

MACGILLIVRAY FREEMAN'S

RETURN TO EVEREST EXPEDITION UPDATE

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

DISPATCH # 5

DATE: *May 10, 2007*

LOCATION: *Everest Base Camp*

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 *RETURN TO EVEREST (2D/3D)*, a follow-up to the smash hit film *EVEREST*, the highest grossing IMAX Theatre film of all time. *RETURN TO EVEREST* 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* will be released to IMAX Theatres and other giant screen cinemas on March 4, 2009, the 11TH anniversary of the original historic *EVEREST*.



REUNION IN BASE CAMP

Climbers and trekkers meet in the icy city

After the two-week trek up from Kathmandu, the MacGillivray Freeman film crew arrived in Everest Base Camp safe and strong. Araceli Segarra and Jamling Norgay led the *Return to Everest* team back to the familiar grounds of the 17,600-foot encampment, which they last saw eleven years ago. But time had wrought its changes.

"Base Camp is different than what I thought it would be," said producer Shaun MacGillivray. "In 1996 there were maybe seven or eight expedition camps here, but now there are as many as 1000 people in at least 30, possibly 40, expeditions. It feels like a city." And like a city, small businesses have cropped up—there's a massage tent for weary climbers and even a bakery for fresh bread.



Even on Mt. Everest, the world is a small place—Araceli Segarra runs into an old friend, Nigel Hart of the Caudwell Xtreme team.

The trek up was a memorable experience, fully documented by director Greg MacGillivray and his crew. "The hike up to Gorak Shep was really beautiful," reports Barbara MacGillivray of the journey's final days. "We followed the trail up along the glacier at the foot of the Khumbu Icefall. Above Gorak Shep there is an unexpected dry lake bed, quite large and sandy. Even with the falling snow and clouds, the views from the ridge were magnificent. Doug King of the Saint Louis Science Center said they reminded him of the astronauts' description of the moon's 'magnificent desolation.'"

The trek was not without an emotional recall of the tragic 1996 climbing season that left eight people on the mountain dead. Not far from Gorak Shep—the last overnight before the trekkers reach Base Camp—the team came upon a small *chorten* (temple) where fresh prayer flags flew in the crisp wind. They had been placed there by Jan Arnold, widow of the New Zealand climber Rob Hall who died near the summit in 1996. Jan had come to Base Camp on a personal pilgrimage with their daughter Sarah, now 10, who never got to see her father. The scene in *Everest* where Rob's call from his last camp is patched through to his pregnant wife remains powerful in the minds of all who have seen the movie.

After meeting Jan and her family on the trail, the MacGillivray Freeman team filmed Araceli and Jamling at the *chorten* as they emotionally recalled the tragedy that killed Rob and seven others on Everest that fateful year.



During a break in filming, Jamling Norgay teaches ice-climbing skills to members of the expedition.

City on Ice

Once in Base Camp, the trekkers found that the end of the trail was no less dangerous than the rugged path they followed to get there. "On our arrival there was a huge avalanche to greet us, which I'm sure Kay arranged," joked Shaun. "But it's kind of dangerous walking here. You have to really make sure that your feet are well planted or you're going to slip because of the ice."

Kay Mitchell of the Caudwell Xtreme Expedition elaborates: "It's sunny in the morning, and the snow starts to melt and get icy. Then in the afternoon it snows on top of the ice and becomes quite treacherous."

Of the 30-plus groups at Base Camp, the Xtreme Everest expedition is by far the largest. Kay counts over 100 multi-colored tents in their icy village, split between the scientific researchers and the volunteer trekkers who come though for three-day stays, plus the Sherpa tents and group facilities. Kay tells us that from the research encampment to the trekker's tents, "It's a short skid down the hill. One of us is going to end up with a broken ankle sooner or later."

