



**THE HIMALAYAN CLUB**

*Climbing and Beyond...*

# E-LETTER

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## AWARDS INSTITUTED IN THE MEMORY OF JAGDISH NANAVATI

### Jagdish Nanavati Award For Excellence in Mountaineering

Jagdish C. Nanavati, President Emeritus of the Himalayan Club, was an eminent personality who meticulously analysed many expeditions. He made it his mission to make Indian expeditions plan, study, execute and report the venture expertly.



A special Award *Jagdish Nanavati Award for Excellence in Mountaineering* has been instituted in his memory, which will be managed by the Himalayan Club and funded by the Nanavati family.

This will be an annual award, carrying a cash prize of Rs. 51,000/-. The amount of money to be awarded is at the discretion of the Managing Committee of the Himalayan Club in consultation with the Nanavati family.

For more details [click here](#).

### Jagdish Nanavati 'Garud' Gold Medal

Jagdish C. Nanavati, President Emeritus of the Himalayan Club, was an eminent personality who regularly interacted with support staff on an expedition and treks. He was very keen on their welfare and supported many persons through various schemes run by the Club and also through Nanavati family trusts.



A Gold Medal, *Jagdish Nanavati Garud Gold Medal*, has been instituted in his memory, which will be managed by the Himalayan Club and funded by the Nanavati family.

This will be an annual Medal, carrying a cash prize of Rs. 11,000/- and a specially designed Gold medal. The amount of money to be awarded is at the discretion of the Managing Committee of the Himalayan Club in consultation with the Nanavati family.

For more details [click here](#).

## ANNUAL SEMINAR 2013

The Annual Seminar of The Himalayan Club will be held on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th February, 2013. It is open to all members and their guests. Leading mountaineers, explorers and writers will present audio-visuals and illustrated talks over two exciting days. The function will be inaugurated by Gen. (Retd.) Ved Prakash Malik, PVSM AVSM, Former Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).

The topics and speakers are as follows:

- Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture by Pat Morrow: Quest for the Seven and a half Summits
- Bernadette McDonald: Story behind 'Freedom Climbers'
- Arun Samant Memorial Lecture by Anindya Mukherjee: Zemu Gap from South
- Arun Samant Memorial Lecture by Col Anil Goth: Ascent of Apsarasas
- Harish Kapadia: North Sikkim Odessey
- Pradeep Sahoo: Jongsong and Dome Khang
- Divyesh Muni: Explorations and Climbs in the Angtung Valley
- Stephen Alter: Sacred Waters, Sacred Mountains

**Venue:** Air India Auditorium, 1st Floor, Air India Building, Madam Cama Road, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021.

For more details [click here](#).

## THE BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL 2013

The Himalayan Club in association with The Canadian High Commission & The Banff Centre, will present a festival of Mountain Films on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at Pracharya B. N. Vaidya Sabhagruha, Raja Shivaji Vidyalaya, Bhalchandra Road, Hindu Colony, Dadar (East), Mumbai.

More details will be circulated later.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Seventy Ninth Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2013, at 2.30 pm at the Air India Auditorium, 1st Floor, Madam Cama Road, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021. The agenda and the minutes of the Seventy Eighth Annual General Meeting were previously circulated to all the members.

## EXPLORATIONS AND CLIMBS

### CHAUKAN PASS

In the Second World War, during the Japanese advance in Burma in 1942, two major retreats were very disastrous and hard. In both cases several civilians had to trudge through deep sticky mud, a specialty of this frontier. Without much food, ravaged with malaria, monsoon and a variety of ailments, they had to cross the Burmese frontier into British India and safety from pursuing Japanese troops. The rainforest here was thick and rivers flooded in the rains. A large numbers of refugees came across the Pangsau pass, which was a steep climb through knee-deep mud.

#### To Pangsau Pass and Lake of No Return



Lekhapani Railway Station  
(Harish Kapadia).

Our trip to Arunachal Pradesh began by flying to Guwahati. We would proceed to the eastern-most point of India and along the India-Burma border. At Pangsau pass we had crossed into Burma and at Chaukan pass we slept near the border pillar!

First was a ride on the oldest and eastern-most train route in India to Ledo. The train ends here now but it used to go till Lekhapani, a few kilometres ahead. From here the famous 'Ledo Road' or 'Stillwell Road' starts. The goods for the Burma War effort were loaded on trucks from here and were carried to Kunming, China - then an ally of the British. It was a nostalgic place to stand on and recall history.

We spent a night at Jairampur and later at Nampong from where the approach to the Pangsau pass starts. The next day we crossed into Burma through the Pangsau pass, the



Pangsau pass (Harish Kapadia).

historic gateway to and from Burma, which was nicknamed as 'Hell Gate' as, during the Second World War, returning survivors across the Pangsau pass paid a heavy price in terms of health, sickness and death, due to deep mud, malaria and exhaustion. It was nostalgic to see 'Lake of No Return', in the plains of Burma from here. It was a vast lake, the only clearing in the midst of thick forest. When they developed engine trouble, planes flying across the 'Burma Hump' tried to land on these waters. Most of them did not return to tell the story. We had Burmese food and then walked back.

