



# Half-Billi



Nuusbrief van die Vrystaatse Afdeling van die BKSA/ Newsletter of the Free State Section of the MCSA

## PRE-AARDEBERAADKONFERENSIE IS DRINGEND NOODSAAKLIK

Agenda 21 van die Rio+10 Aardeberaad bied 'n stewige grondslag om volhoubare ontwikkeling te bewerkstellig, maar daar heers met reg kommer in Bergklubkringe dat omgewingsbewaring op gemelde beraad tweede viool gaan speel teenoor sake soos nooddruf, armoede en die ontwikkeling van plaaslike gemeenskappe in berggebiede.

Dit is betekenisvol dat die VN se *Food and Agricultural Organisation* (FAO) die agentskap is wat in samewerking met regerings en nie-regeringsorganisasies (NRO's) genooi is om die VN se *International Year of Mountains* program te loods, en nie die *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP) nie. Eersgenoemde organisasie se fokus is onmiskenbaar gerig op die benutting van bergareas deur die plaaslike bevolkings en minder op bewaringsbehoefes.

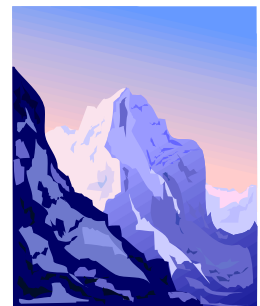
Dit lê op die weg van organisasies soos die BKSA, die UIAA ander omgewingsgroepe om te verseker dat die bewaring van die berg habitat as 'n noodsaaklike voorvereiste gesien sal word vir die bereiking van volhoubare ontwikkeling van bergareas.

'n Prekonferensie van omgewingskundiges om gefundeerde beskrywingspunte aan die Aardeberaad voor te hou, is krities noodsaaklik.

## *Earth Summit and International Year of Mountains closely linked*

South Africa is hosting the important International Earth Summit Rio+10 (10-year review of the Rio Conference) next year after Germany has agreed to foot most of the R400 million bill that the Conference is expected to cost.

One of the most important aims of the Earth Summit to be held in Johannesburg in 2002, will be a detailed assessment and implementation of Agenda 21 (the resolutions and plan of action) that evolved from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. The first Earth Summit was a call upon the



international community to co-operate in preserving and utilising the environment for sustainable development. Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 recognises the vital and interrelated importance of the mountain ecosystem to the survival of the global ecosystem.

Mountains or highlands make up more than a quarter of the Earth's land surface. More than half of the world's population depends on freshwater that originates in mountain regions and twenty-five per cent of forests grow in upland areas. Mountains have a truly global significance for the future of the planet. And it is therefore vital to adopt a new approach to the understanding of and attitudes towards mountain regions and to raise public awareness.

In the light of the above, the Mountain Club should consider applying for financial sources to hold their own IYM pre-conference on environmental issues relating to the mountains, and submit a brief memorandum with recommendations and resolutions to the Earth Summit for consideration.

# Indringerbosse op Tafelberg uitgeknap

'n Stewige poging om van die honderde indringerbome wat Tafelberg se kranse op plekke ontsier, ontslae te raak, het begin. Dit is deel van die parkbestuur se veldtog om binne 10 maande die indringers op 2 000 ha van die hoogste kranse te verwyder. Talle natuurlike plantbevolkings is weens die indringers onder druk.

'n Span van 12 opgeleide kransklimmers met kettingsaie het reeds die denne- en bloekombome teen die kranse begin afsaag.



Die poort tot die Kaapse Skiereiland Nasionale Park, wat die meeste besoekers aan Kaapstad se eerste blik op die berg is, is as voorkeurgebied gekies.

Die internasionale Global Environmental Facility en die projek Werk vir Water van die Departement Waterwese het verlede jaar R50 miljoen aan dié projek in die wêrelderfenisgebied geskenk. Die denne en bloekoms op die stuk grond van sowat 40 ha wat nou teen R118 000 verwyder moet word, het meestal versprei uit die plantasies laer teen die berg wat tussen 1983 en 1992 geplant is.

Mnr Augustine Morkel, die KSNP se assistant-gebiedsbewaarder by Nuweland, het gesê dit is die eerste besliste poging in 20 jaar om groot dele van die berg se ontoeganklike dele skoon te maak.

Anders as uitkap op gelyk grond is die werk op hoë plekke uiters gevaarlik. Klimtoue word gebruik om bome teen die kranse te bereik.