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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

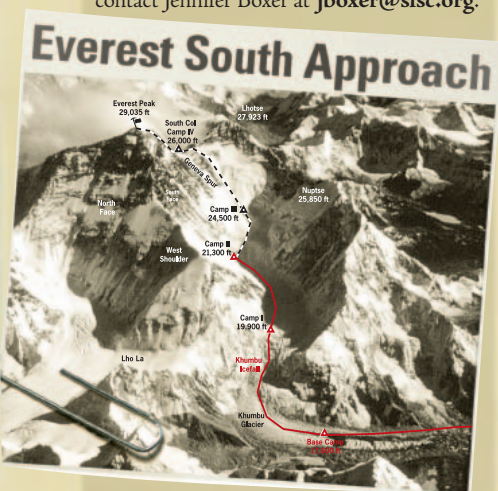
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MacGillivray Freeman Films is proud to support **Science Beyond the Boundaries**, a program of the **Saint Louis Science Center** encompassing a network of science centers reaching over 10 million visitors annually throughout the United States and 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.



Jamling, meanwhile, is right at home among his fellow Sherpa. "Jamling has taken it as a challenge to eat at every one of the expedition kitchens, and he seems to know everyone here," Barbara reports. "It has been wonderful hearing all of Jamling's stories, and fascinating to learn that the largest trekking and mountaineering companies here are now owned and run by Sherpas—another big change since 1996. With this new prosperity, they can now give back to their community with education and medical facilities."

High Science

For the doctors on the Xtreme Everest summit team, Base Camp has become but a way-station. They recently spent almost two weeks on the higher reaches of Everest conducting research experiments at Camp II (21,300 feet) and acclimating to the altitude. The team was forced to retreat a few days earlier than expected when a large spring storm threatened.

"It would be fair to say that in terms of the science, things couldn't have gone any better," Dr. Mike Grocott reports. "We've managed to do everything we planned to do, and a lot of them were firsts for science at that altitude."

Incredibly, the team took an exercise bicycle up to Camp II where they were the first to endure the "torture" of a bike test with gas analyzer masks to measure every breath. "I can assure you that doing a work-out on an exercise bike at 6,400m is no easy feat!" noted one of the scientists. Other high altitude firsts included nutritional studies exploring aspects of dietary absorption and excretion, a battery of neuro-cognitive tests and measurements of brain blood flow, and use of a special camera to look at blood flowing through tiny vessels under the tongue to see how lack of oxygen would affect it.

And they're not done: the team plans to repeat the experiments and tests at the South Col's Camp IV at 26,000 feet when they return to the mountain next week.

Fattening Up Down Low

For now, the team has retreated down to lower altitudes to Dengboche, a Sherpa village at about 14,500 feet, to "fatten up," as Kay put it—both in terms of food and to saturate their blood with oxygen before the next stage. All climbers must acclimate to the low oxygen of altitude by pressing higher on the mountain in stages, then retreating to lower levels to re-oxygenate their systems. This is the time-honored method of acclimatization that mountaineers use to condition their bodies for reaching the world's highest summits.

Meanwhile, the MacGillivray Freeman team is shooting Base Camp life and the dramatic surroundings, and they are excited about the IMAX footage they are getting. "In 3D, it will feel like the mountain is basically resting on the audience's laps," enthused Shaun MacGillivray.

Sometime in the next few days the Xtreme climbing team will renew their summit attempt, hoping this time to set up a research tent as high as Camp IV on the South Col, then return to Camp II for a night or two before attempting the summit. It will be a challenging few days, and if the weather cooperates, the culmination of their scientific endeavor as well as their personal dreams.

Next: Back to the heights.

Photographs courtesy of the Caudwell Xtreme Everest Expedition. For more information about the Caudwell Xtreme Everest Expedition, visit www.xtreme-everest.co.uk.



Members of the Xtreme team erect their Drash Lab at Camp II where five days of experiments included breath analyzer tests on an exercise bike and blood samples.



Night in Camp II at 21,300 feet where temperatures can range from -10° up to 90° F. The Xtreme team performed research experiments never before attempted at this altitude.