

Climbing Essentials

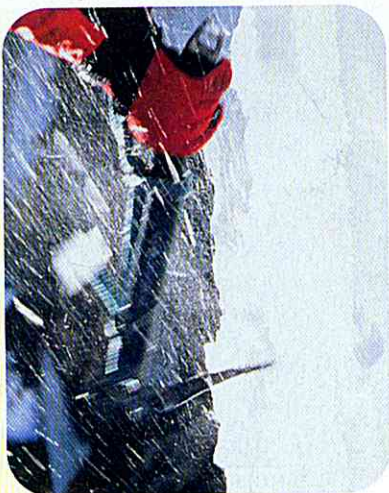
Special equipment is used by climbers to help them get up snowy and icy slopes. Hillary mentions the following pieces of equipment:

ice axe: A tool designed to chop ice to give the climber a platform on which to stand.

crampons: Spiked platforms fastened on the climber's shoes to prevent slipping.

belay: A rope support that is attached to another person. As the climber climbs, the other person lets out the rope. If the climber were to fall, the person holding the belay rope would clamp down on the rope and prevent the climber from falling far.

Hillary and Norgay used ice axes to cut steps in the snow.



belay (bi lay) n. rope support

Reading Check

What are some of the dangers that Hillary and Norgay encounter?

saw that the bottles were less than a third full of oxygen, but this could give us another hour of endurance on our return. That could be very useful later.

We had made considerable height, but there was much more ahead. A 400-foot-long snow slope rose steeply up toward the South Summit. Alternating the lead, we made our way forward, but it was an extremely uncomfortable experience. A thin skin of ice covered deep soft snow. On one occasion there was a dull breaking noise and a six-foot-wide piece of ice around me shattered and slid away down the mountainside. I slipped backward three or four steps and fortunately stopped, but the ice carried on with increasing speed far out of sight. It was rather frightening, but we had no alternative, we must keep going. With a considerable feeling of tension, we forced our way

upward, the snow condition improved and we emerged with great relief onto the South Summit. We were now as high as anyone had ever been before. It was impossible not to dwell for a moment on the remarkable support we had received from our colleagues—John Hunt and Da Nangyal's lift to the depot on the South-East Ridge; George Lowe, Al Gregory and Ang Nyima with their superb support to Camp Bourdillon to the South Summit. Their contribution had enabled us to make such good progress. But now the next move was up to us.

I looked carefully along the final summit ridge. It was impressive all right, but not impossible, despite what Charles Evans had said. We'd certainly give it a good try. We had a drink out of Tenzing's water bottle and I checked our oxygen supplies. Each of us had a bottle that was almost empty so, to save weight, we removed these and I attached our other full bottles firmly into place. It meant we had a total endurance of just under four hours. If we kept moving quickly it should be enough.

With a growing feeling of excitement, I moved down from the South Summit to the small saddle at the start of the summit ridge, cutting steps on the left-hand side below the great cornices and keeping just above the rock face sweeping into the Western Cwm. We moved cautiously, one at a time. I hacked a line of steps for forty feet, thrust my ice axe into the firm snow as a sound belay, and then brought Tenzing along to join me. After I had covered several rope-lengths, I noticed to my surprise that Tenzing was moving rather slowly and seemed in some distress. When he came up to me I examined his

3. **Evans and Bourdillon** Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon were the first assault pair in the Everest expedition of 1953. They climbed to within 300 feet of the summit.