

E-LETTER

Volume 23 • January 2012

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Himalayan Club News

Annual Seminar 2012

The forthcoming Annual Seminar is being organised at Mumbai on 18 and 19 February 2012. Legendary mountaineer Peter Habeler has very graciously agreed to deliver two lectures during the event. He would be showcasing his various achievements in the Himalaya as well as in other mountain ranges of the world. Other speakers include Harish Kapadia, Ashutosh Mishra, Tapan Pandit, Pradeep Sahu, Dr. Raghunath Godbole, Divyesh Muni and Deepak Bhimani. More details of the event will be circulated at a later date and posted at our website www.himalayanclub.org

Website of the Himalayan Club

Many new features are being added to our website in order to make it more interactive and member friendly. The main feature added is the facility of 'Online Payment'. Gone are the days of writing cheques, ordering demand drafts and air mail postings. Now



you are just a click away from making payments. Members can renew their membership, subscribe to the journal, pay various dues and also donate generously for various noble causes and activities the Club undertakes from time to time. Kindly visit www.himalayanclub.org for more details of bank transfers and credit card payments. Your active participation and support will encourage us to introduce more and more facilities on our website.

Joss Lynam Medal

Joss Lynam, a Life Member of the Club since 1946, who passed away exactly a year ago, was one of the most well known Irish Mountaineer for the last 70 years. He arrived first in India in 1942 as a young army recruit and his last visit was to climb Jaonli in 1991. In such a long span of climbing in the higher ranges he made several trips which were exploratory and pioneering. He was responsible for exploration of the Gyundi, Bara Shigri and Lahaul-Kullu divide in 1955-1958 and climbed Shigri Parvat, 6526 m in 1961. His team also climbed many peaks in the Bara Shigri glacier- all first ascents. In 1964 he went to Rakaposhi in the Karakoram and to Changtse (Nepal) in 1987. His books on the hills and mountains of Ireland are a bible for adventurers and he edited 'the Mountain Irish Log'. In the last years of his life he served on many committees of the UIAA and contributed constantly to the sport.



Harish Kapadia with Joss Lynam Medal, flanked by two daughters of Joss Lynam and Mrs. Geeta Kapadia on extreme right.

The first 'Joss Lynam Memorial Lecture' was delivered by Harish Kapadia from India, in Dublin on 24th November 2011. The auditorium at the historic Trinity College was full of senior and young members of "Mountaineering Ireland" who took keen interest in the subject of mountains in the Siachen glacier and its military and political aspects. The speaker recalled his interactions with Joss Lynam over the past few decades and Joss Lynam's contribution at various mountaineering forums. He started his lecture with a couplet by the poet Declan O'keefe (present in the audience).

There are Hillarys, Messners and Bonington too.
There are walkers and climbers - a whole motley crew.
There are Alpinists: mountaineers, all of a sort.
In this rambling, wandering evergreen sport.

And there is Joss!

The first "Joss Lynam Medal" was awarded to Harish Kapadia on the occasion.

Two Prizes- One year- One book !!

Honorary Member of the Himalayan Club, Bernadette McDonald has won two prestigious awards in a single year for her book *Freedom Climbers*.

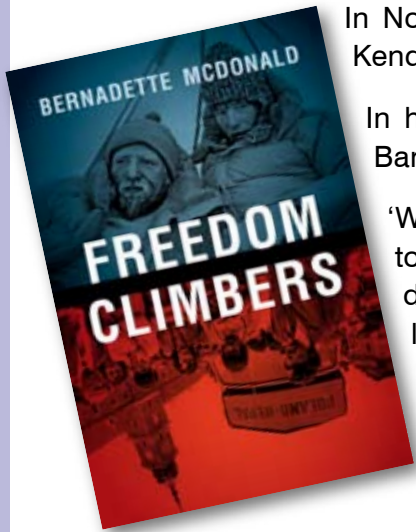
The book first won the Banff Festival Book prize. David Pickford said the following about Bernadette while awarding the Book Prize to ***Freedom Climbers***.

"When Bernadette McDonald began researching one of the most extraordinary episodes in the history of modern mountaineering — the story of Polish climbing in the Himalaya between the 1970s and the 1990s — she faced a maze of obscure sources weaving a tale with no obvious beginning or end.

Out of that miasma she has produced one of the most captivating books on the subject of mountaineering to have appeared in recent years: a vigorous, vivid, and deeply sensitive portrait of a time as remarkable for the characters that defined it as for what they achieved in the mountains."



Bernadette McDonald.



In November the book won another prestigious prize at the Kendal Film Festival, UK.

In his Adjudication speech at the Boardman-Tasker Award Barry Imeson recalled Edward Whymper's words:

'Why is it that men who cannot speak, allow themselves to be put forward to bore their fellow creatures? And why do not men who can speak say something that is worth listening to?'

He was referring to short listed books for the prestigious Boardman-Tasker Award. Soon it was evident that the book selected as winner was worth every word of praise it received.

"Freedom Climbers by Bernadette McDonald which we felt to be one of the most important mountaineering books to be written for many years. Freedom Climbers is the story of how Polish climbers emerged after the 2nd World War and the rigours of the Russian occupation to discover, and then dominate, high altitude climbing in the 1970s and 1980s.

Bernadette McDonald draws upon her extensive interviews with climbers and their relations to paint a vivid picture of the stifling social, political and economic background faced by Polish climbing communities on their extraordinary journey from local outcrops and testing climbs in the Tatras to the highest, and most difficult climbs in the world. The author describes how this was achieved, not only by their toughness in the mountains, but also by how they turned the economic situation to their advantage by trading on their prestige value to the establishment and by creating a system within the system to allow them to travel outside their borders, experience new cultures and make a living from climbing that gave them what they valued most – freedom.

