, no move had been made until the swelling was substantial. Now the hand was two to three times normal size. And the nearest doctor was at the Swiss village of Jiri at least forty miles distant. The only step his family had taken had been to wrap a cloth-like tourniquet around his elbow, hoping this would prevent the spread of poison to the rest of his body. Our only step was to turn the tourniquet into a sling and give him two pills each of achromycin and aspirin. Knowing that few Nepalese have built up any tolerance against antibiotics because of prior use, we suspected the pills might produce too much relief and slow down their race for a doctor. So, with the strongest feeling, we said, and Lakpa translated three times: "If he not get doctor in two days, he die." And we meant it.

Possibly our other most serious case was at the Thyangboche monastery, three days closer to Everest. Arriving in the late afternoon on our return trip, we were asked to help the #2 Lama, who lay moaning lightly on his couch with symptoms described as, "Much headache, hot, and seven days no shootee." Again aspirin and achromycin, plus a cold cloth, were prescribed by Nan. In the morning the word was, "Better. Eat. Sleep."

From all we saw, Nepal is still a country where only the fittest survive. Substantial advances have been made in the past fifteen years, by hospitals such as the United Mission's Shanta Bahwan in Kathmandu, by individuals and expeditions—particularly Hillary—and by the governmental aid programs of several nations, including the U.S.A. But the infant and illness mortality is enormous.

Along with the lack of medicine, lack of sanitation is the cause. It could almost be said that you can gauge the size of the village you are approaching by the intensity of the smell. As a result it

isn't safe for a westerner to drink any water until he gets above any village or habitation. And since they run up to 13,000 feet, it's simpler to assume "unsanitary" than to check. The Nepalese have developed considerable oral immunity. And Sherpas like ours, who have been with mountaineering expeditions, have developed some sanitary practices in addition to being on the receiving end of shots. Jahman, Lakpa, and Ang Pasang were all very careful to boil our water, and to clean any dishes or pots we might use. Our record speaks for their success.

Fifteen days of steady trekking, and one day of rest, had brought us to the base of the high country and within reach of our goal. For eleven days we had headed due east on a course that almost paralleled the Himalayan ridgeline. Then after the day of rest at Takhsindhu we had turned north. Every mile could now be directly related to the snow peaks ahead, and rising on the flanks as well.

As Day #16 started, we were still down in the Dudh Kosi River valley, crossing half a dozen of the bridges built in 1964 by Hillary. Then at the point where the Dudh Kosi and the Bhote Kosi separate, so did we from the valley floor.

Up we climbed steeply toward Namche Bazar while the weather turned dry and clear after five consecutive days of cloud and shower. The trail up to Namche included one spot from which Everest could be seen. Added Jimmy Roberts, "Your first view of Everest since the first day of your hike." We hadn't seen it that first day, and even if we had, it would have been simply one of many small white bumps on a distant skyline. Today was different. We were within twenty airline miles of Everest.

But we missed it.

So excited were we by the snow-covered peaks that stood revealed at literally every turning of the trail, we just didn't stop until suddenly we rounded a bend and there was Namche Bazar, the "capital city" of the region.

Our fast pace and missed view gave us a dividend of free time. We had three sunny hours in which to explore Namche and to go a mile up the trail to a bend where we couldn't miss Everest. And there it was. Still a long way off, and not the dominant mountain in view because it was surrounded by peaks of 20,000 feet and upwards. But the black rocky summit cone was unmistakable.

Both of us took a number of first-view pictures, both of the high mountains ahead and back down the steep valley of the Dudh Kosi whence we had come. Then, with the sun still warm but westering toward Kwangde (20,300 feet), we went back down the trail to Namche.

The capital city of the Khumbu region in theory, it is a trading

center in fact. Perhaps 1,000 people live in homes which terrace out to the flanks of a vast natural amphitheatre. The initial impression is attractive. But what with so much shifting of population its reputation does not match the impression. A trading center and only ten miles from the Tibet border, it is in many ways more strongly influenced by that land than by a government over 100 miles away in Kathmandu. But even though no high level Nepalese officer has visited the city in recent years, there is no urge to separate, and a government check post is maintained. And within thirty minutes of our return from the view our credentials were examined.

While the check post and the small formality involved seemed almost play-acting, they represent an entirely proper concern for international relations on the part of the Nepalese government. Often likened to Switzerland by its size, mountain habitat, and central position among major powers, Nepal must guard its neutrality carefully. Hence the government is understandably cautious in granting permits for climbing or trekking. And well it might be. For example, the American do-it-yourself mountaineer Woodrow Wilson Sayre had deceived the Nepalese in order to obtain his permit, and had then departed from his announced goal to make his vain attempt on Everest—spending four illegal weeks in Tibet in the process. Naturally this put a strain on Nepal's relations with China. And we heard tales of other self-willed adventurers whose actions had even more serious implication.

Our permits were specific in this regard. So were the covering instructions from Colonel Roberts. "Although large parts of the northern mountain ranges of Nepal have been barred to foreigners, the government . . . has kindly agreed to allow access to this side of Mount Everest. . . . Please confine your travels . . . to the area of the Khumbu Glacier and its tributaries. *On no account are you permitted to travel up the neighboring valley of the Bhote Kosi beyond Thami village (four miles from the Tibetan border).*"

Our night in Namche was a pleasant one. Warmly welcomed by Jahman's mother and sister, we used their home for another re-sorting of gear. Ahead lay higher altitudes and colder weather. No need for such items as bathing suits. And mostly new porters were needed, equipped with shoes. Lal Bahadur with his white dhoti, blue shirt, and all-purpose scarf was soon to be left behind, close to tears.

A good night, huge breakfast, quick peeks at snow-capped Kwangde from the front window, and we were off. While Jahman and the porters headed straight for Thyangboche, we went

by way of Khunde, the home village of Lakpa and Ang Pasang. Lakpa had gone ahead; Ang Pasang was with us. En route to this picturesque town there occurred one of those gaps in communication which are at the same moment frustrating and humorous. My (pidgin English) diary recorded it.

So, steep up slope behind Namche. Suddenly notice at rest point big load formerly carried by the "Pirate" (our most evil looking porter). But no "Pirate."

Q) Who carries it?

A) The porter.

Q) What porter?

A) This one (pointing to an attractive girl).

Oh!

So on up for another hour, and just as go over pass leading down to Khunde,

Q) Will Anpurra (Lakpa's wife) be home?

A) This (the girl) Anpurra.

Wow! We could have shot Ang Pasang! And the young boy also with us for the first time turns out to be Nima, Lakpa's younger brother (age 15). And both Anpurra and Nima are going on with us as porters!

