



The Himalayan News

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THE ED HILLARY CENTENARY ISSUE

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THE ONGOING CLIMB OF SHERPA HILLARY

Michael Dillon



OF CHIVAS SCOTCH, SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS IN THE SOLUKHUMBU

Bhanu Banerjee



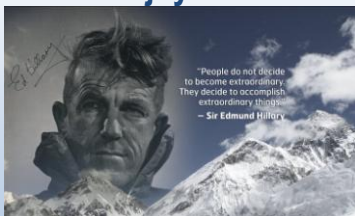
SAVING THE HIMALAYA AND REMEMBERING ED HILLARY

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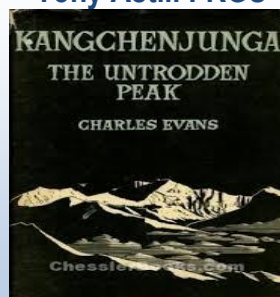


BOOK REVIEW: ED HILLARY A BIOGRAPHY by Michael Gill

Sujoy Das



OBITUARY TONY STREATHER Tony Astill FRGS



BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS Feedback from our Readers



Dear Readers,

With great pleasure, we welcome you to the fifth issue of The Himalayan News.

July 20th 2019 is the birth centenary of Sir Edmund Hillary and to celebrate the centenary we bring you a special Ed Hillary issue.

On 29th May 1953 Edmund Hillary catapulted into the history books when along with Tenzing Norgay Sherpa he made the first ascent of Everest. Interestingly, in the year of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, a beekeeper from New Zealand and a Sherpa born in Tibet made the headlines as part of a British team which reached the highest point on earth.

Life for Hillary would never be the same again but he bore his fame lightly preferring to spend the post-Everest years working tirelessly for the Sherpa community of the Solukhumbu, building schools, hospitals, airstrips and medical clinics for the villages. The story famously goes that when Sir Ed asked his Sherpa friends if he could do something for them the answer was "Our children have eyes but they cannot see. We need a school."

To celebrate the centenary a number of events have been planned including a trek to Everest Base Camp led by his son Peter and an orchestral work composed by Gareth Farr called "Roar Of A Thousand Tigers" which was Tenzing Norgay's description of the violent, high altitude icy winds that buffet the upper reaches of Mount Everest.

In this our fifth issue Michael Dillon who was a part of a number of expeditions with Sir Ed writes about a visit to the Solukhumbu. Bhanu Banerjee who also was a team member of the scientific and yeti expeditions reminisces on his years with Sir Ed. Capt M S Kohli who was part of the "Ocean to Sky" expedition writes about the Himalayan Environmental Trust (HET) which was set up with Sir Ed in 1989. Tony Astill writes on mountaineer Tony Streather who summited Kangchenjunga in 1955 with Norman Hardie and passed away on October 31st 2018. Finally Dr Michael Gill long time friend and associate of Sir Ed and a part of many expeditions has paid tribute through a biography which is reviewed in this issue as well.

May is the month for Everest climbs but this season has been particularly brutal in the high Himalaya with 11 deaths on Everest and climbers lost on other 8000 metre peaks like Kangchenjunga and Makalu.

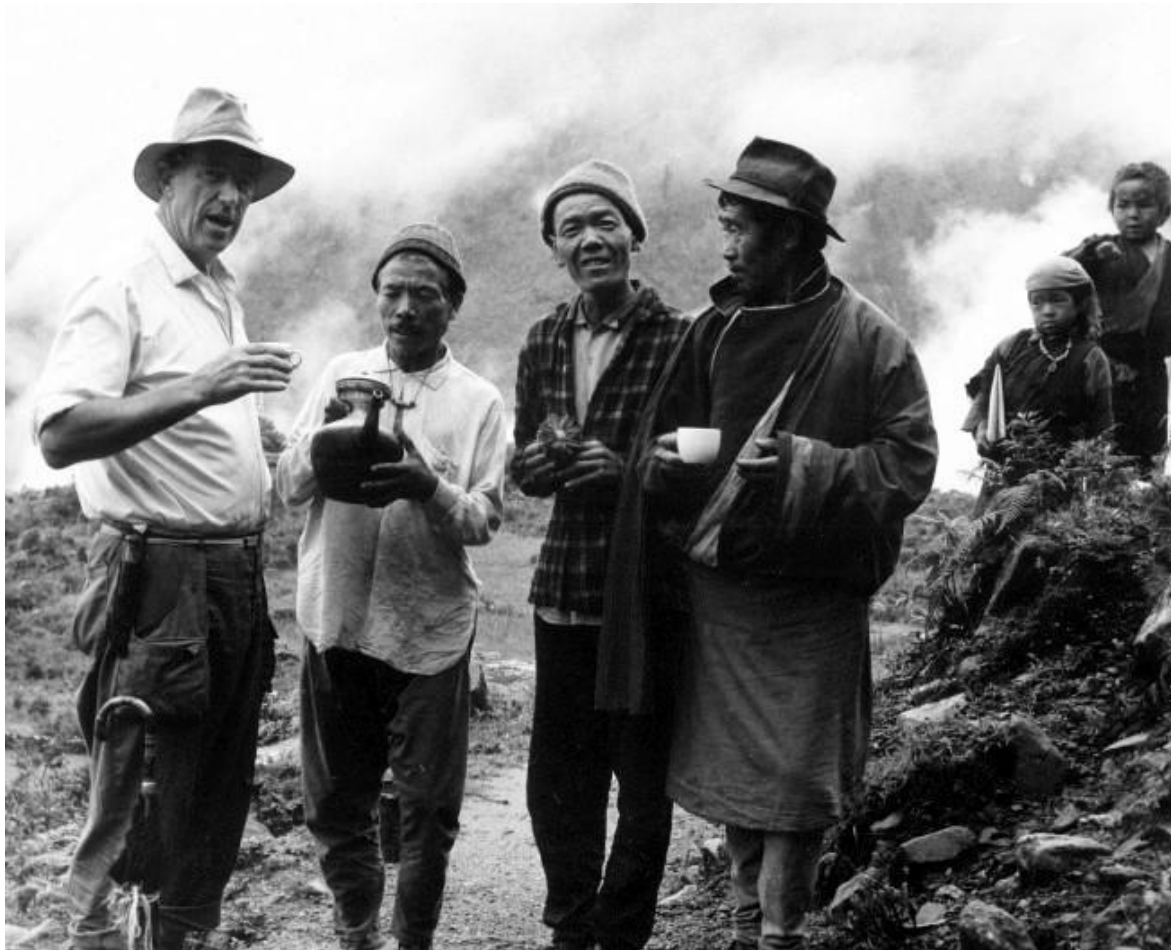
Further, closer to home, in the Indian Himalaya, experienced mountain guide Martin Moran and his seven member team attempting Nanda Devi East have perished in an avalanche last week. Martin has led more than 40 expeditions to the Indian Himalaya attempting many unknown, unnamed and unclimbed peaks in the 6000-7000 metre range. In many ways he was an explorer in the Shipton mould and mountaineering will be a lot poorer without him.

