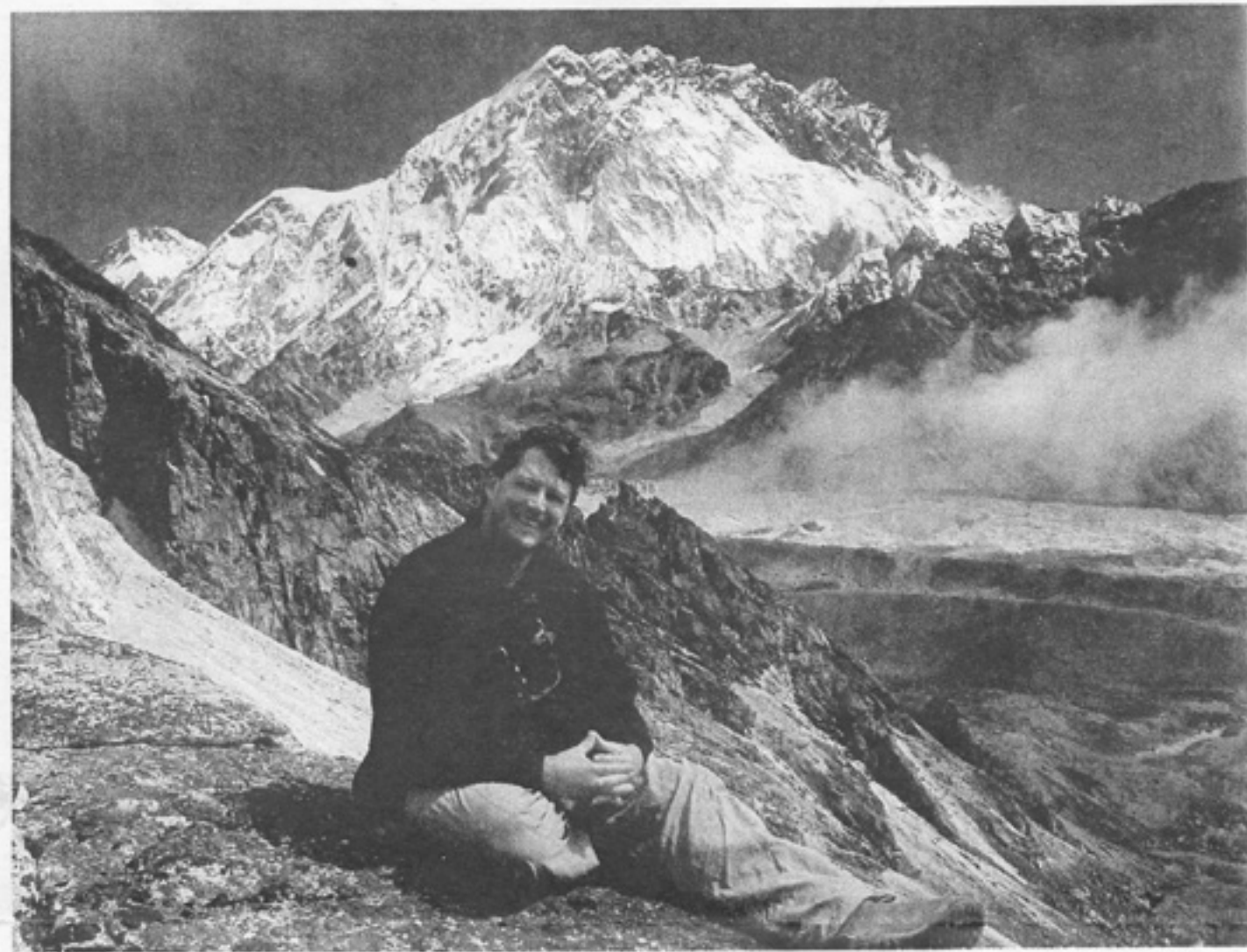


LINCOLN HALL

On May 25, 2006, Lincoln Hall was literally left for dead while descending from the summit of Mount Everest. His wife and children were informed of his death. The next day, he was discovered alive in the "Death Zone" sitting next to a sheer 10,000-foot drop. Hall said to his saviours, "I imagine you're surprised to see me here."



Your survival on Everest was almost miraculous. What do you attribute it to? Conditions, luck, fitness, a higher power?

I have been a climber for 35 careful years. Early on, I learnt to never give up, however impossible the obstacles seemed. If anything got me through that night it was my psychological strength.

A lot of survivors claim the experience profoundly changed their outlook on life. Did your experience change you? If so, how?

Back home I recovered slowly. I'd been knocked to pieces and had to rediscover myself. Along the way I had gained a sense of intuition – something short of clairvoyance, that kept me connected to the greater whole and gave me a wonderful perspective on the world. For me now, the world is full of generosity and possibilities.

Did Everest take a lot of physical training prior?

I was given 7 weeks' notice to join the 2006 Everest summit. I needed 7 months' training, not 7 weeks. My priority was strengthening my

legs, which I did by climbing up 1200m of steep sandstone steps 3 times a week. I was lucky to have those cliffs only 10 minutes jog from home. Most of my training was hiking above Base Camp during what the others regarded as their acclimatisation period. It hurt but it worked.

Do you "train" yourself mentally for the extraordinary hardships of an expedition? How?

A big expedition demands a special headspace. I turn on

a big "focus" switch in my head and I lock into it until the climb is over. Patience is important.

How does being in the "Death Zone" effect one's body and mind?

Death Zone is an apt title. Stay above 7500m without oxygen and you'll die. Your muscles waste away and your mind loses its power. All sorts of physiological processes go haywire.

Do you still train physically these days?

I'm lost without yoga which I've done for 30 years. I use the gym set in my office but mostly I'm running or on my bike.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to attempt a big mountain? Take up rock climbing so you can learn to manage the dangers of the vertical world. Learn to judge your own abilities. Write a will.

Do you ever yearn for the intensity of experience that climbing and expeditions offer? Is it, for want of a better word, addictive?

Addictive is not a good word because you need to stay in control. There's a bitter sweetness with climbing expeditions. You can't have just the bitter or the sweet. It's like bricks without mortar. ■

Lincoln Hall is a motivational speaker and author of Dead Lucky and 7 other books. He's a director of the Australian Himalayan Foundation, an ambassador for the environment organisation Thin Green Line Foundation, and a patron of disaster relief organisation ShelterBox Australia. Hall also leads treks to the Himalayas.

HOW TO: SURVIVE ALTITUDE SICKNESS



Altitude sickness is caused by an acute exposure to low partial pressure of oxygen. This is found at altitudes above 2,400m (8,000 feet). It presents itself as non-specific symptoms that resemble a bad case of the flu or a rotten hangover. It can be fatal. [1] To avoid altitude sickness, you must acclimatise by training your body to work on with decreasing oxygen levels. [2] Most climbers practise a technique called "climb-high, sleep-low", such as staying a few days at a base camp, climbing to a higher camp then returning to base camp to sleep [3]. When repeated, the body adjusts to the oxygen level and produces additional red blood cells.