**Scholastic News: Interview With Sir Edmund Hillary** **(November 1996)**



Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first two men to successfully climb Mt. Everest. Sir Edmund answered questions from students in 1996. He died in 2008.

**Question:** How did you have enough energy to climb Mount Everest?

**Answer:** I was very fit and had much climbing experience.

**Question:** I was wondering if you have any thoughts on the tragedy in the spring of 1996 on Everest in which several people were killed. For example, do you think unacceptable risks were taken? What might you have done differently?

**Answer:** Many people have been getting too casual about climbing Everest. I forecast a disaster many times.

**Question:** How do other mountains you've climbed compare to Everest? Can you think of another peak that's challenged you as much as Everest?

**Answer:** Other mountains have more technically difficult routes than Everest. But none have that last 800 feet of extreme height.

**Question:** How did you sleep on Mt. Everest?

**Answer:** Sleeping is always difficult at high altitude, so we didn't sleep much.

**Question:** What was the most difficult part of your adventure?

**Answer:** Strong motivation is the most important factor in getting you to the top.

**Question:** Did you have to carry all your own food, or was there some food available on the mountain, such as plants?

**Answer:** We carried all our own food.

**Question:** I know from reading your story that you trained for a long time and also were/are a courageous man. But was there a time up on Everest when you were scared? Can you describe what was happening?

**Answer:** I was scared many times on Everest, but this is all part of the challenge. When I fell down a crevasse it was pretty scary.

**Question:** What did it look like up that high on the mountain? How long did it take you to climb Mt. Everest?

**Answer:** From the summit we could see at least a hundred miles in every direction. It took seven weeks to go from base camp to the top, but only three days coming down.

**Question:** How many pounds of food did you take? What kind of food did you eat?

**Answer:** High on the mountain, food is repugnant and you have to make yourself eat. Most of our energy came from very sweet drinks — mostly hot weak tea with lots of sugar.

**Question:** How did you feel when you reached the top of Everest? Were you able to see anything? What did the world look like from up there?

**Answer:** On the summit of Everest I had a feeling of great satisfaction to be first there. We could see a vast distance in every direction — mostly mountains, glaciers, and high plateaus.

**Question:** How does it feel to be called "Sir"? What was it like being knighted? That must be really cool.

**Answer:** Becoming a "Sir" is slightly uncomfortable at first although it is a considerable honor. It is amazing how quickly you become accustomed to it. I still have the same friends and a similar way of life. The actual knighting took place in Buckingham Palace by the Queen [of England] — it was a very impressive ceremony.