The summer season is upon us and we wish you all happy climbing and trekking in the months ahead.

Sujoy Das
Rupamanjari Biswas
Editors

THE ONGOING CLIMB OF SHERPA HILLARY

Michael Dillon



"I don't know if I particularly want to be remembered for anything. I have enjoyed great satisfaction from my climb of Everest and my trips to the poles. But there's no doubt, either, that my most worthwhile things have been the building of schools and medical clinics. That has given me more satisfaction than a footprint on a mountain." Sir Edmund Hillary

We are on a light plane, a Yeti Airways flight no less. We've taken off from Kathmandu into a spellbinding world of giant Himalayan peaks.

In front of me sits a large old man in a woolen cardigan, his hair grey and tousled his face as craggy as the mountains below. He is deep in thought.

Perhaps he's remembered that today's the anniversary of the saddest day of his life. The day his wife and youngest daughter took off

from the very same airport and minutes later died.

Or perhaps he's thinking of Everest. It has come into view now. A giant, black pyramid above the clouds.

Everest, Earth's highest peak.

How strange it is that our highest peak is almost exactly the right height for us, as though custom built by the gods just high enough to test man to his limit. At twice the

height it would be impossible, at half the height inconsequential. But here it is, the ultimate challenge, 8848 metres above sea level, just within man's grasp.

Fifty years ago, no one knew it WAS within man's grasp. Many had tried for its summit. Many had died. But 50 years ago, in 1953, two brave men worked their way along its virgin knife-edged summit ridge. On their backs were oxygen cylinders so heavy their weight almost cancelled out their advantage. On their minds, the scientist's warnings that if their oxygen cylinders stopped working, they would probably die. But ever on these brave men climbed, a beekeeper and a Sherpa.



Tenzing and Hillary at Camp IV 30th May 1953 after the successful summit

One of these legendary heroes, Tenzing Norgay, is long dead. The other sits in front of me, Sir Edmund Hillary. Everest, that great event in his life, has faded from view now, and his face warms as the plane banks to reveal the terraced hillside villages of the people of Everest, the Sherpas. Suddenly the ground rushes to meet us and we are bumping along a grassy airstrip well known to Hillary - it was he who built it.

A huge crowd surges forward as Hillary pauses at the plane door to take in a lungful of thin air.

But what the atmosphere lacks in oxygen it makes up for in affection. There is love in everyone's eyes, welcome scarves and flowers

in everyone's hands. Soon Hillary is amongst them, embracing a doctor from a hospital he has built, a nurse from a health clinic he has built, a pupil from one of thirty schools he has built, and other players in his 40 years of secret service to the people of Everest. The man who climbed their highest mountain has gone on climbing higher, into their hearts.

How he would have laughed if you'd told him his life would be like this. I have an image of him back in 1931 in his own rural setting, a bee farm out of Auckland. He is 12, short and scrawny, uncomfortable in his own body, uncomfortable amongst others. At school he prefers the company of the ants in the playground to his fellow pupils and in his physical education class he has been placed in the hopeless squad. I imagine ambushing him as he ambles along in his ill fitting overalls carrying beehives, and confronting him with that big red book, "Edmund Hillary, this will be your life. This may surprise you Edmund, but one day you will be the most famous New Zealander in history. Your face will be on the currency. The Queen will knight you not once but twice. You will have medals galore and eight honorary doctorates. And a mountain people you don't yet know will love you like a god."

The mountain people are leading him up a hill now, one of his oldest Sherpa friends supporting him by the arm, others poised to help should Hillary's eighty year old body falter. For over forty years they have watched him come to them, trekking for weeks from Kathmandu with hundreds of porters carrying building supplies. Now he comes by air and less often. But each visit is treasured. And each visit they know may be his last.

He isn't here to take the air, nor here out of nostalgia. He is here to work, he and his team. One of his team is walking beside him, a bearded man with a twinkle in his eye, also about eighty years old, his name George Lowe. Lowe and Hillary were the two New Zealanders on that successful British Everest

Expedition of 1953 and the best alpine climbers on it. If they'd had their way they would have climbed to the summit together but fate, or rather expedition politics, decreed otherwise. Not only did the leader John Hunt not countenance a colonial summit team. He had even dropped them from the expedition some months prior to departure, but reinstated them after being persuaded by the English team members that Hillary and Lowe's alpine skills could well mean the difference between success and failure. And they were right. It was Hillary and Lowe who forged the route through the icefall. Lowe who forced the route up the Lhotse Face. Lowe who cut steps for Hillary and Tenzing to their highest camp. And Hillary, with Tenzing, who finished the job.

