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# 1955 International Himalayan Expedition

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## PART I – PREPARATIONS

LATE IN JANUARY 1955, Norman G. Dyhrenfurth received permission from the Nepalese government to lead an expedition to the Mount Everest area of the Himalayas for an attempt on Lhotse 27,890 feet, the highest unclimbed peak in the world. Permission was granted only for the current year, the Swiss having rights for the following two years.

Naturally the ideal time to attempt the 8,000-meter peaks is in the spring, before the monsoon arrives. However, it soon became evident that we were not going to have adequate time to properly organize the expedition and leave for India in time to make the attempt before the monsoon. Rather than not go at all, Norman reluctantly decided to make the assault during the post-monsoon season.

During February and March, Norman organized most of the expedition while in Switzerland. Finances and personnel were the two main problems that confronted him now. The really big problem, permission, had been successfully obtained even though coming too late for a pre-monsoon attempt. There appeared to be possibilities for financing the expedition from sources in three countries and this led to the formation of an international expedition.

Erwin Schneider and Ernst Senn were selected from the Austrian Alpine Club. Schneider is an expert mountain cartographer and

veteran Himalayan climber. Senn is one of Austria's foremost "extreme" climbers and had been a member of the 1954 Broad Peak Expedition. Norman selected two Swiss climbers, one of them Arthur Spohel, who was with Norman on the 1952 Swiss-Everest Fall Expedition. We were also fortunate to secure a climbing doctor, Bruno Spirig, M.D., from Olten, Switzerland. As American representatives, invitations were sent to Dr. George I. Bell, Fred Beckey and myself. Bell is a physicist from Los Alamos, N.M., and one of the most experienced climbers in the states.

Each member of the expedition was naturally required to make a financial contribution to help meet the extreme costs. A group of climbers brought the question of sponsorship and financial backing for Beckey and myself before The Mountaineers' Board of Trustees. The recommendations of this group led to the approval of a permanent Expedition Committee of The Mountaineers with limited funds to be made available to qualified climbers and expeditions seeking assistance. Not only did this help us, but it would act as a nucleus for expeditions in the future. The American Alpine Club also made funds available and hundreds of climbing friends and friends of climbing helped support our participation in the expedition during the following months.

## PART II – THE FIRST GROUP

In order to complete several important programs on the expedition agenda, it was decided to send one group into the Everest area as soon as organization could be completed. This first group was composed of Dyhrenfurth, Schneider and Senn. They would spend the months through September mapping, filming and exploring in the rugged unexplored country to the south and west of Mount Everest. In late July the second group would leave Europe and sometime in early September meet the first group at the Lhotse Base Camp.

The first group reached the Indian-Nepalese border in late April and began the long approach march through the high, rugged foothills to the base of Mount Everest. Over 200 porters were required to carry the seven tons of supplies to the expedition's summer home in Dingboche, at the base of Everest and Lhotse. When they arrived, Schneider immediately began his cartographic work in the Imja Khola Basin. Dyhrenfurth and Senn, with a few porters, reconnoitered the southern flanks of the Everest-Lhotse massif hoping to find a possible route to Lhotse II. A formidable looking ice fall and knife-edge ridges on the upper slopes of the mountain made it obvious that any approach by this side of the mountain would rank in the suicidal class.

Next on the party's program was a visit to the old base camps of the British and Swiss below the Western Cwm. This enabled them to explore the ice fall which we would have to conquer later in the year. While at the old base camp Senn and his Sherpa, Pemba Sundar, made the first ascent of the famous Lho La, 20,000 feet. This high col separates the Khumbu and West Rongbuk glaciers. Some difficult fifth-class climbing was encountered on the ascent, quite good for a Sherpa. Schneider, by the time they returned to Dingboche, had completed the photogrammetric reproduction of the entire Imja Khola Basin.