On and up we go, we happy band. Khunde and Khumjung, two very attractive stone-walled villages, lay in full sunlight at the base of the sacred (Buddhist) mountain, Khumbila (19,300 ft.). Then on to Thyangboche past flaming barberry set against dark granite or blue sky. But on arrival, Thyangboche at 13,000 feet was just going under a cold bank of clouds for the night, and the abrupt change brought out the down parkas at once.

We were slated to spend that night (Day #17) in the Guest House of the Buddhist monastery, with its accompanying American-style outhouse perched over the Dudh Kosi valley. But scant time for settling-in was permitted. First things first, and this was the home of the Head Lama of all Buddhists in Nepal. We were expected for an audience. As quickly as our numbed limbs permitted, we followed the Head Lama's emissary, past a guarding (and chained) mastiff and up to a simply furnished room which had the usual open hearth and equally open window. With us by virtue of position was Jahman. The English was scanty, the conversation halting, the tea excellent. My diary picked up the audience:

Then we were presented three different guest books to look at. We do, with comment on many familiar names. I ask, "Would you like us to sign?" Answer "No." Seems odd since everyone we know of has signed all three books. But, forewarned, I say we want to make



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DA TENSING, THE FAMOUS SHERPA

a small gift, and haul out 20 rupees. Head Lama duly accepts, and then we are proffered all three books and a ball point pen. We sign! And we also put down the amount of contribution in the designated column!

Guess I'm not so far from fund-raising, after all.

After an hour and a half, and polite goodbyes it was back to the Guest House, a good meal, and a long cold night. But before we turned in down to the House strode Da Tensing. He is *not* the Tenzing Norgay who first reached the summit of Everest with Hillary. He *is* famous in his own right of which more later. That night we knew him only slightly by reputation. But the alacrity with which our Sherpas jumped at his entrance made it obvious that he was an *important personage*. Thanks to his friendship with Jimmie Roberts, he was to join us for the next six days.

But first we were to join him for breakfast.

Breakfast at Da Tensing's was the usual pleasant affair. Cereal with hot milk, eggs, chapattis, and new potatoes were all there in huge quantity. So was rayosak (green spinach), finally well established on our menu. So were chang and rakshi.

But Da Tensing was in no hurry to rush off at dawn. Let the sun warm a bit. Give us a chance to see and photograph the truly wonderful peaks on all sides—Thamserku, Kantega, Taweche, Ama Dablam—all with summits clear. Further, our mileage would now be shorter each day on account of rising elevation and rougher footing.

Hence it was close to ten o'clock before we started. Da Tensing was in the lead, his permanent post which no one questioned during the next five days. Not even Nima, about as aggressive a 15-year-old as ever lived and enormously keen to be first. Da Tensing was indeed in charge. And he strode (a much more accurate word than "walked") ahead. He was slightly taller than most Nepalese, and his erect carriage and cap (with plaited hair underneath) added extra inches. He had a way of slightly cocking his head with his gaze questing upward which made him seem to sniff at each peak as if had a smell or sound all its own.

While this characteristic pose connoted a sense of grandeur, it had direct purpose as well. He was looking, and his eyesight was excellent. A Japanese expedition had added to this power by giving him an excellent pair of field glasses. These he used and shared with us. So from time to time we would stop to see a bird, a distant peak or draw, or the route of a climbing expedition.

Around noon we saw another facet of Da Tensing. Just as we were getting somewhat winded from a long steady climb, he spied a grassy spot. Calling a halt, he dug into his pack to produce a small carpet on which only Nan was to sit. She did, graciously. Then back into the pack, and a large yellowish plastic jar emerged. Chang it was this time, and a most excellent brand we shared. Then one more invasion into pack and a can of succulent sardines. Add a bit of cheese, and you have a high country idyll.

Da Tensing has been described by Hillary's colleague, Desmond Doig, as a "patriarchal figure of indeterminate age who exudes personality and alcoholic fumes." We had indeed been lavishly supplied with liquid refreshment at breakfast, and now this welcome half-gallon of chang. But Da Tensing's interest in liquor declined as the elevation rose, stopping completely at 15,000 feet. "For," he said that night with great emphasis: "No drink above 15,000 feet. Very bad." He then went on to describe the dire misfortune which had befallen an Indian climber who reputedly pursued his liquor above that level, even switching up high from rakshi to brandy.

In his career, which stretches back until at least 1922, when he was on Everest with General Bruce, Da Tensing had been everything from porter to high climbing Sherpa and several times the sirdar of major expeditions. In all areas his reputation was



HELPING PORTERS ON THE KHUMBU GLACIER

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superb. We saw him more as a sirdar: authoritative, courteous (even courtly), considerate and attentive to all the wants and needs of our group. He was the first to see that our porters were having trouble on a loose snow-covered slope and needed help. He it was who picked the spot to ford a stream, and then set himself in the middle where he could help the unsteady.

Within the year he had been in England as an honored guest on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the climbing of Kangchenjunga. Da Tensing must have been the perfect choice. For not only was his Sherpa record of the finest, and surely covering the longest span of years, but he has a flair for the dramatic and is an unmitigated ham. Let me but cock the camera and he was ready with gaze and profile. From the photos and clippings seen in his house, it was obvious that his English visit had been a romp.

Our campsite that night was in the town of Pheriche, elevation 14,200 feet, population eleven (Sahib, Memsahib, Da Tensing, three Sherpas, and five porters). Used seasonally by shepherds, it was the cluster of stonewall-bordered fields and stone houses



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PORTERS BRINGING FIREWOOD TO GORAK SHEP CAMPSITE

Pumori (23,442 ft.) forms the backdrop

which had become familiar above 10,000 feet. Now it was deserted, and up went our tent in the lee of a wall. Nearby was the second Sherpa tent, and the rest crowded into a shepherd's hut, although they were temporarily rebuffed at the first one they approached. It had been used only for cattle, and its door latch had been sealed shut with an enormous yak dung!

Cold and chill it was again on the night of Day #18. Wood was scarce and soon to become non-existent. A mixture of scrubby juniper and dried yak dung sufficed for cooking fuel. But the next morning the sun rose into a cloudless sky to warm both body and spirit.

A long day of gradual ascent, with occasional steep pitches, led onto the terminal moraine of the Khumbu Glacier. A few days earlier the whole route would have been deep in snow. But our streak of clear days had melted much, and it was only on the shaded northern slopes that we encountered any. Views abounded, although not of the Everest group until the end of the day. But the ground we had been covering for almost two



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CAMPSITE ON KHUMBU GLACIER MORaine AT LOBUJYA

days was a vast wasteland of rock, sand, snow, and water. The land colors were variants of brown and black, drab hues all. This was the land on which we pitched camp at the end of Day #19 at Lobujya.

