

Everest Conqueror Celebrates 50-Year Mark

-- By conquering Everest, the beekeeper and the Sherpa affirmed the power of humble determination--and won one for underdogs everywhere ...--



BACKGROUND:

BY JAN MORRIS

On May 29, 1953, Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal became the first human beings to conquer Mount Everest--Chomolungma, to its people--at 29,028 ft. the highest place on earth. By any rational standards, this was no big deal. Aircraft had long before flown over the summit, and within a few decades literally hundreds of other people from many nations would climb Everest too. And what is particularly remarkable, anyway, about getting to the top of a mountain?

Geography was not furthered by the achievement, scientific progress was scarcely hastened, and nothing new was discovered. Yet the names of Hillary and Tenzing went instantly into all languages as the names of heroes, partly because they really were men of heroic mold but chiefly because they represented so compellingly the spirit of their time. The world of the early 1950s was still a little punch-drunk from World War II, which had ended less than a decade

before. Everything was changing. Great old powers were falling, virile new ones were rising, and the huge, poor mass of Asia and Africa was stirring into self-awareness. Hillary and Tenzing went to the Himalayas under the auspices of the British Empire, then recognizably in terminal decline. The expedition was the British Everest Expedition, 1953, and it was led by Colonel John Hunt, the truest of true English gentlemen. It was proper to the historical moment that one of the two climbers immortalized by the event came from a remote former colony of the Crown and the other from a nation that had long served as a buffer state of the imperial Raj.

I am sure they felt no Zeitgeist in them when they labored up the last snow slope to the summit. They were both very straightforward men. Tenzing was a professional mountaineer from the Sherpa community of the Everest foothills. After several expeditions to the mountain, he certainly wanted to get to the top for vocational reasons, but he also planned to deposit in the highest of all snows some offerings to the divinities that had long made Chomolungma sacred to his people. Hillary was by profession a beekeeper, and he would have been less than human if he had not occasionally thought, buckling his crampons, that reaching the summit would make him famous.

They were not, though, heroes of the old epic kind, dedicated to colossal purposes, tight of jaw and stiff of upper lip. That was George Mallory, who said most famously in 1924 that he was climbing Mount Everest "because it is there." But if he ever reached the summit, he never lived to tell the tale. Hillary and Tenzing were two cheerful and courageous fellows doing what they liked doing, and did, best, and they made an oddly assorted pair. Hillary was tall, lanky, big-boned and long-faced, and he moved with an incongruous grace, rather like a giraffe. He

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habitually wore on his head a homemade cap with a cotton flap behind, as seen in old movies of the French Foreign Legion. Tenzing was by comparison a Himalayan fashion model: small, neat, rather delicate, brown as a berry, with the confident movements of a cat. Hillary grinned; Tenzing smiled. Hillary guffawed; Tenzing chuckled. Neither of them seemed particularly perturbed by anything; on the other hand, neither went in for unnecessary bravado.

As it happened, their enterprise involved no great sacrifice. Nobody was killed, maimed or even frostbitten during the British Everest Expedition of 1953. They were not in the least aggressive, except in a technical sense. They were considerate members of a team, and it was true to the temper of their adventure that Hillary's first words when he returned from the summit, to his fellow New Zealander George Lowe, were "Well, George, we've knocked the bastard off!"

The real point of mountain climbing, as of most hard sports, is that it voluntarily tests the human spirit against the fiercest odds, not that it achieves anything more substantial--or even wins the contest, for that matter. For the most part, its heroism is of a subjective kind. It was the fate of Hillary and Tenzing, though, to become very public heroes indeed, and it was a measure of the men that over the years they truly grew into the condition. Perhaps they thought that just being the first to climb a hill was hardly qualification for immortality; perhaps they instinctively realized destiny had another place for them. For they both became, in the course of time, representatives not merely of their particular nations but of half of humanity. Astronauts might justly claim that they were envoys of all humanity; Hillary and Tenzing, in a less spectacular kind, came to stand for the small nations of the world, the young ones, the tucked-away and the up-and-coming.