Dingboche, the expedition's summer home, is a small Sherpa village situated on the south

slopes of Mount Everest at 16,000 feet elevation. After a short rest the three climbers took a five-day trip to Thami, a lamasery near the Tibetan border. Lionel Terray and Guido Magnone accompanied them as guests. The two Frenchmen had just returned from a successful ascent of Makula and were taking a short cut back to Katmandu. Norman filmed the famous lama dances in the beautiful monastery grounds surrounded by rugged icy peaks and yak-grazing fields. The last major exploration trip was to the Nangpa La, 19,050 feet. This is one of the major trade-route passes between Tibet and Nepal. Hundreds of yaks and coolies cross this snow-blanketed pass every week carrying salt and wool into Nepal in exchange for crude fiber paper and spices. Dyhrenfurth obtained some interesting material for his Sherpa movie. Schneider worked with his photo-theodolite obtaining information on the northern and western approaches to Cho Oyu, one of the 8,000-meter peaks. Senn meanwhile made several first ascents of 22,000-foot peaks in the area, accompanied by Pemba Sundar. Schneider and Senn climaxed their stay on the border by making the first ascent of a 23,000-foot peak on skis!

By late June the three had returned to Dingboche and their drafty stone hut. The monsoon had by now swept in from India and the following days were anything but pleasureable. Dyhrenfurth was able to complete some of his films but Schneider could not find one day to work on his map project. Near the end of July they engaged local Sherpas to move the supplies to Lobuje, a small grazing area one-half day's hike from Lhotse Base Camp. Rain continued to make their stay rather dismal, every day continued to be about the same. Nevertheless they remained in good spirits until mid-August when they began the Lhotse build-up. Day after day Sherpas continued to relay loads to base camp until on August 30 all the supplies were transferred and they themselves could move up.

## PART III – SECOND GROUP

Fred Beckey and I left the United States on July 20 bound for Switzerland. In Zurich we were to meet the two Swiss members of the expedition and proceed to Bombay by ship with over a ton of supplies. George Bell would fly directly to New Delhi several weeks later in time to join our group. Beckey and I spent

one week climbing in the Zermatt region before leaving Switzerland. Spohel, one of the Swiss members, was unable to join Beckey, Spirig and me for the voyage to Bombay but would fly directly there two weeks later to meet our ship. We were surprised to find our ship was a small luxury liner with several swimming

pools and other recreational facilities. Our journey was most relaxing. En route we passed through Naples, Port Said, the Suez Canal, Aden and Karachi. The ship stopped a full day at each port enabling us to explore the cities quite thoroughly. After 14 days we reached Bombay with the monsoon in full force.

The combination of Indian Independence Day, the Goa riots and custom formalities delayed our departure from Bombay one week. Meanwhile, Bell had arrived from the states and waited for us in New Delhi. Spohel arrived in Bombay a few hours later than our ship, then left for New Delhi to present our passports to the Nepalese legation for final approval. We all joined at Lucknow, in central India, before proceeding by train to Jogbani on the Indian-Nepalese border. On August 25 we arrived at Jogbani. The monsoon rains greeted us as we stepped down from the train and into the waiting arms of three Sherpas, sent by Norman. They were happy to see us, as if we were long-lost brothers. This was a sample of the devotion the Sherpas have for their employers and climbing companions.

Jogbani is at the end of the narrow gage railroad. A primitive road leads to Dharan Bazar at the edge of the Himalayan foothills. The following two days ox carts loaded with equipment crawled along the muddy roadway to Dharan, 25 miles north of Jogbani. Fifty-five porters were recruited for the approach march to Lhotse Base Camp. On August 29 porter loads were distributed and we started off through the thick jungle. Far in the distance snowy peaks rose high over the green foothills that were to be our home for the next 18 days.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the entire expedition was the 180-mile hike across the Himalayan foothills. Thick forests cover the mountains to the 13,000-foot level. Small farms are located on many of the hillsides and occasionally a village will be found in the deep valleys. The route we followed was picked by Dyhrenfurth as being the best to travel during the monsoon season. This route avoided the numerous rivers that are normally encountered by other routes. One or two other expeditions had passed along sections of the trail but most expeditions approach the Everest region from Katmandu, far to the west.