## The Epic of Chaukan Pass

The second group fleeing the Japanese army consisted of the British who were trapped at Fort Hertz (now known as Putao) in north Burma. They too were fleeing the advancing Japanese troops who possibly would overrun Fort Hertz. They had to come across the Patkai range through dense forest in heavy rains. The nearest pass was the Chaukan. More than 230 British crossed over this with Sir John Rowland and even a three month old baby. They had to flee in June, at the height of monsoon, with flooded rivers and leeches, snakes and malaria mosquitoes. A small party went ahead to reach Miao and alerted the authorities who mounted a rescue. They covered about three kms per day, stopped by various flooded rivers like the Tilung Hka and Dapha Hka. Food was airdropped to them and a party led by Gyles Mackrell, from the Tea Association of Assam, mounted a major ground rescue with several elephants. These efforts by men and animals saved many though about two dozen perished. This was the Epic of Chaukan pass. After almost 70 years we were to follow their trails into India, and experience some of the difficulties they faced.



MV Road! (Harish Kapadia).

We spent a night at Miao, the starting point of the Vijaynagar road. Another two nights were spent at Deban or Namdafa Sanctuary Guest House. Then the trail began in real earnest. First was a drive on 'Miao-Vijaynagar Road' or 'MV Road' for short. We stayed at 40<sup>th</sup> Mile- all stops are named such. Our porters met us here and we started trekking. It was a hell road – deep sticky mud everywhere. Powerful four wheel trucks had to be pushed by bulldozers to proceed. We

started walking after only three kilometres were covered by a truck in a day! While walking, if you get off the road you can slip into a culvert and if you slip you are in knee-deep mud. On the second day we went down to the river and it was a sheer delight to camp and walk along the river, passing a village. But in two days we had to return to the MV Road and its mud. At last, after three days, the valley opened up and we were at Gandhigram, named after a funny looking small statute of Gandhi installed here. It was a peaceful village with friendly Lisu villagers. Around here were villages of settlers- Nepalis retired from the Assam Rifles, who were assisted to settle here. The last 18 km to Vijaynagar was relatively pleasant. We spent a night at Vijaynagar, at the Assam Rifles post near the airstrip.

Then began the real stuff- a trek on a thin trail along the Noa Dihing river (here known as the Diyun river). Nothing had changed here in seven decades in terms of trail and difficulties en route. Climbing steep ridges, descending wooden ladders, crossing single log bridges required a good balance and strong heart. We also had to construct about

10 small bridges to cross the river between different banks and avoid serious climbs. It was tiring and tense all along as we had to climb and descend regularly. At many places, trails had to be cut, log bridges installed at the sides to cross along the bank and crossings on many fallen tree trunks were a challenge! We stayed at Bheda, Thapa and finally the Base Camp. It was cold at night but with so much wood around and supported by strong, extremely helpful and energetic Lisu porters we were assured warmth. The forest was both, a joy and fear! No animals and even birds here – Lisu had eaten them all over many generations! However we could hear calls by Gibbon monkeys, saw few hornbills and much fish in the river.



Chaukan Pass (Harish Kapadia).

On the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2013 we left early and climbed almost 1000 m to the top of a ridge. Then we descended along the forested ridge more than 500 m and traversed through Burma. Finally after a 10 hour day we descended to the historic Chaukan pass (2419 m) and camped near the Border Pillar no. 183 which marks the border between India and Burma. It was from the Chaukan pass that in 1942, a party of British had crossed over to India. We were next civil party reaching here, after a gap of 70 years!

Next day we reversed the trail from the Chaukan pass, climbed up 500 m and descended 1000 m! Then systematically and with much concentration we carefully covered the return trail over our newly made bridges, muddy forest trails and slippery logs. Finally we were at Vijaynagar. After a two day wait we were able to catch the helicopter sortie which supplies materials here. It was a 60 minute ride to Mohanbari /Dibrugarh, which otherwise would have taken us at least a week to cover. Next day we were on a flight to Mumbai.

Despite the support and beauty around, this was the hardest exploratory trek anyone of us had ever done.

Members: Harish Kapadia, Rajendra Wani, Lakshmi R. and Nanak Bhagat.

Period: 7<sup>th</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2013

**Harish Kapadia**  
(Article HJ 69)

## CLIMBING IN THE RONGDO VALLEY

We were a modest group of four climbers: Three Canadians (Dr. Jeff Dolinsky, his wife Joan and I) and one American (Andy Selters). In addition, we were accompanied by Kunzang Sherpa (Sirdar), Arvind Raman (LO), Danuru Sherpa (Dawa) and Nangang Bhote, and three camp cooks/support staff: Raj Kumar Rai, Mu Gombu Rai and Chamu Singh.

Our climbing objectives were located at the head of a beautiful and remote valley called Rongdo in the Nubra area of Ladakh, lying between the east and west arms of the Shyok river. Tom Longstaff travelled close to what is Rongdo village today (3000 m) while exploring the Siachen glacier and Saltoro areas in 1909. It gave me quite a thrill to look west across the lovely, wide meandering Shyok and imagine Longstaff moving slowly up the opposite bank on his way north – to be so close to his footsteps!