Lobujya was supposed to contain two unoccupied shepherd huts. One only could we find, and into it went the porters. We had our tent, and Da Tensing, Ang Pasang, and the irrepressible Nima the other. It was a site where the third tent would have been welcome. But still it was a good campsite, with good water, and now Nuptse (26,850 feet) towered close by. Just after sunset, the clouds parted for perhaps thirty seconds and revealed Nuptse in a wonderful warm pink afterglow, with a snow plume tailing off its summit. This glimpse was the perfect carrot for the morrow.

But first the night, starting as usual by 5:30 P.M. We were camped at 16,200 feet, 3,000 feet above my previous high, 4,000 feet above Nan's. These nights now lasted a full twelve hours. And, as mentioned before, we had been cold for the past two or three nights. Moreover, we rather shyly confessed to each other

that sleep had also been hampered by sudden bouts of claustrophobia, almost of suffocation. Possible headache and nausea we had been prepared for. But neither symptom had plagued us. Instead we were experiencing what is known as "Cheyne-Stokes" breathing. Later we were to remember that in his official account of the American Expedition (*Americans on Everest*), James Ramsey Ullman had described it most accurately as a "plague of the heights . . . in which a sleeper would awake gasping and choking with the sensation that he was sealed in an airtight tomb." I would only add that our "tomb" seemed pitch black, too.

Ullman's mention of Cheyne-Stokes breathing coincided with his description of the Americans at Lobujya. So we were clearly reacting at par. And we could be thankful that this was all, as contrasted with Ullman's sentence, "For though the team was now beyond the realm of infections and epidemics, the ever-increasing altitude brought its own toll: and headaches, sore throats, and nausea were rampant."

All of which is nice in hindsight. But it didn't warm the body one degree. Instead we put on just about every bit of warm clothing we had, including such items as three pairs of wool socks and down parkas (Nan's idea). This helped, but it also filled up the sleeping bags to the point where turning over took a full ten minutes.

Why complain? We asked for it, didn't we? Yes. And all expeditions have had the same sort of tale? Yes. But we just want you to know that *we* suffered too. Even if slightly!

The dawn of Day #20 matched its four immediate predecessors in its clarity. Nuptse stood completely revealed with its ever-present snow plume streaming off its crest. Camped on ground with a partial but not heavy snow cover, we had a heavier than average breakfast as the warm sun broke out over Nuptse's shoulder. The sleepless portions of the night were forgotten, and we quickly struck camp in something akin to an era of good feeling.

"Mush" (but pronounced "Mooosh"), I said. This had become our usual starting signal in times of good humor. I had used it once near the start, the Sherpas were fascinated by the sound, and Nan had then explained its North American origin. So, mooosh we did.

Up over glacier moraine we moved. Past small streams, in and out of snow, over boulders and loose gravel, and steadily up, up, up. We were climbing in the footsteps of the greatest mountaineering expeditions of this century and close to the location they had used for base camps. British, Swiss, Nepalese, American, and

Indian. These were the footsteps which had gone ahead, first to discover the route, and then to force it finally to the summit. For Everest was no one man's or nation's mountain. The British had laid down by far the largest stake in number of years, attempts, manpower, and resources. It was fitting that a British expedition first reached the top, and that the summit team was made up of a Sahib and a Sherpa. All expeditions have used the experience of their predecessors to lean upon and borrow from. All have shared their successes, as their sorrows, with those who would try next. So the British success in 1953 and the successes of Swiss, Americans, and Indians which have followed are all parts of the same story—mountaineers on, finally on top of, Everest.

Heady stuff for this American couple just off Main Street. But these are mostly *ex post facto* thoughts. At that time we were concerned only with putting one foot in front of the other. How far ahead was Gorak Shep? Why was it so tiring when it didn't look steep? Clearly, altitude was, in Jimmie Roberts' appropriately British understatement, "making itself felt."

Da Tensing was delightedly in his element, his special country. He kept the pace and the porters in good order. But he glowed. And catching the glow was Lakpa. He and Jahman had both been high with major expeditions, but Jahman had suffered a major accident sixteen months earlier and was naturally in no mood to cavort. Moreover he was older. Lakpa, however, had a lightness in his step and speech that bespoke his spirit. So, to a degree, did Ang Pasang. And so to a degree, *after* rest and "brunch," did a 48-year-old average American.

Gorak Shep was, in effect, our base camp, and the foot of our goal. Technically it is not the site of the major expedition base camps. Those have all been sited at the foot of the Khumbu Ice-fall another two or three hours further up the glacier, but from which no good views were to be had, and from which Everest is not visible. So we planned to camp for the night at the head of a glacial tarn and, as conditions permitted, go up on the ridges above, possibly even on the lower slopes of Pumori, from which we could see and photograph the "big three," but particularly Everest.

So we set up camp in the blazing sun and warmth of high noon. It was a spot with poignant memory. Within fifty yards were two memorials. One was for the Indian Ambassador to Nepal who had died the previous year of pneumonia at the time when the successful major Indian attempt on Everest was being mounted. The other was for the American climber John E. Breitenbach, member of the 1963 American expedition, who was killed when



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VIEW EAST FROM GORAK SHEP CAMP

Memorial to John E. Breitenbach in foreground

tons of ice had suddenly crushed down upon him in the Khumbu Icefall. It read simply:

In Memory of
JOHN E. BREITENBACH
American Mt. Everest Expedition
1963

It had been carved, or rather hammered, into a giant granite slab by one of the Americans' porters. As we stood there looking up at this memorial, our eyes carried on up to the shining summit of Nuptse directly above. It wasn't until many days later that we learned that one of our newly acquired porters was the stone-cutter. He was a very strong, quiet man who carried his load with ease. All the lettering he had hammered from a tracing, since he could neither read nor write, using only his stone hammer.

The memorial is a fine one, particularly because of its simplicity and its placing in line with Nuptse. But the ravages of the weather were already at work. Some spots, after two years, were

fairly close to being obliterated, and we feared that in another few years it would be unreadable. We hope, therefore, that it can be replaced soon by a plaque of bronze or other weather-resistant material.

The temperature in the mid-day sun must have registered close to 80 degrees. It would have been delightful for sun bathing, but the ridges and Everest were beckoning—first of all to Da Tensing.

I don't think it was conscious planning on his part, but as we were all finishing lunch, he and Lakpa got talking with increasing excitement. Naturally I couldn't understand anything except the occasional word "Pum-o-ri." Pretty soon I couldn't stand it, and asked "What?" Lakpa said they planned to go as high as they could the next morning on Pumori and added, "You go too?"

