



Cheryl Bart (YPO Sydney) and her daughter, Nikki, on their climb to the summit of Mount Everest

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On Top of the World

A YPO Mother-Daughter Team Makes History

Cheryl Bart (YPO Sydney) had never seen anything like it.

"The sun is rising, and it's just the most glorious spectacle ever," she says.

Few could prove her wrong. After all, not many people have seen the sunrise from the top of Mount Everest.

After 54 days of sub-freezing temperatures, suffocating altitudes and a spirit-crushing setback, Cheryl and her 23-year-old daughter, Nikki, made history on 24 May 2008 as the first mother-daughter team to climb the world's tallest mountain.

In doing so, they also became the first mother-daughter team to scale the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each of the world's seven continents, something fewer than 230 individuals have accomplished.

"Looking back, it was an awesome eight-year journey that tested our physical abilities, our mental skills and teamwork, and culminated in summiting Everest, which had been beyond our wildest dreams when we started out," says Cheryl, chair of the South Australian Film Corporation, the Adelaide Film Festival, Australia Pty Ltd and the Environmental Protection Authority.

The adventure began in 2001 when Nikki and Cheryl climbed 7,310 feet to the top of Kosciuszko in Australia. From there, they scaled Europe's Mount Elbrus (18,510 feet), North America's McKinley-Denali (20,320 feet), Africa's Kilimanjaro (19,340 feet), South America's Aconcagua (22,834 feet) and Antarctica's Vinson Massif (16,066 feet).

Last on the list was Asia's Mount Everest, which towers 29,029 feet above sea level. With sponsors such as events (a women's clothing

retailer), BigPond and the North Face, Cheryl and Nikki chronicled the physical and mental demands of their monumental journey on a Web site (www.bigpondeverest.com).

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"The biggest trick with this part of the expedition is going to be living in the moment. We can't think about what is ahead: the freezing cold, the illness and certainly not the summit. Now we have to think about trekking through some of the most extraordinary scenery and bonding with a team who will become our family over the next 10 weeks."

Accompanied by three sherpas and seven other climbers, they began a slow ascent to acclimate to the thinner air. Some fought colds, stomach problems and chest infections while braving howling winds and heavy snow.

After reaching Base Camp on day 10, safely navigating the perilous Khumba Icefall, where shifting blocks of ice can easily trigger an avalanche, and settling into Camp One by day 20, they encountered a major setback.

For almost 20 days, their climb was delayed as the Olympic Torch made its journey up Mount Everest. (The mountain was off-limits to climbers until the torch was safely down.)

Once permitted to restart their climb, Cheryl and Nikki spent more than a week climbing up and down between Base Camp and Camp Two, re-acclimating to the thin air and completing oxygen mask training, which saves lives in the death zone.

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"Knowing what an unbelievable effort this all is, why do we keep on coming back? Actually, that's a question we've been asking ourselves lately. The best comparison seems to be to childbirth. At the time, you can't imagine anything more painful, and yet, with time ... all you're left with are glowing memories."

In Nepal, Mount Everest's summit is known as Sagarmatha, "the goddess in the sky," and on 24 May, two women made history. At 4:36 a.m., Nikki planted her feet securely on the summit of Mount Everest; her mother joined her 24 minutes later. The first mother-daughter team to stand on top of the world hugged.

Months after the climb, Cheryl is still humbled by the experience. "It was a great privilege to climb to some of the most majestic and beautiful places on our planet and an honor to share these experiences with my daughter," she says.

Today, Nikki is back at the University of New South Wales studying medicine. Her mother, meanwhile, is checking off more adventures from her to-do list.

"I recently went to the Dead Sea in Israel," says Cheryl. "I joked with myself that after touching the highest spot on earth, I wanted to touch the lowest point in the same year. I also ran the New York City Marathon this year and hope to organize some heli-skiing, other mountain climbs and, possibly, a trip to the North Pole."

There's no doubt Nikki will be right behind her.

Higher Ground, Higher Calling

Rob and Katrina Follows (YPO London) were the first YPO couple to climb the Seven Summits together, reaching the top of Mount Everest on 24 May 2006. They also were the first couple in history to get engaged, married and honeymoon on three of the seven peaks! They had not climbed a single mountain before setting their "Everest for Altruvest" goal during their life-planning process. Rob is founder of Altruvest Charitable Services and founding partner of STS Capital Partners, an international investment bank that helps entrepreneurs and family business owners sell all or part of their firms to strategic investors as they seek out more meaningful projects.



Rob and Katrina Follows (YPO London) on Mount Everest.