I wrote this article in response to statements I’ve read from numerous sources that Fred Beckey went on a climbing rampage in 1963, because he was not selected to be a member of the American Expedition to climb Mt Everest in 1963.

Beckey’s climbing statistics indicate that one needs to go back to the year 1961 and to not limit an evaluation of his reaction to just the single year of 1963.

First the story behind why Norman Dyhrenfurth did not accept Beckey on the Mt Everest Expedition, because of Beckey’s actions on the 1955 Lhotse expedition.

**Lhotse 1955**

The organizer and leader of the 1963 American Expedition was Norman Dyhrenfurth. Dyhrenfurth also served in the same role for the 1955 Lhotse expedition.

Prior to the 1955 Lhotse expedition, Dyhrenfurth was a member of the following expeditions: 1938 Mt St. Agnes, Alaska; 1938 Harvard Alaskan Expedition (co-leader); 1952 Swiss Mt Everest Expedition. So Dyhrenfurth had been on a total of three expeditions, one of which he was a co-leader, and had no experience as the sole leader of an expedition.

Dyhrenfurth only accepted Beckey on that cash strapped 1955 Lhotse expedition when the President of the American Alpine Club, Henry Hall, agreed to donate a large financial contribution ($10,000 in 1955 dollars, equivalent to $93,750 in 2019 dollars) to support the expedition.

But there was one string attached.

Fred Beckey had to be part of the expedition. **[1]**

Another member of the expedition from the Seattle area was Dick McGowan. He and Fred Beckey prepared for the expedition in early May 1955, by spending the night in cold storage locker in Seattle. They slept in double sleeping bags, each weighing 9 ½ pounds, in 26 below zero temperatures, with fans blowing at 30 mph. They awoke the next morning feeling toasty and cozy.

**Overview**

The first account of what happened on Lhotse is from Norman Dyhrenfurth’s trip report in the 1956 *American Alpine Journal* (AAJ) **[2]**. I don’t include all of Dyhrenfurth’s lengthy account of the expedition in this article, but I include a link to the whole trip report in the Endnotes. I begin with my summary of Dyhrenfurth’s account between October 10 and 20, 1955, when the initial attempts were made on the summit of Lhotse. Starting on October 21st, Dyhrenfurth’s written account begins.

Next, I include information from an article in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, which is an account based on a letter Fred Beckey wrote on October 27, 1955 **[3].**

Lastly, I will amalgamate these two accounts into what I think occurred.

**Lhotse Expedition personnel mentioned in these accounts**

Norman Dyhrenfurth (expedition leader), George Bell, Fred Beckey, Dick McGowan, Ernst Senn, Dr. Bruno Spirig, Arthur Spöhel, Pemba Sundar, Chowang, Kancha, Chotari, Phu Dorje, Ang Dawa and Lapka Sona.

**Camp elevations**

Camp II or Advanced Base Camp: 21,500 feet (6,553 meters)

Camp III: 23,300 feet (7,102 meters)

Camp IV: 24,200 feet (7,376 meters)

Camp V: 25,200 feet (7,681 meters)

**Dyhrenfurth’s Account**

My summary of Dyhrenfurth’s account begins on October 10th when the first summit attempt was made by Senn, Spöhel, Pemba and Chowang from Camp IV, which proved to be too much distance and elevation, so they turned around at 26,200 feet (7,986 meters). However, eight oxygen bottles were cached at this elevation. A few days later a Camp V was established at 25,500 feet and another attempt on the summit was made on October 15th. But they couldn’t find the cached oxygen bottles buried by a snow storm. Spöhel couldn’t climb any higher and gave his oxygen bottles to Senn. Senn continued alone reaching 26,600 feet (8,108 meters) before his oxygen set failed. Everyone but Senn return to Camp IV, who remained at Camp V, hoping a solo attempt would be successful. Bad weather foiled another attempt by Senn and he returned to Camp IV on October 19th, physically and mentally spend. Meanwhile the expedition was having problems getting enough fuel, food and oxygen to Camps IV and V, due to bad weather and deep snow. On October 21st Senn, Spöhel, Dyhrenfurth, and Sherpas descended from Camp IV continued past Camp III to Advanced Base Camp.