Hundreds of Nepalese that we passed daily had never seen westerners and we were continually subjects of much interest. Almost every night we stayed in local farm houses, as the tents offered little resistance to the heavy rains.

The porters would also spread over the community and seek shelter in other farm houses. Gylazen, sirdar of the porters, took complete charge of our necessities. He would buy local food, find us lodging at night and see that we were well cared for at all times. Usually we would hike several hours in the morning before breakfast. This procedure saved several hours' delay that we would encounter if breakfast was prepared where we spent the night. We only had our cameras and lunch to carry each day which made the walking enjoyable. We usually called a halt in mid-afternoon near a farm community. Once Beckey, Bell and I traveled too far ahead of the caravan and consequently spent the night in a flea-infested bed on a local farm. Our dinner consisted of fried chicken, potatoes, roast corn and Tibetan tea which was served by our farmer host.

The greatest problem during the approach march was the rivers that were at flood stage because of the monsoon. The Arun River, flowing from Tibet, had to be crossed using dugout canoes and required almost a full day to transport porters and their loads across. Other rivers were crossed on the traditional vine-bamboo bridges. Once we spent the whole day crossing, one at a time, on a bamboo line that was stretched over the river. The "victim" would sit in a small basket while several others pulled the basket across; the basket was hung from the rope on an inverted V-piece of wood and would slide along quite readily. Six-foot-six Bell was almost too much for the operation. Fortunately he only lost his umbrella when he almost fell out of the basket directly over the middle of the river!

Most of the population we encountered was centered about small farm areas. Each person has several plots of land and grows corn, potatoes, rice and various grains. He often has chickens, goats and cattle. They are almost entirely self-sufficient, trading to some extent with other areas for salt, tea, sugar and spices. The women as well as the men work in the fields. At night they all gather around the fireplace in their homes roasting corn or potatoes and drinking tea. Their homes are usually quite clean, varying in construction with the different locations but most often being clay and wood structures. Windows are small and homes are very dark. Small children gather wood for the fireplaces during the day in the nearby hills while the older children herd the family goats or cattle. Part of the year the men trade with the other sections of the country, carrying heavy loads over high passes and rough and

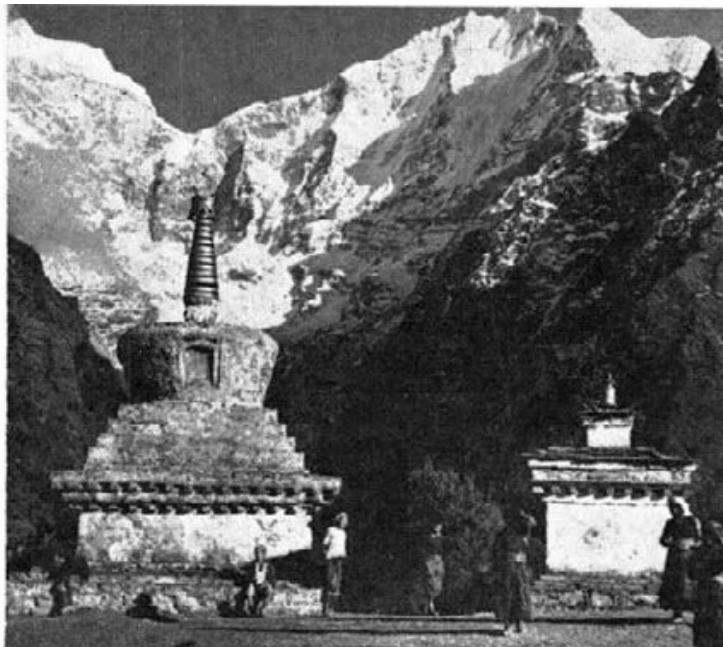
rugged trails.

Women's clothes consist of homespun wool skirts, or cotton dresses and sweaters, and they have numerous trinkets adorning their attire. In the lower areas nearer to India, the women wear nose and ear rings. The men are dressed in tight ankle-length pants and wool shirts. Many of them wear friendship hats fitting snugly over the head. A large kukri (heavy knife) hangs from their belt.

