

EXPEDITION NEWS

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June 2012 – Volume Nineteen, Number Six

EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 18th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

EXPEDITION UPDATE

Movie Focuses on Freediving Tragedy

James Cameron is handing *The Dive* over to Martin Campbell, award-winning director of multiple James Bond adventures, including the winning franchise reboot *Casino Royale* and last summer's *Green Lantern*.

Based on factual events, *Dive* tells the story of husband-and-wife freedivers Francisco “Pipin” Ferraras and Audrey Mestre. The two would dive to unimaginable depths on a single breath. But during an effort to break her world record, Audrey lost her life.

Cameron has been circling the story for some time now, even shopping a treatment that had Salma Hayek in the Audrey role at one point. The *Titanic* filmmaker later recorded a dive Ferraras completed in his wife's honor.

20th Century Fox will distribute *The Dive*, with Campbell directing from a screenplay by J. Michael Straczynski (*Changling*, *Underworld: Awakening*) which will take its cues from Ferraras' 2004 autobiography *The Dive: A Story of Love and Obsession*.

ESPN is also planning a major documentary on the Audrey Mestre tragedy and freediving in 2013.

EN personally witnessed Mestre, then 28, die while freediving on Oct. 12, 2002, approximately 2-1/2 miles off the southeast coast of the Dominican Republic (see *EN*, November 2002). She was attempting to officially break the world freediving record with a dive of 557.7 feet (170 m), a depth she achieved unofficially during a practice dive three days before.

Mestre was attempting to break the record in the “No Limits” category, which involves riding a weighted sled down the length of a vinyl-coated stainless steel cable.

EVEREST ROUND-UP

Everest Logjam Spurs Call for Action

We always know when things are getting out of hand on Mount Everest when even our own parents call from a Florida retirement community to say, “did you hear about the traffic jam on Everest?”

It’s May and that means Everest gets into the news again, but usually for all the wrong reasons. In a single day late last month, a near-record number of climbers reached the summit from the Nepali side as the season ended. The photo of climbers queuing up was, frankly, sad to see.

According to *The Times UK* (June 4), this year was the busiest in the 59 years since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first conquered the summit. Alan Arnette, an Everest summiteer and blogger who monitored the Everest climbing season on www.alanarnette.com, said that 548 people climbed over a four-day period this year, an average of 137 a day. That was 52 per cent more crowded than 2007, the next busiest season on record when 633 people climbed in seven days – a 90 per day average.

The spring mountaineering season, which lasts from March 1 to May 31, is the most popular season to climb the Himalayan peaks in Nepal. The record number of ascents in one day is 169 set on May 23, 2010, according to German statistician Eberhard Jurgalski.

This season Arnette calculated a 57.93% summit to attempt rate. At 10 deaths this season, that figures out to be a 1.82% summit to death ratio.

The high death toll, pictures of hundreds of climbers ascending in “traffic jams” on fixed lines, and tales of rubbish, human waste and bodies strewn across the mountainside, have provoked criticism that – far from its glorious image as the peak of human achievement – scaling Everest is becoming a commercialized tourist attraction, in which crowds of often inexperienced climbers pay up to US\$110,000 to be taken to the top by sherpas, often with little regard for their own safety, or that of others. This has led to calls for better safety measures to end traffic jams near the summit.

American Mark Jenkins, a mountaineer who reached the summit with a team from the National Geographic Society late last month (see below), said that “a full 25 per cent” of those attempting Everest this year lacked proper experience or training.

“This is a mortal sport, not tennis or bowling,” he tells *The Times’* Robin Pagnamenta. “You make one mistake, the mountain might forgive you, but if you make two or three you die.

“Experienced climbers can make their own way and get away from the crowds,” said Jenkins, who has called for stricter rules on issuing permits to limit the numbers. “But for

those that have to stay on the fixed lines (ropes put up by sherpas at the start of the season), everyone has to move at the speed of the slowest person."

Jenkins said the problem was fueled by the type of people that Everest attracts.

"Many of them are very successful in other areas of their life – banking, real estate, whatever. They are type-As who come to prove themselves, and often their attitude is, 'I paid so much money I deserve to get to the top.'"