I pick up Dyhrenfurth’s actual narrative from the AAJ report on this date. Words in parenthesis were added by me for clarity. I have emphasized key words or statements in bold italicized text.

“The following day (October 21) we did succeed in reaching the safety of Advance Base, groggy from fatigue, but grateful to be alive. At Camp III we had met Beckey and Spirig, who were scheduled to move up to IV that day, but had decided to wait another 24 hours. Not one of the Sherpas there was willing to accompany them, but when I asked for volunteers, heroic Chowang, who had just come down with us, and brave Pemba Sundar, whom we had to send down with a severe case of laryngitis a few days ago, both agreed to move up to Camp V and to carry oxygen to the Lhotse couloir. They don’t come any better!”

“On October 22 Beckey, Spirig, and five Sherpas went up to Camp V, on one of the few almost windless days. What a day for the summit! Three Sherpas went back to Camp III that same afternoon. The following day (October 23) I looked up early (From ABC at 21,500 ft) at the Lhotse Face, but nothing moved at all; only huge billows of snow blowing across the face. Beckey told me (via radio contact) that the night had been very bad, and that there could be no thought of trying the summit that day. They were willing to spend another night there, hoping for the wind to die down.In the meantime, George Bell, who had recovered from his laryngitis, and Dick McGowan went up to Camp IV with Lakpa Sona and Kancha to act as support for the others and to take over as third summit team if necessary.”

October 24: "… Again, I talk to Beckey at 9 A.M. The storm is of such violence that neither he nor Spirig could sleep at all. They are demoralized and exhausted, and Spirig does not believe it

possible to change oxygen bottles in this cold. With the sets we were forced to use, one can only get one and one-half hours of oxygen per bottle, which means only four and one-half hours for each three-bottle set. The decision is hard to make, but I must tell them to give up the Lhotse Face and ***evacuate all camps***.”

"Shortly before 1 P.M. I notice eight men on their way down, four from Camp V, and another four from Camp IV, ***but all tents are still up!*** Suddenly one of the black dots below Camp V is missing (Spirig). One of the remaining three (Beckey) is rapidly moving down the slope to catch up with the other two, obviously Pemba and Chowang. They deposit their loads below Camp IV and hurry back up, followed slowly by the sahib (Actually Beckey) who appears to be very tired. Halfway between IV and V the missing fourth reappears (Spirig) and is brought down by the two Sherpas. At Camp IV the obviously wounded or exhausted man (Spirig) is placed inside my old tent. What on earth could have happened? What amazes and worries us most of all is the fact that the other sahib (Actually Beckey) and the two Sherpas leave the sick man (Spirig) alone up there and move down to Camp III. We are greatly concerned, unable to find a likely explanation.”

"Later that afternoon (October 24th) Bell and McGowan arrive here (at Advanced Base Camp) with their Sherpas. One bad night at Camp IV had taken its toll; they seem quite exhausted. Early that morning the Sherpa tent was ripped wide open, and poor Kancha and Lapka Sona were buried under a huge snow drift. George and Dick tried to persuade them to follow them up to Camp V ***to help with the evacuation***, but they refused to go anywhere but down. At last I get Beckey over the radio at Camp III. He reports that Spirig had a complete collapse, combined with snow blindness, which convinced Beckey of the need for help from the two Sherpas. I reproach him for having left Spirig all alone up there, without sleeping-bags or air mattress! None of us can understand this. Now it is too late to attempt a rescue today (October 24th). Senn and I decide to leave from here (Advanced Base Camp) as early as possible tomorrow (October 25th) to get Spirig down, if he is still alive by then. We spend a worried and sleepless night. …