Even though the people were at first timid in our presence, they would soon want to talk with us and we always found them a wonderful happy people.

The days slipped quickly by as we steadily grew closer to our objective. By the 17th day we reached Namche Bazar, main village of the Sherpa people. Namche sits in a small amphitheater valley at about 12,000 feet. Over 100 two-story homes line the hillside. Several more Sherpas, sent by Norman, greeted us an hour below the village. They were very happy to see us, bringing hot tea and chang from Namche. They eagerly told us that the first group had already succeeded in finding a route through the icefall to Camp 1. That night the expedition sirdar held a grand homecoming for the many Sherpas that had gone to meet us in Dharan. Even the sahibs had to dance and take part in the celebration. To refuse arrack or chang from the host was to pose an insult. Alcohol at 12,000 feet was almost more than we could handle but customs are customs.

The porters we had hired in Dharan were dismissed the next day and we took on local Sherpas for the high-altitude hiking from Namche to Base Camp. On September 12 we left Namche Bazar. Monsoon clouds hung heavy over the mountains and only on rare occasion could we get a glimpse of the gigantic peaks that were supposed to surround us. Rain continued, in the afternoons especially. Later that day we reached Thyangboche, the beautiful monastery which is located below



Fred Beckey photo

*Kangtega, 22,000 feet, rising abruptly above the chortens at Thyangboche monastery.*

Ama Dablam and Kangtega.

The next day we left the Imja Khola Basin and late in the day made camp at Lobuje at 16,500 feet where the first group had lived for over a month. A little snow fell that night and it was very cold. Heavy black clouds and a cold wind gave evidence that the monsoon was not yet over. Supposedly the monsoon ended in early September—but were we to have a bad year when it would not end until winter arrived? Next morning we eagerly arose for the final walk across the Khumbu Glacier to Base Camp. Cairns on each small rise showed us the route. These had been placed by the hundreds of porters who had passed this same way during the Swiss and Everest expeditions. A wide corridor on the glacier between huge ice ships led directly beneath the Khumbu Icefall where base camp was located. Dyhrenfurth happily greeted us as we came into camp. For Fred and me, it was our first meeting with the leader of the expedition.

#### PART IV — LHOTSE

On September 7, while we were on the approach march, Dyhrenfurth, Schneider and Senn had succeeded in reaching the top of the icefall at 20,500 feet. What had taken the British 11 days to complete, they did in 14 hours. In the following days until our arrival they continued to reinforce the route by placing aluminum ladders and wooden bridges over crevasses that blocked the trail. The icefall proved to be much easier than when the British

and Swiss had successfully penetrated it in previous attempts on Everest. What a shock it must have been for members of the earlier expeditions when they learned that Schneider and Spirig had descended the entire icefall on skis. Even though the ascent of the icefall had taken little time; it was not completed without much hard work. Waist-deep snow made relaying of equipment to Camp 1 an unpleasant task. One or two sahibs would break trail fol-

lowed by Sherpas carrying 40-pound packs.

On September 16 the second group arrived at base camp. We were only moderately acclimatized and the first few days felt the effects of the elevation. The first night we all experienced Cheyne-Stokes' respiration. Schneider considered the best way to acclimatize was to make numerous trips to Camp 1 and return each night to sleep at base camp. This theory was put into practice for the next few weeks and seemed to work quite well. Every few days we would lead a Sherpa relay team to Camp 1, breaking trail and making sure the Sherpas remained roped. Relay teams to Camp 1 would leave base camp before sunrise and usually returned in time for lunch. In the afternoons the icefall would become unbearably hot and the equatorial sun would leave the deep snow slushy and bottomless.

Several days after our arrival Dyhrenfurth and Spohel pressed beyond Camp 1, at the top of the icefall, and found a route through the crevasses guarding the entrance to the Western Cwm. This enabled Senn and Spohel to continue the route up through the Cwm a few days later to establish Camp 2 at the site of the earlier Swiss and British Camps 4. By the end of September a dozen Sherpas were at work in the Western Cwm relaying supplies between Camp 1 and Camp 2. Bell and Beckey soon moved up to Camp 2. Meanwhile Senn and Spohel reached the head of the Western Cwm, the Lhotse Face. On the last day of September Dyhrenfurth returned to Camp 1 to direct the operations above and coordinate movements of supplies up the icefall.