Both, of course, were showered with worldly honors, and accepted them with aplomb. Both became the most celebrated citizens of their respective countries and went around the world on their behalf. But both devoted much of their lives

to the happiness of an archetypically unprivileged segment of mankind: the Sherpas, Tenzing's people, true natives of the Everest region. Tenzing, who died in 1986, became their charismatic champion and a living model of their potential. Grand old Ed Hillary, who is still robustly with us, has spent years in their country supervising the building of airfields, schools and hospitals and making the Sherpas' existence better known to the world. Thus the two of them rose above celebrity to stand up for the unluckier third of humanity, who generally cannot spare the time or energy, let alone the money, to mess around in mountains.

I liked these men very much when I first met them on the mountain nearly a half-century ago, but I came to admire them far more in the years that followed. I thought their brand of heroism--the heroism of example, the heroism of debts repaid and causes sustained--far more inspiring than the gung-ho kind. Did it really mean much to the human race when Everest was conquered for the first time? Only because there became attached to the memory of the exploit, in the years that followed, a reputation for decency, kindness and stylish simplicity. Hillary and Tenzing fixed it when they knocked the bastard off.

Jan Morris accompanied the 1953 British Everest Expedition.

STORY:

(AP) Fifty years after conquering Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary is still setting himself lofty goals. As he prepares to travel to Nepal to mark the anniversary of his momentous climb to the summit of the world's highest peak, Hillary is planning to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to help impoverished people living in the Himalayan mountains.



These days, it is those aspirations rather than memories of his historic climb that invigorate the 83-year-old former beekeeper. "Building schools and hospitals, medical clinics and fresh

water pipelines and re-establishing forestry" were "the most worthwhile things we have done."

"I've had a remarkable time, I've had great adventures, I've made extremely good friends ... and of course we've been able to be extremely helpful to the Sherpas" he said, summing up the 50 years since May 29, 1953. On that day, the 33-year-old New Zealander and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, became the first climbers to reach the 29,035 foot summit of Mt. Everest.

Today, the last obstacle before the domed summit, a 40-foot ice-covered rock face, is called the "Hillary Step" in recognition of the triumph. More than 1,200 people since then have climbed to the peak, and the trail blazed by Hillary and Tenzing is well worn. Officials say at least 180 have died in the process. This year, a record 1,000 climbers plan assaults on the summit of what the Nepalese call Chomolungma or Mother Goddess of the World. Most will fail to reach the top.

Meanwhile, Hillary and the charitable trust he set up funnels about \$400,000 annually into development projects in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal. Hillary's trust has built two hospitals, a dozen health clinics, 27 schools, air landing strips, bridges and even restored Buddhist monasteries for the Sherpa people he vowed to aid back in 1953 in return for Tenzing's help in getting him to the roof of the world.

Recalling his climb, Hillary said he vividly remembers "many occasions" when he and Tenzing doubted they would reach the top. Deep ravines and crevasses, avalanches, extreme ice faces and rock walls stood in the way as they struggled upward. "That's what it's all about really, overcoming those problems even though you may have a sense of fear. I think fear can be a stimulating factor and can help make you drive yourself really to overcome dangerous problems," he said.

Approaching his 84th birthday in July, Hillary acknowledged, "I've got to slow down" and reduce his international fund-raising commitments, but he added: "how I'm going to do that I don't quite know."

McCartney Rocks Colosseum

--Beatles hits echo out of the Roman Colosseum... --

BACKGROUND:

The Great Colosseum in Rome is best known for its multilevel system of vaults made of concrete. It is called the Colosseum for a colossal statue of Nero that once stood nearby, but its real name is the Flavian Amphitheater. It was used for staged battles between lions and Christians, among other spectacles, and is one of the most famous pieces of architecture in the world.



It was originally constructed of wood, and later of stone, and was used by the Romans for gladiatorial combats, fights of wild beasts, and other spectacles. The exhibition area was encircled by seats. The first amphitheater was constructed in 59 BC by the Roman pontifex maximus Gaius Scribonius Curio. The first partial stone amphitheater was built in 30 BC by Augustus, before he became first emperor of Rome. This amphitheater remained the only one in Rome not entirely of wood until the erection of the Colosseum by the Roman emperor **Vespasian**, whose son and successor, Titus, dedicated the edifice in AD 80. The upper part of the Colosseum itself, however, was originally of wood; it was replaced by stone after 223. The example of Rome was followed by all the cities of any importance throughout the Roman Empire. According to a

4th-century document the Colosseum at Rome seated 87,000 persons; modern scholars, however, believe that only about 50,000 persons could be seated. The colosseums of Pozzuoli, Capua, Verona, and Tarragona are about the same size.