*(Bonus Volksblad, 27 Januarie 2001)*

(Heelwat afdelings van die BKSA reël uitstappies wat spesifiek op die uitwissing van indringerplante gemik is. - Red.)

## KLIMMERS MAAK EVEREST SKOON

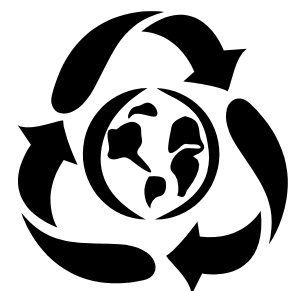
**BEIJING – 'n Span bergklimmers pak weer vanjaar Everest aan om om die berg van rommel en die lyke van ander bergklimmers skoon te maak, het die Chinese media berig. Verlede jaar is 1,5 ton rommel onder inisiatief van die Nepalese regering en**

**hoofsaaklik Westerse klimmers op soortgelyke wyse bymekaar maak.**

Hierdie rondte word die opruimingsaksie egter hoofsaaklik van Tibet se kant af aangepak.

Altesaam 44 klimmers van China, Georgie, Japan, Nepal en Suid-Korea het by die basiskamp vir die groot skoonmaak-operasie byeengekom. Die span sal na verwagting sowat 3 ton rommel bymekaarmaak.

'n Poging sal ook aangewend word om die lyke van slagoffers van vorige ekspedisies op te spoor en van die berg te verwyder. Daar is sowat



200 lyke op die berg, die taak word egter bemoeilik deur die feit dat die meeste deur diep lae sneeu en ys bedek is.

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Die Half-Billi is redaksioneel versorg deur Molly Smit (red.) en Derek Odendaal. Bladuitleg en tegniese versorging is deur Nico Combrink.

# YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE MOUNTAINS

[Hikers with smaller children often wonder whether it is safe and desirable to take their little ones into the mountains. Here is an article published by the UIAA (International Union of Alpinist Associations) on the topic, written by Dr Franz Berghold.]

Healthy children can be taken to the mountains, depending on their age and the parental knowledge of mountain environment and risks. Walking, climbing or skiing in the mountains must be a pleasure for the child. It is important to adapt the length of the activities to the age and fitness of the child and to respect rest times. In general, since each child develops individually, the advice given below should be adapted individually.

## **Altitude risks**



Children are not under more restrictions to acute exposure to altitude than adults, at least below 3000 m above sea level. Above 3000 m, data are lacking and only caution can be recommended. Children may not be able to express the

symptoms of altitude sickness and the parents should therefore be aware to recognise headache, nausea, vomiting or difficulty in breathing. Medications, which prevent mountain sickness in children, are not recommended. Infants with any known health risks should not be taken into high altitude.

## **Cold and rain**

The risk of hypothermia and frostbite is higher for children because of less subcutaneous fat for isolation, low energetic reserves and higher body surface to weight ratio, leading to higher heat losses. Clothes and hats must be adapted and should be modulated during the day by responsible adults. Since children lose a great deal of heat through their heads, it is important to keep the head covered to protect them from the cold. Using a backpack babycarrier in cold weather can be dangerous, since the baby is inactive and may cool down very fast due to impaired blood circulation. Children must have proper protective clothing in case of rain. The head must always be covered. It is best not to be out in the mountains with children in rainy weather.

## **Sun and heat**

More than for adults, protection from UV-rays is essential. Use shady places to rest. Protect the body with adapted clothes and the naked skin with a high protective sunscreen. Protect the eyes with sunglasses of good quality. A child should wear a sun-hat. In hot weather, limit the physical activity of children and give them lots of fluids, preferable water.

## **Nutrition**

Children should eat regularly to prevent low energetic reserves. Do not skip a meal. Give them high-energy food and snacks in cold weather. Drink plenty to reduce the higher risk of dehydration, which can lead to heat stroke in hot weather, and tendon and cartilage lesions.

## **Carrying a rucksack**

Backbone and joints are not yet fully developed and overloading (heavy backpack or long steep descent) in the youth may result in damage for life. Accordingly heavy backpacks should be avoided. A rule of thumb for the weight of the child's rucksack is: not more than 1 kg before age 5; less than 3 kg before age 8; and less than 5 kg before age 12. Let the child carry the water bottle.

## **Taking a rest**

Children get tired soon, but recover fast as well, even while playing during a rest break. So frequent rests are important. They also get bored easily, so keep their minds occupied with interesting stories, facts and questions. Help them to discover and appreciate the wonders of nature.