But he has little sympathy for those who ignore the warnings, then get into difficulty. "The mountain didn't kill these people; they killed themselves," he tells *The Times*.

"In many cases, the sherpas told the client, 'You are moving too slowly; you are going to die' and the client refused - and they died. They viewed the summit as more important than their own life."

On May 26, approximately 150 people reached the top, according to tourism ministry official Tilak Pandey, a week after four deaths on the South side led to calls for better safety measures to end traffic jams.

Nepali officials shrug, "The climbers have received the permits to climb within specific dates. We cannot say who gets to get to the summit on which dates because of the unpredictable weather. When weather clears up they all want to benefit," Nepal's Tourism Ministry spokesman, Bal Krishna Ghimire, tells the *Associated Press*.

Long-time Explorers Club member Frederick P. Selby, author of *Postcards from Kathmandu* (Vajra Publications, 2008), shakes his head over the whole situation:

"Time was when the government of Nepal issued permits to two Everest expeditions each climbing season. Dick Bass, first to complete the 'Seven Summits' about 30 years ago, was unable to secure a permit but a permitted Norwegian expedition enabled him to climb Everest on their permit."

Selby continues, "Today the fee charged by Nepal is \$70,000 per expedition, usually divided among seven to 10 expedition members. Forgotten is the clogged path to the summit – the fees charged matter to this nation, one of the world's poorest countries.

"Climbers are aware of this and proceed at their own risk, aided by the dozens of guiding agencies. Deaths will continue as a result," he warns ominously.

What to do about this? Tourism Ministry spokesman Bal Krishna Ghimire, tells *AP* that eventually the government plans to set up a seasonal office at Base Camp equipped with doctors, weather experts and security personnel. Ghimire said they also have plans to give each climber a tracking device.

For another perspective on Everest 2012, see the related story in this month's *EN Focus*.

In other Everest news:

- **Oldest Woman** – Tamae Watanabe of Japan has become the oldest ever woman to summit. On May 19, she reached the peak at the age of 73 years and 180 days from the northern side on the Tibet-China border with Asian Trekking's International Everest Spring 2012 Expedition. She created the new record by breaking her own record – she previously summited Everest in 2002 at the age of 63. This was her sixth summit of an 8000 m-plus peak.

The oldest Everest climber is 76-year-old Min Bahadur Sherchan of Nepal, who ascended in 2008.

- **American Record-Breakers** – Rainier Mountaineering Inc. (RMI) guides Dave Hahn and Melissa Arnot established new records on the mountain. It was Hahn's 14th summit, breaking his own record with the most summits of Mt. Everest of any non-Sherpa. The climb also marked Arnot's fourth summit of the mountain, setting a new record with the most summits of Mt. Everest of any American woman. The record number of summits for any human is 21, set in 2011 by Apa Sherpa, of Draper, Utah.

Arriving in Nepal at the end of March, Hahn and Arnot made the 12-day trek into Base Camp. After close to a month of climbing establishing successive camps, Arnot, Hahn and their team made a summit bid on May 26, reaching the top at 9:31 a.m. local time.

Hahn is a renowned mountaineer and guide and is widely regarded as the preeminent high-altitude mountain guide who also holds the record for the most number of summits of Antarctica's Vinson Massif. Arnot is an accomplished climber and guide and a preeminent female American mountaineer.

- **National Geographic-North Face Climbers Summit With Anker** – A six-person National Geographic-North Face team summited last month, despite unrelenting winds and the aforementioned crowds of climbers. And in a surprise twist, the sixth member of the team – group leader and The North Face athlete Conrad Anker – summited a day later despite pulling out earlier due to exhaustion, according to www.nationalgeographic.com (May 26, 2012).

The group that summited via the well-traveled Southeast Ridge also included magazine writer Mark Jenkins, and The North Face athletes Hilaree O'Neill, Kris Erickson, Sam Elias, and Emily Harrington.

The summit attempt was only the most visible part of a wider expedition designed to answer scientific questions about Everest geology and human health.