And here they are again, that little known team of Hillary and Lowe, climbing up a Himalayan slope with Sherpa friends, heading off to work.

They'll tell you it isn't work, tell you it's the most satisfying thing they've ever done, and they'll tell you it all began at an expedition campfire some years after Everest when Hillary asked his head sherpa, "Urkein, if there was just one thing we could do for our Sherpa friends what would they want it to be". The reply was immediate. "Sir, we would like a school for our children."

Next year Hillary and his team built a simple school in the Sherpa village of Khumjung and soon the first batch of eager barefoot Sherpa children, faces brightly polished for the occasion, stepped into their wooden benched classroom and began a journey that would take some to incredible heights.

When word spread through other villages and other valleys, Hillary was avalanched with petitions. At Thami village the monks and elders composed a petition that was presented to Hillary by a 10 year old boy. They had written "Our children have eyes but still

they are blind. Please build a school in our village too."

So next year Thami village, where Tenzing Norgay had grown up, had a school of its own.



A school in the Solukhumbu

One school, two schools, another and another. Hillary and his teams have now built thirty of them, as well as two hospitals, two airstrips, many bridges and many health clinics. A forty year labour of love, fashioning rocks he used to climb into school and hospital walls, working with Sherpa and western building teams, including his brother Rex who worked as building foreman on these projects for twenty five consecutive years.

And now Hillary is back. He has reached his hotel now and quickly prepares for work. He's a hundred kilometers south of his first school project but his work now has extended this far and keeps on extending.

There is always another valley, another mountain of requests. And petitioners are already gathered.

Soon Hillary is meeting them along with Ang Rita, the full time administrator of Hillary's Himalayan Trust. Ang Rita was in the first batch of barefoot children from Hillary's first school and went on to top the school leaving certificate in the whole of Nepal. Now he is Hillary's right hand man, based in Kathmandu from where most of Hillary's projects are administered. But the hill folk know that

Hillary always comes with a rucksack of rupees for on the spot discretionary aid and quietly wait with their written petitions, sealed in envelopes, entwined in silk scarves.



The Hillary family

Circling the group, taking photos, is Hillary's son Peter, shuffling a little painfully having only recently returned from hauling a heavy sled uphill for 84 days to the South Pole. Peter was the first child born to Hillary and his wife Louise, whom Hillary had courted in Sydney where she was studying music. Two other children soon followed, daughters Sarah and Belinda. By then Hillary's building activities in Nepal were in full swing and it wasn't long before three little Hillary children were carrying rocks along with Sherpa children, each doing what they could. These family trips to Nepal, living and working with the Sherpa people, were the happiest times in Hillary's life, and 1975 was meant to be the happiest time of all.

That year Hillary, Louise and their now teenage children had decided to spend the entire year in Nepal. Hillary had gone on ahead to supervise the building of his second hospital and his family would join him in

stages. His wife Louise and youngest daughter Belinda, 16, would be first in and on March 31st 1975 they set off with the family dog and some Sherpa friends to Kathmandu airport to fly in to join him. Louise had always been fearful of light planes and wanted to walk in , but Hillary had persuaded her to fly.

A young New Zealand pilot met them at the airport and soon they were taxiing for takeoff. Perhaps in the excitement of transporting half the Hillary family , the pilot had omitted one pre-flight check. He had forgotten to remove the pins that unlock the tail flaps. The plane took off, the tail flaps still locked in stall position. It came crashing down into a field killing all on board.

Hillary, standing on the mountain airstrip on which they should by now have landed, had a premonition that something terrible had happened, and a friend soon arrived by helicopter to break the dreadful news. Hillary helicoptered back to Kathmandu and felt compelled to land at the crash site. He would have nightmares for years to come.

That night Hillary cremated the two people he loved most in the world, his wife and youngest daughter. And his only wish that night was to join them. For days he struggled with inconsolable grief made worse by his belief that it was all his fault, that he'd made them fly rather than walk. His two remaining children, Peter and Sarah on arrival in Kathmandu were warned by their grandmother "Your father will never be the same again. He's heavily drugged, curled up in a ball, sobbing".

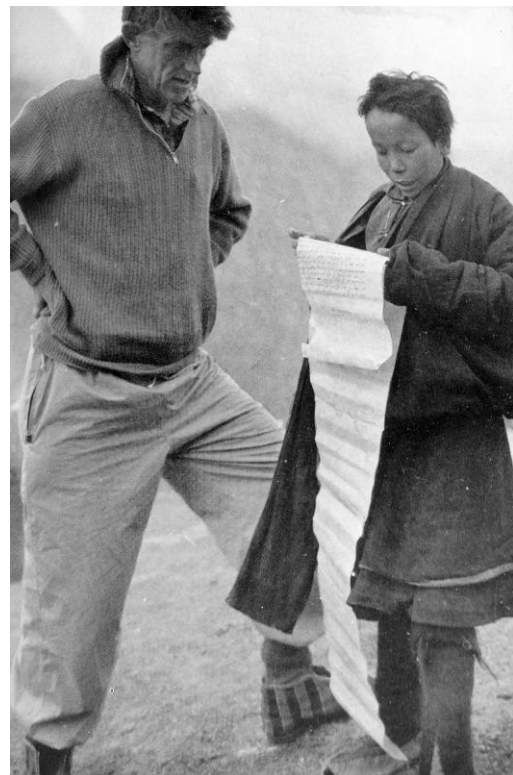
It was the hardest thing that tough man ever did, clawing himself back from the brink of suicide. He would stay alive, he decided, for what was left of his family. He would stay alive because of his responsibilities to the Sherpa people. He would return to the hills and his half completed hospital, and work and weep with his Sherpa friends.

