

As usual, Everest records were set. They included the oldest summiteer and the first double amputee. On May 17 Takao Arayama, a 70-year-old Japanese, became the oldest climber—by three days—to reach the top, having climbed the Tibetan side of the mountain.

The first successful double amputee, 46-year-old New Zealander Mark Inglis, had summited two days earlier, also from the Tibetan side. There have been two single-amputee summiters, each of whom had lost a substantial part of one leg: American Tom Whittaker in 1998 and a Sherpa six years later. Both climbed from the Nepalese side. The first double amputee to try was an American, Ed Hommer, in the autumn of 2001, but when he reached 7,500m, he found the scar tissue on his left stump had cracked open in the dry air and was bleeding slightly. He abandoned the climb.

Twenty-five years ago Inglis had been marooned in a storm for two weeks on New Zealand's highest peak, Mt. Cook, and his badly frostbitten legs had to be amputated at mid-calf. His cleverly engineered artificial legs have the flexibility to enable him to handle technical climbing, but when he was going down the fixed rope early in his attempt on Everest this spring, an anchor pulled, he did a couple of somersaults and found himself sitting in the snow with one leg lying beside him. He got out some duct tape, did a field fix, and descended carefully to advanced base camp. A new leg was brought to him from base camp, and he went back up.

Inglis said he felt "huge satisfaction" at having summited Everest. "If you are a climber, as I have been all my life, the skills are already there. My problem is not going up but coming down. You have to be very careful; there is more wear and tear on the stumps." And indeed he got frostbitten. In his descent to advanced base camp on the day after his success, he was lowered by one his guides on his bottom and two days later reached base camp astride a yak. Back in New Zealand he underwent an operation on his stumps.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, AAC Honorary Member, Nepal

Everest, cross-border traverses. Everest traverses seem to have become the latest fashion, with an unprecedented four successfully completed in the spring season. Three had received permission from both the Chinese and Nepalese authorities; one had not, but managed to get away with it—at a price, literally.

The Italian Simone Moro had no permit to make a traverse. According to him, he had intended to reach the summit from Nepal via the South Col, then descend the Tibetan north face via the Hornbein Couloir, move across to the west ridge and down the Nepalese flank into the Western Cwm, where he had left a camp. But, he claimed, he became lost in the moonless dark and had to follow the fixed ropes down the normal Tibetan route, pulling them out of the snow as he went. An Italian friend, who lives in Lhasa and speaks Chinese and Tibetan, met him in base camp and explained to the authorities, both there and at the nearest police post, how he had innocently gotten lost. The police sold him a pass that allowed him to cross the border into Nepal.

Others who were on the mountain at the same time point out that Moro had taken his passport with him, which is most unusual when climbing from Nepal. They also say there was a tent and an oxygen bottle labeled "MORO" placed by two Italians, Marco Astori and Roberto Piantoni, at 8,100-8,200m on the normal Tibetan route. His friend was already waiting for him at base camp when he arrived, but Moro had no satellite phone, so their meeting must have been pre-arranged. He had to pay \$3,000 for his permit to cross the border.

Those who did have permits came from three other expeditions. The Swiss, Mario Julen, with Sherpa Da Nima, crossed from south to north. Korean Park Young-Seok and Serap Jangbu Sherpa, and at a different time Dawa Sherpa alone, traversed from north to south. Dawa rightly claimed a traverse speed record with his elapsed time of 20 hours and 15 minutes, verified by the leaders of teams he left on the north side and joined on the south side. He used two bottles of oxygen, starting at 8,300m during his ascent and finishing at 8,500m on the descent.

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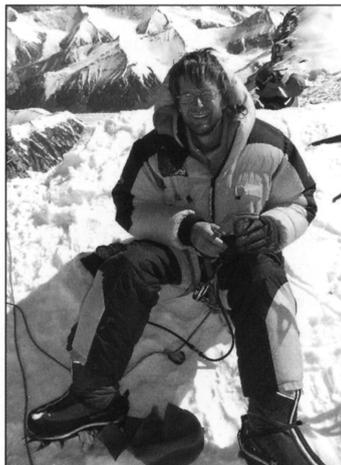
Everest, deaths during the spring. “I imagine you guys are surprised to see me here” were Australian Lincoln Hall’s words upon being discovered miraculously alive on the north side of Everest on May 26, after having been reported dead the day before. He was speaking to Dan Mazur and his party, who were on their way to the summit. “Can you please tell me how I got here? ... You guys on this boat too?” Mazur said that Hall was behaving like a three-year child.

Mazur’s account of the rescue appears below but it took several days and reportedly at least 15 Sherpas and 50 cylinders of oxygen to get Hall to base camp. A yak took him the last distance because of his weakness and seriously frostbitten fingers and big toe. Mazur’s summit party, knowing it was then too late to go for the top, turned around and went down to advance base camp.

The Hall saga is reminiscent of an incident during the disastrous spring of 1996, when the resurrected American, Beck Weathers, suddenly appeared alone at his camp on the South Col, saying, “It’s great to be alive.” Weathers was alive, but after having been out in the open for 20 hours at very high altitude and presumed dead when last seen. He was nearly blind and very badly frostbitten on his nose and the fingers of both hands.

Although Lincoln Hall did not die, eleven people did, making spring 2006 the second deadliest season on the great mountain (a dozen died in spring 1996). On the south side three Nepalese Sherpas, Lhakpa Tshering, Dawa Temba, and Phinzo, perished when a massive chunk of the notorious Khumbu Icefall collapsed on top of them. The remaining eight deaths occurred on the Tibetan side. A Russian, Igor Plyushkin, and a Nepalese, Tuk Bahadur Thapa Magar, succumbed to acute altitude sickness. German Thomas Weber died of a stroke. Two were killed in falls: a Swedish skier, Tomas Olsson, when one ski reportedly cracked while descending the Great Couloir, and an Indian soldier, Sri Kishan. And three died, as Hall nearly did, from exhaustion, exposure, and frostbite: a Briton, David Sharp, a Brazilian, Vitor Negrete, and Jacques Létrange from France.

There was much outraged commentary, including entries on mountaineering websites, about how as many as 30 people may have passed the dying David Sharp at 8,500m as they went for the top or descended from their summit bids. Their actions were depicted as heartless



Lincoln Hall at ca 8,550m on Everest’s north ridge on the morning of May 26, after being discovered by Dan Mazur’s party and revived with oxygen, warm tea, and food. *Dan Mazur*