

St Aiden's Homeschool



Footsteps on the Road to Learning



Biography
Sir Edmund Percival Hillary



www.staidenshomeschool.com
Donnette E Davis

Sir Edmund Percival Hillary KG, ONZ, KBE (20 July 1919 – 11 January 2008) was a New Zealand mountaineer and explorer. On 29 May 1953 at the age of 33, he and Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay became the first climbers known to have reached the summit of Mount Everest. They were part of the ninth British expedition to Everest, led by John Hunt.

Hillary became interested in mountaineering while in secondary school, making his first major climb in 1939, reaching the summit of Mount Ollivier. He served in the RNZAF as a navigator during World War II. Before the successful expedition in 1953 to Everest, he'd been part of a reconnaissance expedition to the mountain in 1951 and an unsuccessful attempt to climb Cho Oyu in 1952. As part of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition he reached the South Pole overland in 1958. He'd later also travel to the North Pole.

Following his ascent of Everest he devoted much of his life to helping the Sherpa people of Nepal through the Himalayan Trust, which he founded. Through his efforts many schools and hospitals were built in this remote region of Nepal.

Youth

Hillary was born to Percival Augustus Hillary and Gertrude Hillary, née Clark, in Auckland, New Zealand, on 20 July 1919. His family moved to Tuakau (south of Auckland) in 1920, after his father (who served at Gallipoli) was allocated land there. His grandparents were early settlers in northern Wairoa in the mid 19th century after emigrating from Yorkshire, England.

Hillary was educated at Tuakau Primary School and then Auckland Grammar School. He was initially smaller than his peers there and very shy so he took refuge in his books and daydreams of a life filled with adventure. His daily train journey to and from high school was over two hours each way, during which he regularly used the time to read. He gained confidence after he learned to box. At 16 his interest in climbing was sparked during a school trip to Mount Ruapehu. Though gangly at 6 ft 5 in (195cm) and uncoordinated, he found that he was physically strong and had greater endurance than many of his tramping companions. He studied mathematics and science at The University of Auckland, and in 1939 completed his first major climb, reaching the summit of Mount Ollivier, near Mt. Cook in the Southern Alps.

World War II

Upon the outbreak of World War II Hillary applied to join the air force, but withdrew the application before it was considered because he was "harassed by [his] religious conscience". Following the introduction of conscription on the outbreak of war in the Pacific, in 1943 Hillary joined the RNZAF as a navigator and served on Catalina flying boats. In 1945 he was sent to Fiji and to the Solomon Islands where he was badly burned in a boating accident, after which he was repatriated to New Zealand.

Shipton was named as leader but was replaced by Hunt. Hillary considered pulling out, but both Hunt and Shipton talked him into remaining. Hillary was intending to climb with Lowe but Hunt named two teams for the assault: Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans; and Hillary and Tenzing. Hillary therefore made a concerted effort to forge a

working friendship with Tenzing. From there the following effort was relatively simple. They reached Everest's 29,028 ft (8,848 m) summit, the highest point on earth, at 11:30 am.

They spent only about 15 minutes at the summit. They looked for evidence of the 1924 Mallory expedition, but found none. Hillary took the famous photo of Tenzing posing with his ice-axe, but since Tenzing had never used a camera, Hillary's ascent went unrecorded. The two had to take care on the descent after discovering that drifting snow had covered their tracks, complicating the task of retracing their steps. The first person they met was Lowe, who'd climbed up to meet them with hot soup. bronze statue of "Sir Ed" was installed outside The Hermitage hotel at Mt Cook village, New Zealand, in 2003. Two Antarctic features are named after Hillary. The *Hillary Coast's* a section of coastline south of Ross Island and north of the Shackleton Coast. It's formally recognised by New Zealand, the United States of America and Russia. The *Hillary Canyon*, an undersea feature in the Ross Sea appears on the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans, which's published by the International Hydrographic Organization.

In 1974, Folkways Records released *Interview with Sir Edmund Hillary: Mountain Climbing* which included his thoughts on the Everest Expedition and the Abominable Snowman.

Private life

Hillary married Louise Mary Rose on 3 September 1953, soon after the ascent of Everest. A shy man, he relied on his future mother-in-law to propose on his behalf. They'd three children: Peter (1954), Sarah (1955) and Belinda (1959-1975). Hillary married June Mulgrew, the widow of his close friend Peter Mulgrew, on 21 December 1989. His son Peter Hillary has also become a climber, summiting Everest in 1990. In April 2003 Peter and Jamling Tenzing Norgay (son of Tenzing; Tenzing himself had died in 1986) climbed Everest as part of a 50th anniversary celebration. Hillary had six grandchildren, altogether.

He spent most of his life (when not away on expeditions) living in a property on Remuera Road in Auckland City.

He was also known for liking to read adventure and science fiction novels, especially in his retirement.

Australian mountaineer Adam Darragh in turn considered Hillary's criticism of Inglis and his team as too harsh, and Inglis himself, while maintaining that he remained on good terms with Hillary after the incident, noted that Sharp was "almost frozen solid" and "effectively dead" when the team found him in the difficult terrain on their descent.