Freedom Climbers is meticulously researched and, by bringing together the stories of some of the key players, fills an important gap in the history of Polish Mountaineering written in English and will be compulsive reading for anyone with an interest in mountaineering history."

Due to an injury Bernadette could not be present to receive the second prize. But no sooner the award was announced someone from the audience walked up with a pre-recorded acceptance speech by her!

Harish Kapadia

Expeditions to Saser Kangri Group

The First Ascent of Saser Kangri II and other peaks of the Eastern Karakoram



Saser Kangri II, South face. (Mark Richey)

The west peak of Saser Kangri II had been reached by a massive Indian Japanese expedition in 1985 following a route from the north. The main, eastern summit remained unclimbed.

By mid September of 2009, Steve, Mark Wilford from Colorado, Jim Lowther from the UK, and I found ourselves half way up the 1700 meter South East face of SK II. Huddled in two tiny tents perched on a narrow ledge of ice, a storm

raged and temperatures dropped well below zero as we struggled to melt water with a failing stove. On our fourth day, we made the decision to retreat.

In 2011, Steve Swenson and I were ready to return for a second attempt. This time we would recruit the youthful talent of Freddie Wilkinson from New Hampshire, a thirty-one year old professional climber and already one of the top US alpinists. Three other experienced climbers would join the team: Freddie's wife Janet Bergman, also a professional climber; Emilie Drinkwater, a professional climbing and skiing guide from upstate New York; and Alaskan extreme skier and guide, Kirsten Kremer.

In addition to the American members, we were joined by six Indian climbers: Chewang Motup, expedition Co-leader; Konchok Thinlese, our Sirdar; Pemba Sherpa (aka King Kong); Dhan Singh Harkotia; Jangla Tashi Phunchok; and Tshering Sherpa. Our base camp was well staffed with Santabir Sherpa, Chief Cook, and his assistants Arjun Rai, Aungchok, and Mahipal (aka the Kitchen Boy). Raj Kumar, from the Indian Army, served as our Liaison Officer.

By July 11, the whole team was comfortably settled in a lovely high meadow base camp at about 5,000 meters at the snout of the Sakang Lungpa glacier, which was just four days walk from the Nubra valley.

On July 23, Steve, Freddie, and I packed up and skied over the 6,000 meter pass to an advanced base camp on the South Shukpa Kunchang glacier, directly below the 1,700 m SW face of SK II. Our first attempt on the face, intended to be a recon to our 2009 highpoint, ended at our first camp; dubbed "The Launchpad" after extreme heat caused major snow sloughs and rock fall in the great couloir, the main feature on the wall was that it bisects the SW face and the start of our climb.



Nearing the Launch Pad bivy. (Freddie Wilkinson)

At this point, it was clearly too hot to attempt SKII so we made another plan and skied down the South Shukpa to explore a spectacular cirque of mountains that had caught our attention. One 6,585 m high peak looked promising, particularly after we discovered a perfect line of ice runnels splitting the steep north face and leading directly to a triangular summit.

Starting at four a.m. on July 31 with nothing but day packs, we climbed twelve pitches of superb grade 4+ ice to the summit ridge. We then made a tricky traverse to the top arriving at six p.m., just as the final rays of sun painted the range in alpenglow. From the summit, we got spectacular views north to SK II and could see that the East Peak was considerably higher than the Western point reached by the 1985 expedition. We named the mountain Tsok Kangri, a Buddhist term that refers to the practice of gathering merit and wisdom in one's life.

On August 4, encouraged by an excellent weather forecast, we returned to ABC to attempt more of the lovely peaks above the South Shukpa Kunchang glacier. First to strike were Emilie and Kirsten with their first ascent of Pumo Kangri, 6,250 m via the west face on August 5. Assuming their route to be mainly neve snow, they carried only one ice screw and no bivy gear. The snow turned out to be just a veneer over water ice and although they simul-climbed most of the way, they arrived on the summit late afternoon and made some fifteen rappels in the dark using just one ice screw to make v-threads. As they reached the snow field above the glacier, they passed Freddie and Janet on their way up to bag the first ascent of Saserling, a spectacular rock tower to the north. Their



Swenson arriving on the summit of Tsok Kangri. (Mark Richey)

route follows a steep crack system in god granite for eight pitches of American grade 5-9+ and finishes directly on a pointed summit. After just one day of rest, everyone was ready to go again and skied across the valley to a high camp below a 6,660 meter peak that we named Stegosaurus, for a central spine of rock towers that reminded us of the dinosaur's armored back. From our high camp, the five of us climbed together up a steep line of snow just right of the towers to a 300 meter traverse along the final ridge, where we belayed each other one at a time to the corniced summit.



Saserling, Pumo Kangri and Tsok Kangri. (Mark Richey)

On August 20, we reached ABC early in the afternoon and began preparing for the main climb. Above ABC, Steve, Freddie, and I would climb in alpine style, which meant we had to be light. In the cold pre-dawn light on 21 August, we stashed our skis, and like automatons we ascended the snow funnel to the bergschrund and start of the great couloir.

Freddie led the first block of fifty-five degree ice, while Steve and I managed the ropes and then simul-climbed to his stance, hung our packs, and repeated the process. After three pitches up we discovered that hard neve snow had formed on top of the ice in places allowing us to move together without belays. With the improved conditions, we moved faster than on previous attempts and by late morning we had reached the Launch Pad bivy just as the sun beamed over us.

