

MACGILLIVRAY FREEMAN'S

# RETURN TO EVEREST EXPEDITION UPDATE

FEATURING **JAMLING NORGAY**  
AND **ARACELI SEGARRA**  
ON LOCATION WITH **CAUDWELL**  
**XTREME EVEREST EXPEDITION**

**DISPATCH # 1**

DATE: *April 11, 2007*

LOCATION: *Lobuche*

FILED BY: *Christian Kallen*

On March 24, 2007, an international team of doctors, scientists and filmmakers embarked on a three-month mission to conduct a series of medical experiments on the world's tallest mountain and to document the expedition for a new IMAX® Theatre film. Doctors on the **Caudwell Xtreme Everest Expedition** will risk their lives to bring back important medical discoveries about the effects of extreme altitude on the human body while giant screen film producers, **MacGillivray Freeman Films**, document the expedition for its new film, *RETURN TO EVEREST 3D*, a follow-up to the smash hit film *EVEREST*, the highest grossing IMAX Theatre film of all time. *RETURN TO EVEREST 3D* will also reunite two of the original stars of *EVEREST*, Jamling Norgay and Araceli Segarra, as they travel to Everest to help the Nepalese Sherpa people and conduct research on what has changed in the eleven years since their successful 1996 climb. *RETURN TO EVEREST 3D* will be released to IMAX Theatres and other giant screen cinemas on March 4, 2009, the 11<sup>TH</sup> anniversary of the original historic *EVEREST*.



## TREKKING TOWARD THE ANSWERS

*On the trail of medical mysteries in Nepal*

**April 3, 2007**—On trek between Namche Bazaar and the Everest Base Camp, vascular surgeon Chris Imray checks his climber's watch. The altimeter reads 4425 meters, and he breaks into a wide grin. "Take my picture!" he asks Kay Mitchell, communications director of the Caudwell Xtreme Everest expedition. "I'm half way to the summit of Everest!"

Dr. Imray, Kay and the rest of the 35-person expedition are immersed in what expedition leader Dr. Michael Grocott calls "the largest human biology study ever performed at high altitude." Most of them are doctors; nearly all are in medicine. But rather than spending the weekend golfing, they've chosen a much tougher course—and one more rewarding.

Fifteen of the team will climb above the Khumbu Icefall on the south flanks of Everest, and ten of them will go on to attempt the summit of the world's highest peak, at 8850 meters (29,035 feet) the very limit of human capability. All of them are guinea pigs in an on-going scientific experiment to measure the effects of low oxygen levels on human health. And what better place for the study than the highest of the Himalaya?

Trekking with the expedition is a film crew from MacGillivray Freeman Films which is documenting the expedition for its new IMAX Theatre film, *RETURN TO EVEREST 3D*. The filmmakers were the first to bring back IMAX images from Everest's summit eleven years ago; now they've returned to tell a new story.

### Everest as laboratory

"It's been almost ten days since we've left Kathmandu," Kay tells us when she calls in from Lobuche, a wide spot on the trail at 4900 meters (16,100 feet). "And it's getting very, very cold! I'm standing outside with my down jacket on, and my woolie hat, and my gloves, and loads of layers. But it's even colder up at Base Camp—we sent Mac Mackenney and the logistics team ahead to set up the tents, and they say last night it was 18 below." That's  $-18^{\circ}$  Centigrade, a nice round  $0^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit.

The trek began at 2840 meters in Lukla, with stops of several days each in the villages of Namche Bazaar and Pheriche where the team set up field labs. "At each village we repeated the same medical tests that we did at sea level and in Kathmandu," Kay continues. "We had blood taken, we went on the exercise bikes, and we had the oxygen levels in our brain measured."

The expedition set up labs in each village to test not just their own members, but up to 200 volunteer trekkers expected later in the season to gain a large statistical pool for their research. The doctors will use this data to study the effects of hypoxia—low oxygen levels in the blood—with the hope of finding new treatments for critically ill intensive care patients with similarly low blood oxygen levels.

This is perhaps the largest expedition ever on Everest. All along the trek, at base camp (18,370 feet) and at Advance Base Camp (around 22,000 feet), the Caudwell Xtreme Everest team will install small laboratories for testing.