Just up the hill from Hillary's hotel stands a little schoolhouse he has recently been upgrading with skylights and new floors. Every morning we hear an oxygen cylinder being struck, summoning children to school, and know that throughout these valleys 29 other Everest oxygen cylinder school bells are ringing out and that a thousand children are beginning their often hours long journey to school. Now we see them, the children of this closest school, their dusty red school uniforms held together by an equal measure of buttons and safety pins, a fresh handkerchief pinned to their chest. But today they are not just carrying their schoolbooks. Each child has a beautiful arrangement of red rhododendrons they must have spent hours preparing. For today is a special day. Edmund Hillary is visiting their school.

The teachers form the children into a line that stretches from the school almost to Hillary's hotel. The school band has assembled on a nearby rock with their shiny collection of drums. Hillary donated the drums last year and they are now banging them so vigorously he'll probably have to give them another set next year. Hillary is now making his way along the line of beaming children, each one handing him their own little gift of thanks, the flowers from their forest. One little boy, when Hillary gets to him is so overawed he freezes, flowers still in his hand, until he's thumped on the back by the boy next to him.

At the school the grand inspection begins. The class of seven year olds does a spirited rendition of "The Wheels on the Bus" song. It matters not that they've never seen a bus and rarely a wheel. They sing with such glee and passion, almost poking out each others eyes with their expansive hand gestures. Next it's the eight year olds with the highest ever rendition of "Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree". Another class is in the playground, the entire class running around in a circle singing "Fire on the Mountain, run, run, run." At the end of each verse the teacher calls out a number such as five and the children have to

instantly gather in groups of five. It's an interesting and energetic way to teach numeracy and is one of many innovations that have come out of Hillary's recent teacher training programme. It was Hillary's Everest partner, George Lowe, who on retirement as Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools in the UK, travelled incognito around all the Hillary schools and recommended the development of such a programme, and the results have been spectacular. The team of Hillary and Lowe, Hillary building schools, Lowe, supervising the teaching standards within, has pulled off something special, just as they did on Everest in 1953.



Sir Ed receiving a petition from a sherpa boy Kalden requesting for a school in Khumjung

When this humanitarian work began, over forty years ago, Sherpa civilization was at a crossroads, their old way of life of trading with Tibet cut off by the Chinese invasion. The opening of the Hillary schools would foster alternative vocations for Sherpa children, helping many, through their knowledge of English, to move faster through the ranks of

trekking companies, many of whom they now own. Helping the brightest into occupations undreamed of. The Medical Superintendents at both Hillary Hospitals are Sherpa doctors, once schoolboys racing to the sound of a Hillary school bell. Another, now a PHD in Forestry, is Warden of Mount Everest National Park. Another boy, who used to make aeroplanes from pieces of left over school building wood, now pilots jumbo jets in Europe. Another boy, who used to drive his teachers mad by drawing helicopters on every available surface, is now a helicopter pilot.

Next morning the flying Sherpa, Captain Dawa arrives with his helicopter to transport Hillary and his party to a distant school, Mount Everest School- its pupils mostly sons and daughters of Tibetan refugees.

It's a long steep slope up to the school from the level ground where the helicopter has landed. A long hard climb. Once again the path is lined with beaming children offering Hillary flowers and silk scarves. But the atmosphere is muted. It is clear Hillary is suffering. He climbs slowly, his face is deathly pale and he is slurring his words. It is painfully clear that yet again he is playing Russian roulette with his respiratory system, and all are concerned that this may be the time he actually dies.

But here he is, eighty years old, tempting fate once more. Today's summit is Mount Everest School, still a long slope away, and its clear Hillary is putting more effort into this climb than he did on Everest in 1953. Once again he is triumphant and sits as guest of honour as the children sing to him

On this Wonderful Day,
We the children of Mount Everest School,
We wish you happy welcome.
Edmund Hillary
Edmund Hillary.



Sir Ed and Lady June at Salleri Gompa 1999 for his ordination as an honorary monk

It is some days later and Hillary is again down valley at Phaplu. The sun is sinking lower in the sky. Hillary is sitting indoors, with George Lowe, listening to more petitions. Already it has been a long day. That morning at a new monastery partly built with Hillary funds, Hillary was taken by surprise when, to the accompaniment of gongs, trumpets, and horns, the monks started dressing him in the clothes of a High Lama, topped off with a huge yellow sail shaped hat.

Now High Lama Hillary is sitting in mufti, in his old corduroys and cardigan, again listening to petitions. A teenage Sherpa girl, with clasped hands and pleading eyes tells her story. Her parents have died and she needs financial help to be able to stay in school. Behind her, silhouetted in the curtains by the setting sun, are many more petitioners waiting patiently outside. Hillary hands the young girl some money and in an old exercise book makes a note, Young Sherpa Girl – Nine thousand rupees. Above her name are those who came just prior to her- limping man, scholarship boy, ill children...

The day's work almost done. Hillary is exhausted. George Lowe is reflective, and tries to put words to his thoughts. "There is no end to the need here. There'll always be people at the door. It is an uphill task. But that's Ed's strength, uphill tasks. I've seen it on Everest and I see it still. He'll just keep plugging on until he can't go one step more."

