



The High-Altitude Section of the Colorado Mountain Club

THIN AIR

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Everest Expedition, Part 2 of 2, Tonya Riggs

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Tonya Riggs on the summit of Mt Everest

Join **Tonya Riggs** as she shares her experiences on her recent climb of Mt. Everest as part of the Everest Peace Project. *Tonya* has only been climbing since she joined the Colorado Mountain Club and took Basic Mountaineering School in 1999. Prior to the year 2000, she had never even winter camped. The courses she took and the people she met in the CMC have enabled her to climb all over the world, including the Peruvian Andes, the Dolomites of Northern Italy, the Central Alps of Europe, and ultimately the Himalayas of Nepal. Don't miss this great slideshow and opportunity to be inspired to "Live the life that you have always imagined." Tonya will tell you how she made her wildest dream come true and all the steps along the way. Enter to win prizes from Trango and Stonewear.

Wednesday, March 7th at 7:00 PM

American Mountaineering Center

710 10th Street

Golden, Colorado

Free and Open to the Public

Back in Kathmandu - the rest of the story

At this point I am going to share my dispatch back to the United States. It was written upon my return to safety at ABC when the climb was fresh in my mind. This same dispatch can be found on www.projecthimalaya.com where Jamie McGuiness, our Expedition Leader, stored my story. It is not edited. The notes in parenthesis are where Jamie added his commentary. Through my words you will gain a deeper understanding of the true pain and agony associated with climbing Mt. Everest.



Cleaning up after the summit

Back in Kathmandu - the rest of the story

I am really fatigued and very weak. I think I am less than 90 lbs but eating lots and sure to regain my strength in the next two weeks. The mountain was so easy to get up, it was getting down that was the challenge. Here is the rest of the story...

While hanging out at ABC I met so many wonderful people... THEY DIED on the mountain. Oh my, it was the most difficult of all difficult situations I have ever encountered. Dave Sharp died on the trail (we essentially had to step over him). His death is very controversial because the world is wondering why people walked past him and did not give him oxygen or assistance. He literally died on the trail. David was British and a good friend of Jamie's.

Then there is Victor from Brazil. He died quietly in his tent at 8,300 meters. We spent a lot of time with Victor. He was a father of two little children. His death is so upsetting.

A wonderful French woman lost her husband to a fall. He was seen after the third step just hanging on the fixed line. She did not go above C3.

There were others and this really took an emotional toll on me. None-the-less, I climbed up with no problem and really enjoyed summit day. I was on top early and then back at C3 (8,300 meters) by say 1:00 in the afternoon. I was emotionally whipped by the excitement and the adrenaline. All I

wanted to do was sleep on oxygen and then descend all the way to the North Col the next day. I couldn't. With Sele's rescue and the risk of another night at 8,300 meters it was important for me to keep moving down. Sele would need the tent space and the oxygen etc.

So, I started down. I was emotionally drained. I think I stopped at every dead body and cried. Da'Yula started preparing me for the deaths and he would shake me back to my senses at times and tell me to stay focused.

I had spent so much time training on the uphill and not enough on the downhill so I found myself having a difficult time walking downhill. It is very steep from the high camp to C2 and you cannot rappel as the lines are just too tight. You can't even angel arm rappel at times as it is too tight. Brad short roped me just so I could move a bit faster and have the security of being attached to him. Brad is our cameraman and a guide on mountains such as Denali and Aconcagua. It was a great help. However, we did not leave high camp until 3pm and it started getting dark and very windy.....our next camp was at 7650 meters. Micha was with us but ahead of us. As the winds became unruly.....we hear Micha yelling, "Brad.....over here." We found Mica in a stranger's tent. We climbed in to regroup. Our tents were still another 200 meters below and we did not think we could make it there. Micha was complaining of frostbitten toes and I was so weak all I wanted to do was sit.

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The descent ridge

We decided to spend the night in this tent at 7900m. Think about how high this is, there aren't many mountains higher than this. It was awful, the three of us crammed in this tent. Da'Yula brought me my next tank of oxygen but I gave it to Micha because he was in worse shape. Brad and I slept without oxygen. Let me restate, I did not sleep. I spent the entire night wiggling my toes and fingers in complete fear of losing them all. Every five minutes I just wiggled. We boiled water using the snow that had blown into the tent. It was awful water with lots of floaties.....ick!!!! I did not have enough power in my boot warmers to turn them up and my feet were wet so I had no choice but to take my boots off. I did keep the batteries on and near my chest which kept my core a bit warm.

The next morning it was still howling. Micha took off, he needed to get down fast. Brad had dropped a mitten on summit day so he took off

due to cold hands [Jamie had a spare but we didn't meet]. Da'Yula and I started down. We only needed to get to 7650m to our tents to get more oxygen. The wind was blowing me over. We were both in bad shape. Every ten to 30 feet I would fall. Sometimes due to wind and other times due to fatigue. Finally, Da'Yula called for oxygen to be brought to us. He sat down and encouraged me to wait. I was being plummeted by the wind and feared frostbite. We were on the edge of C2. Many of the tents were torn apart, very little left. I crawled and rolled to a torn tent that offered a little shelter....I rolled through piss, food, and trash but got some relief. I was only about 20 feet from Da'Yula. I lay face down and started crying for no reason other than I was a bit scared and completely frazzled. I think I fell asleep because the next thing I know, a rescue sherpa [Project Himalaya sherpa] rolled me over and shoved a mask on my face. I had oxygen, suddenly the world became visible again and life was getting better. I

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was on the oxygen for about ten minutes and then able to get up and retreat down to our tents at 7650m where we could get more oxygen and water.