During the first week in October Camp 3 was established at 23,000 feet at the foot of the Lhotse Face. Sherpas relayed more supplies to Camp 3 to begin the assault on the Lhotse Face. Camp 3 was located between several large crevasses protecting it from the avalanches that poured off various sections of the Lhotse Glacier. During the first few days an avalanche scattered the first cache of equipment, however, without any loss. Spirig and I remained at base camp to lead Sherpa teams through the icefall and wait for the time when the final summit attempt was ready to take place so we could move up. That week George Bell came down with a case of laryngitis at Camp 2 and Dr. Spirig had him evacuated to base camp. Schneider also remained at base camp waiting for the monsoon to break so he could begin his mapping project once again.

On October 7 Senn, Spohel and Pemba Sundar left Camp 3 to reconnoiter the route

on the Lhotse Face. They had not gone far when a snow slab broke off a few feet above Senn. Pemba Sundar was caught in the avalanche but his two sahibs were able to hold him. The following day they returned and completed the route to 24,200 feet and set up Camp 4. This was about the same area as British Camp 7. Dyhrenfurth moved to Camp 4 the following day, leaving Beckey and Spirig at Camp 2 and Bell and myself at base camp.

On October 10 the first attempt for the summit was made from Camp 4, 24,200 feet. Senn and Spohel, using closed-circuit oxygen sets, led off from camp followed by Chowang and Pemba carrying extra bottles of oxygen to deposit near the entrance of the Lhotse couloir. Progress was very slow and it became evident watching from below that they were not going to reach the summit. At 25,500 feet they stopped, left the oxygen bottles, and returned to Camp 4. Knee-deep powder snow, breakable crust and the threat of avalanches had made the going extremely arduous. It was decided that another camp would have to be placed on the last terrace of the Lhotse Glacier at 25,200 feet before another attempt could be made.

The monsoon continued. The next four days a violent storm held everyone in his tent. Bell's condition at base camp was only moderately good and he wanted to wait until it improved before returning to Camp 2. A lull in the storm occurred on October 14 and I left base camp with Penso, our youngest Sherpa, to clear the route to Camp 1. New snow had left the icefall in an almost unclimbable condition. Numerous bridges had fallen into crevasses they spanned and seracs had fallen across the route. While crossing the last aluminum ladder before reaching Camp 1, the ladder gave way from beneath me and I was only saved by making a lunge with my ice axe for the opposite side. Penso on the other end of the rope was badly shaken by what had happened. Late in the day we reached Camp 1 after spending 10 hours improving the route and wading through new snow which was often chest deep. The following day we returned to base camp having opened the route through the icefall.

By October 15 the storm had subsided and a cold wind blew out of Tibet. At 7:30 a.m., Senn and Spohel crawled from their tents at Camp 5 and began the second summit attempt. From below their progress could be followed across the Lhotse Face. They moved upwards, making good time at first, but the many days



of waiting out the storm at Camp 5 had left them weak and tired; they soon were barely making headway. When they reached the spot where they had left the oxygen bottles, they stopped. The oxygen bottles were not there. Evidently an avalanche had carried them down the face. Spohel could go no higher and gave his extra oxygen bottle to Senn. Spohel and the Sherpas returned to Camp 5. Senn decided to try reaching the summit alone and started upwards through the deep snow. At 26,600 feet, just below the entrance to the summit

couloir, his oxygen set failed completely. He was thoroughly exhausted, having gone that far in deep powder snow and had to give up. This was the highest point reached by the expedition.