OF CHIVAS SCOTCH, SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS IN THE SOLUKHUMBU

Bhanu Banerjee



On the trail from Namche Bazar to the villages of Kunde and Khumjung

Lady Louise Hillary states the following in her book A YAK FOR CHRISTMAS:

'The raising of money for the Hospital dominated our lives for a year It was a worry for all of us. What if we received no money? Or not enough? Money started to trickle in – a few pounds from our local members of Parliament, a few precious shillings from an old age pensioner. We organized a business appeal with me making the appointments and Ed was making the calls. Throughout 1965, he worked long hours to raise money. He approached individuals and companies, wrote articles, gave as many as five talks a day to service clubs and schools, and travelled thousands of kilometers up and down New Zealand. A breakthrough came at the end of the year, when the 40 Lion

Clubs of Auckland District agreed to raise £ 30,000 – over N.Z. \$ million in today's currency.'

Some more funds came from a single bottle of scotch. This improved the lives of Nepal's valiant but poverty-stricken climbing community – Sherpas.

Ed sold off one of the prized possessions – a bottle of the most coveted 50 year old scotch – back to its makers for \$ 30,000 to raise money for the Sherpas.

The whisky made by Chivas Brothers, was first in a batch of 255 bottled in 2003 to celebrate the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation and mark the 50th birthday of Royal Salute Scotch Whisky.

The bottle was gifted to Hillary in 2003, to mark the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest.

On May 29, 1953 Hillary and his Sherpa friend Tenzing Norgay became the first humans to scale the Summit of Everest, the world's tallest peak. Ever since, the tall New Zealand climber has dedicated his life to the service of the selfless Sherpas.

Hillary's second wife June said:
"We decided to sell the bottle because the whisky was too expensive to drink. Ever since Ed got the rare Royal Salute 50 year old whisky as a gift, we were looking to sell and donate the proceeds to the Himalayan Trust, our NGO helping the life of the Sherpas. Finally, the Chivas brothers decided to buy it back from us and donate \$ 30,000 to the Trust. We will use the money to build more schools for children in the far flung Everest region and health centre for the community".

The special batch of whisky was distilled before 1953 and kept in warehouses to mature until they were married in a single cask in 1993 and bottled 10 years later. The blended whisky was bottled in blue porcelain flagons adorned with silver and gold metal plaques. All 255 bottles sold for a minimum of \$ 8,888.

"The Royal Salute 50 years old may never be matched again and remains the oldest blended scotch ever produced and sold commercially. We will return the bottle to Scotland, where it will be preserved", said Chivas Brothers Chairman, Christian Porta.

In Sherpa land, illness was mediated by spirits, not bacteria, and the spirits were everywhere – in trees and springs, on the heights of the mountain Khumbila behind

the Khumjung village, and hovering over houses, hospital, and thickest of all, over the area of rocks and forest where dead were cremated.



Kunde Hospital

Convincing sherpas that the hospital might be useful was not easy. It was dangerous to leave the protection of the deities in one's own house. The spirits outside were often less than benign.

The first to be called in was usually the local Lama, but slowly the villager discovered that the doctors and medicines that miraculously cured a high fever in a child or the cough and wasting that was tuberculosis. Nearly every resident doctor had a terrifying encounter with women suffering an obstructed labour that required some sort of intervention. They might have had rudimentary instruction in how to do a caesarian section back home, but it was in the middle of the night in a grubby Sherpa house with snow on the ground outside. Over time, family planning in the form of depot hormones became accepted. The government-supported immunization policy was implemented by the hospital and the Sherpa staff. Slowly the burden of disease in the community decreased.

A special situation was the high incidence of goiters and cretinism, a common

problem in the mountain people worldwide due to the lack of iodine in water. Goiters, sometimes growing to a grotesque size by middle age, were to be seen in the necks of nearly all Sherpas. Cretinism from lack of iodine in the pregnant woman affected up to 10 percent of those born in Khumbu, causing retardation and stunting throughout their shortened lives.

Although Ed Hillary was proud of his hospitals, he recognized that of all the assistance he gave, providing access to education was the most important. But when thinking about the question, 'What is the purpose of education?' Ed's answer was simple. Literacy: the three Rs, reading, writing, arithmetic.

We had put much thought into the problem of how far we should take children along the path of education. Too much education could make them misfits in the simple life of their community. They'd drift to the towns, joining the growing bands of partly educated – those not well trained to get a good job but proud to dirty their hands with physical labour. In reviewing how western knowledge could most profitably be used, Ed inevitably came back to the needs of public health and agriculture.

As it turned out, Sherpas were not keen on the poorly paid teaching profession. Kalden Sherpa, Ed's first young graduate teacher, soon realized that teaching does not make use of the commercial instincts that are part of being a Sherpa. He settled in Kathmandu, worked in the tourist industry, started his own business and eventually became very wealthy indeed. There were many like him. Others took degrees in National Park Management –

at Lincoln University in New Zealand – or Environmental Studies, and found jobs in international NGO's. One of them, from the first Khumjung school intake, was Mingma Norbu Sherpa who became a director in the World Wildlife Fund. Sherpas became pilots both in Nepal and for international airlines. And there were health workers, not least of them Dr. Kami Temba who became Khunde Hospital's first Sherpa doctor.



Dr Kami Temba at Kunde Hospital

Since inception of the Himalayan Trust, founder Ed Hillary had built two district hospitals, 13 Clinics and 30 Schools. Over 100 students received grants annually for education. Health programmes to control TB and Smallpox has been launched. Still-birth and infant mortality has been reduced. Over a million trees of special varieties have been planted. Several Sherpas have gained degrees in forestry and national park management.

Ed was building a hospital at Phaplu, a district headquarter in Eastern Nepal, Louise Hillary and their 16 year old daughter Belinda were traveling from Kathmandu to help Ed, in a four-seater Pilatus Porter Swiss aircraft which crashed soon after take-off taking lives of all passengers including the Pilot. Their son Peter and his Australian friend Simon Mc Larain, who were with me at a tea

plantation where I was posted at the time near Jorhat, Assam had to rush back to Nepal to join Ed. Even then Ed finished his task and completed building Phaplu hospital where 10,000 Sherpas receive medical treatment.

