

the same climb at different times do not experience the same conditions. However, the Olympic Committee went ahead with its plans and in 1924 the first gold medal for mountaineering was presented to General Bruce for the outstanding feats performed by the 1922 British Everest Expedition in reaching 8320m on Mount Everest. In 1932 gold medals were awarded at Los Angeles to the Munich brothers, Franz and Toni Schmid for their first ascent of the N Face of the Matterhorn in 1931, and in 1936, at the Berlin Olympiad, the Swiss Gunter Dyhrenfurth and his wife were given similar awards for their Himalayan explorations. After this the Olympic Committee dropped mountaineering gold medals.

One could develop a weighty polemic against such developments being reinstated into world mountaineering which could be based on how potentially harmful might be the increased commercialism, media interest, problems of amateur/professionalism, increased political activity and pressures which would now accompany such awards, but it is best to leave the argument there, each for himself to decide on the worth of the spread of such practices. However, I do wish to point out that modern climbing certainly in the West at any rate, has no need of organized competitions to help further its development. The pressures on the leading practitioners at both rock-climbing and mountaineering are now such that they need to be totally committed. There is no division in the sport between amateur and professional presently at this level of commitment, for most of those who are presently pioneering major new ascents it is absolute.

It seems to me, though, the important thing is how we feel about the mountains, rock-faces, sea-cliffs and outcrops, the scene of our activities in the context of competition. If we degrade them by making them into a mere sports arena, a giant stadium, we will be somewhat degrading ourselves, ignoring the role mountains have played in man's history and robbing our sons and daughters of a precious heritage of the spirit. An ennobling factor which none of us should cast away lightly, exchanging a unique timeless mystery for something so intransigent as a stop-watch measured climbing achievement!

A hundred days in the Himalaya 1977 Pt 1 Latok II

Paul Nunn

Good luck rather than judgement played the greater part in allowing me to participate in 2 Himalayan expeditions in 1977. I was drawn into the British Barnaj Expedition late in 1975. This trip to Padar was harried into being by Geoff Tier from Camberley and his friends and was a fixed feast when Don Morrison invited me to go to the Biafo. It was an offer that I could hardly refuse as it involved Don's level-headed experience, a chef-de-cuisine (Pat Green), the meticulous gear organization of my old friend Pat Fearnough and eventually Tony Riley as film man—and then there were the objectives. The only problem was that it was hard to see how my employers would see such a venture except as concrete evidence of total dispensability. But in a City where honorary degrees are given for such activities maybe all things are possible!

Don wanted to climb the Ogre, but I felt personally relieved to get a permit to climb Latok II as I had no emotional or past commitment and believed that this objective was more feasible for a small party with slender resources. In mid-May the others flew to Rawalpindi while I stayed to arrange the raising and transfer of a customs bond and cash to the drivers of the Ogre Expedition van which had temporarily been delayed by Turkish regulations of long existence but irregular enforcement. Once they were underway I scuttled on to the Pindi plane.

After enjoying superb hospitality with the British community in Islamabad we assembled in Skardu on 23 May. Together Don and Capt Javed Nangyana, our liaison officer, pushed us through that deathbed of expectations in one night, overcoming the obstacles of the supposedly closed bridge and other sources of delay by a mixture of impervious persistence and needling optimism. For me it was a fleeting wheezing view of the Skardu fortress, Bob Downes's grave, a dusty polo game, a gargantuan Japanese K2 expedition and unfailing blue skies. Next day we were in Dusso, on 1 June at Base Camp near the Uzun Blakk Glacier at 15,800ft. After cold damp weather for 3 days up the Biafo everything was deep in snow. We were the first expedition into the Karakoram in 1977.

The snowy conditions made the establishment of Base Camp a problem. Despite excellent pay the porters almost refused to go up the Uzun Blakk at all in the snowy conditions. Ideally we should have used a few porters to carry to Advance Base but we doubted if many would do it and could scarcely afford the added expense, particularly as Javed maintained the Pakistan officer tradition of avoiding all cookery. This meant that we had to employ a man at a high rate of pay throughout our stay at Base. Even when shared with the Ogre party who arrived 10 days later he cost us £125. Fortunately he did carry a few loads to Advance Base and also had a sense of humour—without those qualities his continued presence might have been difficult to suffer.

Between 1 and 10 June Advance Base at just over 5200m was established and stocked; we began to climb the 750m slope to the col of the W ridge. Pat Fearnough became ill and spent some time at lower altitude with Pat Green, so that the brunt of the night shifts required to climb the slopes to the col fell on only a few people. Repeated and heavy snow-falls did not help, creating both hard work and avalanche danger. On our first attempt to climb to the col Don and I left at 11pm. In good frozen conditions we crossed the upper bowl and climbed with heavy loads up the initial slopes to the rock barrier, reaching it at about 3.45am. Roped we traversed on ice for one rope-length and I belayed on a pitch. Don front-pointed up green ice for over 40ft. One crampon detached itself and he fell nearly 100ft. I turned upside down but the piton held. Don recovered my glasses and led the pitch using some steps. We climbed about 200m further in deep snow on ice to a small rock island, cached our loads safely on a sheltered rock shelf, and fled before the inevitable avalanches which began once the sun broke through about 8am.

Initially our approach to this slope, which ended at a point somewhat in excess of 6000m, had been inordinately optimistic. Bad weather made the easy ground leading to the slope very hard work and load carrying on it really needed fixed ropes if previous efforts were to help subsequent climbing. Until 10 June there were few days without some major effort on the col, but snow each day nullified most of our gains and eventually drove the three of us back to Base on 9 June. On the morning of the 10th Tony and I decided to divert a little energy to an exploration



46 On the Baintha Brakk glacier looking across to the Ogre (Photo: A. Riley)

of the Baintha Lukpar Glacier to see the other side of Latok II, Latok I and Latok III. After some hours we retreated without the full satisfaction of seeing and photographing all three when clouds swept across their S faces. It was a strenuous plod of 6 hours but by now we were becoming sufficiently fit to cope with that and recover very quickly. At Base Camp the Ogre Team had arrived and were paying porters, but found the time for the first of many brews and chats which enlivened both these expeditions in a spirit of friendly cooperation.