A glance at Nan. And a return look which said, "Sure, you've known all along that you would want to go up something, or at least try to." Wow! What a carrot! I completely forgot that an hour earlier I had been only too happy to settle to the ground and shed my pack.

Nan's quick acquiescence was, I later realized, based on several solid facts. Pumori, at 23,442 feet, sat 6,642 feet above us. It had been climbed only once, and certainly was not in danger of succumbing to a one-morning effort on the part of a three-man group whose ages ran twenty-five—forty-eight—sixty-five (probably plus), and whose middle man had absolutely no experience with rope on snow at high altitude.

Secondly, for whatever we might do, Da Tensing and Lakpa had amply demonstrated their skill on the slopes and could cope with whatever predicament their Sahib could discover. Finally, we lacked any permit for attempting a mountain, let alone one sitting astride the Tibetan border, and simply from the point of legality I had no intention of going back on our word.

Nan knew that she (or rather I) was perfectly safe. But it was a mighty heady afternoon of sniffing at the summit.

Meantime Nan had her own brand of mountain fever. Her reading background equipped her with good knowledge of all the routes tried. She wanted to test the book and the photograph against her own eye. So off she sped up the brown ridges, carrying her Olympus Pen camera. Two hours later she was back bubbling with pleasure. Yes, the Everest summit was clear, she had photographed madly, seen the West Ridge, the North Ridge, etc. Then, settling for a moment of rest out of the wind, she had dozed momentarily in the still bright sunshine.

Having spent the time doing a number of small things to get

ready for the morrow—including the vital (!) task of wrapping the "Andover expeditionary banner" around my ice axe—I was eager to see for myself. So up again we both went, perhaps to 17,500 feet. It was all that Nan and observers before her had said. We just had to capture all of this in photographs as well as memory. That was really the chief mission of the morrow. From higher altitude we could see more.

So back down to the camp, the usual full meal, and a stroll down the trail to the lake just as the sun started setting and the shade line rose steadily up the ice and snow slopes of Nuptse. Tonight was no thirty-second peek. Tonight we saw the whole thing, the changing diminishing colors, particularly yellow, and finally the sun touched only the summit snow plume—and was gone.

We stood there chilled. I had taken thirty-six photos at fifteen-second intervals leaning up against a giant boulder for steady support since I had no tripod. We were c-o-l-d. So we scurried for the warmth of sleeping bags.

I didn't sleep a bit better that night, for all the same reasons. Plus a dandy new one—excitement. I even tried some sleeping pills for the first time in my life, but they didn't touch me.

We were up by 5:15 and off by 6:30, although the sun was to remain hidden behind the Everest massif for another two hours. But the sky again was clear as we started out in twenty-degree temperature. The previous afternoon's scramble was repeated and then was moved beyond as we slabbed toward the southeastern ridges of Pumori. Steadily we rose, as the result of the usual tiring up-and-down-and-up procedure with which we were completely familiar. The terrain was a mixture of loose scree and large boulders, not unlike what I had experienced above tree-line in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, but much less stable. In such footing I was particularly glad that our feet were encased in boots made by Peter Limmer. They were warm, a perfect fit, and had the body and weight to give a sense of purchase on such loose terrain.

Up and down we went. In and out of snow patches. Past a cold greenish-blue lake not yet touched by the sun. Always above to our left front was Pumori, and to our right the summit pyramid of Everest revealed itself bit by bit as we gradually climbed and its lower ridges offered proportionately less screen. By nine o'clock the south ridge was in full view, and the sun's rays were just starting to touch the South Col.

By 9:00 A.M. we were in full, hot sunlight and shedding our down jackets, then our sweaters. We had stopped slabbing and started up a ridge, broad at this point, which pointed directly



F. A. Stott

KHUMBU ICEFALL FROM 18,000 FEET ON PUMORI

toward Pumori's summit. The grade steepened perceptibly, but not enough to require roping up, and the footing was solid. But the pace of the Sahib was s-l-o-w.

At 10:30 we had climbed to a logical resting spot which had several yards of near-level rock. The views were unsurpassed in all directions. I looked up with a slight bit of yearning. But I could feel the fatigue and altitude deeply entrenched.

This was it. We would halt here, rest, eat a bit, . . . and photograph. But first came the elevation. Lakpa and I guessed, and then carried out the regular ritual of opening. The printed numbers went up to only 16,000 feet. But we had reset it to give us an approximate figure, and the needle pointed to 18,200. Not bad, and at that moment *no* yearning to go higher. Of course, later the "if only" school of personal dreaming returned to me in full force and I have said, "I wish we could have hit 19,000 feet or even 20,000."

I am kidding no one, really not even myself. That was plenty. And if my vanity wants a little boost, I can point to the best available maps and the angle of the photographs and claim that we were at 18,500 . . . maybe even a little higher!



F. A. Stout

EVEREST FROM 18,500 FEET ON PUMORI
Right-hand ridge descends to South Col

From there we could look down on the various expedition base camp sites which Da Tensing pointed out. Across we could look at the lower ridges of Everest and Nuptse, and at the treacherous jumbled mass of ice which formed the Khumbu Icefall, which then led up to the Western Cwm. Across and rising we picked up the "traditional" Everest route at the head of the Cwm and followed it up the face of Lhotse as it slabbed diagonally above the Geneva Spur and up on to the South Col. And there on top of all sat the black rock summit of Everest. The south peak and ridge were silhouetted against a blue sky. The ominous West Ridge ran toward us. It was less distinct, but it was so powerfully there.

There indeed was the Everest "I would really love to see with my naked eyes and under my own power."

Then back, and down. Retracing of footsteps. A new immediate and small goal—get back to the camp site at Gorak Shep. Later it would seem downright wrong not to have hungered for more time, a bit higher on Pumori, a few days of camping there so that we could explore the actual base camp locations. I am sure there must be souvenirs of many nations lying there for the taking!

But not in the late morning on Friday, October 29, 1965. I was tired. The thoughts of both of us had already turned the corner and pointed toward home and all the questions unanswered by five weeks of silence. At the bottom was the thought, "Mission accomplished." We had done precisely what we set out to do.

So down, down, down. And then up and down and up and down over the endless smaller ridges. The mid-day sun was now at full strength. And there were at least twice as many ridges to cross as had existed in the pre-dawn light.