Rongdo valley has seen virtually no visitors, save one Indian-American climbing team in 2005 which descended the valley (in two days) from the Satti area due north of Rongdo valley (*HJ* Vol 62; *AAJ* Vol 48). I initially called the four peaks (all just over 6000 m) forming the natural cirque in which we climbed Rongdo I to IV, but we have since applied local names consistent with Tibetan culture which forms the foundation of Ladakhi society. These names are officially registered with the Indian Mountaineering Foundation.

From Rongdo village (3000 m) on August 5 we began our walk up Rongdo valley heading northeast, and following the south side of the Rongdo river. Upon reaching the head of the valley we pushed a little higher to establish Base Camp (4802 m) on August 10. Over the next few days we explored higher, trending north-easterly in search of a suitable Advance Base Camp (5181 m), which we established on August 14, just below our main climbing objective Ngapo Kangri or Rongdo I (6350 m). From this glorious grass-covered camp, suitable for casual football and Frisbee, we could see the unnamed glacier and cirque with the Rongdo peaks (Rongdo I to IV moving clockwise).



Rongdo I and II (Jeff Dolinsky).

After several reconnaissance trips to Ngapo Kangri, and up the main glacier to view the cirque of Rongdo peaks, on August 18 Andy, Jeff and Joan, Kunzang, Dawa, Nangang, Arvind and Gombu climbed the west sub-summit (6000 m) of Balden Lhamo (Rongdo III) via the col between Rongdo III and Rongdo IV, then up the southwest ridge (10 hrs return). On August 22 Jeff and Joan, Kunzang, Dawa, Nangang, and Arvind climbed Chamba (6170 m) or Rongdo II via the

southeast glacier (10 hrs return). On August 23 Joie and Nangang climbed the upper west rock ridge of Ngapo Kangri to 60 odd metres below the corniced summit (12 hrs return). At the same time Andy and Arvind ascended Ngapo Kangri via the southerly slopes; first on talus and rock ledges, then (with care) up the avalanche prone southeast aspect to easier angled summit slopes, finally gaining the corniced summit (14 hrs return).



P. 6160 m.

On August 27 Joie, Kunzang, Dawa and Arvind headed up the main glacier to attempt the true summit of Balden Lhamo (6120 m); a high camp on the glacier was established at 5690 m. An early departure the next morning got us up the icy headwall to the col (6060 m) by 9.00 am, where the steep west ridge curves south to become the long exposed summit ridge. The weather was distasteful to say the least and with minimal technical ice gear and limited

technical ice experience in the party, it would have been folly to attempt this long ridge, hence disappointed we retreated. On August 29 Andy and Nangang left a high camp at 5181 m, several kilometres northeast of our ABC, to climb Gazgazri or peak 6160 m. They ascended the southwest ridge, then traversed onto the icy south face, after which several short pitches the last being 70 degree hard ice, led them to a ledge at the edge of the summit dome, whence they ascended to the highest point (14hrs return to BC).

By August 31 we were all ensconced at BC looking forward to the upcoming evening's Full Moon celebration. Indeed we had a most enjoyable time singing together around a wonderful dung fire – we were a well-harmonised international climbing group! Next day we descended the valley taking two days to arrive back at Rongdo village. Sept 3 we returned to Leh via the Kardung La.

#### Notes

- i. 'Ngapo' (Rongdo I) is Ladakhi for (male) Blue Sheep.
- ii. 'Chamba' (Rongdo II) means future Buddha.
- iii. 'Balden Lhamo' (Rongdo III) is the name of a female goddess (Rongdo Gompa).
- iv. 'Gazgazri' (Peak 6160) is the local Ladakhi spelling for Lammergier (Bearded Vulture).

**Joie Seagram**  
(Article HJ 69)



## SECTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Mumbai Section

6<sup>th</sup> October, 2012:

#### 1. Adventures of Three Generations – Trek to Tarsar Lake by Jaisinh Mariwala, Dr. Ravi Mariwala and Arnav Mariwala



L to R: Tanil Kilachand with Arnav, Ravi and Jaisinh Mariwala.

It is unusual that three generations from the same family visited the Tarsar lake in Kashmir valley on two different treks and within a span of nine months. It is the spirit of adventure and love for the outdoors within the family that has passed on from one generation to another. Jaysinh, Ravi and Arnav Mariwala talked about their trek to the lovely Tarsar lake through one of the beautiful valleys of Kashmir, nestled in the shadows of the Kolahoi range. They

reflected up on why is there a love for nature and adventure within the same family over generations and what has inculcated the same. The three generations span over from 80 years in age to 16 years and each has a unique passion and view point on nature, outdoors and adventure.

#### 2. Screening of the Film ‘The Avalanche’ – by Serbjeet Singh

*The Avalanche*, 35mm, B&W, winner of President of India’s Award in the year of its release (1964) was written, directed and produced by Serbjeet Singh. It is an apocryphal tale of unrequited love in the high Himalaya, The film is a story as told by a *sadhu* who is both a participant in the drama and a witness to its unfolding. It created a sensation in the film world, being the first film to be shot entirely on location, at an altitude of 20,000 ft above sea level in the Kullu Himalaya. All the location work for the film was done in 1960 and this film brought Indian cinema outdoors from the confines of the studio. Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar composed music for the film and among the many top musicians he used were Laxmi Shankar and Shiv Kumar Sharma. It won prestigious recognition at the 19<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh International Film Festival and the top award of the world’s most prestigious International Film Festival of Mountain Films at Trento in 1965. After 1964, *The Avalanche* was screened for the first time in Mumbai.