That evening the weather improved and at about 10pm we set off with Don for Advance Base. After a brew there we continued towards the col slope with heavy loads. At dawn Tony had led up knee-deep new avalanche debris to the rock barrier. By 7am we passed the rock tower and 2 hours later were within 2 rope lengths of the rock island which promised a safe haven for an interim camp prior to the last push up to the col. But the sun caught us too soon and Don, now in the lead, was forced to traverse into seracs on the right to avoid the snow slides which

were encroaching upon us with the sun. We spent a miserable day, brewing and baking in the seracs at about 5800m. Perhaps fortunately the weather deteriorated again and clouds covered everything by 4pm. The snow slides stopped in the couloir and we set off back, dumping our loads at the only place where they were unlikely to be swept away, on the rock shelf. We left some fixed rope to ease the future. By the time we reached the lower snow-basin deep murk and driving snow obscured everything and we were hard pushed to plough through the deep snow and crevasses to Advance Base.

Thereafter the weather continued snowy and new avalanches made all progress difficult. We climbed 3 times into the central part of the couloir, fixing ropes and moving up impressive quantities of food and equipment. In the central area the avalanches persistently swept the ropes away. At last Pat Fearnough recovered, while Tony and Don made a push to the *rognon* on 19 June and set up a camp. We followed next day and climbed to their camp and Pat Fearnough led on in fine form half-way to the col. Next morning we cracked it, with Pat leading through deep slabs of snow. We established an idyllic camp behind a gendarme and moved back to bring up more supplies from the camp below. Late the same day, once the frost returned, Pat and I hurried back to the col with more supplies, and the next morning crossed the mile long col towards the W ridge. Fortunately an area of wind slabs which had groaned ominously the previous day ceased to be troublesome. Pat Green meanwhile stayed at the couloir camp and descended next morning to the cache below. In the darkness he found that the couloir fixed ropes had been broken yet again by the daily avalanches. Late on 21 June he came up to the col camp with all the food beyond Advance Base. Tony and Don had promised early support so that we now felt considerable optimism.

Next day we left early, soloed the corniced ridges to the gendarmes at the E end of the col and crossed the fixed ropes left by Pat and myself the previous day. The initial 200m section of the ridge was steep and by midday, when the sun softened the snow, we were only half-way. From a 60° slope of thin ice on rock I went back, leaving rope in place. Next day Pat Green and I camped nearer while Pat Fearnough made a solo descent to Base to seek more support and supplies. On 25 June we set off up the steep ridge and by early afternoon climbed to the long easy snow-slope above. It was still steep and soft in the sun and we had 4 days food. No one else was on the mountain though two climbers had been sighted going down from Advance Base—that was beyond explanation but the climbing of the remaining 600m seemed to require more than we could muster. We fixed a rope, left behind some ironmongery requisitioned from the earlier Japanese attempt and went down.

Next day we traversed the col early after a windy bitterly cold night. With huge loads we descended to the couloir camp. In the lower gully Pat and Tony appeared in support and the previous procrastinations were easily explained. On the same day that Pat Fearnough had led us to the col Don had set off back up with Tony after minimal rest at Base Camp. Unroped and loaded he fell through a snow-bridge below Advance Base and could not be reached or contacted, despite several attempts. It was only after much sorting out and difficulty that thought could be spared to deal with us, pushing away in our ignorance on the mountain. Though Pat and Tony had brought supplies they came too late—we had spent ourselves and as an expedition we could not manhaul the equipment we had withdrawn to the col in any reasonable length of time.



47 Latok II (Photo: P. Nunn)

With help from Jackie Anthoine and Stephanie Rowlands, and from Javed and Halim the 2 Liaison Officers, we recovered most of our equipment except for that lost with Don, and a box which disappeared in a new chasm which grew in our absence under Advance Base. While awaiting porters Tony and I travelled the Baintha Lukpar Glacier into its upper reaches and took a photographic Tour under the Ogre. Between 4 and 6 July we travelled with our 11 porters to Askole and by the 10th we were in Skardu. There we received rapid and sympathetic help from the Commissioner and his assistant and we were all in Pindi despite some flight problems by 14 July. Tony and I spent a miserable day or two in the rearguard living on rice before running into the flesh-pots of Islamabad. There too we were little delayed by the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism and all 4 of us flew home on 16 July.

A mountaineers' history of Table Mountain

Michael Scott

Early navigators from the Dutch East India Co, sailing around the dreaded Cape of Storms used to search the horizon eagerly until spotting the flat silhouette of the impressive 'Tafel Berg', the mountain with a table top shape, and the first hand to sight the Table was given a prize of 10 guilders and 6 bottles of wine. This rugged majestic block of sedimentary sandstone has signalled across the centuries, that a welcome respite awaits those setting foot beneath the slopes of Table Mountain at the place which became known as the Tavern of the Seas—the City of Cape Town. Panoramically enfolding the harbour and providing a magnificent backdrop for the view of the city are the 3 peaks of the massif: Devil's Peak, The Table, and Lion's Head. Signal Hill runs out from Lion's Head and is noted for its vantage point for viewing the lights of Cape Town at night, and for the Noon-Gun site, where there is an old cannon which is fired electrically from the Observatory at noon each day.

48 Table Mountain (Photo: *The Argus, Cape Town*)