"We've got exercise bikes, centrifuges to spin the blood, Doppler machines to measure oxygen levels in the brain, a machine that measures hemoglobin and hematocrits, 30 laptops to process the information, a whole heap of generators to give us power for all this, and batteries to store the power. Oh, and we've got lots and lots of liquid nitrogen to keep the blood samples in. It's easier to keep them cool now than it was at sea level!" Kay laughs through her chattering teeth.



*Almost there! Members of the Caudwell Xtreme Everest Expedition on their way to Everest Base Camp located at 18,370 feet.*

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## RETURN TO EVEREST PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR: **GREG MACGILLIVRAY**

PRODUCER: **SHAUN MACGILLIVRAY**

CO-DIRECTOR: **MICHAEL BROWN**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: **BRAD OHLUND**

DIRECTOR OF MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY:

**MICHAEL BROWN**

CAMERA: **GREG MACGILLIVRAY, MICHAEL**

**BROWN, JACK TANKARD, RON GOODMAN**

EDITOR: **STEPHEN JUDSON**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: **HARRISON SMITH**

EDUCATION PARTNER:

**SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER.**

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MacGillivray Freeman Films is proud to support **Science Beyond the Boundaries**, a program of the **Saint Louis Science Center** encompassing a network of science centers reaching over 10 million visitors annually throughout the United States and Canada. A 2-disk set of educational and exhibit development materials regarding **Caudwell Xtreme Everest**, including hands-on science activities, posters and a live demonstration script, is available to all participating science centers at no cost. For information about joining the network or to order the disks, contact Jennifer Boxer at [jboxer@slsc.org](mailto:jboxer@slsc.org).



## Feeling the altitude

Now, after reaching a height higher than any in the continental U.S., the effects of altitude are beginning to show. "We've got quite a few people with headaches, so we're keeping a close eye on them. It hasn't been a problem until this evening, when we've got people showing signs of acute mountain sickness for the first time."

But what better time to get sick? "We are falling over doctors," Kay jokes, "so there is no problem getting lots of advice and suitable medications as required."

Only the Sherpa, a Tibetan-descended people who have inhabited these regions for hundreds of years, can endure climbing to such altitudes with only modest difficulty. The Sherpa and their culture will form one of the main thrusts of the MacGillivray Freeman Films project.

Clearly this is a different kind of trek than most in Nepal, and a different sort of mountain expedition. But this year it's also the first out of the gate—the advance team got first pick of camp sites. Before another month passes Everest Base Camp will be a tent city of up to 1,000 people on some 30 different climbing expeditions.

## Mountains and moviemakers

"We're having quite a bit of fun with the MacGillivray Freeman IMAX film team, filming us as we trek up the Khumbu Valley," says Kay. "It is a bit strange being on a rocky mountain trail, surrounded by huge snowy peaks, then walking around a corner and suddenly coming face to face with a camera! But we're getting used to it."

Mountain cinematographer Michael Brown is leading the small advance film team on the trek in; he'll be joined by director Greg MacGillivray and the stars of *RETURN TO EVEREST 3D*, Jamling Norgay and Araceli Segarra, later in the month. So far they've filmed locations around the Buddhist monastery of Thangboche and other scenes along the trek route in the giant-screen IMAX format. They've also spent time with the Sherpas in the villages, especially the photogenic children.

"Two days ago we were setting up a shot in a beautiful small valley," Michael reports, "and a large group of school children surrounded us. When we moved for our next set-up they followed. We have a great shot of them racing up the hill in a mad dash."

Meanwhile, the trekkers and filmmakers are spending their last couple of nights in the modest yet warm lodges on the Khumbu trail, before checking into the nylon tents at Everest Base Camp, still almost 1000 meters above them.

The expedition is just getting started; but they'll be there for the long haul—nine weeks at Base Camp—time to do as much research as they can, and climb the mountain if at all possible. "Of course, it all depends on the weather," Kay Mitchell repeats this more than once, and it's one phrase we're sure to hear many times again in the weeks to come.



Mac Mackenney carrying a gas bottle, part of the 20 tons of equipment used to set up labs on Everest.



Mani stones—sacred Tibetan prayers carved into rock—are found along the trail leading through the Khumbu Valley to Base Camp.