



BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

Edited by Horace Sutton

Yaks and Yeti—Part Two

This is the second of two pieces on Nepal by Voit Gilmore. The first, about a visit to Tiger Tops, a hotel built in the trees, appeared last week.

THE PANORAMA of the incredibly high Himalayas viewed from Tiger Tops impels a closer look. Several of us took the RNA DC-3 flight from Tiger Tops to Pokhara. In thirty minutes of flying we crossed the Inner Himalayan range with its rushing headwaters of the sacred Ganges, progressing from the hurried subtropics to the temperate region of Pokhara Valley. In the foothills of the Annapurna range we were 2,900 feet above sea level, looking sharply upwards toward 26,000-foot *himals*, white with perpetual snowfields and glaciers.

Here Jimmy Roberts operates his service to trekkers called "Mountain Travel, Ltd." A veteran of Himalayan climbs, the forty-nine-year-old Britisher was a member of his country's expedition that conquered Everest. He was transport officer of the successful American Everest Expedition of 1963, and on his own he is credited with an impressive number of first ascents. Nepalese-Chinese relations are edgy these days and no major climbs are presently allowed into the highest Himalayas along the border. In fact, it wasn't long ago that Sir Ed-

mund Hillary was poking about near his high-elevation mission project for Sherpas when the Red Chinese protested that he was "spying." So Lt. Col. Roberts these days welcomes the opportunity to supply non-expert mountaineering such as ours. It's legal, safe—and thoroughly exhilarating.

Macchapuchare ("Fish Tail") Peak towered above the grass air strip at Pokhara when we deplaned under a banyan tree and shook hands with Jimmy Roberts. Preceded by our luggage on bullock carts, we followed Roberts on a two-mile ramble through native quarters to Phewa Lake. There our base camp was deployed at water's edge, a gay picture of green, yellow and blue nylon tents. Sherpa and Gurkha manservants scurried about offering tea and biscuits, kerosene lanterns and buckets of boiled water. From a lounge chair on our overlook, one could see the peaks of Annapurna I and Dhaulagiri either by glancing sharply skyward, or by an equally clear view mirrored in the lake. Only a half-mile west at his lake chalet, King Mahendra can enjoy the same magic reflection.

For a flat \$100 per person Jimmy Roberts provided round-trip RNA transportation from Katmandu, two nights of tenting with warm bedrolls, a total of



—Paul Conklin.

**Pokhara—accessible only
by plane or ten-day hike.**

five meals, and Sherpa guides for trekking. The food included tough local chicken and tinned vegetables; however a supply of U.S.-style peanut butter saved Jimmy's culinary reputation with us, as did excellent local dark bread and yak cheese. Hot tea was served all day, beginning at 6 a.m. (late sleepers had to fight off determined Sherpa tea servers). Our setting made unnecessary any explanation as to the absence of such amenities as ice, electricity and running water. During a subsequent visit to Pokhara's leading hotel, the Amar, I noted a similar lack of amenities, though residence at the Amar (\$2 per day, meals included) offered the novelty of living with several pigs, sheep, chickens and a horse, all of which the manager allowed to graze in the lobby and tea garden.

Some of our group hiked along the shore of Phewa Tal, past Mahendra's chalet and on to the Barahi Temple. A brief trip kneeling in a dugout canoe was necessary to reach the temple on its tiny, private island. There, where the Annapurna Range was reflected in glacial-green water, we found an Indian movie troupe making a film. ("I snapped a picture of the leading male star," one of our group reported. "Instead of treating me with Hollywood indifference, he surprised me by rushing over to ask if I would be sure to send him a copy.")

Downtown Pokhara is as a page torn from a seventeenth-century history book. It teems with unspoiled color. Now is the time to see it, you hear it said, because the coming Katmandu-Pokhara road will end its insular ways. As I passed the Rastra Bank, a water buffalo sprawled unconcernedly at the entrance door. Two roosters ambled out of the manager's office. When the path I followed cut through a school yard my Western



—Monkmeyer Press Photo.

Nepalese porters transporting cheese near altitude of 18,000 feet in Himalayas.