After 1960-61 Scientific Mountaineering and Yeti Hunting Expedition Hillary's next Expedition was schoolhouse in the clouds.



Khumjung village today with the school to the right of the photo

The Khumjung village school built in 1961 was first aid project and it had a substantial impact – but much more was needed, Hillary therefore resolved to organize further aid to the Sherpas. His motivation was the deep affection and respect he had developed for the Sherpas over many years of Himalayan Expeditions, but there were other reasons.

His 1963 expedition included a number of objectives. The most important was to build schools in the villages of Thami and Pangboche, situated at an easy day's walk on either side of Khumjung. There were plans to pipe fresh water supply to villages of Khumjung and Khunde, and for the expedition doctors to establish a clinic in Khumjung for six months to give general treatment to any sick people in the area. Finally there was a mountaineering

program, an attempt on two of the most formidable peaks in the Everest area: the unclimbed Summit of Mount Taweche, 21,465 feet and Kangtega, 22,250 feet.

Finance was the major hurdle for the expedition. Hillary estimated the 1963 expedition would cost approximately \$ 54,000.

The Field Marshall Educational Corporation, publishers of the World Book Encyclopedia, agreed to sponsor the expedition once again (they had sponsored Hillary's 1960-1961 expedition). In widespread campaign within this very large company (over 50,000 employees) a total sum of \$ 52,000 was raised.

Another Chicago based corporation Sears Roebuck and company also contributed substantially to the expedition. No expedition ever has sufficient financing, and certainly no expedition leader can afford to forget his long budgetary problems.

In January, 1963 Hillary came to Calcutta to make arrangements with Messrs MacKinnon Mackenzie, shipping agents with big offices for clearing and forwarding expedition gear.

Lady Louise Hillary was also with Sir Edmund. While Ed was busy with his work, I was taking Louise in and around Calcutta for sight seeing when she expressed her desire to buy some curios / object d'art. After visiting several places we landed at Mullick Bazaar (popularly known as Chor Bazar) and here she found exactly what she wanted and she bought them by the dozens which included from hair-pins to flower vases to cuff-links to

porcelain dolls. Cost of each item ranged from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 50/-. When I asked her what she would do with so many items, she replied that she would sell them to her friends in Australia and New Zealand for big profit (at least \$ 50 each) and the sale proceeds would be given to her husband for building hospitals in the far flung Everest region of Sherpaland.

In 1954 Edmund Hillary and John Hunt visited the US. As Hillary would have said : 'The highlight of our trip was to be the presentation to us of the Hubbard medal of the National Geographic society and this was to be carried out by President Eisenhower in the White House.'

Ed had just turned 70 and the last two decades of his life were settled years.



Honours, including honorary doctorate flowed in from around the world. Most prestigious of all was his appointment to the Knight of the Order of the Garter that came in April 1995 at the Sherpa village of

Junbesi. Modern facilities were limited, but they had a telephone link which came to life with the request to speak to Sir Edmund Hillary. It was the British Ambassador on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II asking Sir Ed to accept the Knightly Order of the Garter. It was not the sort of thing one expects in Junbesi. Of the 19 at the Knight of the Garter, one was John Hunt who had been inducted into the order in 1979. Resolute Republicans sometimes claim that Ed disliked his Knighthoods but his son and daughter both gave evidence that he was fond of his KBE and loved being a Knight of the Garter.



He also became the first living New Zealander to have his image on a 5 dollar banknote issued in 1992 with the 1950 profile photo of a tussled Hillary in the mountains. During his remaining 16 years, Ed would sign many thousands of these notes and some interpret this as evidence of their wealth.

There were many others including, in 2003, honorary citizenship of Nepal on the 50th anniversary of the climbing of Everest.

SAVING THE HIMALAYA

Capt M S Kohli



Reinhold Messner, Junko Tabei, Maurice Herzog and Sir Ed Hillary with the author

It was during the Festival of the Himalaya's in Hong Kong in 1987, that in a quiet moment with Edmund Hillary, I told him what had been bothering me for a while. I felt it was time that we gave some thought to the consequences of the explosion of tourism in the Himalaya. I suggested that we form a trust to arrest this growing degradation and restore the Himalaya to their pristine glory. I also suggested that he should take over as chairman and that we could invite other legendary climbers to become members of the trust. Edmund agreed wholeheartedly and gave his consent to establish a trust to save the Himalaya.

Over the next two years, we corresponded regularly to give finishing touches to the proposal. We decided to

set up the trust with headquarters in Delhi. We invited Maurice Herzog, Sir Chris Bonington, Reinhold Messner, Richard Blum, Junko Tabei and presidents of the National Mountaineering Associations of the Himalayan countries to join us. Everyone agreed. Meanwhile, Sir Edmund's term as High Commissioner in India was coming to an end. Since he was soon to return to Auckland, he suggested that I take over as the chairman. Other trustees also felt that the chairman had to be based in New Delhi to coordinate all work regarding the Himalayan environment. Subsequently, as presidents of the IMF, the Nepal Mountaineering Association, the Chinese Mountaineering Association, and the Pakistan Alpine Club kept on changing, it was decided to appoint these presidents, who were our

founder trustees, as ex-officio members of the Board of Trustees.

On 14 October 1989, the Himalayan Adventure Trust (HAT) was formally launched at a glittering function at the Hong Kong Country Club. We finalized the aims and objectives and the plan of action of the trust. The Himalayan Adventure Trust, it was decided, should be a catalytic, learning and action-oriented body, using its resources to influence governments and to raise funds to initiate and support specific projects on a micro scale in the areas of concern. Realizing that no single organization could muster all the specializations necessary, a consortium of all institutions and persons, national and international, who were competent to contribute, was decided upon.