## **AFDELINGSAKE**

### **Huwelisklokke in die berge**

Die hoofbobbejaan van die Vrystaatse berge, Derek Odendaal, het vir hom 'n oulike wyfie uit die trop aangekeer, ene Jacomie Louw, op wie hy lankal 'n ogie het en met wie hy nou reeds maande lank in die berge rondklouter.



Die tweetjies haak af teen einde September en gaan so 'n paar dae by 'n vakansieplaas in die berge deurbring.

Van die trop se kant, veels geluk! Mag julle baie gelukkige jare saam geniet en baie geleenthede hê om styf teen mekaar in die laatmiddagson die sonsondergange in die berge bo van die kranse te aanskou.

### **Lede se sportprestasies**

Charlotte Augustyn en Elmarie van Heerden het weer vanjaar die moordende Argus-fietsren in die Kaap aangepak en met sukses voltooi. Geluk aan julle twee. Was daar ander? Laat weet die redaksie, asseblief!

Herman Fourie het vanjaar sy eerste Comrades Marathon gehardloop in die uitstekende tyd van 8 uur 10 minute (!) — twintig minute vinniger as wat hy beplan het.



### **VAN DER MERWES SE NUUTSTE PLANNE**

Riana en Mynhardt van der Merwe vertrek 25 Junie na Rusland om Elbrus (5600m) in die Kaukasiese berge te klim. Daarna gaan hulle vir twee weke 'n paar 400m pieke in die Switserse Alpe aandurf.

### **Dave wen kompetisie**

Dave Cronje wen die netjiese kaart van die noordelike Drakensberge met sy korrekte antwoord op die vraag: *Watter piek is die hoogste in die Vrystaat?* Dit is die Namahadi-piek op 3283 m

### **Nuwe lede**

Jacomie Louw, Derek se aanstaande, het verskeie stappe saam met die Afdeling meegemaak en is tydens die jongste bestuursvergadering goedgekeur. Baie welkom, Jacomie!

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## **Vrystaat-stappersgalery:**

### *Schalk Theron: Reeds 'n legende in sy eie tyd*

— Molly Smit

**Schalk Willem Theron** wat op 2 September 1912 in die distrik Potchefstroom gebore is, vertel in sy eie woorde.

**IN SY EIE WOORDE:** 'My vader het destyds vergeet om my geboorte te laat registreer. Dit was toe hy op die drieman-plaasskool Rooipoort prinsipaal was. Maar jare later moes hy tog 'n eed aflê dat ek bestaan en toe moes ek begin belasting betaal. Dit was sy grootste fout. 'n Onderwyser was hy soos die res van ons familie, eerlik en voorbeeldig. Later het hy prinsipaal geword van die School of Industries op die dorp waar ek vir die eerste keer op die ouderdom van vier en 'n half jaar musiekklanke gehoor het (later jare miljoene daarvan). Twee wêreldoorloë deurgemaak sonder om iemand self dood te skiet.'

NA MY MA SE DOOD toe ek twaalf jaar oud was, het ek op 'n ander plaasskool wild geword. Rêrig wild. Heerlik wild. Tussen die koppies en die krimpvarkies, die koeie en die kallers op wie se mak rûe ek gery het en in wie se warm mis ek my kaal, koue, skurwe voete gestee het om die koue te verdryf.

OM MY MAK TE MAAK, het my pa my Wellington toe gestuur na twee tantes wat tevergeefs probeer het. Wanneer ek vandag voetprobleme het, kan dit wees van die eerste paar skoene wat ek daar MOES dra. Hulle was te klein. Ek het mieliepitte in die skoene gedruk, nat gemaak om te swel om die skoene te laat rek.

EK MOES OOK 'n onderwyser word.

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***Ek het gemuit en verkies om vir drie en 'n half jaar posseëls te plak en koeverte te lek.***

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Kollege toe. Vir wat? Dit was depressie.

1931.

Twee van my ongetroude matriekonderwysers is afgedank (sonder pakkette). Daar was net salarisgeld vir getroude onderwysers. Die twee het later op die paaie gaan werk teen 'n halfkroon (25c) per dag. Ek het later gemuit en verkies om vir drie en 'n half jaar posseëls te plak en koeverte te lek as tweede 'office boy' in die prokureurskantoor van 'n vriend se pa. Die salaris? Vyf pond (R10) per maand. R9-00 losies betaal en net R1-00 vir vrolikheid. En was ons groep jong depressieniste vrolik! Gesing, gelag, gegrap, poetse gebak, gedans, gestap, fietstoere onderneem, geswem, min geswoeg, sonder sorge die lewe sonder geld geniet soos nooit weer nie.