The Colosseum remains one of Rome's most impressive sites. From the inside, pictured here, visitors can still imagine the roar of 50,000 spectators witnessing a host of bloody sports events. Beneath the floor of the Colosseum, now gone, were numerous cells which held wild animals, gladiators, criminals, and Christians.

Inside the Colosseum, pairs of gladiators regularly fought each other for public amusement. There were formal rules and there was, as in hockey or baseball games today, even musical accompaniment from organs. The Thracian, armed with a curved sword, was conventionally set against a Samnite, who had a crested helmet and was protected by a long shield. In other competitions, the retiarius, a fighter whose principal weapon was a net, was arrayed against a secutor armed with a short sword and small rectangular shield. Since the retiarius fought bare-headed while their opponents' heads were protected by helmets with face masks, the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) would invariably order their deaths *pollice verso* (thumbs down). This was because the Emperor took delight in watching and observing the fighters' facial contortions.

STORY:

(Reuters) - Taking the floor where gladiators once battled wild beasts and fought to the death, ex-Beatle Paul McCartney brought rock 'n' roll to Rome's Colosseum for the first time.



"We understand it's the first time there's been a band in the Colosseum since the Christians," McCartney joked with the audience, in reference to the persecution of the early Christians by the Roman authorities.

Lighting in hues of orange gave an intimate atmosphere to the concert despite the

immense space. In its heyday some 2,000 years ago, the Colosseum could seat as many as 80,000, but on Saturday just 400 people were let in for the benefit show.

"This is a beautiful, beautiful place," the 60-year-old McCartney told the audience of VIP guests and a lucky few who nabbed rare paying seats in an Internet auction. Tickets were sold for as much as 1200 USD a pair.

Proceeds from the auction will go partly to Adopt a Minefield, a charity set up by McCartney's wife Heather Mills McCartney, and partly to archaeological projects in Rome. Proceeds from the sale of television rights for both concerts will go to an Italian archaeological mission in Iraq that aims to help the looted Iraqi Museum in Baghdad get back in operation.

McCartney made ample use of his treasure trove of Beatles hits, with 18 out of the 27 songs he performed coming from the pioneering 1960s band's repertoire -- including "Can't Buy Me Love," "Let It Be" and "Yesterday."

McCartney was due to give a second concert in Rome on Sunday, but this time just outside the monument, using its arches as a backdrop. The concert will be free, and organizers have said they expect some 200,000 people to turn up. McCartney is in the final stages of a world tour that has made him the world's highest-earning celebrity. By the time it finishes on June 1 in Liverpool, birthplace of the Beatles, nearly two million people will have paid to see him play.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Colosseum represents the Roman Empire at the height of its power. It has the characteristics of the early Flavian dynasty: the desire to restore and maintain popular support for the emperor by returning areas of the heart of Rome to public use that had been taken over by Nero for his own personal pleasure. The fights and battles that took place there demonstrated the power of the military and cesar. When gladiators defeated a foreign person or animal it helped to make the people feel as if they, as Romans, were stronger than that foreign country.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:**May 12, 1949****BERLIN BLOCKADE
LIFTED**

On May 12, 1949, an early crisis of the Cold War comes to an end when the Soviet Union lifts its 11-month blockade against West Berlin. The blockade had been broken by a massive U.S.-British airlift of vital supplies to West Berlin's two million citizens.

At the end of World War II, Germany was divided into four sectors administered by the four major Allied powers: the USSR, the United States, Britain, and France. Berlin, the German capital, was likewise divided into four sectors, even though it was located deep within the Soviet sector of eastern Germany. The future of Germany and Berlin was a major sticking point in postwar treaty talks, especially after the United States, Britain, and France sought to unite their occupation zones into a single economic zone. In March 1948, the Soviet Union quit the Allied Control Council governing occupied Germany over this issue. In May, the three Western powers agreed to the imminent formation of West Germany, a nation that would exist entirely independent of Soviet-occupied eastern Germany. The three western sectors of Berlin were united as West Berlin, which was to be under West Germany.

On June 20, as a major step toward the establishment of a West German government, the Western powers introduced a new Deutsche mark in West Germany and West Berlin. The Soviets condemned this move as an attack on the East German currency and on June 24 began a blockade of all rail, road, and water communications between Berlin and the West. With West Berlin's food, fuel, and other necessities cut off, the Soviets reasoned, it would soon have to submit to Communist control.