Another storm struck that night. Supplies were running short at the two higher camps and the Sherpas could not move in the storm. Our only connection between camps the next few days was with the radios. Bell and I were able to reach Camp 1 on October 17 and the following day reached Camp 2. The snow was

*Snowstorm on the Lhotse Face, as Sherpas and Sahibs fight to keep from being blown off the slope by gale.*

Richard McGowan photo



so deep and we were so tired we had to leave our packs within site of camp and go on without them. Beckey and Spirig were skiing down the cwm to meet us. They retrieved our packs while we continued on to Camp 2.

On October 19 Dyhrenfurth sent Spohel and seven Sherpas to Camp 5 with more equipment and food. That same afternoon Senn stumbled into Norman's tent at Camp 4 physically and mentally exhausted. Spohel returned with the Sherpa relay team from Camp 5 later in the day. The three of them held a conference deciding to abandon the attack and leave the following day for Camp 2. Many days on the Lhotse Face under the most severe conditions left them weak. The only thing for them to do was retreat. The next day as they left Camp 4, the storm was raging horribly. The route was hard to distinguish and the snow deep. They had not gone far when Chotari fell head first down the slope, pulling Chowang after him. Fortunately Phu Dorje stopped them by wrapping the rope around his ice axe. They were badly shaken. With the threat of avalanches and visibility nil, they decided to retrace their steps back to Camp 4.

The next day the weather was considerably better but a strong cold wind had replaced the monsoon clouds. Dyhrenfurth, Senn and Spohel with their Sherpas again left Camp 4. Spirig and Beckey met the descending party at Camp 3. They had been unable to move upwards because the Sherpas would not agree to carry loads. Norman asked for volunteers to accompany Dr. Spirig and Fred. Chowang and Pemba Sundar, who had long been on the face, volunteered to return. They would carry oxygen for the second summit team. Later in the day the first summit team (Senn and Spohel) and Dyhrenfurth reached Camp 2. They had done a fine job but the weather and

the altitude left them in no condition for any further climbing.

Spirig and Beckey reached Camp 5 on October 22 only to find the tents badly damaged by the wind. Bell and I moved up to Camp 4, as the third summit team, with five Sherpas. A pep talk at Camp 3 had encouraged the Sherpas to go on with us. Two of them stayed at Camp 4 with us while the other three returned to Camp 3. The storm raged violently that night. The next morning Norman, over the radio, encouraged everyone on the face to come down. To remain any longer might mean being permanently cut off from the lower camps. I left the tent to see how Kancha and Lakpa Sona were doing in the Sherpa tent. To my horror I found their tent torn to shreds and their sleeping bags covered with snow. They refused to do anything except go down. We could not blame them. Their fingers and toes were nearly frozen. Spirig and Beckey had not fared very well that night either and decided to come down. Dr. Spirig was not feeling well and both were becoming exhausted under the trying conditions.

In a later radio contact, Norman requested Camp 4 and 5 be evacuated. Later that day we abandoned everything at Camps 4 and 5 and began the evacuation. Slowly we made the descent to Camp 3 in a vicious wind. During the next few days we retreated down the cwm and the icefall. By October 27 everyone had returned to base camp. The attempt to climb Lhotse had taken eight weeks. We were all somewhat happy to be down in the lower elevations once again even though regretting the defeat. Plans were immediately made for leaving base camp and returning to Thyangboche monastery. The monsoon which was supposed to end in September at long last was over and winter at high elevations was here.

## PART V – AFTER LHOTSE

The main body of the expedition moved down to the Thyangboche monastery grounds for the remaining two weeks. Schneider was to spend the last days finishing his cartographic project while Norman worked on his Lama film. The remaining body of the expedition was left to do as they wished. Beckey, Bell and I left base camp a day before the rest and under clear, cold, autumn skies hiked down the Khumbu Glacier to Lobuje Camp. Behind Lobuje Camp rose a splendid 20,000-foot peak draped with hanging glaciers and fluted

ridges. For lack of any name it was simply called "Lobuje Peak." Four Sherpas carried our supplies to a small pond surrounded by grassy meadows at the base of the peak. The following morning before sunrise we started for the summit. First the route crossed tremendous boulder fields, then onto a sharp ridge that curved to the summit in a crescent-like shape. Small ice walls and steep ice slopes were negotiated until 4 p.m. when we arrived on the west summit well over 20,000 feet in elevation. The summit afforded a magnificent

view of Everest, Lhotse and many other peaks rising out of the valleys like inverted icicles.

