There are no translations available.

Buddha Basnyat

Griffith Pugh (Physiologist)

Griffith Pugh was an eccentric Welsh physiologist who was instrumental in the successful 1953 Everest climb by Ed Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. He was so absent minded that he was wearing pajamas when John Hunt's team was formally presented to King Tribhuvan after their Everest climb. Regarding his eccentricity a well known incident on the 1953 expedition has to do with a heavy crate of Pugh's "physiological equipment". The Sherpas carefully brought the crate up the Khumbu's treacherous Icefall only to find out after opening the crate that it contained bottle after bottle of mango chutney!! Often he would forget where he parked his car in London and report to the police that the car was stolen, following which the police would eventually recover it.

He may have been eccentric, but no one questioned his brilliance. In the Spring 1952, the Swiss team of Raymond Lambert and Tenzing Norgay (the same Tenzing that would later summit with Hillary) were only 300 m from the top of Everest. But amazingly they abandoned their attempt!

Griffith Pugh from his field studies in May 1952 in the Cho Oyu area determined that there were two important reasons for the failure of the physically strong Swiss team. Pugh concluded that dehydration due to excessive deep breathing (hyperventilation) could be severe at extreme altitudes if not replenished by generous quantities of fluids. Incredibly the Swiss team in 1952 forgot to pack a stove in their ultimate bid for Everest and were melting snow with candle for drinking water! Pugh in his extensive report to the Royal Geographic Society emphasized the importance of plentiful fluids for a successful climb. Indeed, as a result Hillary and Tenzing were drinking "mugs of lemonade" as they ascended.
Pugh also concluded that the second reason why the Swiss team failed was that the supplemental oxygen apparatus in those days allowed you to breathe oxygen only while resting. So Pugh designed a device that enabled climbers to inhale plentiful oxygen even while walking up.
Climbing experts think there is little doubt that the Swiss team born and bred in the mountains with a technical climbing ability superior to that of the British failed in the spring of 1952 primarily because of insufficient attention to oxygen and hydration. Eccentric Griffith Pugh cleverly outmanoeuvred the Swiss and help put the British team on top the next year.