

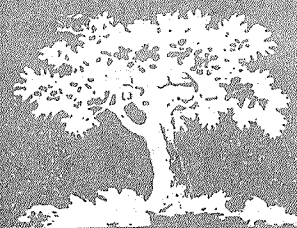
Menlo girls go for state title 'three-peat': Page 47

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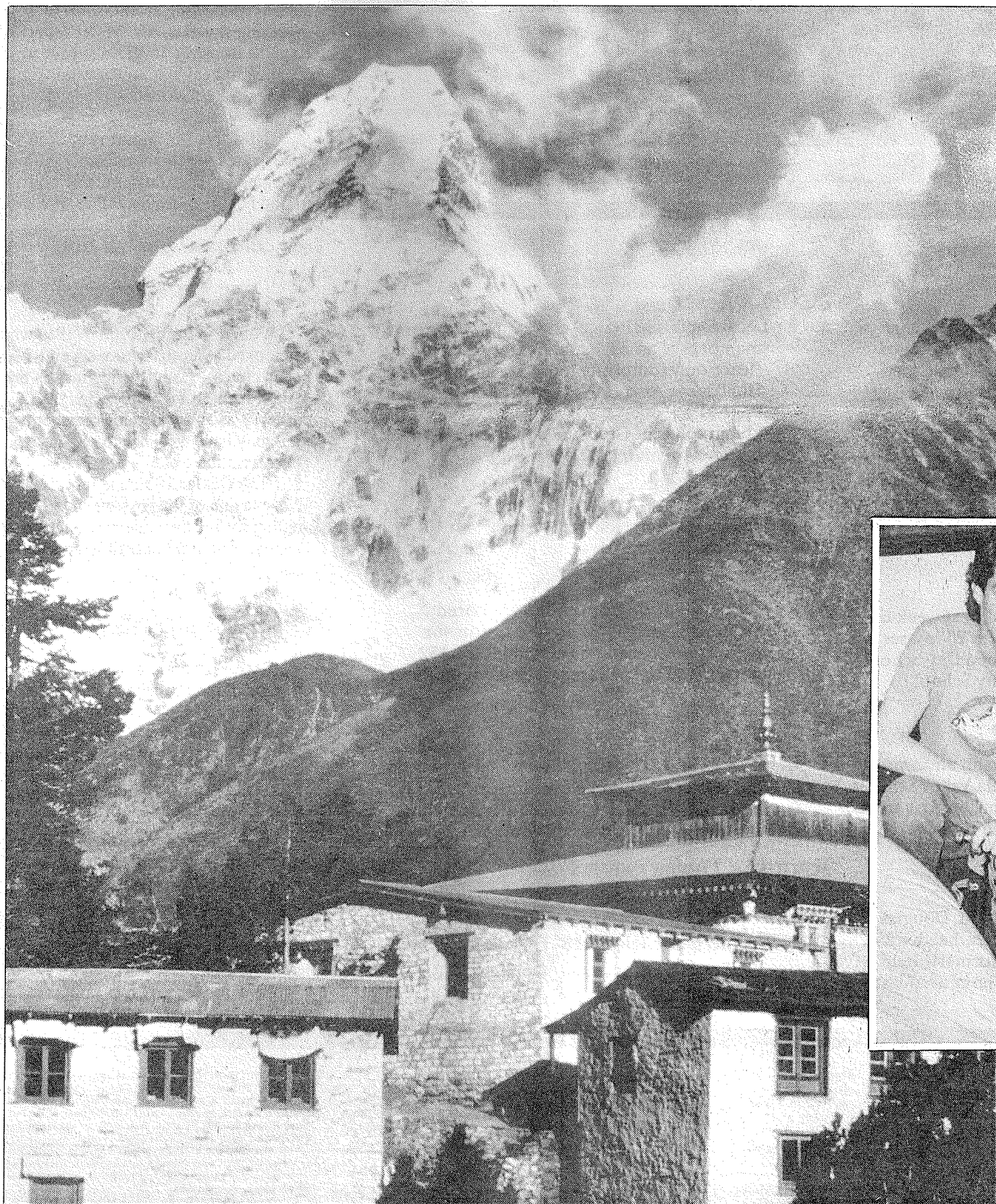
Menlo Park's Almanac



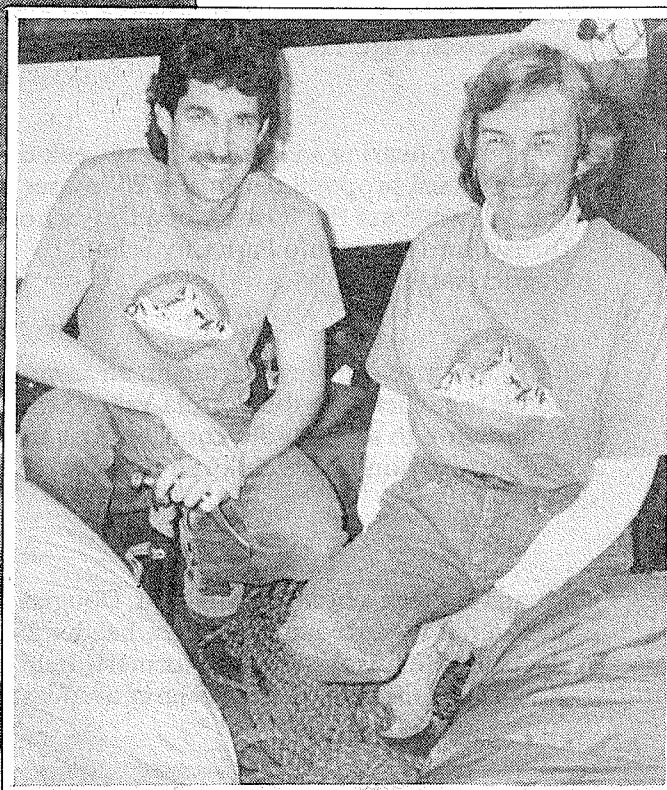
855 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025

Phone: 328-1600

Local family challenges Himalayan peak



A Menlo Park-based expedition will climb a 22,500-foot peak in Nepal – Page 9.



