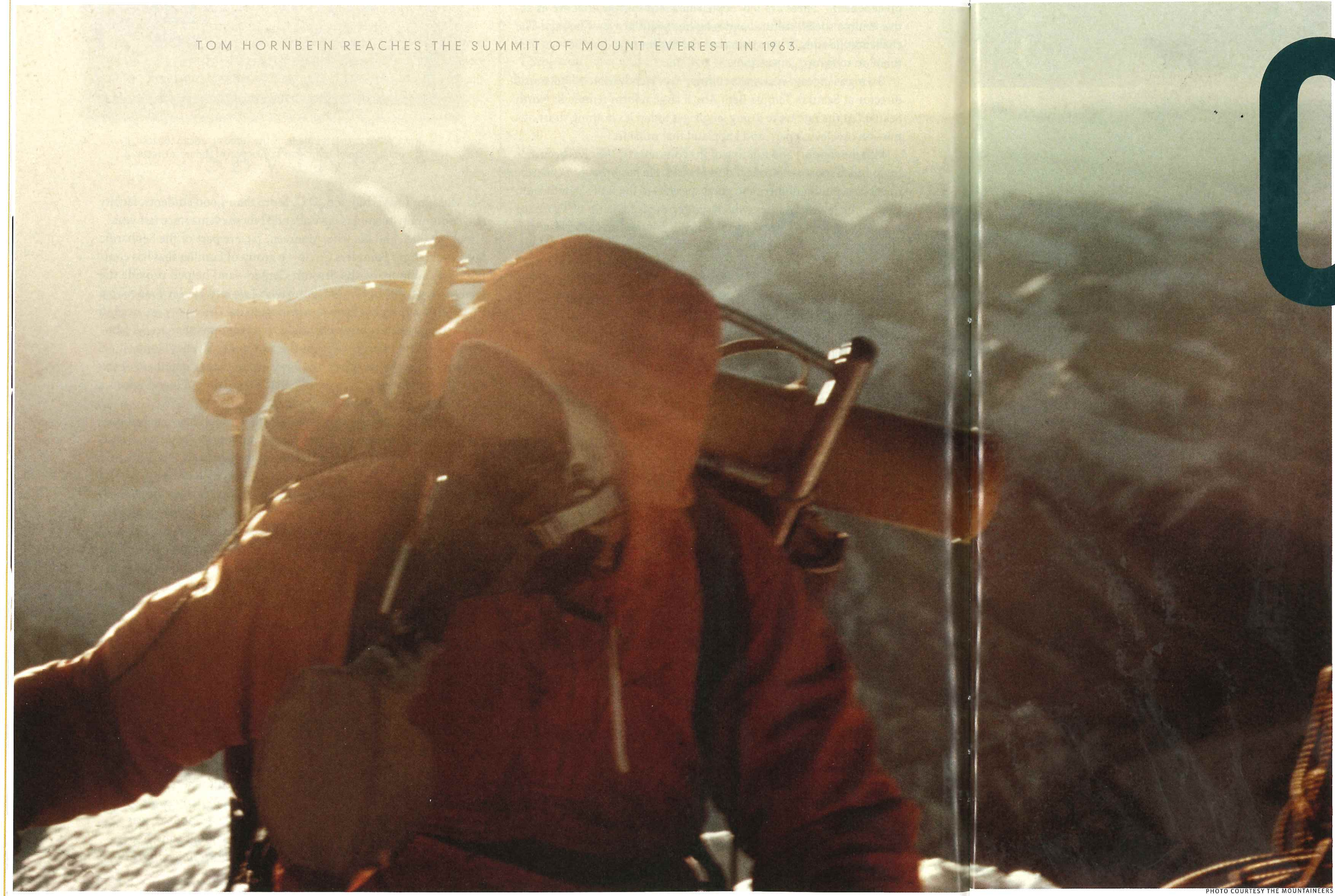


TOM HORNBEIN REACHES THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT EVEREST IN 1963.

PHOTO COURTESY THE MOUNTAINEERS

TO CLIMB

THE ALLURE OF THE MOUNTAINS has drawn many a UW student, parent, graduate, staff and faculty member up into the rarified air. This story highlights a few of those bold, strong and determined enough to push the limits.