EN TOE? 1935: goud, goud! Suid-Afrika van die goudstandaard af. Voorspoed! Nou moue oprol. 'n Regte, eie potjie om te krap. Jo'burg toe.

Departement Naturellesake. Vyftien jaar se bedrywighede van vele aard. Dit speel toneel, radio-optredes, koorleier, films en soms werk. Elke naweek ontsnap na die rante, klowe en berge naby die Rand. Die wildernis in.

IN 1951 met bevordering na Bloemfontein. Onderwysdepartement. Hoof: Geboue Afdeling. Beplan skole, koshuise, sale (ek wou mos altyd 'n argitek geword het). Gou weer betrek by opvoerings, drama en musiek, radio, Mielieblaarklub ('n baie gewilde radioprogram - Red). Te veel! Ek moet ontsnap. Eerste motor gekoop op ouderdom 42. Nou orals rondry. Golden Gate!

IN 1954 sluit ek by die pasgestigte Vrystaatse en Basoetolandse Bergklub aan. Later word dit die elfde afdeling van die Bergklub van Suid-Afrika. Lesotho word onafhanklik en die Basoeto-deel verval. Ons stap en ontdek wyd en syd. Lees maar alles in Billi. In 1956 word ek as voorsitter gekies. Die 50-jarige bestaan van die Unie van Suid-Afrika word in 1960 gevier en ek raak vir nege maande vas betrokke as optogmeester.

NA DIE FEES word ek deur die regering aangestel as stadsgebiede-kommissaris in

Port Elizabeth. 'n Nuwe pos, 'n Moeilike taak, maar weer kan ek na die berge ontvlug saam

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***Ek moet reël vir sosiale aande elke Donderdagaand — my straf vir my oormatige entoesiasme vir die berge***

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met die Afdeling Oostelike Provinsie. Elke naweek vanaf 1961. Ja, elke naweek. En ek geniet my gate uit. Ben Loots en ek ontgin nuwe gebiede; word op die bestuur van die Klub gekies. Ek moet reël vir die totstandkoming van sosiale aande elke Donderdagaand. Hulle sê dis my straf vir my oormatige entoesiasme vir die berge en die klub.

Nou is daar ook die see. Nie vir swem nie. Glo my: ek het nie een keer in die see geswem gedurende my jarelange verblyf in Port Elizabeth en ook nie by Oubosstrand nie. Hoekom nie? Ek hou van en verkyk my aan die see. In die berge kan jy stap. In die see kan jy nie eens swem nie. Die branders laat dit nie toe nie.' Daar is egter die strande en wilde kuste.

**SCHALK WORD NA DRIE JAAR** voorsitter van die Afdeling Oostelike Provinsie. Hy keer egter terug na Bloemfontein as Toneelbestuurder van die pasgestigte Streekraad vir die Uitvoerende Kunste (SUKOVS). 'n Paar jaar later word hy Hoofdirekteur.

**VIR 10 JAAR** is hy voorsitter van die Vrystaatse Afdeling van die Bergklub. Schalk slaan baie min togte oor. Met behulp van sy 4x4 word areas in veral Lesotho verken wat met 'n gewone voertuig onbereikbaar is. Die avonture wat ons saam met Schalk beleef het, kan as ongelooflik beskou word. Al die snaakste goed het in sy tyd gebeur. Dit is omdat hy sulke snaakse dinge aangepak het. 'n Baie harde dag in die berge is altyd afgesluit met ure om die kampvuur (daardie jare was dit nog ekologies aanvaarbaar om kampvure te maak). Daar is ywerig kos gemaak (Schalk het baie fiemies met sy kos) en later het ons na sy interessante vertellings en skreusnaakse grappies geluister. Nog later is oorgeslaan na liedjies sing. Het hy 'n repertoire! Veral sy 'Darling press me to your bosom' het goed afgegaan. Na sy vertrek is daar nooit weer so lekker gesing nie bloot omdat ons nie so 'n goeie voorsanger het nie.



**Kampvure was destyds nog ekologies aanvaarbaar**

**HY ONTVANG** lewenslange erelidmaatskap van sowel die Vrystaatse as Oostelike Provinsie Afdelings. Die Goue Wapen word in 1972 deur die Sentrale Komitee van die BKSA aan hom toegeken onder andere ter erkenning van sy verkenning en oopstelling van nuwe stapareas en sy leiding van en hulp en aanmoediging aan jong bergklimmers. Hy het ook die Goue Billi van die Vrystaatse Afdeling ontvang vir sy buitengewone bydrae as voorsitter en stapleier. Hy het ook verskeie kere in radiopraatjies oor sy avonture opgetree.

