

We didn't waste any time. I started cutting steps again, seeking now rather anxiously for signs of the summit. We seemed to go on forever, tired now and moving rather slowly. In the distance I could see the barren plateau of Tibet. I looked up to the right and there was a rounded snowy dome. It must be the summit! We drew closer together as Tenzing brought in the slack on the rope. I continued cutting a line of steps upward. Next moment I had moved onto a flatish exposed area of snow with nothing but space in every direction. Tenzing quickly joined me and we looked around in wonder. To our immense satisfaction, we realized we had reached the top of the world!

It was 11:30 a.m. on 29th May 1953. In typical Anglo-Saxon fashion, I stretched out my arm for a handshake, but this was not enough for Tenzing who threw his arms around my shoulders in a mighty hug and I hugged him back in return. With a feeling of mild surprise I realized that Tenzing was perhaps more excited at our success than I was. But time was short! I turned off my oxygen and removed my mask. Immediately my face was pricked sharply with ice splinters carried in the brisk wind. I removed my camera from the protection of my down jacket, stepped a little down the slope and photographed Tenzing on the summit with his ice axe upraised and the flag flapping in the breeze—the United Nations flag, the Indian flag, the Nepalese flag and the Union Jack. Tenzing didn't have a camera and, to tell the truth, the thought didn't enter my mind to try to organize a picture of

What was the last obstacle to reaching the summit?

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