BY JULIE GARNER

FOR SOME, 1970 WAS THE YEAR THAT THE Beatles broke up. Or the year of the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. But for Steve Swenson it was the year of the telephone pole. It started in boyhood with Swenson inhaling climbing accounts by mountaineers including Sir Edmund Hillary, the New Zealander who, with Nepalese Tenzing Norgay, first climbed Mount Everest in 1953. Then, when he was 14, Swenson climbed to the top of Mount Rainier with his Boy Scout troop. It whetted his appetite for more. That's how the ordinary Doug-fir telephone pole at the end of the driveway of his family's south Seattle home morphed into a "rock cliff."

Swenson, '77, took pitons (metal spikes climbers use to progress up a rock) that he had ordered by mail and jammed them into the pole as he climbed using a technique he'd learned from a book. Soon, he was 15 feet up the pole and enjoying the view of his neighborhood. The fun ended abruptly when his dad, a Boeing engineer, came home from work in his old brown Studebaker pickup. A spirited conversation between father and son ensued with the elder Swenson beginning the chat by asking, "What kind of a stupid stunt is this?" Swenson convinced his father that the safest course was to "summit" the pole; tie a loop of nylon webbing around the wooden crossbar bolted to it and then rappel to the ground. Swenson considered the experiment worth the punishment and the pole became a foretaste of the joys to come.

These formative experiences would propel Swenson on what has now become a 45-year climbing journey. Swenson has climbed all over the world including in India, Pakistan, the Argentine Patagonia, Nepal and many more countries. In 2012, he and his partners made the first ascent of Sasser Kangri II (7,518 meters)—the second highest unclimbed mountain in the world for which they were awarded the prestigious Piolet D'Or award (French for the 'Golden Ice Axe'), for the most significant climb of the year. He has summited K2 and Everest without oxygen and is

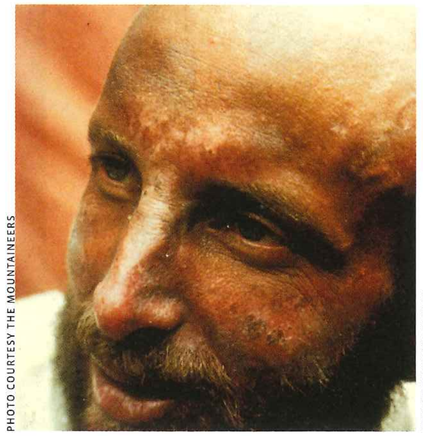
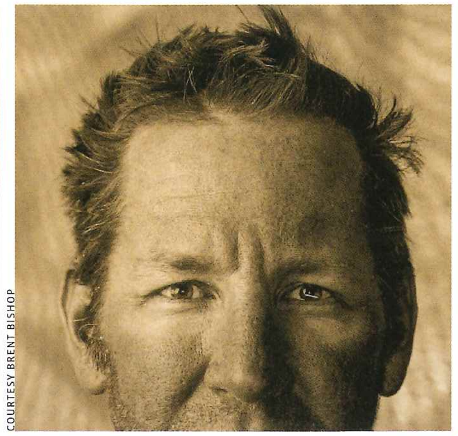


PHOTO COURTESY THE MOUNTAINEERS

TOM HORNBEIN



COURTESY BRENT BISHOP

BRENT BISHOP

COURTESY MEGAN BOND

FRED BECKEY

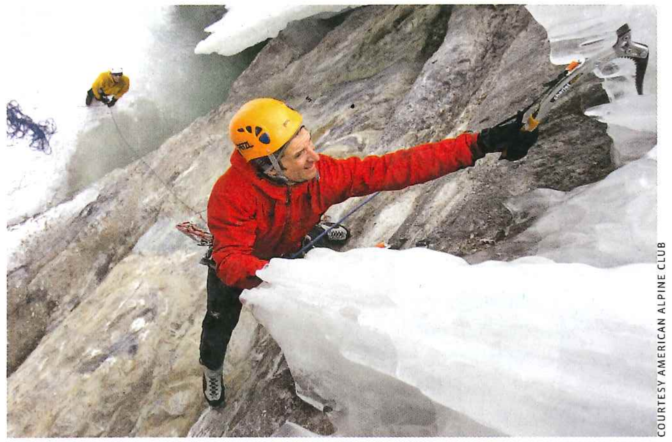
a former president of the prestigious American Alpine Club.