**TUSSEN AL SY STAP-** en klimtogte deur het hy nog tyd gevind om op 'n teatertoer in Europa te gaan en as gevolg van die ondervinding wat hy daar opgedoen het, belangrike insette te lewer met die ontwerp van die Sand du Plessis teater.

**OP 65 TREE HY AF** op Oubosstrand waar hy hom gate uit geniet met bergklim, op 68 jaar in Kango III en IV rondkruip (voor dit was dit slegs die speleoloë se voorreg), kanovaarte onderneem, die Himalaja twee keer besoek, in films en televisiereekse optree, rolbal speel (hy lê orals waar hy woon sy eie rolbalbaan op sy erwe aan) en foto's neem (Schalk se kleurskyfies is legendaries).

**HY ONTPOP** toe ook as skrywer. In die gepubliseerde 'Die wildernis in' beskryf hy onder andere oor sy ervarings langs die Tsitsikamakus, in die Okavango, Kalahari, Malutiberge, Namib, Kangogrotte, Limpopo en Himalaja. Veral sy uiteindelijke aanskoue van Everest het 'n groot indruk op hom gemaak. Hy sê daaroor: 'Op hierdie hoogte raak ek bewus van die kort

inaseaming van koue, klare lug en ek weet dis ek wat hier staan. En in hierdie 'niks' ervaar ek stilte, kalmte en vreedzaamheid'.

HY HET NOG 'n aantal manuskripte voltooi wat op publikasie wag: 'Klanke uit die planke', 'Langs die bergpaadjie' en 'Wanderings in the wilderness'. Deesdae teken hy selfs die prentjies wat sy boeke illustreer waarvan sy tekeninge van bome die grootste aftrek kry.

TUSSEN AL sy aftreeaktiwiteite deur het hy ook in 1992 tyd afgestaan om die FAK se toekenning vir besondere kultuurprestasie vir die bevordering van die uitvoerende kunste te ontvang.

AS 81-JARIGE het hy Kilimandjaro tot by die hoogste kamp geklim en dit heel goed oorleef. In September 1987, toe hy 85 was klim hy vir oulaas Champagne Castle en word hy, sover ons kan vasstel, die oudste persoon wat nog op bo-op Champagne se kruin gestaan het.

HY HET LATER van Oubos af na Kareedouw vertrek, weer 'n rolbalbaan met spreiligte op sy erf aangelê en toe by Oudtshoorn gaan aftree waarna hy besluit het die oord vir seniors is nie vir hom nie. Tans woon hy in die

bekoorlike Montagu waar hy onder andere tuinmaak en in die kerkkoor sing.

SCHALK VOEL AFGEHAAL omdat hy elke jaar 'n dokters- en

oogkundige verslag oor sy bekwaamheid om nog voertuig ('n 4x4) te bestuur, moet inhandig by die versekeringsmense: 'Ek voel afgehaal en stokoud. Wat van al die dronkies wat nie op die pad hoort nie?'

HY SÊ HY IS deesdae onder baie titels bekend: senior burger, pensioenaris, afgetredene, rustende, bejaarde, oumens(ie), obie, oubaas (as iemand bedel), meneer, sir, my dear en dan lê 'wyle' ook nog voor.

DINK JULLE jongeres nog ons ouer lede maak oninteressante leesstof?

## *Trekking in the Himalayas*

— Kobus Theron

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*Kobus Theron is the Free State Section's most experienced Himalayan trekker. In 1990 he did the classic Gokyo route in the Everest region and visited Kala Patar. Two years later saw him crossing the Thorung La on the Anapurna circuit. Kobus did two more trips, the last related in detail in Half-Billi volume 7:1 under the appropriate heading "My Addiction to Nepal" before he tackled the Manaslu route in October 2000. Here are extracts from his journal in which he tells of his latest adventures in the mountains of Nepal, which he dubs "My Second Home".*

I thought I'd tell my old buddies in the Free State Section something

about our Himalayan trip last year and (perhaps) make you all a little bit jealous!

OCTOBER 8, 2000: Seugnet Blignaut and I leave for Singapore and Nepal. It is now my 5th trip to that beautiful place.