Next morning, at three am Steve took the lead. Sometimes belaying and sometimes climbing together, and we flew up the giant face. By ten a.m., we reached the spot of our second camp in 2009. I took over the lead as we passed mixed rock and ice to the “Ice Chimney” pitch. Freddie hollered up encouragingly as I passed a tricky bulge and exited on the steep ice slopes above. Three more pitches and a long traverse to the right placed us on top of a small, rocky buttress.

At this point, we had climbed more than half the wall and had broken through the rock band almost without knowing, a section we feared would be difficult. Furthermore, the weather was calm and clear. All was going our way except for one thing: Steve’s sinus infection had returned and it was getting worse.

Freddie took over the lead early, rock climbing to the top of the buttress and then diagonally up a broad gully we called “The Ramp.” After eight pitches, the Ramp

dead-ended at an overhanging cul de sac. Freddie spied a weakness on the left side of the rock wall, traversed into a crack system, hooking and dry-tooling with a balancy move into a blind corner that led to the top. We named this the “Escape Hatch” pitch, which represented the technical crux of our climb and a key passage to easier snow and ice slopes above.

We woke to our fifth day of perfect weather and climbed three pitches of moderate ice to a broad flat shoulder on the summit ridge and took a break in the warm sun. Surrounding us were unclimbed mountains and unexplored glaciers as far as the eye could see. Tsok Kangri was far below us now. Freddie led us up a steep slope and along a sharp crest and then stopped and waited for me just a rope length from the top. Moments later we were all on top together.



On the final summit ridge of Saser Kangri II. (Freddie Wilkinson)

Below us and half a kilometer to the west, was a rounded dome of snow above a prominent rock tower that we recognized as the West Summit of SK II. We estimated it to be 100 to 150 meters below us and lacking any real prominence. This confirmed our suspicion that the East Peak was not only the true summit of Saser Kangri II, but also the West top was more of a shoulder than an actual summit.

Eventually, we had to go down and we reminded ourselves that the job is not done until all are safely back in base camp. Arriving at our high camp by early afternoon, we crawled inside to rest and hydrate. That is when things began to go badly. Steve was definitely quite ill now and was having trouble breathing. Unable to lie down for fear of choking on his phlegm, he spent the night sitting upright at the door while Freddie and I squished into the back and did our best to make him comfortable.

Next day, thirty-five rappels, the last twelve by headlamp, delivered us to the glacier and our skis.

That night, at three a.m., I awoke to a persistent tug on my leg. “Go away, let me sleep” was my first reaction. It was Steve. “I am in trouble and I need help” he said in a weak voice. One look in his eyes told me it was urgent. Weighing the circumstances and our remote location, we initiated a helicopter evacuation.

Throughout the day, we all did our best to make Steve comfortable, keeping him warm and upright in a chair made of ski’s and snow and pushing warm liquids constantly. At three p.m. the telltale whir of rotor blades filled the air. Soon we loaded Steve in and within an hour Steve was being attended to at the general Hospital in Leh.

It was a great adventure. Collectively, we made five first ascents including the world's second highest unclimbed mountain. All were climbed free, in alpine style, without the aid of fixed ropes or camps on any of the climbs.

Mark Richey
(Article HJ Vol 67)

Lure of the Yellow Goddess

Buoyed by their successful climb on Mamostong Kangri (7516 m) on their maiden foray into the eastern Karakoram last year, the Himalayan Club Kolkata Section's team turned their sights onto the imposing battlements of Saser Kangri-I (7672 m), that is located merely 34 km SSE of Mamostong Kangri. Saser Kangri IV, also known as Cloud Peak was the additional peak of choice of the Himalayan Club team.

Pradeep Sahoo, who had led the Mamostong Kangri team, took on the gauntlet of leading the team once again. The team consisted Debraj Dutta (Deputy Leader), Meghlal Mahato, Kakali Ghosh, Binita Soren, Sheelarani Mahato, Subrata Dey, Biplab Banerjee, Debabrata Ghosh, and Rajeev Kr Mondal. The Sherpa team consisted of Phurba Sherpa, Pasang Phadur Sherpa, Dawa Wangchuk Sherpa, Mingma Thendup Sherpa, Ang Dorjey Sherpa, Pasang Gyalzen, Lila Raj Ria (cook) and Ang Pemba Sherpa (cook).

On the 10th of July, the team left Kolkata for their six week long expedition. They reached Leh on the 14th of July and after undertaking necessary governmental formalities, porter arrangement and food supply finalisation, they were on their way to the hamlet of Pukpoche on the 16th of July. Base Camp was established c. 4734 m on a grassy valley, after an intermediate stopover. Load ferrying to C-I (5391m) commenced soon after, and involved walking down from the BC to the stream coming from South Phukpoche glacier, then climbing onto the central moraine zone, crossing three more streams before following the true right moraine of the South Phukpoche glacier. After gaining another 250m, they left the moraine ridge and stepped onto the flat glacier basin that was strewn with rocky debris. On the 26th of July, ferry towards Camp II

(5632m) was undertaken and the climbers had to gingerly move past innumerable exposed crevasses to finally locate their camp near a triangular peak that marked the beginning of the ridge emanating from Saser Kangri IV.



View of Saser Kangri IV and west ridge of Saser Kangri I.

A spell of bad weather coupled with continuous snow fall stymied further movement for a few days. Camp III (6025m) was

established and load ferry to this camp commenced on the 1st of August. However, the next day, they were again beset by heavy snow fall and jet stream winds that continued till midnight. On the 3rd of August, as the weather cleared, further ferries to C III were made. Debraj Dutta recounts -‘We stepped onto a field of gigantic crevasses. In all my previous expeditions, I have never come across such unhealthy and complex crevasses and tumbling ice seracs. We had to move over unstable snow bridges that hung loosely over deep crevasses, carefully belaying each other’.