As illustrious as Swenson's career has been, he's just one part of a rich UW climbing legacy. The Pacific Northwest's most storied climbing legend, Fred Beckey, '49, who also got his start climbing with the Boy Scouts, has more first ascents than any other climber in the world. He has climbed and named many of the peaks in the North Cascades. Beckey is also the foremost author of guidebooks about climbing in the Pacific Northwest. Becky, who is 90 and still climbing, writing and giving presentations about his experiences, shunned the trappings of conventional life devoting himself single-mindedly to his climbing passion. In fact, it appears that a degree in business from the UW may be the single most conventional act of Fred Beckey's life. (He said in December, after returning from a climbing trip to China, that he enjoyed his time at the UW, especially "the Hub and the breaks.") He has become a little like Bigfoot, a fabulous creature with many unconfirmed, yet hopeful sightings by Pacific Northwest hikers.

Like Beckey, Kitty Calhoun, '93, has devoted her entire existence to climbing. Material concerns recede in the quest for the next excellent adventure. A self-described former debutante and Southern belle, Calhoun lived out of her Subaru for seven years. Tragically, this lifestyle presents terrifying risks as well. Chad Kellogg, '93, '01, was killed Feb. 14 in a climbing accident in Patagonia. Interviewed via email a few weeks before his death, he told *Columns*, "Although I own a couple of houses, in order to earn enough money to be on expeditions eight months a year I need to live in a tent 250-plus days each year at this point in my life to live my dreams." Kellogg, 42, set the speed record on Mount McKinley (Denali) in June 2003, in 14 hours, 26 minutes. He also set the roundtrip speed record on Rainier in August 2004 at 4 hours, 59 minutes.

Others, such as Swenson, Brent Bishop, '93, and Thomas Hornbein, '57, pursued careers in engineering, business and medicine, respectively, and managed to have families as well. Ed Viesturs, '81, and Calhoun are "professional climbers," each sponsored by a company that sells climbing gear and apparel. Viesturs is a brand ambassador for Eddie Bauer's First Ascent Line and Calhoun represents Patagonia. Kellogg was a brand ambassador for Outdoor Research.

Thomas Hornbein, a physician, followed a different path. He spent 43 years in the Departments of Anesthesiology, and Physiology and Biophysics, serving as chair of Anesthesiology from 1978 to 1993. He also conducted significant research on the effect of oxygen deprivation and the altitude effect on the human brain. Hornbein and Willi Unsoeld, '59, were among the climbing party that saw the first American ascent of Mount Everest; the two climbed what was, and still is, a difficult route up Everest, the West Ridge. Hornbein told *Outside* magazine, "When we went up there we didn't have any idea what we were getting into. We had one Indian Air Force photo—they flew over Everest right after it had been climbed in 1953," he says. The magazine went on to call that climb one of the greatest achievements in American mountaineering. (Unsoeld died during an avalanche on Mount Rainier in 1979.) Hornbein's book, *Everest: The West Ridge*, is a fascinating account of this climb.



COURTESY AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB

STEVE SWENSON

Hornbein, now 83, describes himself as "an amateur climber." Some amateur. He still climbs, albeit more slowly, in Rocky Mountain National Park with Jon Krakauer, author of *Into Thin Air*, and other younger friends who he says are "patient."

Calhoun, who received her master's degree from the UW Foster School of Business, lives in Moab, Utah. For the past 15 years she has volunteered with Chicks with Picks, an organization that promotes self-reliance by teaching technical climbing skills to women. Calhoun is the first woman ever to reach the top of Makalu, the fifth-highest mountain in the world, and the first American woman to summit Dhaulagari, another high Himalayan peak. Of late, Calhoun is on a new mission: Speaking to people about climate change. "The Himalayas are experiencing the greatest effects of climate change of anywhere in the world. There will be floods and then there will be drought. I have seen it as an alpinist. There are climbing routes that will never have a repeat because the ice is gone," she says.

Viesturs is one of the most well-known American climbers, not just

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BOOK EXCERPT FROM

THE MOUNTAIN

by Ed Viesturs

The first time I tried to climb Mount Everest was in the spring of 1987. It was a very different mountain then from the swarmed-over scene it's become today. By that spring, there had been only 209 successful ascents of the mountain by 191 different climbers. A single person, the Sherpa Sungdare, had reached the summit as many as four times.