EVAN AND ROBIN SMITH show some of the equipment arriving at Mrs. Smith's Atherton home for the 1991 Ama Dablam Expedition. Three of Mrs. Smith's children will attempt to climb the 22,494-foot peak, while she treks to the base camp.

AMA DABLAM near Mt. Everest will be tackled by a team of climbers associated with the National Park Service based in Menlo Park. Team leader Evan Winslow Smith, who grew up in Atherton and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School, is organizing the "minimum impact" trip. Climbers will travel light and pack out their non-biodegradable garbage.

Family challenges Himalayas

Three members of Atherton family will bring a 'leave only footprints' ethic to climbing 22,500-foot Ama Dablam mountain in Nepal.

BY MARION SOFTKY

They're going to carry their own kerosene rather than cut down fast dwindling firewood in Nepal. They'll carry out their garbage plus more left by previous climbing expeditions. They'll even bring back several duffel bags of used plastic for recycling in the United States.

"Our goal is to have minimum impact on the environment while trekking and climbing in the Himalaya," said expedition leader Evan Winslow Smith, who grew up in Atherton and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School.

"We want to provide an example for what other travellers and mountain expeditions can do to preserve the environment—which is why they went there in the first place," he added.

Robin Smith's family has been a major catalyst for the "American Ama Dablam Expedition - 1991," which plans to climb the 22,494 foot peak near Mt. Everest.

Three of her four children will join the 10-member climbing team. Evan's brother, Colin, is a backcountry ranger in Kings Canyon Park; his sister, Mallory, works in public relations for the National Park Service in San Francisco.

Mrs. Smith, who has lived in Atherton for 27 years, will be leaving for Nepal near the end of March to join a support trek to base camp.

The climb will also highlight the National Park Service and its people. All 10 men and women who will tackle the mountain are either park rangers or associated with the Park Service. They bring years of experience as back country rangers, climbers, and rescuers to the challenge of ascending a mountain which is technically more difficult than the standard route up Everest, although not as high.

Why do they do it? Not just because it's there. "We're there for the experience. We believe in the process, not the outcome," said



MARION SOFTKY

TEAM LEADER Evan Smith, left, and his mother, Robin, prepare for trek.

Evan in an interview in his mother's Atherton home.

At its first meeting the team set out goals for the trip, Evan explained. First they want to come home alive. Second, they want to come home as friends. And third, they want to get to the top.

He compared climbing with the thrill of jumping into a cold mountain lake. "It's the experience of being alive that I want."

Getting Ready

Team leader Evan Smith was digging into a pint of Haagen-Dazs ice cream with a tablespoon as he greeted a reporter in his mother's Atherton home.

The slim, wiry adventure and action photographer is trying to build up his weight to meet the 6,000 calorie-per-day requirement of climbing at high altitude.

"At 18,000 feet there's half the oxy-

gen," he explained, eating another tablespoonful of melting richness. "Carbohydrates don't do it. Once you start burning muscle you might as well go home."

Among sleeping bags, jackets, climbing ropes and kitchen utensils gathering at Mrs. Smith's home, Evan described how a family interest in backpacking grew to a Himalayan expedition.

The Smiths took their children backpacking across the Sierra when they were very small — "and we loved it," he said. "Now I'm more comfortable walking on a trail than a sidewalk."

Colin and Mallory got an extra dose of mountains in the mountaineering program at Ravenswood High School.

All four graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School. The three who hope to climb Ama Dablam also worked for the Park Service. For several years Mallory ran the Yosemite Visitor's Center, and Evan was a photographer, climber and rescuer at

Yosemite. "I spent my time climbing and rescuing climbers," he said. "I learned how not to do it."

During three trips trekking and climbing in the Khumbu region of Nepal near Mt. Everest, Evan fell in love with Ama Dablam.

"This is the most beautiful peak," said Mrs. Smith.

The mountain gets its name from the hanging glacier near the top which looks like a mother with outstretched arms wearing a religious locket. "Ama" means mother in Sherpa; "Dablam" means locket or charmbox, Evan explained.

Walking by Ama Dablam in 1988, Evan was hooked on the idea of climbing the mountain. So he inquired about getting a permit. "I was calling my own bluff," he commented.

Now he and most of the team are in Nepal, making the long trek into Ama Dablam and the real challenge.

Base camp will be at 16,000 feet, and they plan at least three camps above that. High altitude really begins at 20,000 feet, Evan said. "Above that, climbing 1,000 feet is like climbing 5,000 feet in the Sierra."

Mrs. Smith, who is on sabbatical from her job as a teacher in Fremont, is looking forward to her still strenuous part in the expedition. "This is the only mountain climbing expedition I will be involved in," she said, "It will be exciting to be in base camp and go to Khumbu and have some fun."

By now Evan is probably enjoying what he was looking forward to — "working with a team, hearing yak bells, telling stories with Sherpas, smelling hot Sherpa tea."

The Ama Dablam expedition still needs donations and has T-shirts for sale. For information, write P.O. Box 1204, Menlo Park, CA or call 949-3863.