On the 6th of August, around 7am, six climbers started moving up from C-III, traversing the ice field that led steeply to the Bissa Col, while a team of Sherpas who had already opened C-IV, moved up the upper face of SK IV and fixed two coils of rope on it. Reputed Sherpa climber Purba Sherpa harnessed his wide experiences and reached the summit of SK IV, climbing solo. For the climbers moving up from C-III, the initial gradient of the wall was around 40 degrees. Eight coils of rope had been fixed enroute to C-IV. As they climbed using Jumars on the fixed rope, the terrain became steeper. The route became technically difficult as they moved through the rock band that had an average gradient of 65/70 degrees. Climbing mostly on their toes using crampons on the slippery rock and ice, they encountered mixed climbing grades. Ascending past loose slabs of rock, they crossed sharp rocky pinnacles, treaded through knee deep snow as well as climbed on hard ice. The ascent from C-III to C-IV was nearly a vertical thousand meters and stretched them to their limits. C-IV (6946m) was reached in the evening by Rajeev, Debraj and Meghlall. The other members who had set off from C-III had to turn back enroute since they had slowed down.



Climbing route and camp locations labelled.

Above C-IV, the climbers observed a complex and a broken snow field leading to the col between Saser IV and Saser-I. The reason that the Indian Navy team of 2003 had team failed to access the 1987 direct route to the common col became evident to them. The topography had changed since 1987, and opening of the direct route to the col would thus take

a longer time than anticipated, one that perhaps would involve wading through deep snow on rather treacherous terrain. Thus, it was decided to attempt Saser Kangri IV directly first and thereafter focus on the traverse to the Yellow Goddess’s NW Ridge.

A blizzard started on the 6th night and continued relentlessly for the whole of next day freezing them at their summit camp. However the weather settled down by 3am on the morning of the 8th of August. Setting out at around 3.30am, and climbing in the back drop of a brilliant crimson dawn, Debraj Dutta and Ang Dorjay Sherpa summited Saser IV at 9 am on a glorious Karakoram morning, followed by Meghlal Mahato and Mingma Thendu Sherpa who reached by 9.30am. They descended rapidly after

extensively photographing the panorama, tired but jubilant. Pradeep Sahoo surmised that the climbers were already stretched and such inimical weather conditions would make route opening on the Saser Kangri-I fairly difficult as well as risky. They were also short of rope and time, having lost several days due to bad weather. Thus, rather regrettably but wisely, he decided to abort the proposed attempt on Saser Kangri-I.

Priyadarshi Gupta
(Article HJ 67)

Treks and Explorations

Gosainkund – Langtang Circuit Trek

Langtang National Park, established in 1976 is the second largest national park in Nepal with an area of 1700 square kilometres. It is bounded by the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the north, and by the Bhote Kosi and Trishuli rivers on the west. It lies 32 Km north of Kathmandu as the crow flies and is an ideal getaway for anybody with a week or two to spend in the mountains. The Langtang valley lies in the north of the park hedged by the Langtang Himal range to the north and Jugal Himal to the south. The famous Gosainkund lakes lie in the southern part of the park. The two can form separate trekking routes or can be linked by a hard south to north crossing across the the Ganja la (5100 m). Earlier last year, my wife, daughter and I did the circuit trek over a period of 13 days. The trek from Dhunche (1966 m) to Gosainkund (4460 m) across Laurebinayak la (4160 m) is done at an easy pace over 3 days to allow for some acclimatization. The trail is almost entirely through subtropical forests ablaze with rhododendrons in bloom and redolent with birdsong. In fact, the birds keep you company throughout the trek. Gosainkund has 3 large lakes and many smaller tarns. The lakes are sacred to Hindus and form an important pilgrimage site



Approaching Ganja la.

in August every year. From Gosainkund the trail ascends to the Gosainkund pass, also called the Laurebina pass (4610 m) and then steadily descends to Ghopte (3430 m). We took the easterly trail from here ascending to the ridgeline at Tharepatti (3630 m) and descending steeply to Malemchigaon (2930 m). This quaint village lying on a plateau above the Malemchi khola is a gem hidden far from the despoiling footsteps of tourists. It is also possible

to follow a southerly trail from Tharepatti and descend to Mangengoth and proceed further to Sundarijal traversing the Helambu region. Our trek took us east across the Malemchi khola to Tarkhegyang (2600 m) and then further north along the Yangri danda ridgeline. The trek up to the base camp at Keldong (5160 m) took two days. The weather



Langtang Lirung II from Riverside Inn in the Langtang valley.

had become iffy soon after we left Tarkhegyang and it was overcast and snowing intermittently. The day we crossed the Ganja la started of beautifully.

We left at 0400h under starlight, the snowy peaks gleaming faintly all around. By the time we reached the Pass at 1300h a raging blizzard was buffeting us about and chilling us to the marrow of our bones. The descent from the pass seemed impossible due to the weather and a 80 degrees gradient snow-covered slope. We had to fix ropes to rappel down 100 m. The trek from the pass to Khyanjing Gompa takes 9 h but the blizzard forced us to camp at the base of the pass. Kyanjing Gompa (3830m) lies at the head of the Langtang valley in the shadow of Kyanjin Ri (4773 m), Trengo Ri (4984 m) and Yala (5500 m) peaks. Day treks up these peaks offer grand views of the glaciers tumbling down and of Shishapangma to the northeast. From Kyanjing Gompa to the roadhead at Syaburubensi is covered in 2 easy days. The walk on the north bank of the Langtang Khola, down the broad glacial valley is absolutely de-stressing.