We spend a couple of days in Singapore, emptying our purses, and then we fly to Kathmandu. Our aim is to trek around Manaslu, crossing the Larkya La (5220m), join up with the Annapurna Circuit at Dharapani, and continue via Thorung La (5416m) to Jomosom. From there we will eventually fly out to Pokhara, and back to Kathmandu. We visit a number of the old haunts in KTM...enjoying a couple of beers on a rooftop restaurant in Patan. It's so great to be back in a place I have come to perceive as my second home.

OCTOBER 13. We arrive at Gorkha, and during the next 2 days we slog eastwards to Arughat Bazar. It is unpleasant and beautiful at the same time, a hot and humid trek. The scenery is lush green forest. Manaslu, Peak 29 (Ngadi Chuli) and Himalchuli rear up in the distance; impossibly far away. It seems like lunacy, trying to get around those peaks and in the meantime, I'm already very tired. I doubt my chances of making it.

OCTOBER 17. We arrive at Machha Khola. The valley of the thundering Burhi Gandaki is deep and dark, and we traverse nasty landslides and paths hanging on cliffs. I only manage some of these obstacles with the help of our guide, Sangay. Suegnet, on the other hand, appears to be enjoying the spectacle. There are no mountains; just little hills as huge as the Drakensberg all around us.

OCTOBER 18. We trek to Yaru Khola, a lovely little spot high above the river. The view is much like Tal on the route up the Annapurna Circuit. En route, we pass Tatopani, a hot spring. The water is hot, everything is hot! I wash myself, and gulp down two Mirandas (something like Fanta). By now I'm addicted to Coke, Fanta, Miranda and Tuborg beer. Yes, beer we can get but almost no bottled water. This luxury is getting scarcer by the day. The boiled water tastes rather s..tty!

OCTOBER 19. We arrive at Philim, having passed through Jagat. This is the end of the road for "normal" trekkers. We had a liaison officer of the Nepalese Government all the way from Gorkha, and one must do this trek with a registered trekking company. Very expensive. No lodges, only tents. I get sick with a typical Nepalese stomach bug, causing violent Krakatoan explosions which almost launch the toilet tent into orbit and we are forced to stay another day and night. Up to now we have been the only group but all of a sudden several other groups catch up with us.

OCTOBER 22. We trek to a little place just east of Namrung, having passed through Deng and Ghap. It is up-and-down-country, heavy on the muscles and the old bones. Still we find ourselves in the gorge of the Burhi Gandaki....there seems to be no escaping this endless, but awe-inspiring river.

OCTOBER 24. We have now reached the pastures of Samagaon (3530m). Hundreds of yaks abound in the fields around the village. After 11 days' trekking, Manaslu finally appears. The Burhi Gandaki refuses to disappear...but our mountain is there...it wasn't a bloody joke after all! .... To see Manaslu is to see something very beautiful, a sublime vision for



people brave enough to venture into great and empty spaces. Alas, in ten years from now it will just be another Annapurna Circuit: they have already started to make those cliff-hanging paths a lot safer, albeit still daunting....and the locals are starting to catch on! The beginning of the Annapurna-like lodges is already there, and it won't be long before the Nepalese Government relents. This area is less than 10km from the border from Tibet, with relatively easy paths...what tourist possibilities! (God forbid). At sunrise in Samagaon I "blast" about 40 photos of the mountain. It is simply irresistible.

OCTOBER 25 AND 26. We leisurely walk up to Samdo, where we stay 2 nights to acclimatise (at 3780m). On the way we have uninterrupted views of the eastern and north-eastern aspects of Manaslu and its glaciers. To use a cliché, it is a sight to behold. It is impossible to believe, from this viewpoint, that Manaslu is in fact the 8th highest mountain in the world. It is too close, too innocent-looking. There are always clouds around, especially from 11 am onwards...and we never manage to positively identify Ngadi Chuli or Himalchuli. In any case, there are so many other white peaks around us that we don't really worry about names.

October 27. After a good 2-night rest at Samdo, during which a lammergeier (bearded vulture, yes, just as in the Drakensberg!) visited us, we trek steeply up to Larkya Bazar (or Dharamsala as it is called on some maps). This lonely and bleak campsite is at 4460m, but what stunning views along the way! Yes, there were clouds, but if anything, they make the total experience even more special, more unique, more unforgettable, more 3-

dimensional... (I am running out of words here.) Forget exposing our behinds to the elements during visits to the toilet tent, that is just part of the painful fun. Fun? I wonder.

I have been accused of getting too romantic, too lyrical about places like this. Guilty as charged! Let otherwise-thinking fools disappear with the wind.