**26<sup>th</sup> October, 2012:**

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Kekoo Naoroji Book Award Presentation Ceremony**



Nadir Godrej with Graham Bowley.



Rishad Naoroji with Graham Bowley.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Kekoo Naoroji Book Award for Himalayan Literature was presented to Graham Bowley for his book 'No Way Down – Life and Death on K2'. Nadir Godrej spoke of the Late Kekoo Naoroji, the theme of the Award, Graham Bowley and his book by a poem that he had composed. In his presentation, Graham Bowley talked about the process of writing mountain literature, of the challenges of reporting on disasters where people have lost family and friends, and about his own trip to K2 Base Camp in 2009. The introduction is reproduced below.

At mountains many merely stare  
 But there are those who want to dare.  
 His reason why, when asked to share,  
 Said Mallory, "Because it's there."  
 My uncle Kekoo was not so bold  
 A conventional life did unfold.  
 Now Kekoo was a smart young man.  
 A banking student and a fan  
 Of music, a small group was made,  
 The violin was what he played,  
 While he was at the LSE,  
 From where he got his degree.  
 At lunch this group would often play  
 And music always made his day.  
 For years he worked for ICI  
 And when he could he would try  
 To trek and climb very high,  
 Where jagged peaks invade the sky.  
 Perceptive musings he would jot  
 And capture beauty in a shot.  
 For great things he was always meant,  
 And soon enough was President  
 Of an illustrious association  
 A pinnacle of our great nation,  
 That the founders chose to dub  
 As the Himalayan Club.  
 In order to care for his wife  
 He gave up his adventurous life.  
 Talking of Dosa I must state  
 The significance of this date.

In her resting place she's fine.  
 Today she would be ninety nine.  
 We have her memories for sure  
 But alas she is no more.  
 For Kekoo music stayed a treasure,  
 His drink and pipe a simple pleasure.  
 And no one thinks it a fault  
 To have a daily single malt.  
 And when life gets a little rough  
 Is there much harm in just a puff?  
 His sips and puffs were very slow  
 He kept for long a healthy glow.  
 His every pore exuded calm,  
 His sight was such a soothing balm.

One day while going through his stocks  
 Rishad found a treasure box  
 Filled with photographs and notes  
 And as a loving son who dotes  
 On Dad, what does he do but sets  
 His opus, "Himalayan Vignettes",  
 Replete with tales of mountain sannies  
 And photographs of peaks and valleys  
 In Sikkim, when few ventured there.  
 With some of you I did share  
 These thoughts when we launched his book.  
 Now Kekoo's gone, let's take a look  
 At how we chose to commemorate  
 His contribution which was so great.



The Himalayas had to be the nub  
So Godrej and the Himalayan Club  
Instituted a book award  
And the scope is rather broad.  
The Himalayas must be a part  
But they're relaxed about where to start.  
With Karakorum and Hindu Kush  
And neighbouring Tibet at a push.  
And mountaineering's a major theme.  
The environment's part of the scheme.  
Natural history, exploration  
And culture in their estimation  
Are worthy themes for this award  
All past winners we should applaud.  
Especially Bernadette  
McDonald the only one to get  
Not one but two and now she's there  
Presiding in the jury chair.

This year's winner is Graham Bowley  
But he got there rather slowly.  
He's not a Himalayan guy  
He never thought that he would try  
And write a real mountain book.  
But one day he took a look  
At a passing ticker-tape  
A tale of death and escape  
Of mountaineers who had tried  
To climb K2 and some had died.  
He wondered what it is that brings  
These folks to do such crazy things.  
Now Graham's an economist  
Who then became a journalist.  
It was not his own intention  
But his boss's intervention  
That made him write this epic story  
Full of death, shame and glory.  
At first he balked but it was done.  
The story made it to page one.  
The web site was then inundated  
Times readers were all fascinated.  
And that's when Graham thought he might  
Have a richer tale to write.  
The survivors were then interviewed  
But the tales seemed to be skewed  
Distorted by both loss and pain  
And anoxic mental strain.  
The gloss of those who want to win  
As well as guilt avoiding spin.  
Graham had no axe to grind  
The mountaineers would quickly find  
This stranger was the man they needed  
And that is why he succeeded.  
There's rivalry and cooperation,  
Transcendent joy and desperation,

Hopeful love and sudden loss  
And avalanches that can toss.  
Chunks that fall from a sérac,  
Frost bitten limbs that sorely lack  
Most of their fingers and their toes  
And yet they climb, heaven knows!  
The joy they feel outweighs all  
And often leads to their downfall.