Langtang Lirung II on the north and Naya Kanga to the south kept us company most of the way glistening in sunshine and changing shape as we walked down. The idyllic scenery and small hamlets at hourly intervals allow frequent tea stops to soak in the scenery and sun. The trek across the high Ganja la added an exciting dimension to the otherwise gentle but scenic trek in an unspoilt nook in the Himalaya.

VK Sashindran

Into the Gyundi – Almost

Gyundi is relatively large valley, with three glacier draining in as Gyundi East, central and west. To its east is Spiti and to west the great Bara Shigri glacier. This valley had seen one major exploration by Joss Lynam in 1958. He entered the valley from the Losar pass (in the north) and crossed a pass to the Bara Shigri glacier, both challenging and now more dangerous being broken down. Few parties followed this route, till the Losar pass only, (Arun Samant, 1994) and climbed peaks at the border of these valleys, namely Fluted peak (6139 m). In 1995, Kaivan Mistry and myself



Fluted Peak, south-west face from the valley.

made an attempt to cross into the Gyundi from the Ratang valley to its southeast. We could not cross the pass and later in 2010 realised how lucky we were- as the Eastern Gyundi, where we would have crossed into was blocked by steep walls on two sides and it would have been an epic struggle to wriggle out of it.

In July-August 2011 three of us followed the Karcha valley, always wondering why there are not many expeditions here. At first from the Rohtang pass we drove

along the Chandra river, almost till its head at Batal. Except for the first river crossing, rest of the valley had no difficulties and mules could be used till almost its head.

In three days we reached the head of the Karcha valley with great views of Karcha Parvat, Fluted Peak and many unnamed peaks around. There were no difficulties till here except the first river crossing and our mules also reached here easily. The pass to Gyundi was not too difficult except that it required a 12 hour day to cross it as otherwise mules would not find grass to survive. As we were about to do that a freak snow storm deposited snow on the pass and we would have to wait atleast three days for it to clear if we wanted to cross. Gyundi was still to remain a mystery to me though we know the route now. Not wasting time we changed valleys and climbed in to a valley to the south where the highest peaks of the valley are located; 'Chemma', 6105 and 6065 m and two other peaks above 6000 m. On 6 August 2011 we climbed up steep scree slopes to reach a point 5525 m (18,125 ft) which we named 'Thula' ('great person' after Lynam who was first to explore this area.) From the top we had terrific views and Dr and Mrs Limdi, who had climbed their first peak in the Himalaya, were moved to tears.

Enough excitement for us in two weeks, but there are peaks in the Karcha valley to keep climbers busy for a month or more.

Harish Kapadia

Exploring Lalung

The view from the flight to Leh on 1st August 2011 was awe-inspiring. After three consecutive years of troubled weather during our expeditions this was a good beginning. Our destination – the Lalung valley, Zaskar. Not much was known of the valley. The Indian Mountaineering Foundation had listed one of the peaks in the valley, Z 2 as an unclimbed peak in the “open” list. Harish Kapadia had published few pictures along with his article 'Zaskar Anyone' and wrote “Until you reach Pensi la, views in each of the valleys contain challenging peaks – a veritable climber’s playground if height is not the only consideration to climb peaks.”

Our team of five – Rajesh Gadgil, Ajit Bam, Anju Pannikulam, Vineeta Muni and I, decided on an exploratory trip to the valley. We would select our peak depending on the climbing conditions and technicality of the routes on the peaks. Rimo Expeditions had organised our logistical support and also appointed Phujung Bhote and Pasang Sherpa as our high altitude supporters.

We spent 4 days in Leh, acclimatising, checking our gear and generally having fun. On 5th August, we travelled to Mulbec, just before Kargil. A long and arduous journey over a very broken road brought us to Penjung via Kargil and Rongdom monastery.

An early morning river crossing, followed by a long gradual trek brought us to base camp with half our loads. A mix of men, yak and horses carried our loads in two ferries from the road-head to base camp. On 9th August, we located our ABC on the medial moraine of the glacier at about 4465 m. We shifted camp on 12th August.



Lalung valley. (Rajesh Gadgil)

On the following day, we enthusiastically explored a route to Camp 1 on the glacier. As the peaks opened up around us, we experienced mixed emotions. The peaks were beautiful, exciting and challenging. However, the glacier had opened up and we could see the crevasse lines all along. Huge bergschrunds separated the peaks from the glacier. It would be a challenge

to gain access to the peaks. We kept pushing the route further up the glacier, hoping to gain access to some of the peaks at the head of the glacier. On 17th August, we shifted to C 1 despite the weather, hoping it would settle. That evening the snow dampened our moods.

With great excitement, we started off early next morning to survey the peaks at the head of the glacier. Within a few hundred metres of the camp, we were faced with a maze of crevasses. We slowly made our way across the glacier to the true right, where it appeared to be less broken. We gained about 300 m in height after a few hours of weaving around crevasses till we reached a vantage point from which we could study the peaks around. The glacier was so badly broken that it would take us days to gain access to any of the peaks. The climbing conditions were not safe for us to attempt the peaks. Reluctantly, we decided to turn back and wind up C 1.