Half a mile away two figures appeared on the skyline. I waved my ice axe weakly, Da Tensing and Lakpa vigorously with much hallooing. Nan had come up to greet us. Ang Pasang, too, but he was skittering around so energetically she had told him to come ahead. Gradually our paths converged, and I stumbled down the last slope to camp. Ambition and energy were drained. I was just grateful to be down, to be able to lie down on a cot. Twice only could I remember such weariness: once as a sixteen-year-old when with two older boys we attempted a mad one-day dash through the Mahoosuc Range in Maine and New Hampshire; the second a two-man fifteen-mile cross-country race with a fellow Marine Corps officer to settle a wager and find out which of us was the tougher.

On both times I had lost out. Perhaps a glimmer of past ex-

perience had stayed with me this day at Everest so that I tried and did what I could do. And not any more.

Forty-eight years helped, too, of course.

At 2:30 that afternoon we broke camp and started down. All the peaks surrounded us in full sunlight. The wind was light. The setting was just as glorious as it had been twenty-six hours earlier when we arrived. But everything from eyes to thoughts pointed downward. It was getting into afternoon. Lobujya was five miles away. We had loose footing all the way. The trail, visible in snow, became invisible over bare rock. For, in effect, it was not a trail, simply the line which Da Tensing's steps had picked out for that day.

Bit by bit the sun's rays lost their warmth. This made us pick up the pace a bit, until suddenly we were cold, and the sun had practically disappeared. Not only was the day ending; so was our spell of clear sky. That night at Lobujya there was no sunset on Nuptse, not even a thirty-second burst of afterglow. Just gray, cold cloud and an occasional spatter of raindrops.

More of the same gray greeted us the next day, a day in which we doubled our rate of march by going all the way to Thyangboche—as compared with the two days required on our way in. Thyangboche was a misty mixture of rain and snow as we plodded up to it at dusk. We headed for the Guest House. Not! We stay at Da Tensing's home!

Honor indeed. And the "guest room" to boot. Of course, it had absolutely no light, we were still close to 13,000 feet, and our friend Cheyne-Stokes hectored us during the night. But it was warm and friendly shelter. There was chang, and rakshi too, now that we were under the 15,000-foot "no drink" line. Some song and dance; Lakpa just bubbled with happiness whenever we sang "Alouette." And he, Ang Pasang, Lal Bahadur, and Nima did a four-man shuffling song-and-clog dance which delighted us. Nan, of course, became the nurse at night and in the morning as she ministered to the Number 2 Lama.

Da Tensing said goodbye in the morning. From subsequent readings in Hillary and others we realized what a force he was in this Sherpa area of the Khumbu. He had much to do with the effort led by Hillary to establish schools in this region, particularly the one at Pangboche three miles away.

I like to think, as Nan put it, of Da Tensing as The Grand Old Man with just a touch of The Grand Old Ham. He was a mountaineer and a Sherpa who cared. This was the key. He cared about expedition, mountain, self, his people. In whatever he did he cared that it be well done and for the well being of Thyangboche, our 11-man group, the generation coming on—



F. A. Stott

NIMA TSERING, FIFTEEN YEARS OLD, CARRIES SIXTY POUNDS

which might know only tillage of soil or might be permitted to know something more—a major expedition, or the Solo Khumbu.

For the Sherpas of the Solo Khumbu Da Tensing was a sturdy bridge between the generation that had denied an outside world and the generation which has no choice now but to be part of it.

If Da Tensing was such a bridge, who was waiting at the other side?

Well, Nima Tsering for one. Not that he knew he was waiting. What fifteen-year-old would? But others did. We did, too.

Nima is a pretty hard youngster to forget. He had joined us innocuously enough—with Anpurra that day above Namche when Ang Pasang never thought to tell us that the new Sherpani and the new young porter just happened to be wife and brother of Lakpa.

Nima was with us for the next three weeks.

Perhaps 4'8" and 90 pounds—certainly not a bit more—he was well covered on top by a thick and long thatch of jet black hair. Equally dark eyes darted out from beneath the thatch. His face was mobile, his actions quick. And he wanted to be, and be considered, a MAN.

His pants showed it. They were a man's, repaired with several different colored patches, but still originally a pair of black work pants. As such they swallowed Nima. But this enabled him to tuck shirt or jacket in easily, heave the pants high, and then cinch everything tight at the top with a belt.

His first day on the trail with us included a long and hot pitch from the Dudh Kosi up to Thyangboche. Everyone sweated. Rivers ran down Nima's cheeks, spilling onto a well-soaked skivvy shirt or those capacious black pants. Rests were fairly frequent. After each Nima would bob up and scoot for the head of the line. Gradually he would be passed by the older, wiser-paced porters. He looked discouraged and the Sahib sought to counsel him in a fatherly way, by word and by example. And by telling older brother Lakpa, "Nima tired. Go too fast. Maybe need help with pack."

From Lakpa, nothing. No action. No attention. No concern. No help. That was Nima's problem. If he was going to be a porter, he had to make his own way. And he did.

That was the first, and emphatically the last, time I worried about Nima. He could take care of himself in any society. My concern became whether we could take him as a steady diet.

At the age of fifteen Nima had had perhaps four years of formal schooling at the Hillary-founded school in Khumjung. He had picked up some of the basic tools of reading and writing—the limited goals which Hillary has so wisely set as being in the best interests of the Sherpas. (A primitive society does not need specialists from higher education who have no one to talk to but themselves.) His formal schooling was over. His family schooling still had some course to run. As the younger brother of two Sherpas who had been on major expeditions, he had his goal and incentives well established early. And as the fame of his older brother, Mingma, spread (he is now Hillary's favorite sirdar, and while we were there he was sirdar for an R.A.F. attempt on Dhaulagiri IV), so did Nima's ambition. Nima was at once the young hope, the young brat, and the pet. His formal schooling had given him a tool possessed by no one else in the family. He could read and write—somewhat. So when it came to public performance—song, reading, dance—Nima was thrust forward to uphold the family honor.

Instinctively we were attracted. And when he sang the national anthem of Nepal, set to the tune of the Marine Corps Hymn, he had this ex-Marine Sahib hooked. Memsahib too.

After he had been with us for ten days, I wasn't so sure. My diary read:

Nima is a real (maybe potential) enigma. Bright, very quick in speech and action, initially most appealing, forceful, aggressive, competitive. But with the flaws of youth and relationship to the power structure (Mingma, Lakpa, etc.), he tries to dominate and succeeds. Often leads the line of porters, teases, and to our minds shows no consideration whatsoever of others. Walks (runs) up and takes what he wants without asking. Has to be *told* to wait until Memsahib finishes dressing before striking tent in morning: . . . to let us pass so we can go ahead at our own pace. Has had several years of schooling. Obviously family pet. Called on to sing and perform, and does well. Talks like a light-weight machine gun. And he is cast in an all-adult society. *What will he become?*

Has the power to be a real force. We liked him enormously at first. In fact, asked Jahman to keep him on as porter on trip out. Now I am not so sure. Have spoken to him sharply two or three times, and will doubtless again.