At the summit, the team collected rock samples for a Montana State University project that aims, in part, to better understand the mineral composition of Everest and to get new measurements for the height of the mountain. The team also participated in Mayo Clinic research into the connection between high-altitude acclimatization and heart failure. Both institutions were official expedition partners.

As part of the expedition, MSU created an accompanying online science curriculum focused on topics such as geology, glaciology, and climate change.

Hear Anker's interview with NPR by logging onto: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/05/28/153846980/at-end-of-climbing-season-a-reflection-on-everest-traffic-jam>

- **Please Make It Stop** – The climbing madness in the Himalayas this season included a music group claiming the highest-ever concert on 6654 m (21,831-ft.) Mera Peak, which is close to Mount Everest and Mount Lhotse.

Only eight of the 10 volunteer musicians from various countries reached the top, while two with altitude sickness did not. Local porters helped carry their three guitars, and a small amplifier fitted with speakers, microphones and a stand. The musicians took turns performing. They even had an audience – 15 other trekkers paid \$10 each to watch the musicians perform for 40 minutes at the summit.

Group leader Oz Bayldon, an Australian living in London, said the group raised £35,000 (approx. \$54,200) for a charity in Nepal that is building an orphanage. Other performers were from England, Scotland, Poland and Denmark.

Bayldon set a previous record for highest musical performance in 2005, performing near Everest Base Camp. But that record was broken two years later.

Guinness World Records currently assigns highest concert honors to Musikkapelle Roggenzell, 10 musicians from Germany and Bolivia, who scaled Mount Acotango in Bolivia to perform at 6069 m (19,911-ft.).

EXPEDITION NOTES

Fighter Plane Discovered in Sahara Desert

A fighter plane from World War II that crashed in the Sahara 70 years ago has been unearthed, and holds clues to a missing pilot.

According to U.K. newspaper accounts, the intact American-made Curtiss Kittyhawk P-40, which had remained untouched since its crash landing in 1942, was discovered by a Polish oil company worker who was exploring a remote region of the Western Desert in Egypt, about 200 miles from the nearest town.

It is believed that the airman, Flight Sergeant Dennis Copping, 24, initially survived the crash because a parachute found at the scene looks to have been used as a makeshift shelter. But no trace of the body was found, leaving experts to believe the pilot walked away from the flight, then walked to his death in a hopeless attempt to find civilization.

A military historian, noting that there would be no reason on earth to have found the plane in the middle of the desert, hailed the find as "a quite incredible time capsule, the aviation equivalent of Tutankhamun's Tomb."

The Canadian website Vintage Wings of Canada said the plane was in "incredible condition," but worried about looters to the site, which happens is on a dangerous smuggling route between Sudan and Libya.

A search is planned to locate the missing pilot's body, but officials don't believe that any remains will be found. Eventually, the aircraft will be moved to London's Royal Air Force Museum.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Humans are an adventurous species. We like to explore and are inspired by journeys into the unknown. Science is not only a discipline of reason but, also, one of romance and passion. Exploration by real people inspires us."

– Stephen Hawking, British theoretical physicist and cosmologist

EXPEDITION FOCUS

Everest 2012 – Easier and More Dangerous Than Ever Going from Zero to Hero in a Day

By Robert M. Anderson
Special to *Expedition News*

Everest is both becoming easier, as evidenced simply by the numbers of people summiting, and it is also becoming potentially more dangerous, with large amounts of people in places that can in no way be considered safe.

Warmer temperatures up high translate to more movement on the glaciers below. More people create build-ups that force people to wait in places where things can hit them, and up higher, burn through their oxygen that once gone, is a quick recipe for disaster. And climbing ropes and anchors, originally designed for holding two or three climbers, now hold 50 or more, as climbers line up on ropes up the Lhotse Face and on up from the South Col to the summit.

The physical holding power of the anchors and ropes on Everest defies logic. A stone cutting them, a misplaced crampon point, an ice axe, too much weight on them or the anchors and they can't be expected to always work.

What's more, crowds of people in avalanche paths, as evidenced this year at Camp I, which badly injured one person, could easily have been far worse.

So as the mountain gets easier, the potential for disaster increases exponentially. Should there be limits, or restrictions, or qualifications required? One of the great things about climbing is that such limitations have never really existed – you can go from zero to hero

in a day. But that doesn't mean it will ever really be easy. And the easier it appears, the more dangerous it will become.