"The morning (October 25th) we take all available Sherpas with us. By 8:30 A.M. we are at Camp III. Senn and some Sherpas start up the Lhotse Face, I follow with Ang Dawa and Beckey. ***All oxygen sets are at Camp V***; we have to do without them. The storm rages with unabated fury, but the sense of emergency gives us strength, and we reach Camp IV in one and one-half hours. Senn did it in one hour and 10 minutes! The camp presents a desolate picture, torn tents half buried under huge snow drifts, but what is most important: Through the howling of the wind I hear Bruno’s (Spirig) voice answering my call. Ernst (Senn) is inside his tent. Bruno can hardly see; he has bandaged his eyes; he has lived through a terribly cold and lonely night, but thank God there seem to be no serious after-effects! As quickly as possible we prepare for the descent; everything that can be salvaged is distributed among the Sherpas. Beckey goes ahead, leading Spirig over the steep stretches. Senn follows immediately behind, holding back on very short rope, and I follow as anchor man. After a very slow descent with many stops to give Bruno a chance to rest, we reach the safety of Camp III. Here we fashion a toboggan out of a pair of skis, and with the help of the Sherpas we get the sick man (Spirig) to Camp II (Advanced Base Camp) before darkness. It was a hard day, but everything turned out well. ***The Lhotse Face is evacuated, although much valuable equipment had to be abandoned at Camp V.*** But what do we care at this point? Everybody is safe and more or less sound at Advance Base!…"

By October 27 we were all back at Base Camp.

**Beckey’s Account**

In my research I had difficulty finding an account of what happened on Lhotse that was written by Beckey. Eventually I came across an article in the November 21, 1955 edition of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer,* which explained what happened from Beckey’s point of view. The article is titled “Seattle Mountaineer Bares Near-Tragedy” which was written by E. P. Chalcraft, with quotes from a letter written by Beckey on October 27, 1955. I have emphasized certain key words or phrases in bold italicized text.

See the Appendix below for copy of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article.

Chalcraft summarized the beginning of Beckey’s letter on what happened before Beckey and Spirig attempt on Lhotse as follows:

After relating how Arthur Spöhel, Swiss and Ernst Senn, Austrian the first ascent team, were thwarted by winds that ripped up tents and by inability to find a cache of oxygen bottles that had been buried by storms, Beckey wrote:

*“Spirig and I moved up using skis to 23,000 feet (probably for me an American ski altitude record). On October 23 we climbed to Camp Five using open-circuit oxygen sets. Frankly, the sets gave us so much trouble I felt I could have done better without them – and later proved it by making better time on the same stretch. We had a windless day and big hopes for tomorrow.”*

*“Then came bad luck! A very strong north wind showed itself in the morning (October 24). Strictly a day for the tent-all day and the next day too, with a really bad night.”*

Then back to Chalcraft’s summarization of what occurred next.

So, on the 24th , Beckey said, he and Dr Spirig started down for Camp Four, ***leaving Camp Five intact for a later try should the wind abate.***

Then the narrative picks up again from Beckey’s letter.

*“Spirig suddenly collapsed as we began the descent. The wind was fantastically strong. He became snow blind, but principally must have been affected by a heart affliction.*

*“I had an awful time belaying and sliding him down. Half the time the wind was so bad I simply had to stop and hang onto my ice ax. Frankly, I thought he was a ‘goner’.”*

Chalcraft summarization of Beckey’s letter continues.

Beckey related that half way down (vertical distance between the camps was 1,000 feet) he left Spirig and ran down to beyond Camp Four until he caught up with two Sherpa porters (Pemba and Chowang).

Again, from Beckey’s letter.

*“Together we re-ascended* ***to drag*** *Spirig into the lone standing tent at Camp Four. The others had been ripped in the wind. No sleeping bag for him but he was lucky to come out of it with no more than a very cold night.”*

Chalcraft picks up the story again with a summary from Beckey’s letter.

Next day Beckey with other climbers (Dyhrenfurth, Senn) and Sherpas took Dr. Spirig down to Camp III. Where apparently, he recovered rapidly, at lower altitude.

There are at least two sides to a story, but I have not found an account written by Spirig. However, I did find a written account by Dick McGowan in *The Mountaineers Journal-1956* **[4].** But his account does not have any detail about the descent from Camp V by Beckey and Spirig, other than the adding to the confusion over whether Dyhrenfurth wanted Camps IV and V evacuated or abandoned. More on that later.