We returned to Thyangboche the following day enjoying a pleasant walk down the Khumbu Valley through grazing villages and wonderful open country. After a day's rest at Thyangboche, we retraced our steps back through Pangboche, then southeast past Mingbo, making camp in a meadow at 18,000 feet. The next day Fred, accompanied by two Sherpas, Da Tensing and Chotari, reconnoitered a possible route on Ama Dablam, the "Himalayan Matterhorn." They easily reached 20,000 feet but above this the climbing becomes acutely difficult if climbable.

Meanwhile, George and I, without Sherpas, attempted a sharp icy peak behind Ama Dablam. For several hours we climbed a steep fluted face and succeeded in reaching the main summit ridge only to be turned back by darkness and a vertical ice step. The view was inspiring from our highest point. Makula rose up into a clear blue in the near east, while to the south many unnamed peaks glittered in the rays of the setting sun. We retreated down the ridge to a col (north of the Mera Col) which dropped abruptly onto the glacier we had earlier ascended. A few rappels down atrociously steep snow brought us onto the glacier. Late in the night we reached camp where Beckey awaited our return. Both our trips proved interesting and opened unexplored country.

Another day's rest at Thyangboche enabled us to get up enough steam to attempt one of the unclimbed peaks rising above the Dudh Kosi watershed. With several Sherpas to carry supplies, we crossed the Imja Khola and through the village of Forje. Next day we crossed the Dudh Kosi and spent the remaining part of the day ascending steep grassy slopes to 18,000 feet. Here, at the base of Langcha (21,500 feet), our objective, we made camp. By 9 a.m. the next morning we reached the final summit cone. The best route to the summit appeared to be by a steep 1,500-foot couloir, then along a knife-edge ridge to the summit. Hour after hour we chopped steps in the 60-degree couloir. By alternating leads we reached the summit ridge late in the day. George dropped one of his cameras while taking a picture. As it bounded down the flutings below, we were reminded of the necessity for good belaying.

The last few hundred feet had appeared to be easy from below. When we got there a steep corniced area separated us from the

summit. To make matters worse the snow was powdery and unsettled. With "iron belays" giving him mental support, Fred led off up the last section. Both sides of the arete dropped several thousand feet to the valley floor. At 4 p.m. we reached the summit and for 30 minutes enjoyed our victory. The view was tremendous. Icy peaks rose into the clear cold sky all around our mountain. Far below we could see yaks grazing in the fields and Sherpa villages surrounded by stone fences. We could not linger too long for night was approaching and the route was treacherous. In the last hours of nightfall we descended the couloir. The steps we had cut enabled us to descend without mishap and we soon reached the glacier floor. In total darkness we stumbled down the glacier, over the moraine deposits and into camp. We were tired but our victory left us serene: Langcha, 21,500 feet, the first peak to be climbed by Americans in Nepal. We were happy.

At Thyangboche the expedition prepared to leave for Namche Bazar. Before leaving we attended the funeral of a Lama. The colorful ceremony was very interesting and enabled us to broaden our knowledge of the Sherpa people. Fred with his Sherpa, Nema Tensing, left a few days before the main body of the expedition. They made the ascent of Kangtega IV (20,500 feet), a satellite of the main peak, lying southeast of Namche Bazar. Before meeting us on the return march they explored some other beautiful alpine country lying along the crest of the Himalayas to the west of the Solo Khumbu Valley.

On November 14 the expedition left Namche Bazar with 50 porters. The following days were very pleasant, the Himalayan autumn remained superb. However, the summits of Everest and Lhotse were veiled in huge snow plumes, reminding us of the fierce wind blowing in from Tibet. The return march was made to Katmandu in western Nepal rather than back to Joghani. Several trucks waited for us at Banepa, having been dispatched for our convenience by Fathers Niesen and Moran of Katmandu. They acted as liaison officers throughout the many months we were climbing. To them we owe many thanks.