This is one young man I would really like to know about ten years hence. He has the status and the personal equipment to be a real force among the Sherpas!

Wasn't it ever thus? Among people everywhere. The power exists. How will it be used?

At the end of our trek we still weren't sure. Nima had gotten the message when spoken to sharply. But two events of the final twenty-four hours stick in my mind. The first was at our last campsite where Nan and I had decided to give to the Sherpas and porters items of clothing or equipment for which we no longer had need, or whose weight would put us over the limit on the return flight. So we laid them out on a blanket before a highly interested audience. The picking order was well understood: sirdar, Sherpa, Sherpa, and then porters by amount of time with us, and age. This put Nima quite properly at the end.

All went well. Jahman chose my old Marine Corps pants. They figuratively swallowed him, seven sizes too large, eight inches too long. No matter. He wanted. He chose. And so on down the line to everyone's satisfaction. Then Nima. A pair of Nan's woolen finger gloves remained, which he took. But we had miscounted. There was still an old belt. Nima didn't miss it. And then he spied a whistle we had forgotten. That, too, he seized. That was enough, too much. I remonstrated that the most junior member had too much. But before I could organize any redistribution, Nima tossed the whistle (easily the least valuable item) to the senior porter. It was over. Either I would have to make a big thing out of fair redistribution—and the language barrier would have made it a big thing—or forget it. I forgot, except for ten minutes of sputtering to Nan.

And then, at the very end, we were all milling around as transport arrived to pick us up on the Chinese Road. The Land-Rover could take four, a dump truck the rest. Goodbyes said, we turned to get in the Land-Rover. But there were five. For Nima had scurried in during the goodbyes, doubtless thinking that his small size and connection with Lakpa would help. That plus occupation being "nine points of the law."

Not so. Out, into the truck, and goodbye.

So, please, Jimmie Roberts, make a note to let us know whether Nima Tsering has helped his people, as well as himself, in 1975.

For Nepal in 1975 is going to have been subjected to influences far more potent than that of climbing expeditions. Even Sherpa-land, remote as it now seems, India, the U.S.A., China, Russia, and a dozen other nations are now vying in their efforts to help Nepal develop. The U.S.A. alone is spending \$18,000,000 a year there. The Chinese Road bears its name because it springs from Chinese dollars, or rather yen.

So please, Jimmie Roberts, don't forget.

As we moved back toward Kathmandu, we had much more time for rumination than on our outward journey. We knew what lay ahead. For the most part it had a ring both familiar and pleasant. Apprehension didn't exist. Muscles were hardened by the weeks of walking, and the pace speeded. So there was more time and inclination for talking.

With what sort of people had we now been living for a month? Cheerful and pleasant, spartan in the face of physical demand, simple in life needs and wants. Yes, all of that we knew.

But what more did they care about? What were their unanswered questions, their curiosities? What made them do what they did? And why? What will they want to become?

This is stuff far too deep to be answered here. Our experience was much too short. We have neither talent nor training to guess the answers.

What I would set down, though, is an observation about the difficulty of understanding which existed between us and our Sherpas, and which grew rather than diminished during our thirty-five days. Language, of course, was a hindrance, but easily surmounted, and often more of a game than a barrier.

Understanding and resultant logical (to us) action was something again. Every day would have its crop of little questions, little decisions. What about the weather? How far to ———? Can we find the trail alone, or do you need to stay with us? Which way do we go at the crossing? Can we get fruit for breakfast?

Does "green spinach" grow this high? Where do we camp tonight? Can we go faster?

Usually most questions were put into a form which could be answered "Yes" or "No," or, as we quickly perceived, "Esssss" or "Not." And we would get an answer. "Essss," nine times out of ten. Since our questions were not all that well phrased, we knew pretty soon that a few more "Nots" might have given us a better picture. "Esss" would be the morning answer to the daily green spinach query. But a colorless dinner plate would give the real answer, "Not."

So I varied my questioning slightly, tried always to set up two alternatives, and then ask, "Which?" Baffled silence was too often the response. Gradually we learned that the thing the Sherpas most wanted to do was to please us. And pleasing us meant "Esss" much more than "Not." So we struggled on.

Let me cite a few examples.

Departure from Namche Bazar and Kundhe on our homeward trek was one. Of course, it was heightened by the fact that a good many of the porters and Sherpas had homes or close relatives there. So between fete, food, drink, and counsel it wasn't easy to get off. In fact, as Nan said, "It takes three stomachs to say goodbye to a Sherpa village." We wanted to know how many porters were going, who they were, etc. And we wanted to get under way. But the hour (8:00 A.M.) came and went. Nine, then ten, and we were told that the Head Lama, in residence at Namche for a few days, wanted to see us in company with Jahman. That did it. Let Jahman sort out the rest. We would take care of ourselves, and the Head Lama. I just pictured us spending one and a half hours halting audience saying "goodbye." So we did it in five minutes, western style, and hied ourselves ahead. And, of course, things did work out, but we never knew the "how" or "why."

The next time was at "Silver Lining Campsite," a few days from the end. All day we had moved with good pace. And after a week of intermittent rain, it had been mostly clear. So with perhaps two hours of daylight we sought that extra mile or two which would give us a starting edge for the next day. Down stream along the west bank of a river we pushed. Lakpa assured us of a good spot ahead. And then, we ran out of houses and any level ground. Here the trail left the river and climbed steeply. Up, urged Lakpa. But, remembering three miles of "Up" before evening, we demurred. So then a frantic search for any sort of open space. Finally we got a passable spot just as darkness and rain descended upon a wet tent which leaked. No one did much talking for thirty minutes, when suddenly the rain stopped and

the site picked up its name from the moonlight shining out of a clear sky.

All hands recovered from any hurt feelings with a truly wondrous breakfast the next day. But then came gaps in communication and understanding on each of the four following nights.

At Thosé, with the end in sight, a treat for all hands seemed in order. "Rakshi for everyone tonight, Jahman?" "Esss, very nice, Sahib." "Good, we get at Thosé." "Esss." Two hours later I waited at the foot of a long descent for Nan and the rest. Along came Nan, alone and dejected. "Where are the others?" "They said they were going into that house back there to drink some chang." So on we went to the camp site, waited, and then greeted the Sherpas with considerable frost. Was this the way they responded to treat by the Sahibs? Much confusion, some blaming of others ("I told ——— we shouldn't"), and peace is made.