Because of the long exposure so high we needed to get all the way to the North Col. A wonderful Sherpa named Nima Tenzi [a Project Himalaya sherpa] escorted me down to the North Col. It was a long day. Every step hurt but I was happy and talkative and smiling. We found at about 7500m we were out of the wind and the sun was warm. It was just a slow process-every step hurt. The bottoms of my big toes were blistered (I think only from my boots being a bit too big and my feet slid around more than necessary). My quads were screaming! Going up...piece of cake. Coming down...HELL.

Got to the North Col at a decent time and spent the night on oxygen. Almost suffocated. I put the mask on and some time in the night rolled onto my stomach, face down with the mask.....ran out of O2 and woke up gasping. Funny at the time. My face still hurts from sleeping on the mask. I think I bruised all my face muscles.

The day down from the North Col was beautiful. Got back to ABC and ate lots of peanut butter and Nutella, hehehehehe. Had a rest day at ABC and then did the awful 15 mile hike back to BC.

Now in Kathmandu I need to recover and regain my strength. I need to put on about 15 pounds.....most importantly, I need to get out of Kathmandu. (I am not going to rock climb in Thailand....in fact, I could not pull one move at the moment). I am just going to sleep in the warm sun for a couple days. I will still be home as scheduled. My lungs need recovery as does my entire body. Everything hurts at the moment.

It was all worth it. I would do it again tomorrow from the south side. It was a wonderful journey and a fabulous climb. I learned the power of the death zone. It has an amazing relaxing effect on you. All you want to do is sleep and rest in your tent. You must keep moving down no matter how much it hurts. Your body can only handle so much at that high elevation. I understand how so many perished in their tents....sleeping after a great summit. It is really sad and very scary.

So as Paul Harvey would say....that was the rest of the story.

I love you all and can't wait to come home. Tonya (she is now home).

2006 CLIMBER'S LIST

Thanks to everyone who contributed their accomplishments to the second annual list of higher or "exotic" peaks climbed by HAMS members. Submissions this year included a number of photos and stories that make this more than just a "dry" list of peaks. This is a partial list. The remainder of the 2006 Climber's list will be published in the next HAMS newsletter.

Name	Peak	Elevation (ft)	Location	Date (2006)
John Bank	Split Mountain	14,058	California	June
	Mount Russell	14,086	California	August
Georgia Briscoe	Ixtaccihuatel	17,126	Mexico	November
	Pico de Orizaba	18,405	Mexico	November
Bill Farrow	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Tom Hankiewicz	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Lori Hansen	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Jeff Heiderer	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July
Mark Hinton	Mount Rainier	14,410	Washington	July

→ See pag 6 for story and photos

Upcoming Trips

Upcoming trips approved by the ExCom, as well as tentative trips in the planning stage are listed below. For more information, and for other trips offered by Adventure Travel, be sure to check listings on the CMC website at www.cmc.org/events/events.

To request an application for approved trips, or for even more information, contact the leader at the phone number or email shown.



2007 June 27—July 10

Mt Elbrus, Russia

\$3,415 Land & Air

Steve Bonowski nztrekker@earthlink.net

Full, accepting applications for waiting list



2007 July 16—July 28

Matterhorn and Mt Blanc, Switzerland

\$1080 plus air and some meals

Gary Helenga helenga_gary@bah.com

Full, accepting applications for waiting list



2007 July 10—July 15

Mt Rainier, Washington

\$400 plus air and 1 night hotel

Greg Olson greg@ubiquity-design.com

Approved, Accepting applications



2007-2008

Dec 27—Jan 11

Kilimanjaro &

Tanzania

\$4,999 Land & Air

Joshua Baruch

jbbaruch@yahoo.com

Heidi Baruch

hbuffalo@yahoo.com

Approved, Accepting applications



2007 November 28—December 17

Aconcagua, Argentina

\$4220 Land and Air

Steve Bonowski nztrekker@earthlink.net

Approved, Accepting Applications



2007 December 8—December 23

Cotapaxi, Chimborazo, Ecuador

\$1300 + Air

Greg Olson greg@ubiquity-design.com

Tentative

Split Mountain and Mount Russell—John Bank

Split Mountain- 14,058' located outside of Bishop, California in the central Sierras, climbed with my good friend Neil Satterfield on June 16-17, 2006. This was an arduous two day climb. The trailhead is at 6400', so there is some serious elevation gain; in fact, we passed through 3 separate eco-systems. Base camp was at Red Lake at 10,400'. From Red Lake to the summit was a technical snow and ice climb and we were in crampons and using tools the entire time. We accessed the summit via St. Jean's Gulley, a 1600' couloir which we had to enter by doing a standing broad jump over a five foot crevasse in the bergshrund! Split Mountain is one of the most remote of the California 14ers and we did not see another person during the entire climb.

Mount Russell- 14,086' located outside of Lone Pine, California in the southern Sierras, climbed with my good friends Neil Satterfield and Steve Kaiser on August 27-29, 2006. We climbed Mt. Russell via the Fish Hook Arete, a 10 pitch 1200' technical rock climb of sustained 5.7-5.9 climbing. The Fish Hook Arete is an exposed, extremely aesthetic "true" arete which tops out directly on the summit. The trailhead is at the Whitney Portal at 8300'. Base camp was at Upper Boy Scout Lake at 11,300'. The approach hike is a fabulous trek up the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek on a good climbers trail which quickly diverges from the main Mt. Whitney trail. All the way to base camp, we were afforded stunning views of the east face of Mt. Whitney. Upper Boy Scout Lake was an awesome place to set up base camp and it offered great solitude. As a special bonus, we were treated to three days of Sierra "bluebird" weather. The Fish Hook Arete is a challenging climb on one of the most spectacular peaks in the Sierras.



Split Mountain



Mt Russell

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