Capt M S Kohli and Sir Edmund Hillary at the inauguration of the Himalayan Environmental Trust

Within a few months, a new chapter of the HAT, Himalayan Adventure Trust of Japan (HAT-J) was opened in Tokyo under the chairmanship of Junko Tabei. At the suggestion of Sir Edmund Hillary and Dick Blum, the name of the Himalayan Adventure Trust was later changed to Himalayan Environment Trust (HET). The Japanese, however, decided to retain the title of their chapter as HAT-J.

The HET raised about 50,000 US dollars in Hong Kong at the inaugural function. Founder donors consisted of Dr Stanley Ho, an eminent personality of Macao, Dr Hari Harilela, an affluent Indian in Hong Kong, Dick Smith, one of the great Australians, Kamla Kapahi and Daljeet Sethi. Ever since, HET has been surviving on the interest generated by that corpus fund. Donations came in handy to meet the cost of production of HET journals, newsletters, posters and for holding international conferences. Funds raised at special functions were given to field projects administered by autonomous councils.

The first issue of the Himalayas, Ecology and Environment, the official HET journal, was released at the International Symposium on Conservation of Mountain Environment in Tokyo in November 1991. The 'Himalayan Code of Conduct' was also finalized by the Board of Trustees after several prolonged sessions. It was a major contribution towards standardization of the code of conduct.

An important segment of Himalayan tourism peculiar to India was 'pilgrimage tourism'. There are a number of Himalayan shrines all over India. These include the Amarnath Cave, Vaishnodevi, Gangotri, Jamnotri, Badrinath and Hemkund. More than five million pilgrims visit these shrines annually and that too within five to six summer months every year.

This number is undoubtedly much more than the carrying capacity of the area. As a result, more than half of the forest cover is already depleted. Even the birch trees in the higher reaches beyond the Gangotri temple are nearing extinction. We should

introduce a controlled entry of pilgrims to each shrine with the active cooperation of various sponsoring agencies by raising toll taxes for vehicular traffic, and encouraging trekking by establishing staging posts at suitable places 15 to 20 kilometres apart, right from the foothills onwards to each pilgrim site. This would definitely encourage healthy trekking among young pilgrims and reduce congestion and pollution at the shrines. Gangotri needed urgent help.

With matching grants from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the UP Government, the Gangotri Conservation Project (GCP) were launched during an international seminar in New Delhi on 27—28 June 1994. An office was set up in Uttarkashi and a warden appointed to supervise the operation. The Board of Trustees decided that GCP work should be practical in nature with its main focus on cleaning and greening the region. Additional measures like setting up micro-hydel projects, basic amenities like toilets in the mountains, and arranging incinerators ought to be taken up with the help of NGOs and organizations interested in supporting the GCP.

A steering committee, under my chairmanship and consisting of four representatives, one each from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, the UP Government and the HET, was formed. In addition, six eminent experts—Sir Edmund Hillary, Richard Blum, Gurdial Singh, AD Moddie, Bachendri Pal and Suman Dubey—were also included.

During the last few years I have also been working on public hearings initiated by the

People's Commission on Environment and Development (PCED) headed by Dr Karan Singh. I have chaired the hearings at Vizag, Darjeeling, Nagpur and Calicut. The situation at many places was alarming. The forest cover in the Himalaya has come down to less than 50 per cent of what it was three decades ago. The number of visitors, especially pilgrims, is growing at a very fast rate. The fragile ecosystem of the Himalaya is under threat. Only integrated, constant and wholehearted efforts can save this for future generations.

In January 2000, HET celebrated the completion of a decade of its existence. Sir Edmund Hillary, Maurice Herzog, Reinhold Messner, Junko Tabei and Kō Yoshida were at hand for full-fledged discussions about the future of HET. In June of the same year, the trustees met in Chamonix to join the golden jubilee celebrations of the maiden ascent of the Annapurna organized by Maurice Herzog. The golden jubilee of the first ascent of Everest was another occasion for the trustees to meet in Kathmandu.

During the golden jubilee celebrations of the first ascent of Everest, an extraordinary meeting of the HET was held at New Delhi, on the lawns of our Sainik Farms house. Sir Edmund Hillary and Lady June were the guests of honour. They were given a special plaque by the HET. On this historic occasion, it was decided to establish HET chapters in several countries and launch a worldwide campaign to enrol associate members.

I hope that the initiative taken by us to mobilize the mountaineering fraternity to protect the Himalayan environment will continue to grow year after year.

REMEMBERING SIR EDMUND HILLARY

Capt M S Kohli



Ed and I had a long association over several decades. We first met in 1972 when after my posting to Sydney as Air India's Manager for Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, I was invited to give a talk in Auckland on Trekking in the Himalaya which I had introduced worldwide, on behalf of Air India. Sir Edmund Hillary was invited to preside over the function. During those years Ed used to visit Sydney almost once a month. He invariably stayed with me as my house guest at St Ives where I lived.

Subsequently we were together on several occasions. Ed was a very simple and straightforward man with a great sense of humour. Though Tenzing and he became the first two men to climb Everest they rarely met afterwards. Ed became a highly popular speaker travelling worldwide almost 9

months a year ; Tenzing remained busy training students in India as Director of Field Training at HMI, Darjeeling.