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**My interpretation of what happened based on Dyhrenfurth’s and Beckey’s accounts**

I begin with the descent from Camp V by Beckey, Spirig, Pemba and Chowang on October 24th. Pemba and Chowang left Camp V as one rope team, while Beckey and Spirig followed on another rope in a fierce wind storm. Spirig developed medical problems as they descended, causing Beckey and Spirig to become separated from Pemba and Chowang. When Spirig could no longer move on his own, Beckey untied from the rope and left him to get help from Pemba and Chowang. Meanwhile Pemba and Chowang had continued past Camp IV, with the intention of reaching Camp III or lower. Beckey caught Pemba and Chowang below Camp IV, where the Pemba and Chowang dropped their loads.

Pemba, Chowang and Beckey (Dyhrenfurth mistakes Beckey as the sahib in his account.) then re-climbed beyond Camp IV, to find Spirig. The three of them assisted Spirig down to Camp IV, which had been nearly wiped out by the violent storm, into the lone standing tent. Then the three of them made the difficult decision to leave Spirig alone at Camp IV, and they descended to Camp III, because they had no sleeping bags or mattresses. Furthermore because of the time of day, they didn’t have enough time to assist or haul the incapacitated Spirig down to Camp III through the icefall of the glacier, navigating around crevasses, seracs and over snow bridges. The harsh reality was, do you risk more lives by having other people stay with Spirig overnight without sleeping bags and mattresses. Or make the difficult decision to have the three people still capable of moving, drop to Camp III in order to survive the night. Then help with the rescue the next day.

Furthermore, there was no supplemental oxygen bottles above ABC or Camp II until Camp V. The next day when a rescue effort for Spirig at Camp IV was launched, Dyhrenfurth writes:

“All oxygen sets are at Camp V; we have to do without them.”

This only added to the difficulties of the efforts of the rescue group. So, there was a logistics problem too.

Fortunately, Spirig survived the night and was taken down to Camp III.

\*\*\*\*\*

**My Evaluation: What we have here, is a failure to communicate: Evacuate versus Abandon**

Perhaps you’ve heard the phrase: Distinction without a difference.

I believe this is an example of a distinction with a difference.

It has to do with the meaning of the two words.

Evacuate.

Abandon.

The definition of evacuate is:

1. To empty or remove contents of. 2) To withdraw or depart; vacate.

In Dyhrenfurth’s mind, in the common vernacular, that meant to pull stumps or take everything with you. Don’t leave anything behind.

The definition of abandon is:

1. To desist from, cease trying to continue. 2) To give up by leaving or ceasing to operate or inabilities as a result of danger or other impending threat, e.g. abandon ship.

For the climbers, abandon meant to leave certain equipment at the camp, for another possible attempt at the summit. It didn’t mean to remove all equipment from camp.

In a sense it doesn’t matter what the formal definition of these two words are. What matters is how people reacted to what Dyhrenfurth told them to do.

This misunderstanding would have consequences.

\*\*\*\*\*

In Dyhrenfurth’s account he states on October 24th: “The decision is hard to make, but I must tell them to give up the Lhotse Face and evacuate ***all*** camps.” Meaning both Camp IV and Camp V.

In Chalcraft summarization of Beckey’s letter for the date of October 24th, Chalcraft writes:

Beckey states, he and Dr Spirig started down for Camp Four, leaving Camp Five intact for a later try should the wind abate.

Beckey, Spirig and Pemba and Chowang left Camp V without taking everything with them, which meant they didn’t bring sleeping bags, sleeping mattresses, tents and oxygen bottles with them. Otherwise Spirig would have used his own sleeping bag and mattress or one of the other three people would have given a sleeping bag and mattress to Spirig at Camp IV.

As the group is descending from Camp V, Dyhrenfurth writes:

"Shortly before 1 P.M. I notice eight men on their way down, four from Camp V, and another four from Camp IV, but ***all tents are still up***!