On 19th August, we moved back to ABC. A study of peak 5320 m on the true left of the glacier, gave us hope to attempt at least one climb. We shifted to our high camp on 22nd August. The campsite was dramatic. It was perched on a rocky shelf with the glacier draining on both sides of the Camp. We were off by 4 a.m. Initially a series of scrambles zigzagging up for about 300 m brought us at the base of an ice wall. The

angle was not too steep, but the ice was hard. We took nearly 3 hours to negotiate the 300 m of ice. The sun was out and the heat was getting unbearable. We roped up and slowly made our way to the base of the summit pyramid. By the time we reached the base of the climb it was about 11.30 a.m. and we had another 200 m to negotiate. The route was over steep and loose rock, covered in a thin layer of ice. With a lot of loose rock and boulders stacked up on the final summit block, it would be a time-consuming climb with us 5 members and 2 Sherpas. Under the circumstances, we decided to turn back after a quick photo-session. We had underestimated the climb and were not adequately prepared for the technicality of the last summit bit.

It was an amazing experience exploring the valley and glacier from its snout to its head and working out the possible routes on the peaks around us.

Divyesh Muni
(Note HJ Vol 67)

Other News

Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner Sets Climbing Record

First Woman to Summit All 14 Major Peaks Without Supplementary Oxygen

Reaching the top of K2 on her fourth attempt, Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, a 40-year-old Austrian alpinist who resides in Germany, became the first woman to summit all 14 of the world's 8,000-m peaks without using supplementary oxygen. Kaltenbrunner and her team reached the top of K2, Earth's second-tallest mountain, at 6:20 p.m. (local time) Tuesday, August 23.

Kaltenbrunner, supported by grants from the National Geographic Society, was one of four climbers to reach the summit of K2. Other team members to summit were Maxut Zhumayev and Vassiliy Pivtsov of Kazakhstan and Darius Zaluski of Poland. Kaltenbrunner's husband, Ralf Dujmovits of Germany, and photographer Tomas Heinrich of Argentina had turned back to base camp Aug. 19, judging the threat of an avalanche too great. Heinrich is documenting the expedition for an article for National Geographic magazine.

"I can't believe how lucky we were to reach the summit together in this fantastic weather, despite the difficult



Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner.

conditions during the ascent,” Kaltenbrunner said. “I would like to thank everyone for their ‘mental support,’ which I could clearly feel and which literally carried me to the summit.”

In the days approaching the summit, the team waded through waist-deep snow and battled high winds, with avalanche conditions that for several days made the attempt at the summit look implausible.

According to alpine record-keeper Eberhard Jurgalski, before the achievement of Kaltenbrunner, Zhumayev and Pivtsov, only 24 people in the world had made it to the top of all 14 tallest mountains. This includes Dujmovits, who ascended K2 in 1994 and completed scaling the entire set of peaks two years ago. Only 10 of the 24 made the ascents without oxygen.

K2, located on the Pakistan-China border, is 8,611 m (28,251 feet) high and part of the Karakoram Range. It has a reputation of being the hardest of the 8,000 m high mountains to climb, due chiefly to its steepness and the resulting technical-climbing challenges as well as unpredictable weather conditions. Since K2 was first summited by an Italian team in 1954, about 300 climbers have stood on top of the mountain, but many have perished trying.

In the summer of 2010, Austrian Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner was perched on K2’s infamous Bottleneck couloir 400 meters below the summit. She radioed her husband, Ralf Dujmovits, who was hunkered at base camp far below the 8,611-meter summit of the peak on the Pakistan-China border. Through the radio, Dujmovits could hear the shock in his wife’s voice. Moments earlier her partner, ski mountaineer Fredrik Ericsson, had slipped while unroped, tumbled past her, and fallen to his death.

Kaltenbrunner immediately aborted her summit attempt to look for her friend. It was her third failed attempt on the world’s most deadly peak. K2 was the final summit remaining in her 14-year quest to become the first woman to climb all 14 8,000-meter peaks without supplemental oxygen or porters.

In 2011, Kaltenbrunner returned to K2, this time to the mountain’s north side to avoid the Bottleneck, where 11 climbers died in 2008. Kaltenbrunner and her team began the march to the K2 northern base camp from Xinjiang, China, on June 17. A group of camels ferried the team, their equipment and supplies to the Chinese base camp, about 3,900 meters high, crossing the wild Shaksgam Valley in the process. The team then ascended the peak via the North Pillar, a direct line to the summit, first climbed in 1982 by a Japanese team.

At 6:18 p.m. local time on August 23, Kaltenbrunner reached the summit. “I have never had a view like that. There were no clouds, you could see to Nanga Parbat. I had the feeling that I was one with the universe. It’s still present in my heart,” says the 40-year-old Austrian.

Born on December 13, 1970, Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner’s interest in mountain climbing developed at a very young age. Reverend Dr. Erich Tischler—a youth group leader



Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, traversing a steep face.

in her hometown of Spital am Pyhrn, Upper Austria—introduced her to climbing, taking Kaltenbrunner along on numerous tours of the mountains surrounding her hometown. At the age of 13, Kaltenbrunner ventured on her first climbing tours at the local “Sturzhahn,” which sparked her enthusiasm for climbing and paved the road to alpinism. During the following years, she never skipped an opportunity to go climbing. Ski, ice, and climbing tours became her main fields of interest, which she enjoyed

while completing her nurse training in Upper Austria and Vienna.

Kaltenbrunner’s greatest dream—climbing an 8,000-meter peak—was realized at the age of 23, when she succeeded in summiting the 8,027-meter (26,335-foot) Broad Peak in Pakistan. In ensuing years, she began to pour all of the money she earned as a nurse into different trekking and climbing expeditions in the Himalaya. After climbing Nanga Parbat—her fifth 8,000-meter peak—in 2003, Kaltenbrunner finally decided to become a professional mountaineer. Her passion, however, extends beyond the high mountains of the Himalaya and Karakoram ranges to encompass the people, cultures, and religions of this enchanting region. In between major expeditions, Kaltenbrunner enjoys climbing, ice climbing, and ski touring in her native Alps.