Robert M. Anderson is a guide for Jagged Globe, Sheffield, England, leading successful expeditions over 15 Himalayan seasons to Everest, Cho Oyu, Shishipangma and Makalu. An expedition to Dhaulagiri is planned for 2013. (For more information: robertmadsanderson@gmail.com)

MEDIA MATTERS

“Touristnaut” Accidents: What Then?

Virgin's Richard Branson considers what would happen to the burgeoning space tourism industry if an accident occurs. He tells James M. Clash in the May/June 2012 issue of *Departures magazine*, “If it happened early on, it would be a tough one to overcome. If it happens two or three years into the program, and it's been proven that the program works, then I think it would most likely be able to continue.

“Commercial airlines occasionally have accidents, and it doesn't result in all airlines being grounded, as long as we know what went wrong. You fix the problem and move on,” Branson said.

Over 500 prospective “touristnauts” have committed approximately \$200,000 in advance to fly into space, according to Clash.

How “Lucky Lindy” Got His Name

Last month, famed U.S. astronauts and Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh Foundation board members celebrated the organization's 35th anniversary at The Explorers Club in New York. The foundation was established at the Club in 1977, 50 years after Charles Lindbergh's solo, nonstop Atlantic Ocean crossing. Among the 100 attendees of the \$1,000-per-plate benefit were astronauts Gene Cernan, Jim Lovell, and Neil Armstrong, according to a story by Thomas B. Haines in AOPA Online

Reeve Lindbergh, the aviation pioneer's youngest daughter with wife Anne Morrow Lindbergh, revealed her father's nickname did not come because of his successful Atlantic crossing. Instead, it came from him surviving several aircraft accidents in the years before the crossing. After the crossing, he flew nearly every model of aircraft in existence at the time, she said, often observing from the air the impact that society was having on the environment.

“He wanted to continue progress through technology. He was not a Luddite for the environment. He wanted progress and technology and recognized humans' extraordinary ability to adapt so that we could have both the birds and aircraft – we wouldn't have to choose,” Lindbergh said.

Apollo 11 astronaut and first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, was a co-founder of the

foundation, along with Anne Morrow and other aviation luminaries of the time, such as Jimmy Doolittle. Speaking at the New York event, Armstrong reiterated the passion Lindbergh had for balancing progress with the needs of the environment.

Cernan emphasized that Apollo missions were not the work of individuals, but the result of the efforts of many. “We were the tip of the arrow,” Cernan said, noting that 3,000 to 4,000 people worked on the moon missions.

A big proponent of manned spaceflight, he wondered aloud whether there was a boy or girl in school today who might one day be the astronaut who launches humans to Mars and beyond.

(Read the entire story here: <http://www.aopa.org/aircraft/articles/2012/120523aerospace-luminaries-reflect-on-lindbergh.html>)

The Games Explorers Play

Videogame arts and culture company Kill Screen is passionate about examining the intersection between games, play, and other seats of culture from art to music to design. To that end, they publish a website and a magazine as well as organize events. For their next issue titled, "The Great Outdoors," they're interested in writing about the kinds of videogames explorers play, particularly at base camps. (To participate in the story contact Jamin Warren, jamin@killscreenmedia.com, 347 675 4575, www.killscreenmedia.com).

EXPEDITION MARKETING

“We Are Sherpa”

The Sherpa-run and Sherpa-owned Nepalese gear company, Sherpa Adventure Gear, headquartered in Renton, Wash., chose for the cover of its Fall Winter 2012 catalog a photo of Lakpa Rita Sherpa, who works as a guide and Sirdar for Alpine Ascents International. Lakpa Rita safely made the summit last month for his 16th ascent.