Britain and the US responded by initiating the largest airlift in history, flying 278,288 relief missions to the city during the next 14 months,

resulting in the delivery of 2,326,406 tons of supplies. The Soviets made no major effort to disrupt the airlift. As a countermeasure against the Soviet blockade, the Western powers also launched a trade embargo against eastern Germany and other Soviet bloc countries.

On May 12, 1949, the Soviets abandoned the blockade, and the first British and American convoys drove through 110 miles of Soviet Germany to reach West Berlin. On May 23, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) was formally established. On October 7, the German Democratic Republic, a Communist state, was proclaimed in East Germany. Another blockade did not occur, but Cold War tensions over Berlin remained high, culminating in the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

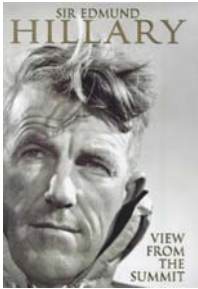
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WHO YOU NEED TO KNOW:*Sir Edmund Hillary*

Hillary, Sir Edmund Percival, mountain climber and Antarctic explorer, who, with Tenzing Norgay, a Sherpa from Nepal, was the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest (8848 m/29,028 ft), the world's highest peak. Born in Auckland, New Zealand, he served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force during World War II (1939-1945). He obtained his early experience in the Southern Alps of New Zealand.

In 1951 and 1952 he participated in expeditions to the Himalayas. He joined the British Mount Everest Expedition in 1953 as one of the chief climbers. Hillary reached the summit on May 29, 1953, and was knighted for the achievement later that year. In 1955 he was appointed leader of the New Zealand party of a transantarctic expedition. He led his party across Antarctica by tractor, reaching the South Pole on January 4, 1958, the first person to do so by overland journey since Robert F. Scott in 1912. He subsequently led several expeditions to the Himalayas. Among his writings is the autobiography *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win* (1975).

ENTERTAINMENT:



View from the Summit

By Sir Edmund Hillary

The first man to set foot on the summit of Everest, the man who led a team of tractors to the South Pole, the man who jetboated up the Ganges from the ocean to the sky has, for the first time, gathered all the remarkable adventures of a long life into one volume.

"Sir Edmund, he's worshipped, you know, as a god among the Sherpas." --Jamling Tenzing

"He had a tremendous, bursting, elemental, infectious, glorious vitality about him." --Jan Morris

That said, Hillary is not going to get a Nobel Prize for this book. It is written in a rather 'choppy' style. It is hard to follow and sometimes just plain boring. However, this book gives us a chance to take a glimpse at the human side of this great explorer. We finally see details about adventures never revealed before because authors deem them unimportant but this kind of details actually allow the readers to see the adventures from a different angle. We see Hillary as a human being and share with him his adventures and his goals. It is just extraordinary to see a man raise from a life as a simple beekeeper to become one of the most important figures of this century and not lose his human quality in the process. It is an interesting adventure story made all the better by the fact that it actually happened.

- [My Triumph On Everest: A Photobiography Of Sir Edmund Hillary](#) by Coburn
- [Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest](#) by His Holiness the Dalai Lama,
- [Sir Edmund Hillary and the People of Everest](#) by Anne Keiser

SPORTS:

The Gladiators

Like sporting events in many ancient cultures, Roman gladiatorial combat originated as a religious event. The Romans claimed that their tradition of gladiatorial games was adopted from the Etruscans, but there is little evidence to support this. The Greeks, in Homer's *Iliad*, held funeral games in honor of the fallen Patroklos. The games ended not in the literal death of the

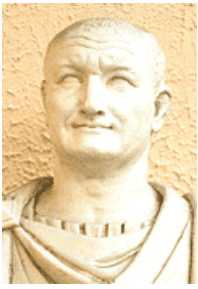


participants, but in their symbolic death as defeated athletes, unlike succeeding Roman gladiatorial combat.

The Roman historian Livy wrote about the first known gladiatorial games, held in 310 BCE by the Campanians (9.40.17). These games symbolized the re-enactment of the Campanians' military success over the Samnites, in which they were aided by the Romans. The first Roman gladiatorial games were held in 246 BCE by Marcus and Decimus Brutus in honor of their father, Junius Brutus, as a *munus* or funeral gift for the dead. It was a relatively small affair that included the combat of three pairs of slaves in the Forum Boarium (a cattle market). From their religious origins, gladiatorial games evolved into defining symbols of Roman culture and became an integral part of that culture for nearly seven centuries. Eventually gladiatorial games reached spectacular heights in the number of combatants and their monumental venues.