(Courtesy National Geographic and Planet Mountain)

“Swiss Machine” climbs Shishapangma in 10.5 hours

Ueli Steck made a solo ascent of Shishapangma (8013 m) in what may be the fastest time from base to summit in the mountain’s history. On April 17, Steck reached the top of the peak after 10.5 hours of climbing on the 2000m southwest face. He arrived back in base camp approximately 20 hours after his departure. Shishapangma, summited in 1964 by its northwest face, was the last 8000 m peak to see its first ascent, despite being the shortest. This climb is first of what Steck calls “Project: Himalaya,” his five-month expedition to speed-climb several of the 8000 m giants.

Steck spent one month acclimatizing in the Khumbu valley prior to the climb. He warmed up with American Freddie Wilkinson on Lobuche (6145m) on March 20, and the French Route of Cholatse (6440m) on March 27. Steck



Shishapangma (8013m), Jugal Himal. (Rob Frost)

made the two-day trek to Shishapangma on April 10, and planned to climb with Canadian Don Bowie. Bowie, however, did not feel well acclimatized for the attempt. Because of calm, warm weather in the forecast, he encouraged Steck to continue with ascent alone.

Steck left camp at 10:30 p.m. on April 16, planning to climb to 7000 m and descend. He said he had been hiking for 5 minutes when he heard “Hey Ueli! For sure you will need them!” Bowie called from base camp, holding up Steck’s down pants that he had forgotten. On the trail once again, Steck reached the bergschrund after 2.5 hours. He climbed a couloir of “perfect,” 55-degree snow and traversed to the British Route. Witnessing rock fall at 6800 m had Steck second-guessing the conditions. He said he wondered what would happen during the day since the face was already warm and loose at midnight. He continued up a channel of snow, hoping it would take him to his target altitude of 7000 m.

Steck maintained his speed up through steep rock and intermittent ice until he climbed to 7200 m. He had already reached his acclimatization goal, but felt confident and wanted to continue. “I promised my wife not to do any solos anymore. But this is not really a solo,” he wrote. “In this area a roped party would not really belay. You would lose too much time and it is not really necessary. I thought I could do it, and I could already see the exit.”

Steck gained a ridge and stashed most of his gear. He continued up the ridge to the summit, reaching the top at exactly noon. The descent to the saddle was “pure horror,” Steck said. “Here on the north side lies hip-deep powder snow. I regretted not having taken the same route down as I climbed up.” He continued down a couloir steep enough that he had to downclimb with his face to the snow. The angle eased off as he reached the glacier, which he said he crossed slowly and carefully. He arrived back at camp at 6:30 p.m., 20 hours after he began.

Steck’s first 8000m peak was Gasherbrum II (8035m), climbed solo in the spring of 2009, followed by Makalu by normal route the same year. He also climbed Cho Oyu on May 5th 2011 with Dan Bowie.

Gwen Cameron and Jenny Hebert
(courtesy: alpinist.com)

Anything Goes

The book that inspired me

Almost 50 years ago a book dealer known to my father approached him. 'A Britisher going home for good wants to dispose off most of his climbing books. As your son is interested in mountains you can show him this lot and then we will discuss'. In



Bill Murray.

that lot were books that any mountain lover today would give his right arm to possess. To be frank, I very reluctantly agreed to buy them and they were for Rs 35 for the whole lot! No, I have not forgotten to add few zeros to the sum!

One of the books in the collection was The Scottish Himalayan Expedition (1952) by W. H. Murray. Four Scotsman leisurely trekked in the Garhwal and Kumaun, exploring and climbing several peaks. There was 'nothing official about it' and I do not think they had any plans or itinerary made. They just started from the foothills at Ranikhet, as they all did in those days. Lampak group, Bethartoli Himal, Girthi Ganga and many other valleys were visited. These were the days where no return tickets were purchased to put pressure on explorers. This expedition and their ways of trekking and writing about it was something that inspired me then and continued to do so

over the past few decades. I have enjoyed trekking and climbing in smaller groups, to unknown valleys and express my experiences as vividly as that great writer Bill Murray did. At least I have tried to do so.

When I visited the UK for the first time I made it a point to meet Murray. His wife and he lived next to a lake in the Scottish Hills. 'As you pass on road we are on the left and on that lonely road we will put up some huge boxes so that you will not miss it and go past our house', were the clear instructions as if we were in the Milam valley of Kumaun. That evening I had this book of my life autographed by him.

Later as I was leaving, Murray, like the famed Single Malt Scottish whisky that we shared, presented me the handwritten diary he had kept on that trip, the diary on which the book was based!

Harish Kapadia

Remembrance

JAGDISH NANAVATI

(1928-2011)

Jagdish Nanavati, the President Emeritus of the Himalayan Club, passed away on 29th June 2011 at Mumbai. He was cremated the same evening - family, friends and Himalayan Club members paid their heartfelt tributes.



Jagdish Nanavati.

His service to our Club cannot be forgotten. When the Club moved to Mumbai, it was on the brink of collapse. Jagdish Nanavati, almost single handed, revived it. His office became and remained the office of the Himalayan Club for almost three decades. He was Hon. Secretary for 21 years! During this period he introduced several youngsters to the mountains. He was Guru to all of them, encouraging them to climb, trek and work selflessly for the Club. He was President for eight years

before retiring. He was then elected the President Emeritus. He also played the role of an Ombudsman for the Club.