This is a very human tale  
But I think that I would fail  
If I were not to make a mention  
And draw my audience's attention  
To the lodestone that drew them all  
The root cause of this siren call.  
In Montgomerie's survey  
For Karakorum he chose K  
From West to East he went his way  
But K2 stayed right to this day.  
K1 became Masherbrum  
K3 to 5 were Gasherbrum.  
But K2 being so remote  
The locals never quite took note.  
Though Godwin-Austen was rejected  
Sometimes on maps it was accepted.  
There are those who feel quite sure  
That this name, so clipped and pure,  
Impersonal in its nature,  
Fits quite well with its stature.  
It's not just the altitude  
But also it's high latitude,  
The sheer size of its face,  
The changing weather one has to race  
That gives K2 its reputation  
Of challenge and annihilation.  
But mountaineers still make a bid  
For this mighty pyramid.  
When on this mountain you may smile  
But if you tarry for a while  
And don't start descending soon  
And leave it to late afternoon,  
With mind and body in a mess  
When oxygen is gone or less  
A mishap that is big or small  
Can very quickly end it all.  
But the summit's always prized  
Ascending one is energized.  
Descending one can only frown  
On seeing that there's "No Way Down".  
This book I find is always gripping  
But now you'll find it truly ripping,  
In Graham's words to hear this story  
Of frailty, sacrifice and glory.

**Nadir Godrej**

## 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2012: The first Ascent of Saser Kangri II by Steve Swenson



Steve Swenson.

On August 24, 2011 Mark Richey, Steve Swenson and Freddie Wilkinson made the first ascent of the Eastern Karakoram's Saser Kangri II (7518 m), the world's second highest unclimbed peak. The American team started the climb from the South Shukpa Kunchang glacier. The summit was reached via the steep 1700 m south-west face after four days of ascent and three bivouacs with the main difficulties concentrated in the upper part of the climb. Their climb is one of the highest first ascents of a peak in alpine style in the history of mountaineering. During the descent, Swenson had some difficulty breathing. The Indian

military organised a helicopter rescue from advanced base camp at 5800 m. The first ascent of Saser Kangri II, acclaimed as the 'Climb of the Decade' by the *Himalayan Journal*, won them *The Piolet d'Or* (French for The Golden Ice Axe) award in April, 2012. Before screening the award winning short film on the ascent of Saser Kangri II, Steve Swenson narrated experience of the first ascent in 2011 and previous attempt on this mountain in 2009. The film was followed by an interview of Steve and his wife Ann by Harish Kapadia.

## 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2012:

### 1. Wild India - Perspective of a Children's Writer by Deepak Dalal



Tanil Kilachand and Deepak Dalal.

After working for 15 years in the corporate sector, Deepak Dalal took to researching and writing of children's novels full time. He also spends considerable time visiting schools to talk about his books, environmental matters, conservation and creative writing. His stories typically have a strong natural history base. The idea is to create a connection between children and wildlife. He was honoured by Sanctuary Magazine for increasing awareness among Indian children about wildlife and ecological issues and

for fostering in them a love for wild places. His talk was an ecological glimpse of India: Its diverse destinations, wildlife, conservation victories and setbacks. Many young

readers attended the talk and were captivated by the beauty and the variety of different locations famous for wildlife.

## 2. Traverse from Nelang to Upper Saraswati Valley by Ashutosh Mishra

For the benefit of the viewers in Mumbai, Ashutosh Mishra delivered the same audio-visual presentation which he had delivered in Delhi on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 about his explorations in the Nelang area. The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session.

**19<sup>th</sup> January 2013:**

### Wandering through the Hindukush and Karakoram by Ankur Shah



Ankur Shah.

Northern Pakistan hosts five of the fourteen 8000ers, countless 6000 and 7000 m peaks and multiple 50 km+ glaciers, making it one of the more inhospitable regions of the world. Yet these valleys and rivers have witnessed nearly every Asian empire from the Greeks of antiquity to the Chinese at present. Ankur Shah shared his experiences from 2005 to 2012 of travel, trekking and hiking on the other side of the border, where Indian tourists are eagerly awaited. He divided his presentation in three parts namely,

**Reliving the Great Game** talking about Chitral, Gilgit, Hunza, Khunjerab pass, Wakhan corridor / Tajikistan, **Highways of history** describing Attock, Peshawar, the Khyber pass, Kabul, Takshashila and the Swat valley and **Walking with giants** narrating treks around K2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrums, Masherbrum and Nanga Parbat.

**Rajan Mahajan**

## Delhi Section

**October 3, 2012:**

### A Lifetime In The Himalaya: Climbing & Understanding High-Altitude Medicine by Dr Charles Clarke

Dr. Charles Clarke has been climbing since the late 1950s and his interests are exploration in the Indian and Nepalese Himalaya, western China, and eastern Tibet, altitude medicine, and traditional Tibetan medicine. He works as a clinical neurologist in London. He led exploratory expeditions to Kishtwar in Kashmir in the late sixties and

was on John Tyson's Kanjiroba Himal Expedition to West Nepal in 1969. He took part in a joint Indo-Canadian expedition and made the first ascent of Swargarohini II in 1974. Charlie was doctor on the successful 1975 Everest SW Face Expedition with Sir Chris Bonington, on Kongur (Xinjiang) in 1981, on the 1982 Everest Expedition to the unclimbed north-east ridge and Menlungtse in 1988. In the 1990s, he explored the Sepu Kangri region in eastern Tibet and last summer made an exploratory trip to the Sorang Valley in Kinnaur and climbed a new 5000 m peak. Sir Chris Bonington and he together wrote 'Everest, The Unclimbed Ridge' (1983) and 'Tibet's Secret Mountain' (1999). In his lecture, Charlie told the story of some of his trips, reviewed the history of altitude medicine, and provided some insights into Tibetan medical practice.