In other words, by Dyhrenfurth’s remark about the tents still being up at Camp IV and V, he expected Beckey, Spirig, Pemba and Chowang to have taken down the tents and packed everything out from Camp V. And furthermore, George Bell, Dick McGowan, Kancha and Lapka should have taken down the lone undamaged tent at Camp IV too, when they left.

In Dick McGowan’s account in The Mountaineer-1956, even he muddles the meaning of the two words. He writes:

*In a later radio contact, Norman requested Camp 4 and 5 be evacuated. Later that day we abandoned everything at Camps 4 and 5 and began the evacuation.*

Well as it turned out, everything was not abandoned. They also left behind other damaged tents and miscellaneous equipment, along with one standing tent at Camp 4. But they had taken their sleeping bags and mattresses with them.

So, these two climbers and two Sherpas interpreted Dyhrenfurth instructions in a similar way as the group at Camp V did, although unlike the Camp V group they took their sleeping bags and mattresses with them. If the group at Camp IV had taken the remaining undamaged tent with them, then Beckey, Pemba and Chowang would have been forced to continue their descend by somehow dragging Spirig past Camp IV to Camp III, in strong winds over difficult terrain, as nighttime approached. Read Dyhrenfurth’s description for the next day, to get an idea about the difficulties Beckey, Pemba and Chowang would have had to deal with. Spirig was at least able to walk on a tight leash, but the previous day he was dragged into the tent at Camp IV:

“Beckey goes ahead, leading Spirig over the steep stretches. Senn follows immediately behind, holding back on very short rope, and I follow as anchor man. After a very slow descent with many stops to give Bruno a chance to rest, we reach the safety of Camp III.”

It is obvious that there was misunderstanding between Dyhrenfurth and the groups of people at both Camp V and Camp IV about what the groups were supposed to take with them when they left the camps.

After Beckey reached Camp III, Dyhrenfurth contacted Beckey and learned about the condition of Spirig and that he was left at Camp IV. Dyhrenfurth wrote the following:

“I reproach him (Beckey) for having left Spirig all alone up there, without sleeping-bags or air mattress! None of us can understand this.”

Dyhrenfurth reacts like he thinks Beckey (and the Sherpas) have a sleeping bag and a mattress to give Spirig, but don’t!

From this event, Dyhrenfurth developed the opinion that Beckey “was not an expedition man”, and lacked confidence in him because he had left Spirig at Camp IV without a sleeping bag and enough warm clothing. **[1]**

Beckey’s explanation was: ‘You can’t always act rationally on these trips. It’s like guerilla warfare up there.’ **[5]**

I think Beckey acted rationally.

I think it is unjust for Dyhrenfurth to put the blame on Beckey for leaving Spirig alone at Camp IV without a sleeping bag and mattress, along with not enough clothing. There was a misunderstanding between Dyhrenfurth and the the people at Camps IV and V, on whether they were supposed to leave things behind at the two camps for another attempt, or to remove everything from the two camps. This resulted in there being no sleeping bags, mattresses, extra clothing or tents being brought down by the four people from Camp V and the people departing Camp IV took sleeping bags and mattresses with them, but thank goodness left an erect tent. Nothing was available to give Spirig when he was left alone at Camp IV.

Being as eight people reacted opposite to what Dyhrenfurth wanted done, I put the blame on him for poor communication skills. Furthermore, Dyhrenfurth’s written account repeatedly mentions logistical problems – not getting enough supplies and equipment to the higher camps. When it came time to rescue Spirig, the rescue party lacked oxygen bottles! (Plus, they were plagued with problems with the oxygen sets throughout the expedition.) Surely bad weather was a significant contributing factor. But as leader of the expedition it was his responsibility to manage the logistic problem. Dyhrenfurth kept sending climbers higher up the route in bad weather and poor climbing conditions without the ability to properly re-supply them. This problem in combination with unclear orders to the climbers and Sherpas, put Beckey, Pemba and Chowang in a terrible dilemma that nearly cost the life of Spirig.