On November 26 we reached Katmandu, capital of Nepal. We enjoyed a week's rest while final preparations were completed for our departure. Every day we journeyed to various religious shrines and temples. On December 2 we left Katmandu by plane for Patna, India. The Europeans returned to Bombay. From



Patna, Bell and I went to Calcutta, then across the Pacific and home. Beckey accompanied the Europeans to Bombay and later climbed Kilo-

manjaro. The expedition for all of us had been a wonderful adventure and we all look forward to the time when we can return.

## PART VI – CONCLUSION

We had not climbed Lhotse but had tried our best. However, this was not the only goal of the expedition. Schneider had completed his photogrammetric map of the entire Mount Everest region. Dyhrenfurth exposed 28,000 feet of commercial Kodachrome on eight separate topics. Also, over 10,000 still pictures were taken not only of the mountains but also of the people, their customs, and life in the lamaseries. Thirty-one peaks were climbed by members of the expedition, mostly first ascents. They ranged in altitude from 19,000 to 23,000 feet. Considerable country was explored, much of it for the first time.

We are willing to admit that the fall season is not the time for the 8,000-meter peaks. The French on Makula, the previous fall, had not reached an altitude as high as we did, but the same climbing team returned the next spring making the ascent with little trouble. The Swiss Fall Expedition in 1952 had barely managed to reach the South Col on Everest and were lucky to return to base camp alive. I think that for smaller peaks, below 25,000 feet, the post-monsoon season is ideal. The days are cold but clear and stormless. We experienced no weather problems on our climbs of smaller peaks and were only hampered by the short autumn days.

Oxygen greatly increases an expedition's chances for success on the big peaks. No major peak has yet been climbed without the use of oxygen. The closed-circuit sets we used were not as good as open-circuit sets but funds were not available for the ultimate in oxygen apparatus.

I would like to mention some financial aspects of the expedition before closing. The total monetary outlay was around \$45,000. Norman personally financed about one-half of the funds, the remaining portion coming from the members. The two Austrians were totally backed by the Austrian Alpine Club and Dr. Spirig was partially helped by a large Swiss Chemical firm. Other members of the expedition contributed varying amounts dependant on their own means. As I mentioned previously Beckey and myself were backed by the Mountaineers, but the funds were only on a loan basis to be paid back through programs or the individuals own resources.

A considerable portion of the treasury went towards transportation of expedition members to and from India. The duration of the expedition required extra supplies to be transported into Base Camp bringing the porter costs to over \$6,000. Oxygen equipment was also a major expenditure along with equipment and food.

Most of the equipment used during the course of the expedition was manufactured in Europe. Our tents were of the Wico-Meade style but too heavy for practical use. They did have double walls and waterproof floors which added to their comfort in the extreme cold. Five of the tents were destroyed by the wind at camps on the Lhotse Face but I doubt whether other makes of tents would have stood up against such atrocious winds. The high altitude boots we used were very good and warrant mention. They were a Swiss make. The outer surface of the boot was thick cariboo fur, with an inner boot of felt and soled with a light bramani. They were very warm and light weight. A canvas gaiter, pulled over the boot like a sox, added to their warmth and kept out loose snow. The Europeans used acryl lined pants, jackets and sleeping bags with poor results. It was no substitute for down insulation. Fortunately Bell, Beckey and I used special down articles designed by climbers in Seattle and manufactured by Eddie Bauer, Inc. The garments were exceptionally durable and warm. The Europeans admitted our down clothing was superior to anything they had seen or used.

The Swiss returned in the spring of 1956 and quite easily made the ascent of Everest and Lhotse. They were financially well backed and had 22 men on the expedition.

The many accomplishments of the expedition were due mainly to Norman Dyhrenfurth, our leader, and his ability as an organizer. No expedition is so difficult to administer than one composed of international climbers. Norman was the only one that could fluently speak the several German dialects and English. He had organized the entire expedition within a very short time and under financial stresses. He did his utmost to handle our problems fairly. All the expedition members appreciate his time, ability and devotion.