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appearance in khakis and sun glasses so stirred attention that the master dismissed school for a half hour to allow his youngsters to examine me and practice enthusiastic exchanges of "Hello," "Thank you" and "America."

Near the Bhimsen Temple a blast of ceremonial horns attracted me to a wedding procession. I fell in with the party of two dozen marchers on their way to temple services across town.

The group moved leisurely through the clutter of street rubble, stray livestock and curious villagers. During frequent pauses a pair of curved, eight-foot-long horns were raised high to join the wild cacophony of sound issuing from three home-made drums and two bronze woodwinds. The result seemed the mixture of a Sousa march and a bagpiper's battle charge. The barefoot musicians wore striped pajamas. At the rear of the parade two barefoot porters in loincloths carried the thirteen-year-old bride. Swathed in white gauze netting, she jounced along, reclining in a coffin-shaped sedan chair made of wooden strips and chicken wire, her head lolling crazily from side to side as though she were drugged. At her side the dark-skinned groom strode stiffly, quite maharaja-like in his black coat and tight white trousers, an opened umbrella held high over his bare head. Possibly he was twenty-one. Two women and a man acted as attendants to the newlyweds. Each was weighted down by a headband attached to a wicker basket full of the couple's clothing, personal effects, and even a miniature shrine.

The procession was straight out of the Middle Ages. I recorded it with color photographs and gestured my willingness to send copies to the newlyweds if given their address. But it was in vain: neither the bridegroom nor anyone in the party could read or write.

Outside Pokhara, trails wind enticingly up the Annapurna slopes. This is one of the famed ascent routes of Himalayan heroes. Our group's more serious trek-

kers struck out for elevations between 3,000 and 7,000 feet, up where February climbing is hot enough by day to raise perspiration and cool enough for evening campfires. Two Sherpa guides and seven Tibetan porters bore the backpacks filled with sufficient provisions for six days and nights of comfortable living by five trekkers. Their heavy loads included live chickens (they were killed as needed), duffel bags, bedrolls, tents and a satisfying assortment of tinned and freeze-dried food. Eggs and fresh yak butter were available from farmers. The humorous yak becomes almost a necessity of life above 10,000 feet in Nepal.

Even at greater heights the pitching of evening camp attracted sizeable audiences of hill people. With fierce determination, these lonely Nepalese eke their living from terraced mountainside plots; fancy campers from afar always assure welcome amusement. At times their friendly curiosity sent our campers inside drawn tent flaps for the sake of privacy.

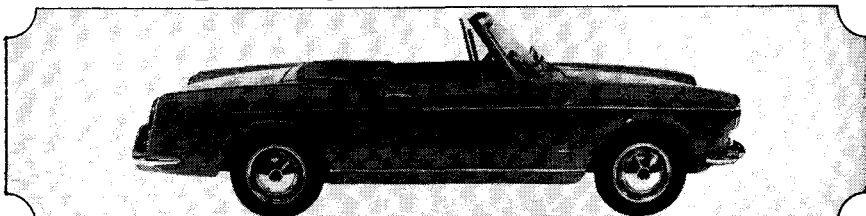
Our sweeping views of the world's rooftop, the serene majesty of this unspoiled place, revealed to us the magnetic pull of the Himalayas on men. No wonder that simple people surrounded by such awesomeness of nature would find it possible to believe the existence of mountain gods and even of Yeti, the legendary Abominable Snowman of the High Himalayas.

Back in Katmandu, strangers in from the mountains and the jungle meet at sundown to swap stories in the Yak and Yeti Bar. A dark-paneled recess of the creaky old Royal Hotel, this Himalayan crossroads is the "in" place for those who find kinship along adventure's trail. As evening falls and Buddhist bells echo across the city, conversation grows more animated around the Yak and Yeti's crackling fire. There is talk of the visitor's rugged life—unsafe water, stomach disorders (irreverently called "the Katmandu gut clutches"), unsure plumbing, unheated buildings and unmarked trails. Yet a sense of special pride in having got there tinges the talk of those present, be they hunters or globe-trotters, writers or mountaineers, AID people or Peace Corpsmen. In this Kingdom where westerners have been welcome less than ten years now, there is discovery in each part of every day. The greatest of this is nature's unrivalled blending of grandeur and peace.

