



**INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAINEERING AND CLIMBING FEDERATION**  
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008

In 2003, two major anniversaries occurred that celebrated the spirit of human endeavour. The first event was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of recorded flight and the second was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ascent of Mt. Everest. Of the two events it seemed that the 1953 climb of Everest once again captured and held the imagination of the world. Much of this attention was due to the personalities involved with the Everest climb and for more than 50 years Sir Edmund Hillary served as the unofficial ambassador of the mountaineering world. In this world his iconic figure towered above all others.

Thus, the death of Sir Edmund Hillary marks the passing of an era. An era which ushered in the golden age of Himalayan mountaineering. The success on Everest in 1953 had been preceded by the French on Annapurna in 1950 and that of the near success of the Swiss on Everest in 1952. The 1953 expedition showed that it was possible to step upon the highest place on earth.

When one thinks about Sir Edmund's life one is struck by three things;

What he achieved as a mountaineer and adventurer,  
How he handled his celebrity status as a person and  
How he used this status to achieve his greatest accomplishments.

Although his success on Everest was the pinnacle of his climbing achievements we should not forget his exploratory work with Shipton and Lowe, or his later sojourns in Antarctica and the Himalayas. His adventures were an inspiration to those of us who grew up and learned to climb in the 1950's and the 1960's.

Many climbers, who were fortunate enough to spend time with Sir Edmund, were struck by how ordinary and likable he was, despite the fame and public adulation that attached itself to him. Many of the UIAA board members talked fondly of spending time with him, whether it was in Barcelona, Kathmandu, Rotterdam or Calgary. He always had time for the ordinary climber.

Mountaineering has entered a new age. The day of the gentlemen mountaineer seems to have disappeared, but Sir Edmund's name and good work live on. That he used his influence to better the lives of the Sherpas and the villagers of Nepal speaks most eloquently of his greatest achievement.

At this time the mountaineering world bows its head in respect to one of its titans. For the UIAA, we also celebrate the passing of one of our honorary members. We send our deepest respects to the New Zealand Alpine Club and to all the people of New Zealand.

Mike Mortimer  
President  
UIAA, Bern, Switzerland