The night here is no fun at all. Larkya La lies ahead the next day and we have no idea what to expect. We have read the books but this is now the real thing, and we are worried. Not even the fact that I had been over Thorung La twice before, can make me believe that I am even remotely experienced in Himalayan affairs. Therein lies the crux of the matter: If I make Larkya La, I will have to run the gauntlet of Thorung La again! Do I really want to experience that again, after the terrible, icy winds of 1998? Is it worth it? My partner, Seugnet Blignaut, can testify to my doubts; I was ready to stumble, roll or storm over Larkya La and just take the shortcut down to Besi Sahar and civilisation....

And so, October 28 dawns, and at daybreak we set off for the pass. I can't even gulp down my favourite breakfast of boiled eggs, and as a result of that I basically start on an empty stomach. I am by now really beginning to wonder how those guys climbing to the summits of Everest and K2 really feel... It is a very nervous me who grudgingly stumbles off after Sangay and the porters.

Basically, the way from Larkya Bazar to the pass is a gentle, but boulder-strewn uphill. Nothing technical. There are some spectacular peaks en route, but I hardly notice them. This is, for me, a survival trip that I want to finish as soon as possible. There is nothing steep like the start to Thorung

La, except for the last 100m or so. That's the most difficult, or so one thinks.

We reach the summit, and by now I've had almost enough. I take a couple of quick pictures, and then ask Sangay to "get me off this mountain". (I will never forget those words). The scenery is absolutely stunning, but I don't really care. Seugnet lingers a while longer, but Sangay's father (our cook) starts to lead me down (or shall I say up?). From the "top" of the pass at 5220m one has to climb even higher along the rocky crest of a glacial moraine and then the path drops sharply down its western side. It is a zig-zag from hell, on loose scree and boulders, and one must constantly watch one's feet in order not to slip. The moraine is basically an active landslide, and rocks (up to the size of soccer balls) are continuously being dislodged from above us. Every time you hear a rumbling noise, you stop watching your feet and look where the rocks are headed.

The path eventually becomes a little bit easier. We pass a place called Larcia, where there is one of the most magnificent views I have ever seen. Numerous icy peaks on the Tibetan border tower above a vast amphitheatre where 3 glaciers come together. A turquoise lake lies embraced between the confluence of 2 of these glaciers, and to the east there are some fantastic icefalls.

By now I'm totally exhausted, and the rest of the party disappears. Sangay promises that he will send somebody back to carry my pack once they reach the campsite at Bimtang but Bimtang is so much further away than I think. I walk for 5 to 10 minutes, sit down, walk again. It seems to carry on forever. Finally Sangay's brother (yes,

it was a kind of family affair!) appears, but it is still all hell.

To the south I glimpse the late-afternoon view of the north-west and west faces of Manaslu disappearing behind the clouds. I can see the campsite, but it appears impossibly far away. One of the porters meets me about a kilometre away with a bottle of juice and then I stumble into the campsite with Sangay and Seugnet waiting. They want me to drink and eat but I tell them to go away. I get rid of my boots and wet clothes and disappear into the tent and the night.

OCTOBER 29. Sunday morning at Bimtang (3720m). We wake up with horrendous gusts of wind thundering down the valley. They try their best to wipe out the campsite, but the main casualty is the toilet tent. Where to turn now for a crap? We are forced to make use of another group's toilet much to their disgust. Eventually Sangay and the others manage a makeshift repair, and once again our own blue loo towers proudly in front of Manaslu.

Today is a rest day, a perfect day once the wind dies down somewhat. An outcast raven, much bigger than the rest of his flock, visits us. This bird speaks in several tongues whilst hopping around the various tents looking for titbits. I think he would be more at home in a circus but for now he is the lucky charm of Bimtang, one of the most beautiful places I have ever had the privilege to camp at.

Now I can really appreciate the grandeur of the place. The pass is behind me, and magnificent Manaslu once again reigns supreme. I feel alive again, at peace with the world.

OCTOBER 31. We arrive at Dharapani on the Annapurna Circuit. It was with some reluctance that we left Bimtang. I

will always think about the wind, the raven, and Manaslu's west face. It is something very special, and somehow it makes all the suffering to get there worthwhile. On the way we pass through some of the most beautiful and enchanting forest I have seen in the Himalaya, with constant gaps framing distant snow-capped peaks. On the way we camp at a little place just east of Gho and Tiliche.