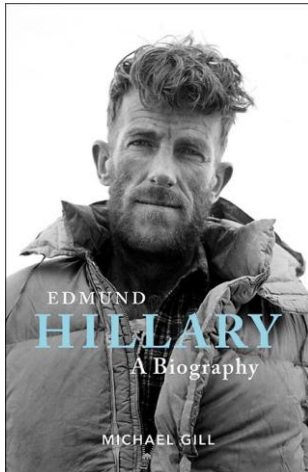
However in 1971 when I joined Air India and started promoting Trekking in the Himalaya, with the permission of J.R.D. Tata, I used to take Tenzing with me. While in Australia I invited Hillary and Tenzing both to tour all over Australia and Far East countries to promote Himalayan Trekking.



The five postage stamps of New Zealand commemorating Sir Ed's life released in 2008

BOOK REVIEW: EDMUND HILLARY A BIOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL GILL

Sujoy Das



Michael Gill was a 22 year old medical student when he applied to join Sir Edmund Hillary's scientific expedition to the Solukhumbu, home of the Sherpas in 1960-61. For almost fifty years after this he was part of many Hillary expeditions and was also closely involved in the work of the Himalayan Trust which Sir Ed had founded. Gill has written a massive 540 page biography which would probably be the most comprehensive ever including additional unpublished material from the Hillary family archives.

There are many facets in Ed Hillary's long and eventful life – beekeeper, mountain climber, explorer, philanthropist, writer and finally a diplomat which are covered in this book.

There are eight chapters covering the Everest expeditions from the 1921 reconnaissance to the successful summit in 1953. The early attempts of the British expeditions from 1921 to 1938 are not strictly a part of Hillary's biography but they provide an insight into the repeated attempts by the British to climb Everest culminating with the Hillary and Tenzing successful ascent on May 29th 1953. Other than Hillary himself, the book has valuable insights into the climbers of that era including John Hunt, Eric Shipton, Tenzing Norgay to name a few.

The book thereafter focuses in detail on the Hillary years post-Everest – the building of schools, hospitals, medical clinics and air strips in the Solukhumbu. In a remarkable effort, the Himalayan Trust which Hillary founded built one airstrip Lukla, twenty seven schools, two hospitals and twelve village clinics all through the Solukhumbu changing forever the lives of the sherpas and catapulting the region to the forefront of education and development in rural Nepal.

The tragic loss of Louise and Belinda Hillary, in an air crash on March 31 1975 due to pilot error, while flying to meet Sir Ed in Phaplu is told with fervour and compassion. And the struggle which Sir Ed faced thereafter including severe bouts of depression and insomnia, brings to life a troubled personality grappling with the trials and tribulations of this phase of his life.

Despite being a close friend of Sir Ed, Gill has managed to provide an impartial view into the life of this great man. The strongest part of the book is perhaps the years from 1960 to mid 1970s when Gill himself worked closely with Sir Ed on many expeditions as well as a team member of the Himalayan Trust.

In the end the voice of Ed Hillary resonates through this book.

As Sir Ed wrote in his autobiography *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win* "Most of all I am thankful for the tasks still left to do – for the adventures still lying ahead. I can see a mighty river to challenge; a hospital to build; a peaceful mountain valley with a pass to cross; an untouched Himalayan summit and a shattered Southern glacier – yes there is plenty left to do."

OBITUARY: LT. COL. H.R.A. (TONY) STREATHER, MBE, OBE Tony Astill FRGS



I first met Tony in 1993 when I was lucky enough to accompany George Band's 40th anniversary return to Kangchenjunga. His genuine friendliness towards me was immediate and lasted from then on.

He had lived with his wife Sue, until his final few years, in the small village of Hindon in Wiltshire and it was there that I would visit once or twice a year.

Tony was an Honorary Member of both the Alpine Club and The Himalayan Club.

Obituaries have appeared in the national newspapers here in the U.K. and more will follow in various mountaineering journals highlighting his experiences on the great Himalayan range with which we are all mostly familiar, especially with regard to the various avalanche escapes in which he was involved.

But he was extremely modest about these dangerous situations and how he managed to live to tell the tale(s)!

There was a celebration of his life at his local church on 1st December and I'm sure that it would have been full to overflowing as he had also been the Church Warden there for a good number of years and was a 'shareholder' in the local shop. He was also a well known local celebrity in the two pubs in the village, where I used to take him to lunch.

I would arrive at his home at about 12md and he would welcome me with a large pink gin. We would sit in the very small conservatory and talk, probably about the same things we spoke about on the last visit and particularly where he thought he knew that Bin Laden had been hiding out in the Hindu Kush.

When my drink was almost finished Tony would offer to 'refresh' my glass. His smile and sparkle of eye was always there, but he was beginning to feel old he told me.

After our last lunch together he was having difficulty climbing the few steps leading out of 'The Lamb' which is just across the road from his home. 'Look at me' he said. 'I've climbed some of the highest mountains and now can hardly get up these!'

It was my special privilege to have known him.

BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

AVM (retd) Apurba K. Bhattacharya

Thanks to super efforts by Priyadarshi Gupta, Sujoy Das & Rupamanjari Biswas for this excellent News Letter. Worth compiling & preserving these issues. Keep it up.

Brig K Kumar

It made interesting reading. Some of the photos are superb and a delight for the mountain lovers. My sincere appreciations to the Editorial team. They have done a marvelous job. Thanks once again and Best Wishes for future endeavours.

UPCOMING EVENTS - KOLKATA

MY YEARS WITH HILLARY

On **July 20th 2019**, the birth centenary of Sir Edmund Hillary, **Bhanu Banerjee** will present an illustrated talk on his years with Sir Edmund including the Yeti and Scientific Expeditions and the building of schools and hospitals in the Solukhumbu. This will be preceded by a presentation of historical photographs on the life and times of Sir Edmund by **Sujoy Das**. To attend this talk do send an email to thehimalayan2017@gmail.com and also follow our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/thehimalayan2017> .

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