A legend has gone - friend, philosopher and guide to HC and the climbing community. Many will have fond memories of time spent with him - his meticulousness, keen analytical mind and sharp wit. He will not only be remembered for his expertise in accurately determining whether a mountain has been climbed or not, but also as a very fine person, a unique human being.

(Full Obituary HJ Vol 67)

George Band

(1929-2011)

George Band, honorary member of the Himalayan Club, died on 26 August 2011, at the age of 82. Energetic and affable, he seemed to be there at every festival or gathering, retelling his stories of Everest and Kangchenjunga yet equally enthused by the latest headline routes in alpinism.

So naturally did he fit this role of elder statesman that it was easy to forget that in 1955 the smiling, white-haired gent regaling you in a lecture hall or club bar had made the first ascent of Kangchenjunga, with Joe Brown, and two years earlier had helped forge the route through the Khumbu icefall that Hillary and Tenzing would follow to the summit of Everest. Band served as president of both the Alpine Club and the British Mountaineering Council and was an honorary member of the Himalayan Club.



George Band.

After retirement in 1990, Band returned to the world of mountains – immersing himself in the affairs of the Alpine Club, the British Mountaineering Council, the Royal Geographical Society and the Himalayan Trust, the charity founded by Edmund Hillary to provide education, health care and other aid to the Sherpa people of Nepal. In 2008 he was appointed OBE for services to mountaineering and charity.

Stephen Goodwin
(Full Obituary HJ Vol 67)

Alan Blackshaw OBE

(1933 - 2011)



Alan Blackshaw.

Alan Blackshaw, past BMC President (1973-1976) died on 4th August 2011 at Raigmore hospital in Inverness. Alan was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma in 2007 and had enjoyed a full and active life since then. However, following recent radiotherapy he developed a chest infection which didn't respond to antibiotics. All the family members were there at the time and were with him in the days preceding his death.

Alan had an illustrious life. He was President of the BMC (1973 - 1976), a BMC Patron (since 1978), and a specialist advisor to the BMC Access, Conservation and Environment Group.

He was also President of the Alpine Club (2001 - 2004), editor of the Alpine Journal (1966-70), and President of the UIAA (2004 - 2005).

Alan was born in Liverpool in 1933. He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby (Foundation Scholar), 1944-51; then Wadham College, Oxford (Open Scholar), 1951-54 (Modern History).

He was perhaps best known for the book *Mountaineering – from Hillwalking to Alpine Climbing* (1966) published by Penguin books that many people simply called *Blackshaw's Mountaineering*. It was the seminal text of its day that was regarded by many as the Bible of climbing and mountaineering.

Alan was married to Elspeth and they had a son and two daughters (Alan also had one daughter from a previous marriage).

During a long and fruitful career Alan worked tirelessly for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers. He was an intellectual giant and made an immense contribution to the international and national mountaineering world.

His presence will be sorely missed.

Nick Colton

Walter Bonatti

(1930-2011)



Walter Bonatti.

Walter Bonatti, who died on September 13, 2011 aged 81, was regarded as one of the finest mountaineers of the 20th century and participated in the expedition that achieved the first ascent of K2 in July 1954. But his role in the final push for the summit was for many years beset by controversy.

Walter Bonatti was born on June 22, 1930 in Bergamo, Italy. At 18 he made the fourth ascent of the north face of the Pointe Walker on the Grandes Jorasses in the Mont Blanc range and at 19 began to train as a mountain guide. He came to wider notice in July 1951, when, aged 21, he made the first ascent of the Grand Capucin rock pinnacle. Three years later he was, at 24, the youngest man to be chosen to join the Italian K2 expedition.

Afterwards, he became famous for his unrivalled technical accomplishments, often climbing alone and in harsh winter weather, and for conquering peaks previously unclimbed. His climbing was informed by a disdain for modern technology and he maintained that he was interested only in climbs that offered almost impossible challenges.

This almost cost him his life in 1955, when he made a solo climb of a new route of the Petit Dru in the French Alps, surviving for six days and five nights on the rock face. One of the pillars in this climb became known as the Bonatti Pillar. Ten years later he carried out the first solo winter ascent of the north face of the Matterhorn.

As the years passed Bonatti suggested that modern equipment had diminished the accomplishments of climbers. The “impossible” upon which he had always set his sights “has lost more and more ground,” he noted, “and great achievements have become rather less great.”

Of Bonatti’s numerous books about climbing and mountaineering, perhaps the best known is *The Mountains of My Life* (2001). He also worked as a photojournalist, and between 1965 and 1979 travelled the world reporting for the Brazilian news magazine *Época* and the German tabloid *Bild*.

He was awarded the French Légion d’Honneur for saving the lives of two other climbers in the Alps, and elected an honorary member of the UIAA (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation) in 1995. Doug Scott, one of the first two Britons to conquer Everest, called Bonatti “perhaps the finest Alpinist there has ever been”.

Walter Bonatti is survived by his wife, Rossana Podesta.

(Courtesy: The Telegraph)

THE HIMALAYAN JOURNAL

(Published since 1928)

VOLUME 67

(2011)

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Edited by

Rajesh Gadgil and Nandini Purandare

Assistance: Mallikarjun Sing and Harish Kapadia

Published for the Himalayan Club

Himalayan Club Centre, 314, Turf Estate, Shakti Mills Lane, off Dr. E. Moses Road,
Mahalaxmi [West], Mumbai 400011, India.

Phone: [91-22] 2491 2829.

Website: www.himalayanclub.org

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