Near Yarsa Khola we had a long day in prospect, what with a detour to the Swiss Agricultural Experiment at Jiri from whence we could send word on return by wireless. It was l-o-n-g and hot, and the detour far more than anticipated. When we rejoined the rest for breakfast, the porters had already been sent on to make camp at Yarsa Khola. After them we went, pulling in wearily at 4:00 P.M. No camp in sight. No word. Nobody.

Then word. Four porters have stopped for chang. The rest have gone ahead. After much hallooing across a valley we locate the camp site. Then from the chang house come the four porters. Ugh. Who are they? Well, the three Sherpanis, and fifteen-year-old Nima! Pretty hard for even the Sahib to avoid grinning at that one.

Another long day (they all were, for we had finally convinced everyone they would get the same amount of money no matter when they got to Kathmandu; no point in stringing out the trek; we all had juicy carrots out in front of us) but this was perhaps our longest. And, of course, hot. Jahman's "Just little bit more. . . . One, two more mile, Sahib" didn't tell us much. But suddenly, at Resingo, he stopped at a small house on a particularly steep hillside that may have pitched thirty-five degrees. "We stay here." "What," I screamed, "we couldn't all stay here even if we slept standing up." Maybe I exaggerated. Sure I did. But it was tight. So I looked about and spotted a level stretch of tentable land. Then the owner, promptly christened Mrs. Fink, took over and off, absolutely balking at our camping, even when I waved a rupee note. (She, incidentally, was the only inhospitable Nepalese we met on the whole trek.) Finally a neighbor, who had doubtless suffered plenty of verbal barbs from Mrs. Fink, too, quietly made



F. A. Stott

SAHIB STOTT ON THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY, AFTER 325 MILES

space available in his field 100 yards down hill. But we could never understand Jahman's choice, or the reasons for it, particularly since any water had to be carried at least 300 yards in a giant urn.

Anyone who has seen the superb book *Everest, The West Ridge*, will have been caught by the stunning photograph of the camp site area at Chyaubas. Rich warm brown and gold tones fit the high grazing upland perfectly. And this was to be our last camp site. It had been our second on the way in, and we had remembered it well. So I had carefully explained to Jahman that we wanted our last night on this upland. I also asked him to get enough chickens by barter so that everyone, porters and Sherpas as well as Sahibs, could have a good last dinner.

Through the cluster of Chyaubas homes we marched. "Camp down there?" I said, pointing to the location of thirty-four days ago. "Not," replied Jahman, "water better on. Next ridge." So on. Then the same story again, and again. And finally to the last little group of houses on the ridge before dipping off steeply on a long final descent to the Indrawatti River. I was seething, and

uttered some oath to the effect that Jahman better damn well locate a site here and now, and that under no circumstances were we going down any more. Silence.

Then Nan, seeing Jahman negotiating for a piece of land that looked only slightly more attractive than a pig sty, told me that I had better make the choice and decision. Either that or an explosion. She was right, of course. And we did finally end up with our view. Plus a copious supply of barbs from some thorny grass. These have stayed with us through many a washing, and even three months later periodically emerged sticking into leg or foot, and, of course, were greeted as old friends.

In this too-long recital of misunderstanding, I seek to fix no blame. At the time it was irritating ("irritating" was a mild word at the time!). But it was also baffling, frustrating, and mystifying. Maybe the gap between East and West is greater than we thought.

Or maybe I over-read the gap that exists. For the last one was strictly on us. On Day #35 we rattled into Kathmandu in the Land-Rover about 3:00 P.M. Jahman and Lapka both said, "We come around. See you. Tonight." All we thought of was the comfort of the hotel. No need to check our gear and supplies tonight. So I said, "Not tonight. Tomorrow."

"OK," said Jahman.

So when we got to our room, what did we have? Only the packs (with dirty clothes) on our backs. That plus the equally dirty clothes on our backs. All the Sherpas had wanted to do was to give us our "clean" clothes!

There we were on Friday, November 12, back in Kathmandu. Just before we started the trek, Elizabeth had asked us our hotel preference upon return. It was an "either-or" proposition. The Royal, or the Annapurna. We knew the Royal well. It had vintage, lots of it. The Annapurna was unknown. But it was brand new and supposedly very modern. Gauging our mood on return, I had voted Annapurna.

An excellent choice. Into it we stalked, at 3:00 P.M. to be greeted by the desk clerk with a quick glance, and "You, I presume, are the Stotts!" Yes indeed. We weren't hard to spot. And then to hot water, bath, toilet, electricity, beds, wall-to-wall carpeting—and it all worked! My diary summed it up:

"The Royal may have the atmosphere and the Yak and Yeti Bar, but the Annapurna has the plumbers and the electricians!"

Now was the time, and certainly the place, for a relaxed view of WHAT WE HAD DONE. Not quite that evening. We were too overwhelmed by the luxury, the grog, the appearance of steak after twelve consecutive dinners featuring chicken, and the lateness of the hour—we couldn't even eat until 7:00 P.M.

The next morning was better. The first light of dawn came at 5:00 A.M., and, as usual, I was waiting. Thirty minutes of futile self-debate got nowhere. So up I got and sought the dining room. There I could use that best time of day to recapture. What had we done? Well, we had amassed some pretty impressive (to us at least) statistics. For thirty-five consecutive days we had been off with the Nepalese, had suffered no frights, and had lost but one day because of illness. We had reached record altitudes. For Nan, at least 17,500 feet. For Fred, 18,500 feet. For each of us this was one vertical mile higher than we had ever been before.

Roughly plotted we had climbed up and down a total of 176,000 feet. Looked at as an average, this meant that each day we had gained or lost, or gained-and-lost, 5,000 feet of elevation. Turned horizontally all this walking had added up to perhaps 350 miles. Exact mileage we do not know. We carried no pedometer, and the trails are gauged more by time than by measured distance.

We had also lost weight, Nan some five pounds, and I had dropped from 165 to 150. Not that we were ever slighted in the department of groceries. We had eaten hugely, but the steady exercise had a leaning effect. Insatiable hunger was one result for me. The Annapurna dining room made no money on me, for invariably I had two servings per meal, not one. Nor shall I forget the evening, three days after our return, when we were the guests of Ambassador and Mrs. Stebbins at a sumptuous dinner. Back at the Annapurna shortly before midnight, I couldn't face the hours until breakfast. So with the manager's help we broke into the kitchen. Only one food could we find, bread. And Nepalese bread has a weight and density all its own. Yet five fat slices did I cut, and eat. Buttered, too.

Moreover, we had set out to see Mt. Everest, and we had seen it under perfect conditions. Perhaps 1,600 film exposures had been taken, and the fifty aluminum cases in which they now lay had survived the dangers of water, sun, and loss.