### 27th October, 2012: No Way Down: Life and Death on K2 by Graham Bowley



Climbing from camp 4 to the summit of K2  
(Lars Flato Nessa).

On 27th October 2012 Graham Bowley delivered a lecture on his book 'No Way Down'. Graham Bowley is the proud recipient of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kekoo Naoroji award for Mountain Literature for the year 2011. On 1 August 2008, 30 climbers from about 10 different national expeditions began the climb to the peak of K2, the second tallest mountain in the world. 18 climbers reached the summit. But 36 hours later, 11 were dead. Graham Bowley first wrote about the 2008 climbing disaster for the front page of The New York Times. Over the next year, he travelled to seven countries, conducting hundreds of interviews with the survivors of the tragedy and the families of the 11 climbers who died, and travelled to K2 Base Camp to write the best-selling book 'No Way Down: Life and Death on K2', about what happened on K2 on those three fateful days

in August 2008, a book that the Associated Press called a "fascinating tour de force of a book". In his multi-media presentation, Graham Bowley talked about the perils of climbing a legendary mountain that is second in height only to Everest but is far more dangerous, and about the impulses that drive people into such beautiful but deadly places. He also talked about the process of writing mountaineering literature, of the challenges of reporting on disasters where people have lost family and friends, and about his own trip to K2 Base Camp in 2009.

**1<sup>st</sup> December, 2012:**

**Traverse from Nelang to Upper Saraswati Valley by Ashutosh Mishra**



Ashutosh Mishra and his team.

Ashutosh Misra made an audio visual presentation on his team’s exploratory trek from Nelang valley to the Saraswati valley. Restricted for civilian access since the last 50 years, the Nelang valley leads on to many historical trade routes. One of these was once used by Heinrich Harrer during his famous escape in 1944, which was mentioned in the Hollywood movie – ‘Seven years in Tibet’. Five years earlier, in 1939, J B Auden explored this watershed and

unsuccessfully experimented with the idea of crossing over to the Upper Saraswati valley over Arwa col. About 50 years later, Harish Kapadia from Mumbai and then Romesh Bhattacharjee from Delhi carried out several explorations in this valley. In June 2012, a team sponsored by the Himalayan Club successfully completed the first-ever civilian traverse from Nelang to the Upper Saraswati valley, forging a new route from Gangotri area to Badrinath. The team navigated from the eastern most extreme of the Nelang watershed at Basisi West glacier. They crossed over the Mana Dhar at Basisi col (5900 m) and entered the Upper Saraswati valley above Deo Tal near the international border at Mana pass.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2013: Kangchenjunga by Love Raj Dharmaskaktu**



Climbing Kangchenjunga (BSF Team Members).

Kangchenjunga (8586 m), which means ‘giant mountain with five treasures’, straddles the India – Nepal border. The mountain, which is the third highest in the world and the highest in India, was first climbed in 1955. Love Raj climbed the south-west face of the mountain from the Nepal side in 2008 after a long approach to the base camp. The challenges the team from the BSF faced included extreme cold, high winds, avalanche prone slopes, high altitude,

treacherous crevasses, falling rocks, and blizzards. After two months of hard work, five members of the team reached the summit. In his illustrated talk, Love Raj shared the challenges involved in climbing Kangchenjunga. Love Raj is a well known Indian mountaineer. In a climbing career spanning 25 years he has been on 37 expeditions and

reached the summit of 24 peaks. His prominent climbs include Everest, which he has ascended four times, Kangchenjunga, Kamet, Mana, Nanda Kot, Satopanth, and Abi Gamin. He works for the Border Security Force and due to his mountaineering achievements has been awarded the IMF Gold Medal and the Tenzing Norgay Adventure Award.

**Maninder Kohli**

## **Kolkata Section**

### **9<sup>th</sup> Sarat Chandra Das Memorial Lecture**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Sarat Chandra Das Memorial lecture was organised by The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section on 19<sup>th</sup> January at the Rotary Sadan, Kolkata. This was a very special evening, with the Himalayan Club President Brig. Ashok Abbey rendering the lecture. The session started at 6 pm before a packed hall with Chinmoy Chakrabarty giving an initial overview of the Himalayan Club and its activities. This was followed by a lecture on the life of the intrepid traveler and intellectual Babu Sarat Chandra Das. Due to the sudden unavailability of Dr. Dalia Roy the lecture was delivered by our HLS Dr. Rupamanjari Biswas.



Brig. Abbey at Kolkata.

Brig. Ashok Abbey thereafter spoke about his travels in Tibet with the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) Instructors' team in the backdrop of their 2005 expedition to Shisha Pangma, the only eight-thousander in Tibet. It was a well crafted expedition with only six climbing members and four Sherpas, and no use of artificial oxygen. The audience was impressed by the Brigadier's in-depth knowledge of Tibet, its people and their culture.

He supported his talk with breathtaking stills of Everest, Kangchenjunga and other mighty peaks photographed while flying from Kathmandu to Lhasa. A lively question and answer session ensued.