It's become almost impossible nowadays to keep track of Everest statistics, but by the end of May 2012, the number of successful ascents was in the vicinity of 6,000, performed by about 3,500 climbers. One indefatigable veteran, Apa Sherpa, has now reached the top of the world 21 times.

In the spring of 2012 there were more than thirty different expeditions simultaneously trying to climb Everest via the South Col route, the line by which it was first ascended by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary in 1953. I saw photos on the Internet of as many as 150 climbers on the Lhotse Face, lined up like Depression jobseekers in a free-lunch queue, as they jumared their way up the fixed ropes. In contrast, on the north side of Everest in the spring of 1987, there were only three teams. Ours hoped to climb the Great Couloir from the head of the Central Rongbuk Glacier. A Swedish team had chosen the traditional route from the North Col up the northeast ridge. And a Canadian, Roger Marshall, was attempting a bold solo ascent via the Japanese and Hornbein couloirs—a route nicknamed the Super Direct.

In 1987, I myself was a different person from the mountaineer who, eighteen years later, would become the first American to get to the top of all fourteen peaks in the world higher than 8,000 meters (26,246 feet). I was 27 years old, and though I'd climbed Denali in Alaska twice and had served for five years as a guide on Mount Rainier, this was my first expedition to an 8,000er. No matter how much I'd read about Everest, I was awed by the scale and majesty of the mountain, and not at all sure I was up to the challenge of scaling its north face by the Great Couloir.

The expedition was put together by Eric Simonson, a seasoned veteran who was also my fellow guide for Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. (RMI). Although Eric was only four years older than I, he had been guiding since 1973, and I looked up to him as a mentor. He'd already been to Everest in 1982, with a team led by our RMI boss, Lou Whittaker, that reached 27,500 feet on the same route—still 1,500 feet short of the summit. Eric had been hampered by a bad knee after a falling rock struck him high on this daunting face, and in 1987 he was determined to give it another shot.

Our expedition was a bit of a boondoggle, for a climber from Arkansas named Jack Allsup had approached Eric, offering to raise all the funds and pay all the expenses for five RMI guides, if we'd serve as glorified Sherpas for him and his buddies. The deal was that we guides would fix ropes, establish camps, and carry loads up the route, but not actually guide the Arkansas gang on their attempt—simply set them up so they could make their own independent push toward the summit. The official name of our team was the Arkansas Everest Expedition. Quite an irony: here I was, a guy who had escaped the flatlands of the Midwest to immerse myself in the rich Pacific Northwest climbing culture, only to be going on my first Everest expedition with a team based in the deep South!

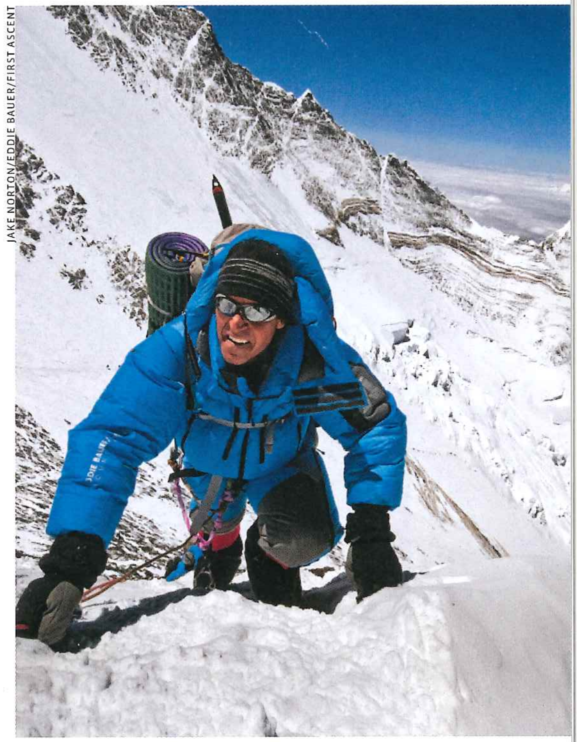
I was grateful to be invited by Eric, who two years earlier had chosen me to serve his assistant guide on a traverse of Denali with clients. For Everest, Eric also picked my fellow RMI guides Greg Wilson, George Dunn, and Craig Van Hoy. A free trip to Everest! Who wouldn't jump at that opportunity?