—VOIT GILMORE.



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French Crime Wave

THE "NEW WAVE" having long ago receded, the French film industry now appears to be occupying itself devotedly with variations on the theme of crime. There are three examples on hand this week, all destined for the art cinemas, and each in its way providing its share of interest and entertainment. *Cloportes* has to do with a bungled safe-cracking venture and its aftermath of betrayal and revenge. *Enough Rope* is a kind of cat-and-mouse affair, in which the crime is secondary to the twists involved in its solution. *The Sucker*, on the other hand, fails to take its crime and criminals seriously, but makes up for this with a blend of farce, tourism, and fine comic performing by two French favorites, Bourvil, and Louis De Funes. As can be seen, none of these are thrillers in the usual sense, nor do they deal with the solution of a mystery. But they are all a cut above average, if only because they endeavor to get out of the ordinary ruts.

The word "cloportes" in the French-English dictionary translates to wood lice, but since the screen first fills with what look suspiciously like roaches it is perfectly clear that the director, Pierre Granier-Deferre, intends us to associate his characters with those unsavory infestations. Having made his moral point, he is then free to concentrate on his criminal milieu, in which no moral distinctions exist and it is all a matter of whom you can trust and whom you can't; no one, in other words, except possibly a chap who specializes in collecting—without payment—post-impressionist paintings, and who is played with stolid believability by the rugged Lino Ventura. Alphonse is his name in the film, and his greed runs away with him when he hears about a safe-cracking venture that would bring him a considerable return if he will rent a blowtorch. When he is caught, and betrayed, he spends five years in jail mulling over with gloomy enthusiasm the revenge he will take after his release—which is when the film picks up steam.

A man now dedicated to doing away with his former associates, he finds himself, through his interest in art, a partner in a high-toned art gallery, as well as the bedmate of Irina Demick, the beautiful saleslady in the art emporium. This gives the film a chance to satirize today's art world, while bringing practically every member of the cast to some unlooked-for fate. Not exactly morally enlightening, any of this, but the acting

by Mr. Ventura, by Charles Aznavour, by the wonderful Pierre Brasseur, and the charming Miss Demick, makes the picture flavorful when those cloportes aren't crawling about.

The characters of *Enough Rope*, which is based on Patricia Highsmith's novel, *The Blunderer*, are not quite so bug-like except for Gert Frobe, who, as a second-hand bookdealer, and wife-murderer, is back to being his most unpleasant self since *Goldfinger*. The director, Claude Autant-Lara, picks his deliberate way through a series of psychological, but not always believable subtleties. Maurice Ronet, made miserable by his neurotic, suicidal wife, identifies with the book-dealer, guesses at the nature of his crime, and soon leads a nosy police inspector to similar conclusions—after Ronet's wife has thrown herself from a cliff. Gears are shifted about half way through the film, and then it becomes a story about how the inspector sets Ronet off against Frobe, and, through his nasty brain-washing methods, precipitates another crime. The point is made strongly enough, but it struck me as more tricky than valid. Robert Hossein, as the inspector, is synthetic; Maurice Ronet is better; and Gert Frobe is almost too gruesomely real.

THE *Sucker*, directed by Gerard Oury, is pure extravaganza, with certain elements that are not unfamiliar and others that are delightfully inventive. Bourvil, a nice, simple bourgeois fellow, is the butt of a scheme to drive the most expensive Cadillac in the world through Italy and France. The car is expensive because its bumpers are filled with solid gold, its fenders are filled with heroin, and its battery is charged with rare gems.

The mastermind of the plot is the above-mentioned Louis De Funes. Bourvil thinks he is having himself a splendid, all-expenses-paid holiday in Italy and France—quite unaware that he is being followed by De Funes and his gang, who, in turn, are being followed by a rival gang. The friendly Bourvil almost marries a Rome manicurist, picks up a buxom German "naturist," and, when he discovers that he is being made a sucker, manages to turn the tables. That, unfortunately, is when the picture begins to lose its zest, but by that time it has also provided more than its quota of fun. And, for my part, the French can continue their crime wave for awhile longer.

—HOLLIS ALPERT.

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