A tea and refreshment break was followed by an interactive session with Brig. Abbey on Himalayan Club Kolkata section activities. Brig. Abbey praised the Kolkata section as one of the most active in India. He advised the Kolkata section to capitalize on the enthusiasm and reach out to a bigger community. He shared ideas such as organising a mountaineering film festival in Kolkata. On discussion with members, the important problem of the lack of permanent club premises cropped up and Brig. Abbey mentioned he would see what he could do to help. Brig. Abbey appealed to club members to synergise as a team and take the HC to the next level.

**Priyadarshi Gupta**



## MEETING WITH DAVID BREASHEARS

Renowned mountaineer, photographer, and filmmaker David Breashears was in Mumbai for a day and a small get-together was organised on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2013. Some of the Himalayan Club members attended the meeting.

GlacierWorks is a non-profit organization founded by David Breashears that vividly illustrates the changes to Himalayan glaciers through art, science, and adventure. Since 2007, GlacierWorks has undertaken ten expeditions to document the current state of the glaciers, retracing the steps of pioneering mountain photographers in order to capture new images that precisely match the early photographic records. Over the past five years, they have recorded losses and changes to glaciers that are inaccessible to all but the most skilled climbers.

David spoke to us about his photography project and demonstrated how one could zoom in on the details. His website already has detailed photographs of all the glaciers side by side with historical photographs that make comparison possible. David showed how he would add information about local people. His main aim is to show the world the effect of climate change enabling people to act. He wants to educate young people in an interesting, interactive way. He wants to add layers and layers of information to his website so that it will be an educational tool that teachers and students can use. He is looking for support to set up exhibits in India like the one he has done for MIT. He is also setting up an exhibit in Nepal. He showed us his seven camera array attached to the helicopter that takes pictures every second enabling the production of 3D pictures. His pictures take Himalayan mapping to an unbelievable level. For more details please visit the website [www.glacierworks.org](http://www.glacierworks.org).

Nadir Godrej

## THE SIACHEN GLACIER



Siachen glacier.

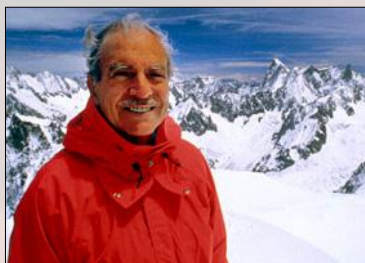
An audio-visual looking at exploring mountains, war and politics in the Siachen glacier has been developed. It covers not only the mountains but also the war, politics, human costs and effects on many aspects of Indian life. These are troubled areas where India, Pakistan and China are engaged in hostilities for decades. It shows Indian Army in action, role of soldiers and sacrifices they make for the country. Proposal for a "Siachen Peace Park" is presented to stop this conflict.

The presentation is based on Harish Kapadia's nine visits to the area from 1980 onwards. To view the presentation click on this link [ <http://youtu.be/W8u5X6Qvock> ]

## REMEMBRANCE

### Maurice Herzog

(1919-2012)



Maurice Herzog in Chamonix in 1990.  
(Fabian Cevallos -Sygma- Corbis).

In late 1950, Maurice Herzog lay in the American hospital at Neuilly-sur-Seine, on the outskirts of Paris, dictating what would become the bestselling mountaineering book of all time, *Annapurna*, published the following year. The effort was emotionally exacting, as he revisited every twist and agonising turn of one of the most important Himalayan expeditions in the sport's history – the first ascent of Annapurna, in central Nepal.

The personal cost of this triumph to Herzog, who has died aged 93, was horrific. In reaching the summit in the summer of 1950 with Louis Lachenal, Herzog's hands and feet had been frozen, and doctors had amputated all his fingers and toes. He spent months in hospital recovering from his injuries and plunged in a deep depression. Writing his book was not only cathartic but also sealed his reputation as a dynamic and courageous leader, and helped restore self-respect to post-war France.

In 1958, Herzog became minister for youth and sport. After France's poor showing in the Rome Olympics in 1960, he was charged by Charles de Gaulle with re-invigorating French sport and inspiring a new generation, something he did to great effect. He was elected mayor of Chamonix in 1968, and headed several enterprises, including the company running the tunnel under Mont Blanc. In a 1998 memoir, he recalled suggesting to John F Kennedy the idea of the Peace Corps and meeting the biggest names of his day, including Brigitte Bardot and Juan Perón.

He was born in Lyon, the eldest of eight children. His father, Robert, an alpinist himself, had served in the French Foreign Legion during the First World War. The family owned a chalet at the foot of the Bossons glacier that flows from Mont Blanc, which sparked Herzog's passion for the mountains. In 1945, he went to work for the tyre manufacturer Kléber-Colombes and continued with his passion for mountaineering as France emerged from the horror of occupation.

Herzog married Marie-Pierre de Cossé-Brissac in 1964. They had two children, Laurent and Felicité, and divorced in 1976. He had two more children, Sébastien and Mathias, with his second wife, Elisabeth Gamper, whom he married in 1976.

Maurice Herzog, mountaineer, born 15 January 1919; died 14 December 2012.

