

How Everest was humbled this day in '53

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George Mallory, one of the most famous climbers of all time, who lost his life in 1924 in an attempt on Mount Everest was once asked why he wanted to climb Everest. His reply was: "Because it's there". Yes, the very fact that the mighty Everest exists with its head high, has challenged and attracted hundreds of dare-devil mountaineers from various parts of the world. Climbers have come from far and near, from U.S. and U.S.S.R., from China and India, from Germany and England, from Japan and Czechoslovakia, almost from every nook and corner of the world. And although Everest has been climbed 26 times, it still remains the ultimate challenge to the mountaineers. It was the climax of decades of dreams, delicate research, invaluable human sacrifices and ingenious labour when on May 29, 25 years ago, the feet of Tenzing Norway a shy, simple and ordinary Sherpa, touched down on the white snow-capped beautiful summit of the great and mighty Everest—and for the first time in history human beings jubilantly gazed upon their own globe from the highest point.

Mount Everest, a peak on the crest of the Himalayan Range, is the highest mountain on Earth. It rises to a height of about five and a half miles above sea level. This mountain in the Himalayan Range lies on the frontiers of Tibet and Nepal, north of India. Rising above the Himalayas, on the undermarked Nepal-Tibet border, its geographical position is 28° N, 87° E. Three barren ridges—the South East, North East and West—culminate in two summits at 29,028 ft. and 28,700 ft. Surveyors agree that the highest peak of Mt. Everest is more than 29,000 ft. high, but disagree on its exact height. A British Government Survey in the middle 1800s set the height at 29,002 ft. The 1954 Indian Govt. Survey set the present official height at 29,028 ft. But a widely used unofficial figure is 29,141 ft.

Until a heart-beat of history ago much of this mighty mountain was a mystery. Because of its commanding size and height, Everest was known in the Tibetan language as Chomolungma, "Goddess Mother of World", and the Nepalese called it "Sagarmatha". Its identity

as the height point on the earth's surface was not recognised, however, until 1852 when the Governmental Survey of India established that fact. In 1865 the mountain—previously referred to as Peak XV—was renamed after a British official Sir George Everest, who was Surveyor General of India from 1823 to 1843. Incidentally it, was Sir Everest who developed a device called the mathematical spheroid for measuring the heights of mountains.

Everest has been climbed 26 times by 67 persons, including two women, but the task is so difficult and hazardous that the 45 attempts made so far have claimed 47 lives—the most in any Himalayan climb. Only a few days

join today the historic celebration.

Attempts to climb Everest began with the opening of the Tibetan route in 1920. Many a climber tried to scale the "Top of the World" but avalanches, crevasses and stormy winds, combined with extreme steepness and lack of oxygen in the higher altitudes made Everest extremely difficult to climb. Seven successive attempts on the Northeast Ridge (1921-38) as well as three missions up the Southeast Ridge (1951-52) failed because of the combined difficulties caused by cold arid air, high winds, difficult terrain treacherous gaps and high altitudes. More than thirty years passed but Everest remained unconquered

histicated instruments and appliances. The selection of members was simply A-1. Re-nowned climbers like Sir John Hunt (the leader of the expedition) and Edmund Hillary and veteran Sherpas like Tenzing Norgay were included in the team. Open and closed-circuit oxygen systems especially insulated boots clothing and portable radio equipments were used by the climbers.

The expedition left Kathmandu on March 10, 1953. It approached Everest from the South side—which most earlier parties had considered unclimbable. As the climbers advanced up the slopes, they set up a series of camps, each with fewer members. Eight camps were established on the route that was taken up the Khumbu icefall and Glacier to the west and the face of Lhotse to the South column, a rocky edge at 26,200 ft. The last camp, one small tent was established at 27,900 ft. From there, on March 29, 1953 Tenzing Norgay the great Sherpa and Edmund Hillary launched the final ascent. The task was extremely difficult, but the determination still stronger. The tension was high and Tenzing very naturally went on asking himself how much longer and how much further the path would be. Slowly, silently and steadily they ascended the Southern Ridge, past South peak. Each step had to be carefully watched each breath to be counted. The climbing was very steep now. There were only humps of rock or snow and often mixture of both. Breathing, which had never been easy at such an high altitude, became even more difficult.

They gasped for breath and each step was now a grind—the humps dulated endlessly and the slope led on and on. If there was simply no end. And, then, suddenly there were no more little humps. Only a white little dome was there curving slightly above them—the Summit of Everest, the Tope of the world!

It was Tenzing Norgay, the child of Himalayas, the Sherpa who dreamt of scaling the mighty Everest even in his childhood who first set foot on the 'Top' at 11-30 a.m. closely followed by Edmund Hillary. The impossible had been made possible! Nature had ultimately bowed down to the dedication and perseverance of human beings Everest had been conquered!



Tenzing and Hillary on top of Mt. Everest on May 29, 1953.

ago, on May 9, this year a two-man team of an Australian expedition reached the tallest peak without the use of oxygen at any stage. The latest successful assault (with the help of oxygen) on the mighty peak was on May 14 by Franz Oppure of Austria. But the first human being to reach the "Top of the world" was Tenzing Norgay of Nepal. He along with Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand achieved the miraculous feat on May 29, 1953. The Ministry of Tourism have very rightly arranged a grand Silver Jubilee Celebration of the first conquest of the world's tallest mountain and about 44 out of the 60 persons who have stood on "The Third Pole" will

it seemed no perseverance, no research, no stamina on earth could enable a man to scale the Summit—the "Goddess Mother of the World" would never allow any human being to set foot on its sacred peak! But to men of spirit the opposition of Nature constituted a challenge which they could not ignore. The greater the difficulty, the more determined they became to overcome it—the peak cannot go unchallenged it has to be conquered, no matter how difficult or dangerous it may be!

In 1953, Royal Geographical Society and the Joint Himalayan Committee of the Alpine Club sponsored an expedition well-equipped with modern and highly sop-