**Senn’s solo attempt on Lhotse**

In the summary of Dyhrenfurth’s account between October 10-20 that I wrote about above, I mentioned Ernst Senn’s solo attempt on Lhotse. I didn’t enter Dyhrenfurth’s full written account in the article about this attempt, but I referenced the Endnotes for a link to the full account. I’ll expand on this attempt below, as another example of Dyhrenfurth’s leadership skills.

Between October 10-14, Spöhel, Senn and two Sherpas get hammered by strong winds. On the 15th they made an attempt on the summit, but they were unsuccessful when Spöhel became exhausted and Senn’s oxygen set fails, plus they cannot find the cached oxygen bottles buried by snow.

Now I include a direct quote from Dyhrenfurth.

“But Senn could not bear the thought of having to give up again, and he decided to make a try for it alone!”

Spöhel and the two Sherpas retreat to Camp IV and Senns remains at Camp V, alone!

Senn makes this decision despite a limited number of oxygen bottles, with an oxygen system which is unreliable and limited amount of food and fuel. Dyhrenfurth just sits back and lets Senn decide to do this.

And Dyhrenfurth accuses Beckey of not being an expedition man, in other words only thinking about his own ambitions and goals. What about Senn?

But Dyhrenfurth only has words of phrase and sympathy for Senn.

To paraphrase Dyhrenfurth’s criticism of Beckey,  I reproach Dyhrenfurth for allowing Senn to make the decision to stay alone at Camp V with an unreliable oxygen system, lack of oxygen bottles, food and fuel. Dyhrenfurth should have interceded and ordered the whole group to descent to Camp IV. I don’t understand this. Senn is trapped at Camp V for four days by violent weather and barely makes it down to Camp IV alive.

What would have been Dyhrenfurth’s reaction, if Senn had died alone at Camp V or during the descent?

Or what would have been Dyhrenfurth’s reaction if Beckey had tried a reckless solo attempt to reach the summit of Lhotse!

Yet another example of Dyhrenfurth’s poor judgement and leadership skills.

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**Mount Everest: 1963**

Norman Dyhrenfurth had been trying for several years to get a permit to climb Mt Everest. Dyhrenfurth permission for an American Expedition to Everest in 1961 was not accepted, and 1962 had been reserved for an Indian team. Dyhrenfurth re-applied for 1963, and finally on May 10, 1961, permission was granted. **[6]**

Climbers had to apply for the expedition to Dyhrenfurth, by including a biography, vital statistics, their climbing record and photo. If accepted, the person was expected to pay their share of expenses, a “token” fee of $500 (equivalent to $4,250 in the year 2019.). **[7]**

Dyhrenfurth was in Seattle in May 1961, meeting with local climbers to see who was interested in the expedition. Beckey badly wanted to join the 1963 Everest Expedition. But Dyhrenfurth responded “ I just told him, you know I can’t.” **[5]**

The December 1961 edition of Summit Magazine contained an article listing the initial roster of climbing team members for the American Everest Expedition. Among the team members were John Rupley, Herb Staley and Dick McGowan. The first two climbers were frequent climbing partners of Beckey as was third person Dick McGowan, who had been on the 1955 Lhotse Expedition.

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Left to right: John Rupley, Herb Staley and Dick McGowan.

Summit Magazine, December 1961, *American Attempt on Mt Everest*, 8-9.

Furthermore, McGowan ran a climbing seminar on Mt Rainier and one of the prominent climbers McGowan used to attract clients in the advertisements for his business was Fred Beckey.

A picture containing text

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Summit Magazine. May 1962, 29. Advertisement.

This had to sting Beckey’s pride too, to have climbing partners selected but not him. However, for a variety of reasons, all three of these climbers eventually dropped out of the Everest Expedition.

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**Beckey’s Reaction**

By May 1961, Beckey knew he wasn’t going to be a member of the 1963 American Expedition to Mt Everest.

I refer to *Chapter 11: Beckey’s Greatest Climbing Year* on this website for statistical information that supports my claim that it was three-year response by Beckey, not a one-year climbing bender.