Once our team was assembled, all five us plunged into gear selection and packing, but Eric took on the brunt of the logistical work. A smart, analytical fellow, he's good at that sort of thing. JanSport jumped aboard as an expedition sponsor, supplying clothing, tents, and packs. They also offered to have our high altitude suits custom-made by an experienced local seamstress.

I was pretty excited at the thought of getting a high-tech suit for an attempt on the summit. I imagined an extremely lightweight, trim-fitting down suit like the ones I'd seen Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler wearing in photos from their pathbreaking climb of Everest without supplemental oxygen in 1978.

Only a day or two before we had to leave Seattle, Eric and I drove up to our seamstress's house to collect the suits. When I hefted mine, my jaw nearly hit the floor. The suits were filled with bulky synthetic insulation, and the outer fabric felt more like canvas than lightweight nylon. Unnecessary doo-dads such as stripes winding around the sleeves added another heavy layer to the already bloated suits. Rather than the sleek Maserati outfits I had fantasized about, we had no choice but to head off to Everest with these cumbersome monstrosities.

At the age of 27, I was just finishing my doctorate in veterinary medicine at Washington State University in Pullman, out on the state's eastern plains. I envisioned a career as a vet, although climbing was my true passion. To leave for Everest in March, I had to rearrange my senior year schedule so that I could graduate two months early. Fortunately, my classmates and teachers fully supported my "hobby," going so far as to buy expedition T-shirts. Still, in 1987 I could not have dreamed of making a living as a mountaineer. As it was, earning a modest income guiding Rainier in the summers, but pouring that money into my tuition bills, I was living as cheaply as I could, renting a room in the Seattle home of my buddy Steve Swaim, who ran his own veterinary clinic. Just before the expedition, a woman I'd been involved with for two years abruptly broke off our relationship. I was hurt and baffled, but in another sense, comfortable with the freedom that gave me. I was fresh out of school, with no full-time job or major obligations, so taking off to Asia for an indeterminate length of time didn't bother me one bit. As I wrote in my diary at base camp, "I guess my life's pretty simple & uncomplicated at this point—yahoo!" ■



JAKE NORTON/EDDIE BAUER/FIRST ASCENT

The Mountain: My Time on Everest *by Ed Viesturs is available at nine University Book Store locations and at ubookstore.com. UWAA members receive a 10 percent discount on eligible purchases.*