For instance, in 183 BCE it was traditional to hold gladiatorial games in which 60 duels took place. By 65 BCE, Julius Caesar had upped-the-ante by pitting 320 *ludi*, or pairs of gladiators, against one another in a wooden amphitheater constructed specifically for the event. At this point, gladiatorial games expanded beyond religious events, taking on both political and ludic elements in Rome.

FEATURE:



Vespasian

Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus was born in AD 9 at Reate, north of Rome. His father Flavius Sabinus was a tax-collector and his mother, Vespasia Polla, belonged to an equestrian family. In AD 39

Vespasian married Flavia Domitilla. It was not necessarily a good match for a man seeking a high-flying career. Flavia was not a full Roman citizen and had been the mistress of a Roman equestrian in Tripolitania. It appears their marriage was truly one inspired by love, rather than political ambitions. Flavia and Vespasian had three children though she died long before Vespasian was to become emperor.

During the reign of Tiberius Vespasian was a military tribune in Thrace and then went on to serve as praetor in Crete and Cyrene. In AD 40 Vespasian was made praetor under Caligula and under Claudius he enjoyed patronage of the powerful minister Narcissus. During the invasion of Britain during AD 43-47 Vespasian commanded a legion (the II 'Augusta'), and distinguished himself with military successes in the south and southwest of England and was responsible for taking the Isle of Wight.

This success led to Vespasian's election of consul for AD 51, and in AD 63 he was proconsul of Africa, his administration winning much praise. This praise was won largely due to Vespasian not following the usual course of milking the province for his own financial gain. In turn however, he did suffer private financial problems and only avoided bankruptcy with help from his brother Sabinus.

In AD 66, as a member of Nero's imperial entourage, the gritty soldier Vespasian committed the ultimate sin by either walking out or falling asleep during one of Nero's recitals. He fell from grace and fled to an obscure country town.

But in AD 67 he was offered a province and an army command of three legions by Nero. If

the emperor was mad and wanted to see Vespasian dead, he needed him now. At the age of fifty eight Vespasian headed for Judaea, directed the reduction of Jotapata in the north and began the preparations for the siege of Jerusalem.

On hearing of Nero's death Vespasian formally recognized the accession of Galba. When news arrived of Galba's murder in early AD 69, Vespasian was prompted to consider rebellion. He had on his side the governor of Syria, Gaius Licinius Mucianus. On 1 July 1, Alexander commanded the legions in Egypt to swear an oath of allegiance to Vespasian. After two weeks the armies in Judaea and Syria had followed that example. In December, the senate confirmed it.

Vespasian possessed insight and the sense of how to maintain peace, too. Though the destruction of Jerusalem and the retaliation against the Jews were carried out with unnecessary severity, and restrictions were placed on some of their practices, Jews were excused from Caesar-worship. In AD 71 he instituted the first salaried public professorship when he appointed Quintilian (AD 40-118) to a chair of literature and rhetoric. He also exempted all doctors and teachers of grammar and rhetoric from paying taxes Under Vespasian, too, a new class of professional civil servants was created.

With the empire devastated by civil war, Vespasian needed to steeply increase taxation to cover the empire's vast costs. These measures soon earned him an undeserved reputation for meanness and greed. However, Vespasian appears not to have had a taste for extravagant living. He was a brilliant and tireless administrator, with a gift, so often lacking in his predecessors, of picking the right man for a job. He was noted for mildness and a healthy sense of justice.

He fell ill, withdrew to his summer retreat at Aquae Cutiliae in the Sabine mountains and died on 24 June AD 79. Vespasian died according to the historian Suetonius, with great dignity. Even on his deathbed his humor still showed in a final jest, '*Vae, puto deus fio*' ('*Woe, I think I'm turning into a god.*')

Quote of the Week:

I have climbed my mountain, but I must still live my life.
- Tenzing Norgay

Quote of the Week:

While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
And when Rome falls -- the world.

-- Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Fact of the Week:

The Colosseum is 157 ft high; Mt Everest is 29,028 ft

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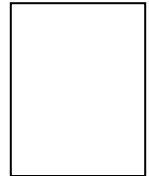
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