Lakpa was the first Sherpa to climb the Seven Summits a few years ago. The cover photo was taken by Lance Mercer, formerly the official photographer of the band *Pearl Jam*. Purchase of selected company products, such as Polarfleece hats, directly benefit Sherpa families in Nepal. (See the catalog here: <http://db.tt/s8SVNEiN>)

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Jaimie Donovan Youngest-Ever North Pole Record Stands

We were incorrect to state in the May 2012 issue of *Expedition News* that the children of explorers Paul Schurke and Rick Sweitzer set youngest-ever Geographic North Pole records in 1993. They were not precisely at the North Pole. The children were flown out onto the Arctic Ocean to meet their fathers who had dogsledded and skied to the North

Pole. Their plane landed at the spot nearest the Pole that had ice thick and stable enough to support an aircraft. According to a story in the February 13, 1993 *Chicago Tribune*, written by Sweitzer and confirmed by him last month to be correct, that spot was approximately 13 miles from the point Schurke and Sweitzer had determined to be the North Pole.

Our thanks to Jaimie Donovan's father, endurance runner Richard Donovan, for pointing out this error. We were wrong to question the eight-year-old's Guinness World Record.

We confirmed the error after reaching Paul Schurke on May 21, a day after he returned from a dogsled trek across Svalbard Island, located in the Arctic Ocean.

We also regret saying that Jaimie was nicknamed "Captain Tot". That was a name given to her in the headline of the Apr. 10 UK *Daily Mail*. Richard Donovan confirms that it is not her nickname.

We apologize for any misunderstandings this error may have caused.

EDITOR'S NOTE: EXPEDITION NEWS TREKS TO STAMFORD

The offices of *EN* recently relocated one town over to Stamford, Conn., about 40 miles northeast of New York. Our new address is 1281 East Main Street – Box 10, Stamford, CT 06902.

Once settled in our new space, we struggled to find link to exploration in our new adopted home. It wasn't easy. How's this courtesy of the Stamford Historical Society: On June 26, 1930, the citizens of Stamford gave a hero's welcome to native son Harold I. June on the occasion of his return from participation as co-pilot in the Byrd Antarctic Expedition, including the airplane flight over the South Pole on November 29, 1929. He was called at the time, "Stamford's Best Known Traveller."

We figure we're connected to June by just one degree of separation based upon our friendship with one of the expedition's dog drivers, the late Col. Norman D. Vaughan.

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

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Life on Ice – Looking for a great adventure read? Lonnie Dupre's new book *Life on Ice* covers 25 years of arctic exploration, including the world's first circumnavigation of Greenland and One World Expedition, a summer expedition to the North Pole. Over the past two decades, Dupre has lived and traveled with the Arctic Inuit, bringing their culture to the rest of the world. Dupre reveals the secret of survival in a world with quickly shifting weather patterns: respecting nature in all its elements and living in sync with the world we inhabit. The guiding force behind *Life on Ice* is the same as the impetus for Dupre's expeditions: the desire to make a difference in the world.

Life on Ice includes a 32-page color insert of extraordinary Arctic images, maps and is autographed. Order now through the Lonnie Dupre Store. <http://lonniedupre.wazala.com/>)

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Ripped From the Pages of EN – Read the book that was spawned by *Expedition News*. Autographed copies of *You Want to Go Where? – How to Get Someone to Pay for the Trip of Your Dreams* (Skyhorse Publishing) – are available to readers for the discounted price of \$14.99 plus \$2.89 s & h (international orders add \$9.95 s & h). If you have a project that is bigger than yourself – a trip with a purpose – learn how it's possible to generate cash or in-kind (gear) support. Written by *EN* editor Jeff Blumenfeld, it is based upon three decades helping sponsors select the right exploration projects to support. Payable by PayPal to blumassoc@aol.com, or by check to *Expedition News*, 1281 East Main Street – Box 10, Stamford, CT 06902

EXPEDITION NEWS is published by Blumenfeld and Associates, Inc., 1281 East Main Street – Box 10, Stamford, CT 06902 USA. Tel. 203 655 1600, editor@expeditionnews.com. Editor/publisher: Jeff Blumenfeld. Assistant editor: Jamie Gribbon. ©2012 Blumenfeld and Associates, Inc. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1526-8977. Subscriptions: US\$36/yr. available by e-mail only. Credit card payments accepted through www.paypal.com. Read **EXPEDITION NEWS** at www.expeditionnews.com. Enjoy the *EN* blog at www.expeditionnews.blogspot.com.