But for all we had accomplished in feet, miles, pounds, days, and views, none could be called the most significant. To us it was the fact that we had done it all together—a couple in their forties from just off Main Street had gone half-way around the world to spend thirty-five vigorous days without diversion, and had succeeded as well in the mutual pleasure as in the statistics. The pleasure was deep. And so was the satisfaction.

Close to the end of the trek, I had done some reflecting. It was a good hour for reflection, and a good place, too. It was the next-to-last morning, following the unpleasant encounter with Mrs. "Haridan Fink."

Up, as usual, at dawn, we made a record getaway, with everyone



F. A. Stott

THE TEAM AT THE END OF THE TRAIL

Two sahibs, three Sherpas, six porters (including three Sherpas)

on the trail by 6:15 A.M. The air was cool and clear, and the path lay uphill to Resingo, some 1,200 feet above the river. Walking alone with steady pace and without stopping I ruminated. It was nice to be tuned up to a physical pitch at which a 1,200-foot rise was pleasure without pain. And the thought kept stirring that much of our tale was in ourselves, our reactions. To what did we adapt? How did we adjust?

For the big adjustment was the sum of a whole lot of little adjustments. So how had we adjusted to ten miles a day every day? To the local food and liquor? To the daily routine of early-to-bed-and-to-rise? To the absence of sanitation, of any utilities? To a people who spoke our language hardly at all? To the friendly but fundamentally uncurious nature of these people? To each other as sole and constant companions? What had been our satisfactions and our frustrations?

One thing was clear. This was NOT the Dream of a Lifetime. More than once Nan had quietly vowed that she was "going to throw those damn boots away if we ever get out, and never put them on again." Like thoughts had come my way. So what had we done in the process of amassing all those statistics?

Well, we had done far more adjusting to Nepal than Nepal had to us. Much of it has already been told. But take my "friend," a person who believes early morning hours are best used for slumber, that cleanliness is next to godliness (maybe a step ahead), that literature is the spice of life, and who likes her privacy—particularly since she lives in the all-male society of her husband and two sons? How did she adjust?

Well, she got up promptly enough to enable departure each day by 6:45. Not without an occasional grumble or stony spell of silence. But her rational Western mind knew it was either up early or camp late. It really wasn't an alternative.

For a person who had never felt properly dressed until after having washed her face with hot water, Nan soon adapted to no lipstick (lost), a communal comb every now and then (hers was lost), washing of face and hands once daily, usually late morning, a bath (sponge) every eight days inside a two-man tent or under a poncho, one shampoo in thirty-five days. And as to "shrubbery," well, she survived for the thirty-five days, with it and without it.

There was time each day for reading, despite limited light and an equally limited four-book library. Second readings helped on this (plus the weight, and weighty style, of *Mount Everest*). To food and liquor we both adapted by dint of an open-mouth policy of curiosity backed up by a pair of sturdy stomachs.

To our apprehensions we adapted by deed. There just was no alternative to "shaky chain bridges," "precipitous East banks,"

"effect of altitude," and "none to prescribe medicine but thyself." They all existed as facts or conditions of life. Hence they had to be crossed, climbed, suffered, and prescribed. And in the deed the apprehension gradually vanished.

To these and countless other changed patterns of our life I could write on our thirty-fourth day:

We have shown the power to adjust, considerable physical stamina, some sensitivity, and some loss of sensitivity. I guess we are proud of *not* having become so civilized (with all the accoutrements of America) that we cannot live a very simple life in a simple society—and still enjoy it. Sure, the mountains, and views, and altitude attained are all a part of what we have achieved. They cap the lure. But they are not the key. We are the key.

Late in the afternoon on Monday, November 15, I received this note:

Dear Fred,

There is a party (of "hill men") tonight at the home of the British Military Attaché and his wife (Lt. Col. Peter Kemmis, Betty-M.C.).

You and your wife are asked. I hope you can come?

You will meet Unsoeld & Jerstad, and also the Dhaulagiri IV party and their Sherpas.

("Buffet Supper" & informal)

Of the Sherpas, Ila Tsering and Nima Tensing went to the States in 1963.

If you are in, please say if OK by you. If you are out, this letter will reach you later, but I'll look in in any case about 7:00 P.M. to see you and take you to the party if you can come.

Yours,

Jimmy R. (Roberts)

Well, we were in. And this was decidedly OK! Unsoeld and Jerstad were two of the six Americans who had climbed to the top of Everest, a feat accomplished by only sixteen men of all nationalities. The "Dhaulagiri IV party" meant the expedition just returned from attempting this major peak which had been composed of British R.A.F. personnel and included Jimmy Roberts. The two Sherpas were famous in their own right, and Mingma Tsering, the R.A.F. sirdar and Lakpa's older brother, would surely be there, too.

We didn't know anything about Peter and Betty Kemmis, but five minutes after entering their pleasant home we did. They were superb hosts. And to a mixed group that included British, Nepalese, and Americans, plus two or three other nationalities. Over forty people moved about or clustered in small groups as

they talked, drank, and ate in a warmly happy glow. My early morning diary said:

We left, reluctantly, at 11 P.M., full of nice spirits and association with the brotherhood of the mountains. A strong sense of warmth on the part of all—that they were warm, safe, and full of food after sharing the common experience of privation, and all-out physical and mental effort. The R.A.F. men glowed (through their beards) with contentment as well as sunburn. As their leader, Commander John Sims, told me,

"No, we didn't reach the summit. But we did our best. And we all got out safely."

Very similar to our own thoughts as we turned our corner, and finally reached our "out."

The Americans glowed, Unsoeld at being among friends, especially the Sherpas, whom he greeted most warmly, and vice versa. Jerstad (who had arrived in Kathmandu that day) at being back in Nepal, with a project involving the high country, and with the prospect of several weeks in that country directly ahead.

The Sherpas glowed, at being in the warm and friendly company of the mountain Sahibs, with an endless supply of beer (no change). They stayed pretty much in a line along the wall. Perhaps shy, perhaps happy. Probably both.

Jimmy Roberts glowed, from fatigue. He, too, is 48, and this was probably his last big expedition as a climber.

The Stotts glowed, just at being there.

This was the fellowship of the hills, of the outdoors. Some had known heights and dangers others would never know. But all had known the personal demand, physical and mental, to respond to the challenge and the beauty of the mountains. Each in his own way had wanted to. And each had responded. That was the common bond of this mixture of age, sex, nationality, and occupation. Every person in that house "had wanted to," or he would not have been there.

And so to the recurring question, "Why did you do it?" there is really only one answer:

"Because we wanted to."