Ed Douglas  
Courtesy: *The Guardian*

## Nawang Topgay Sherpa (Guruji): Lasting Impressions



Nawang Topgay Sherpa.

Nawang Topgay Sherpa, passed away on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012.

Six months earlier, our team of three, in Darjeeling, to talk to and record the lives of the climbing Sherpas, had walked down some precarious stone steps to a broken down hut. In a room no bigger than an alcove, Topgay lay in a narrow cot. His arm once broken and not healed properly curled in an awkward position on his chest. This was a Tiger Badge medalist; nephew of Tenzing Norgay and one of the youngest Sherpas to carry loads up to South Col on the historic 1953 Everest expedition.

Nawang Topgay went on to teach at HMI and Uttarkashi. Known popularly to scores of students as 'Guruji', his cherry cheeked youthful face can be seen in many early pictures of those times. On the occasion of our visit he responded to our presence with a grinning 'Namaste' and when his daughter-in-law, Nima, asked whether he understood what we were saying, he repeated 'Bhujo, bhujo' - I understand - in Nepali. The warm and smiling Nima and Da Temba, his son, told us of his life over tea and biscuits. They showed us the carefully preserved medals and citations. We left uncomfortable and sad that a man who had climbed to such heights in the mountains should now be living in such low conditions. As a result of our visit, the Himalayan Club started sending a monthly stipend to Topgay to help cover the cost of his medicines and a few things besides.

We visited Topgay again on our second visit to Darjeeling in October. The setting this time around was much better. In a new apartment built on top of his daughter-in-law's family home, Guruji lay in a cheerful room with a view of the valley below Toong Soong through his open window. He acknowledged us and muttered incoherently and vehemently when asked questions. His loving family was still around him, raising him up, plumping his pillows and keeping him clean and comfortable. A few days later he died quietly and without any fuss. The entire community gathered to send him off in a traditional Sherpa funeral with his body curled up in foetal form, leaving the world just as he entered it. As we placed a small wreath in his memory we looked up at the mountains surrounding us and at the small children running around and sent a prayer for his soul and a wish that this – one of the last Tiger medalists – and other great Sherpas before him be not forgotten. Nawang Topgay, RIP.

**Deepa Balsavar**  
**The Sherpa Project**

### Ryuji Hayashibara



Ryuji Hayashibara.

Ryuji san was a member of the Himalayan Club for several years. He had a deep interest in the Karakoram glaciers. Perhaps he was one of the rare persons who had traversed all the glaciers in the Karakorams, spread over many years. During his several visits to the Karakorams, Purian Sar climbed by him in 1975 and Sia Kangri in 1979. He crossed the Hispar glacier and Hispar pass in 1997, reached Karakoram pass in 2002 and in his last visit to the Karakoram he traversed the Batura glacier and crossed Chillinji pass. He went to K2 twice and his team members climbed the summit in 1977.

His major achievement was the traverse of five glaciers in 1979 when a Japanese expedition led by him climbed Sia Kangri from the Conway Saddle, descended its south face to the Siachen glacier. They trekked out via the Bilafond la. This was one of the last crossings of West to East Karakorams before the fierce war took over since 1984.

But Ryuji san was not to be deterred in completing his exploration- visiting the eastern-most glaciers in the Karakoram, namely the Rimo glacier. In 2002 he joined with the Indian-Japanese expedition led by Hiroshi Sakai and myself to complete his full explorations. In a long traverse we covered the trail along the Shyok river and then traversed the Rimo glaciers to reach Col Italia.

Ryuji san and I separated here from the main expedition team and went off to explore the 6000 m high Teram Shehr Plateau, the first persons ever to do so. It was surrounded by high mountains. Two of us spent five days alone on the plateau, reached several high cols. Those were great days and though Ryuji san did not speak much English we could perfectly share the beauty of mountains.

After few years when I visited Japan, he was kind enough to invite me to his home and introduce me to his wife. He lived in the mountains and ran a small restaurant which was frequented by climbers and tourists. The first floor of his lovely house was always open for any friends and climbers to come and stay anytime. We spent wonderful days walking in the woods. Ryuji san was a purist in a way – no television, laptop, internet or any modern gadgets for him. As I left Japan little did I realize that this is the last time we would be meeting. He passed away, rather suddenly on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2012 at the age of 62. I will miss a friend and purist.

**Harish Kapadia**

### Ang Nima Sherpa



Ang Nima Sherpa.

Ang Nima Sherpa, also known as Khumbu Icefall Doctor, was one of the oldest serving Sherpas on Everest. He died in his home village of Pangboche on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at 6:30 pm at the age of 59.

The 'Icefall Doctors' are Sherpas who set and maintain the safest path through the Icefall by laying down a series of ladders across the crevasses. The Icefall doctors are an integral part of every successful expedition to Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse. Every year, each climbing season, they stay on the mountain maintaining the route and making sure that the ladders and ropes remain in place to ensure safety of the climbers.

It is an extremely dangerous job with hazards like avalanches, moving glaciers and tumbling seracs threatening them every day. Hundreds of climbers rely on the ropes and ladders (used for crossing large crevasses) that these men set and would be unable to climb Everest without their help.

Ang Nima Sherpa will be missed. I pray to God for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

**Ang Tshering Sherpa**

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