**The Race to the Top of Mount Everest**

Who was the first person to reach the peak of Mount Everest? For years, the answer to that question remained a mystery. Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, the first two people to reach the top, kept it a secret. They would not tell who first stepped onto the peak on May 29, 1953, at 11:30 a.m. Hillary said he wanted to makeit clear that they had made it to the top of the mountain as a team. “To a mountaineer, it’s of no great consequence who actually steps foot first,” he said.

Still, they weren’t able to keep the secret forever. Eventually, Norgay revealed that Hillary had actually been the first person to reach the peak. Reflecting on this, Hillary said, “Often the person who puts more into the climb steps back and lets his partner stand on top first.” Was Norgay disappointed to be second? Most likely not. He said, “If it is a shame to be the second man on Mount Everest, then I will have to live with this shame.” After this experience, Norgay and Hillary remained friends for life.

Hillary and Norgay were far from the first people who attempted to reach the summit—but those before them didn’t reach that goal. As far back as 1921, people began trying to be the first to reach the top of Mount Everest. Most of the other mountains in the world had been successfully climbed. Outer space travel was still just a dream. Mount Everest was every climber’s chance to be first.

Before Hillary and Norgay made it to the top of Everest, fifteen previous groups had set out to climb the mountain, and all of them had been unsuccessful. For some groups, the problem was not having enough oxygen in tanks to make it to the top. In those times, oxygen tanks were not made well, and the oxygen often didn’t last long. For other groups, the problem was the weather. Two climbers who set out right before Hillary and Norgay turned around because of exhaustion. They were 300 feet from the peak, less than the length of one football field. In all, thirteen people died trying to be first to make it to the top.

Why were Hillary and Norgay successful when others had not been? Above all, they learned from the advice of other mountaineers. Hillary and Norgay also prepared for a very long time. Before climbing Everest, they had climbed mountains together in both the summer and the winter. They practiced using an ice pick. They also wore especially designed outfits made out of windproof material. Also, they carried oxygen tanks, and the tanks they wore when they reached the top of the mountain were more modern and better than those that earlier climbers had worn. This meant that the pair could carry more oxygen than previous climbers had carried. Also, Hillary and Norgay had good luck with the weather.

After decades of dreaming, years of preparation, and weeks of climbing, Hillary and Norgay spent just fifteen minutes at the summit of Mount Everest. They took photos, planted flags, and even looked for the bodies of climbers who disappeared before them. Although people have since climbed to the same spot as Hillary and Norgay reached, it’s Hillary and Norgay’s climb that people across the world still remember. The climb is remembered because it was the first, and because Hillary and Norgay were so supportive of each other.