In the category of the largest number of successful climbs in a year during Beckey’s career, see the table included below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number** | **Rank** |
| 1963 | 50 | 2nd |
| 1961 | 41 | 3rd |
| 1962 | 38 | 4th |

As stated in Chapter 5, *Turning Points and Trends* on this website, the era of first ascents had been surpassed by the era of new routes for Fred Beckey. None of these three years had a large number of first ascents. But see below for a table showing largest number of new routes by Beckey during his career.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number** | **Rank** |
| 1962 | 23 | 1st |
| 1963 | 22 | 2nd |
| 1961 | 18 | 5th Tied |

See below for a table showing the category for the combination of first ascents, new routes and first winter ascents in a year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number** | **Rank** |
| 1962 | 31 | 2nd |
| 1963 | 27 | 3rd Tied |
| 1961 | 20 | 7th Tied |

Again, referring to Chapter 11 on this website, the sum of the three “Quality or Difficulty of Climbs” categories, see the table below for the rankings for these three years.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Points** | **Rank** |
| 1961 | 32 | 1st |
| 1963 | 28 | 2nd |
| 1962 | 20 | 3rd |

And finally, see below for a table showing the rankings of Beckey’s Greatest Climbing Year.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Rank** |
| 1962 | 1st |
| 1963 | 3rd |
| 1961 | 5th |

In an *Outside* magazine article titled “Stoned”, Beckey responded to the question about being left off the American Expedition to Mt Everest in 1963 as follows:

*It was a big thing.*

For emphasis I separated the previous statement, from the remainder of Beckey response.

*But I didn’t take it too hard. It didn’t affect my life. Maybe it’s like some girl you’re interested in and it doesn’t work out and you get involved with somebody else and you forget about her.* **[1]**

A former girlfriend Sybil Goman stated:

"He took that (Everest) rejection really badly," **[8]**

If Dyhrenfurth didn’t want Beckey on the American Expedition to climb Mt Everest in 1963, because Beckey was arrogant, not a team player, caused friction, etc., that’s fine. Then don’t accept his application.

In climbing, especially on a long expedition with a large number of diverse people, there is a something called “group dynamics” which comes into play. Poor group dynamics has led to failure on more than one occasion, which is rarely written about in trip reports. As leader of the expedition, it was Dyhrenfurth’s right to make the decision to refuse Beckey’s application on those grounds. But don’t use the Spirig incident as a reason to reject Beckey’s application.

In conclusion, the statistics show that Fred Beckey didn’t wake up on New Year’s Day 1963 and suddenly decided to react to not being selected for the Mt Everest Expedition. The data shows it began in 1961, when Dyhrenfurth didn’t select him for the American team.

**Endnotes**

**[1]** [Nyberg, Justin. *Stoned*, Outside Magazine. September 14, 2010.](https://www.outsideonline.com/1909586/stoned)

**[2]** [Dyhrenfurth, Norman G. *Lhotse 1955*. American Alpine Journal. 1956. 17.](http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12195600700/Lhotse-1955)

**[3]** *Seattle Post Intelligencer.* November 21, 1955, 2. “Seattle Mountaineer Bares Near-Tragedy.”

**[4]** The Mountaineers Journal-1956, 84. “1955 International Himalayan Expedition”. By Richard E. McGowan.

**[5]** Groff, Ben. *Mountain Man: Climbing Legend Fred Beckey*. The Sunday Oregonian Magazine. October 23, 1988. 11.

**[6]** Dyhrenfurth, Norman G. *Americans on Everest, 1963.* Alpine Journal 1964, Volume 69, No. 38. 1.

**[7]** *Norman Dyhrenfurth letter to Dee Molenaar regarding the 1963 American Mount Everest Expedition, October 12, 1961*. University of Washington Special Collection Library. Pacific Northwest Historical Documents. Accession No. 4578-002, Box 1.

**[8]** *Seattle Post Intelligencer.* March 7, 2003. “Icon to some, legendary climber Beckey still obscure to many.”

Author: Dave Creeden.

**Appendix**

A close up of a newspaper

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*Seattle Post Intelligencer*, November 21, 1955, 2.