We bid farewell to the kitchen crew and the porters carrying our tents. It is, as usual, an emotional moment for me to see those people, who have looked after us for so long, disappearing down the Marsyangdi valley. They were only doing their job but even in the space of two to three weeks a special kind of bond develops which one cannot forget ever again.

I dislike tents, but at the same time I am not amused by the thought of another two weeks along the "tourist" route. Luxury of lodges yes, but something would be missing.

NOVEMBER 1. We meet up, as arranged, with two other guys from South Africa, and walk on to Danaque. Manaslu, once again, looms to the east, draped in the red and pink hues of sunset and framed by dark veils of mist. It is a perfect place to relax and enjoy a beer and a hot shower. We are now back in Himalayan "civilization"...and once again I'm headed for Thorung La. I am not looking forward to it. It seems to get worse every time.

NOVEMBER 4. After passing through the familiar, but always lovely terrain around Chame and Pisang, we arrive at Manang, one of my favourite spots. The route goes along the spectacular north side of the Annapurna Himal, and although I am always impressed, I think it was more than that for Seugnet

and the others. It certainly was a new experience for Seugnet, who in the space of 4 weeks had to adjust from a tented trek with few or no facilities, to a somewhat crowded, "modern" Himalayan environment. She certainly got a sniff of everything during her first Himalayan trek!

NOVEMBER 8. We enjoy some good food in Manang (including an excess of yak steak). We trek to Letdar, where we acclimatize yet again after two nights in Manang. One would think that crossing Larkya La was good enough to acclimatize for the whole trip, but I have opted for a horse to get to the top of Thorung La (5416m)! During the two days from Manang to Thorung Phedi at the base of the pass, I decide that enough is enough. My legs simply are not coping anymore.

What a unique and fun experience! Thanks to Sandra Bishop in Bloemfontein for teaching me the basics of horseriding, although I never enjoyed it very much! It certainly helped me on Thorung La, in the sense that I managed to keep the horse and myself from falling off the trail as well as being able to avoid bumping off other trekkers on the sometimes narrow and exposed trail. Horsey and I make it to the top in just over 2 hours, whereupon I hand Horsey back to his owner, take a few photos, and race down the pass at great speed (on my own pair of legs, of course — one has great power and stamina when the end is in sight). And just by the way, I couldn't care a stuff about those who think I cheated. At least I enjoyed it!

I get down to Muktinath, and start enjoying LOTS of beer with a group of Germans. The others arrive about three hours later whereupon we indulge in more beer and rahshi.

NOVEMBER 10. We finally arrive in Jomosom, after 28 days of trekking for Seugnet and myself. On the way we spend a nice day and evening in Kagbeni, again with lots of beer.

NOVEMBER 11. After a long delay due to fog, we finally get on the plane back to Pokhara. It's an exhilarating flight down the Kali Gandaki, on the way glimpsing some familiar places such as Marpha and Poon Hill. We arrive in Pokhara, and celebrate with expensive (!) Johnnie Walker Black Label and

great food at the Fish Tail Lodge.

EPILOGUE. The whole trip was a great success. We did what we planned to do. It was not always easy, and there were some moments of tension between members of the group. Overall, however, it was a trip I will remember for the rest of my life. I wish to thank Seugnet, Les and Jaques for their company, and I wish to thank Shree M. Singh for his hospitality and professional service. Nepal will remain my second home.

*Kobus writes as an aside to his article: "I wish to take up issue with Half-Billi on its listing of the Himalayan peaks in the previous issue, vol. 9:1*



Cho Oyu, at 8201m, is in fact the 6th highest mountain in Nepal after Makalu. Dhaulagiri (8167m) and Manaslu (8163m) follow (Nanga Parbat, Pakistan, is at 8125m). The list of 8000m-peaks in Nepal (or on the border with Tibet), is as follows: Everest, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna I. That's 8 of the fourteen, not 9. The rest are K2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum I (Hidden Peak), Gasherbrum 2 and Shishapangma (the latter in Tibet, at 8047m). The lowest of the 8000m-peaks is Gasherbrum 2, at 8035m. (SOURCE: *All 14 Eight-Thousanders*-Reinhold Messner).

The most obvious and glaring mistake with your list is that you have placed Nanga Parbat in Nepal. It is, in fact, completely within Pakistan, and the 9th highest mountain in the world at 8125m! Come on, guys!

***(Half-Billi bows to the greater authority of Reinhold Messner — ed.)***

So, which single 8000m-peak is NOT in Nepal OR Pakistan? (Answer above!).