COURTESY BRENT BISHOP

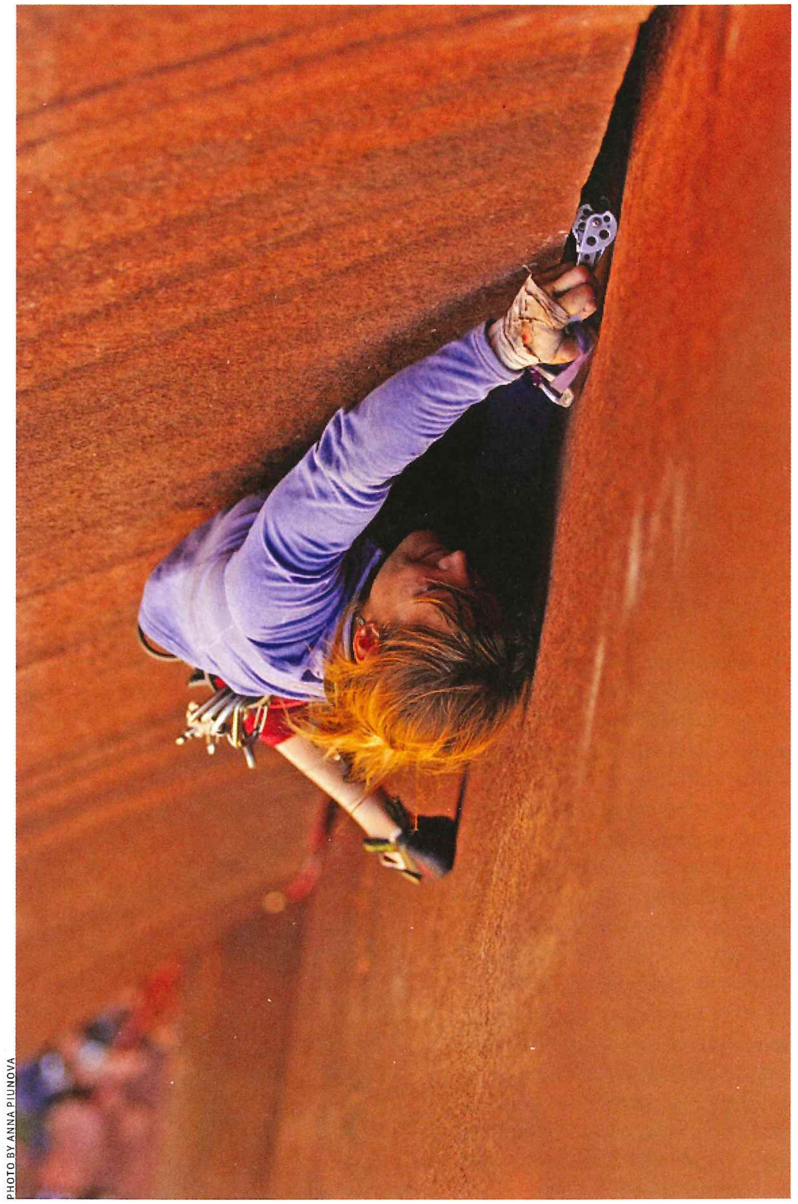


PHOTO BY ANNA PIUNOVA

KITTY CALHOUN

for his climbing achievements. He has successfully reached the summit of the world's 14 8,000-meter peaks without supplemental oxygen, the only American to do so and has written several books about his adventures on the world's highest peaks. His latest book, *The Mountain: My Time on Everest*, was published by Touchstone last fall.

For Brent Bishop, '93, climbing Mount Everest was a family affair (see page 21). His father, Barry Bishop, was on the famed 1963 American expedition up Everest where he and his partner followed the South Col route of the original 1953 climb. Brent reached the summit of Everest in 1994—making them the first American father and son to reach the peak—and again in 2002. The younger Bishop co-founded an organization devoted to cleaning trash off the slopes of Everest. Bishop followed in his father's footsteps for a National Geographic Society film titled "Everest, 50 Years on the Mountain," celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first ascent. Bishop is one of three sons of these original explorers to take part in the documentary.

Today, the UW is still a magnet for those who seek adventure in the mountains. The UW Climbing Club has been active for decades and now has about 100 active members. Although the group doesn't have formal meetings, members can be found on Wednesday evenings enjoying pub night at the Big Time Brewery on the Ave.

There, the next generation of Husky climbers meets to talk climbing and to plan trips over a brew or two. There is no doubt that some of them will keep on going beyond the Cascades to summit other mountains in the world. Many records have already been set by Huskies but future generations will push the limits of mountain exploration. It's part of their heritage as Huskies. ■ *—Julie Garner is a staff writer for* Columns.

1971–2014

CHAD KELLOGG

JUST BEFORE THIS ISSUE of *Columns* went to press, a stark reminder of the extreme dangers faced by climbers was delivered as news of Chad Kellogg's death spread. He was struck Feb. 14 by a falling rock as he descended Mount Fitz Roy in the Patagonia region of Argentina, killing him instantly.

Kellogg was born in Omak, Wash., in 1971. He spent several years of his childhood in Kenya as his parents served as missionaries, before returning to the Northwest, where he began climbing in this early teens. His career was marked by accomplishment, as he set records for climbs on Mount Rainier and Denali. Kellogg was also no stranger to heartbreak. His wife Lara-Karena Kellogg died during a descent of an Alaskan peak in 2007. Soon after, Kellogg was diagnosed with colon cancer. Since, Kellogg's only brother and several other relatives, along with his close climbing partner, Joe Puryear, have also died.

Kellogg had received grants to scale two unclimbed peaks in Nepal later this year. Brent Bishop told *The New York Times* that Kellogg "... was a cardiovascular machine. He was really able to suffer. He kept getting stronger. I think we were really robbed of seeing what this climber was going to do."

ME AND MY DAD

by Brent Bishop

EVEREST WAS PART OF ME BEFORE I was born. My father, Barry Bishop, first went to Nepal in 1961—five years before my birth—to join the Silver Hut expedition on Ama Dablam, led by Sir Edmund Hillary. The team wintered at 18,000 feet on the Mingbo glacier, collecting what would be seminal research on high altitude physiology. My mother, Lila, led her first trek from Kathmandu to Everest Base Camp in support of the 1963 American Everest Expedition, and has been leading treks to the high mountains ever since.