Death


On 11 January 2008, Hillary died of heart failure at the Auckland City Hospital at around 9 am NZDT (10 January at 20:00 UTC) at the age of 88. Hillary's death was announced by New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark at around 11:20 am. She stated that his passing was a "profound loss to New Zealand". His death was recognised by the lowering of flags to half-mast on all Government and public buildings and at Scott Base

in Antarctica. Actor and adventurer Brian Blessed, who attempted to climb Everest three times, described Sir Edmund as a "kind of titan". He was in hospital at the time of his death but was expected to come home that day according to his family. The local press emphasized Hillary's humble and congenial personality and his life of hard work.

In tribute Claire Harvey wrote in the 12 January 2008 New Zealand Herald "And for New Zealanders, Sir Ed was everything a good bastard ought to be - modest and humorous, brave and compassionate, and just grouchy enough to remind us he never sought, nor particularly enjoyed, adulation."

After Hillary's death the Green Party proposed a new public holiday for 20 July or the Monday nearest to it. Renaming mountains after Hillary was also proposed. The Mt Cook Village's Hermitage Hotel, the Sir Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre and Alpine Guides, proposed a renaming of Mount Ollivier, the first mountain climbed by Hillary. The family of Arthur Ollivier, for whom the mountain's named, are against such a renaming.

Funeral

A state funeral was held for Hillary on 22 January 2008, after which his body was cremated. The first part of this funeral was on 21 January when Hillary's casket was taken into Holy Trinity Cathedral to lie in state. On 29 February 2008, in a private ceremony, Hillary's ashes were scattered in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf as he'd desired. The funeral's available to listen to in several parts, along with a lot more audio relating to Sir Edmund Hillary at Radio New Zealand Special Features : Sir Edmund Hillary - A Tribute  On 2 April 2008, a service of thanksgiving was held in his honour at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. It was attended by the Queen (but not the Duke of Edinburgh owing to a chest infection) and New Zealand dignitaries including Prime Minister Helen Clark. Sir Edmund's family and family members of Tenzing Norgay attended as well, many of whom spoke about their memories of the great mountaineer. Gurkha soldiers from Nepal, a country Sir Edmund Hillary held much affection for, stood guard outside the ceremony.

Tribute

There've been many calls for lasting tributes to Sir Edmund Hillary. The first major public tribute has been by way of the "Summits for Ed" tribute tour organised by the Sir Edmund Hillary foundation (www.summitsfored.org.nz). This tribute tour went from Bluff at the bottom of the South Island to Cape Reinga at the tip of the North Island, visiting 39 towns and cities along the way. In each venue school children and members of the public were invited to join together to climb a significant hill or site in their area to show their respect for Hillary. Public were also invited to bring small rocks or pebbles that'd special significance to them, that'd be collected and included in a memorial to Hillary at the base of Mt Ruapehu in the grounds of the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre. Any funds donated during the tour are to be used by the foundation to sponsor young New Zealanders on outdoor courses to continue the values that Hillary espoused. Over 10,000 members of the public attended these "Summit" climbs.

On 11 January 2009 at 9am the New Zealand duo, "The Kiwis" performed their tribute song "Hillary 88" in front of the Beehive in Wellington. This has been recorded as the official world memorial song for Sir Edmund Hillary with the endorsement of Lady Hillary. The band members were Dean Ward and George Watson of Levin New Zealand.

On 23 October 2008, it was announced that all future England vs New Zealand rugby test matches will be played for the Hillary Shield named in honour of Sir Edmund. The shield was contested for the first time on 29 November 2008 at Twickenham Stadium, and was presented to the winning team, the All Blacks, by Lady Hillary.

Publications

Books written by Hillary include:

- *High Adventure* (1955), Oxford University Press (Paperback) ISBN 1932302026
- *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* (1955), Oxford University Press (Paperback) ISBN 0195167341
- *East of Everest - An Account of the New Zealand Alpine Club Himalayan Expedition to the Barun Valley in 1954*, with George Lowe (1956), E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc. ASIN B000EW84UM
- *No Latitude for Error* (1961), Hodder & Stoughton. ASIN B000H6UVP6.
- *The New Zealand Antarctic Expedition* (1959), R.W. Stiles, printers. ASIN B0007K6D72.
- *The crossing of Antarctica; the Commonwealth Transantarctic Expedition, 1955-1958* with Sir Vivian Fuchs (1958). Cassell ASIN B000HJGZ08
- *High in the thin cold air; the story of the Himalayan Expedition, led by Sir Edmund Hillary, sponsored by World Book Encyclopedia*, with Desmond Doig (1963) ASIN B00005W121
- *Schoolhouse in the Clouds* (1965) ASIN B00005WRBB
- *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win* (1975) Hodder & Stoughton General Division ISBN 0340212969
- *From the Ocean to the Sky: Jet Boating Up the Ganges* Ulverscroft Large Print Books Ltd (November 1980) ISBN 0-7089-0587-0
- *Two Generations* with Peter Hillary (1984) Hodder & Stoughton Ltd ISBN 0340354208
- *Ascent: Two Lives Explored: The Autobiographies of Sir Edmund and Peter Hillary* (1992) Paragon House Publishers ISBN 1557784086
- *View from the Summit: The Remarkable Memoir by the First Person to Conquer Everest* (2000) Pocket ISBN 0743400674

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Cascades
3202
KwaZulu-Natal
Republic of South Africa
www.staidenshomeschool.com