Mount Everest became a cornerstone in so many ways for our family. The mountain would define Barry's climbing career with his ascent in 1963. Lifelong friendships were formed around the mountain, and countless adventures were launched with the people Everest brought together. Our family would live in the mountains of Nepal in a tent for two years when I was a boy, and we have now worked, trekked and climbed in the Himalayas for more than 50 years.

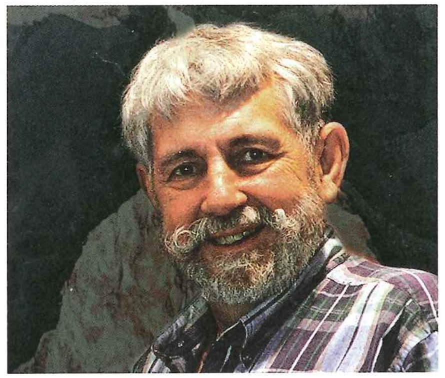
My father was a member of the American Mount Everest Expedition (AMEE) team. I have been lucky enough to follow in his footsteps, reaching the summit of Everest in both 1994 and 2002, and attempted to summit the mountain via the West Ridge in the spring of 2012. May marked the 50th anniversary of the first American ascent of Mount Everest, which was achieved by the AMEE. My own three expeditions to the mountain over the course of nearly two decades have given me a unique vantage point from which to reflect on the significance of the 1963 American team.

As much as I picked Everest, the mountain picked me. My father was a photographer and scientist for the National Geographic Society, and a renowned climber. And he was my hero. Growing up in his household left an indelible imprint on me. I remember watching "Americans on Everest" as a child, the first National Geographic television show ever produced. It documented that first American ascent of the mountain, and was narrated by Orson Welles. I was captivated by the grand adventure of scaling the world's highest peak. This trip epitomized what exploration means to a young boy.

The men of the expedition were giants to me: larger-than-life climbers, and it was my great privilege to know them firsthand. I vividly recall scenes from our kitchen where my father and his cohorts would be telling stories about climbing and travel to far-off places. Unbeknownst to me, these men were all elite climbers, explorers and scientists; I simply viewed them as my father's friends. Such moments filled a young boy with wonder for what awaited him in the world. As early as I can remember, following in my father's footsteps and climbing Everest was a dream of mine, simply part of the legacy that I was lucky enough to be born into.

While these climbers were already heroes to me as a boy, it was not until I embarked on my own Everest climb at age 27, that I came to fully understand the significance of these men and their AMEE expedition. Climbing through terrain that I knew from pictures embedded in my memory, I was flooded with admiration and emotion. These early climbers hadn't accumulated knowledge of the mountain after hundreds of ascents over decades of climbing. They earned their knowledge of the route one foot at a time. I remember struggling with the weight of my own oxygen equipment as I labored up the Geneva Spur to Camp IV, at 26,000 feet. There on the South Col, I picked up a discarded bottle from AMEE's era of rudimentary equipment. It weighed three times as much as my modern apparatus. Even with the psychological barriers of the unknown removed and the benefit of more than 30 years of technological advancement, the climb pushed me beyond what I thought was possible both psychologically and physically.

BRENT BISHOP



BARRY BISHOP

The first time I approached Everest's summit in '94, tears ran down my face as a deep sense of connection to my father welled up inside of me. I now had a true glimpse of how strong and bold those climbers were in 1963, a time when there was no simple formula for success and every step on the mountain was gained through sheer will. Their lives hung on every decision they made, with no preordained template to guide them to the summit.

Tragically, my father was killed in a car accident only four months later, robbing me of the opportunity to share and reflect with him as the first American legacy to reach the summit.

No longer armed with the invincibility and strength of youth, my last climb opened my eyes even more to AMEE's achievement. A memorial to my father sits behind Tangboche Monastery in Nepal, alongside others for his friends and fellow climbers Gil Roberts, Lute Jerstadt and Jake Britenbac. When I visit, I string up Tibetan prayer flags and have a drink with "the boys." Tears are shed and once again I feel like the kid in the kitchen surrounded by heroes, listening with amazement and wonder to tales of Everest. ■ [*A longer version of this essay appears at UWalum.com/columns.*]