Visits in Allentown

Mt. Everest Conqueror Gets Kick Out of Escalator

By DAN PEARSON

There is something almost hilarious about the sight of Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay, who conquered 29,028-foot Mt. Everest in 1953, ascending to the fifth floor of Hess's department store in Allentown on a stainless-steel escalator.

Tenzing thoroughly enjoys mechanical conveniences when he occasionally visits Western nations, but they do not mesh into the program and atmosphere of his mountain-climbing school at Darjeeling, India.

With Tenzing on the escalator were his wife Daku, his nephew Nawang Gombu, and Gombu's wife Sita. Nawang is the only person to have scaled Mt. Everest, the world's highest peak, twice. Now Darjeeling's deputy field director, Nawang guided those expeditions in 1963 and 1966.

The foursome came to the Lehigh Valley yesterday at the personal invitation of Philip I. Berman, board chairman and president of Hess's, and his wife Muriel. During the next two weeks, they will visit points of interest in Eastern Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia's Independence Hall.

The group took a tour of the store, had lunch in the Patio restaurant, and conducted a news conference afterward.

Tenzing achieved the feat of scaling Mt. Everest together with Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand, who took advantage of good weather to make the assault on the summit. The 20th anniversary of that accomplishment was celebrated last week in London. It will be observed in other cities throughout the year.

. . . "Size means nothing in climbing, a big man has no advantage." — Sherpa Guide Nawang Gombu.

Sherpa is the tribal name of 45,000 people who live in an area of Nepal, a monarchy in the Himalayas about the size of Arkansas. Since some of the agricultural villages are at 15,000 feet, the natives are well adjusted to the rarefied air.

Tenzing described the Sherpas, their lives, and the rugged terrain in his 1955 book "Tiger of the Snows." Available in Allentown, the book was written in collaboration with James Ramsey Ullman.

"There are very few climbers among the Sherpas," said Tenzing, "they are mostly farmers and herdsmen."

The tribesmen did not have the elaborate equipment used by the Swiss climbers, but they acquired it and learned to use it expertly. One of the reasons that the Hillary expedition succeeded was that it employed lightweight materials and took sufficient food and oxygen.

What kind of homes do Sherpas live in?

"They are very similar to the chalet that you see in Switzerland with the overhanging roof," said Tenzing. He was impressed by the similarity when he studied mountain climbing in that country.

Because they have no vehicles and few roads, the Sherpas are great walkers, beginning at a young age. Tenzing recalls that he walked a round trip of 175 miles to carry salt to his family.

Tenzing's full head of black hair, trim physique and bronzed skin, belie his 59 years. Many Sherpa men live into their 90s, and one villager who died last year was 104.

Tenzing's wife Daku, who is only 33, is also an ardent mountain climber and instructor. She takes small groups of young women on climbs of up to 19,000 feet, remaining on the trail for a week at a time. She draws the line at the elevation since oxygen assistance is required at 20,000 feet and above.

Pretty and petite, Daku lugs a 60-pound pack as she guides the groups. Her clients are mostly Oriental women "who just want to climb for the adventure of it."

Sita, 32, who is making her first visit to the United States, is not yet a mountain climber. She is the only one of the four who can read and write English fluently.

Tenzing, Nawang and Daku have never studied English formally, but they have mastered the conversational form with remarkable ease. Tenzing, having traveled the most, speaks six languages.

Sita is excited at the prospect of meeting her brother Phursumba who will arrive Friday from the State of Washington. A climbing guide at Mt. Rainier, Sita has not seen him for six years.

Nawang, 37, said that he climbs almost every day at the school. Even smaller than Tenzing, he has amazing strength and endurance.

"Size means nothing in climbing — a big man has no advantage," Nawang explained. Strength and agility, he noted, are advantages.

While Tenzing was actually a member of the 1953 expedition, his nephew was only a porter on that climb. He has since graduated to hiring porters and arranging climbs.

"Everything must be carried on an expedition," Nawang emphasized. "There is no water, food and shelter on the mountains. We had 900 porters for the 1963 expedition."

In that year, Nawang and American adventurer James H. Whitaker reached the summit of Mt. Everest. Whitaker spoke to the group on the telephone yesterday from Seattle, Wash.

Tenzing broke into a broad smile when asked if he had ever bumped into the "Abominable Snowman" while climbing in the Himalayan range.

"Yes, I know all about that, and I don't believe there is such a thing," Tenzing, how laughing, replied.

"The Sherpas have their own superstitions, but they do not understand about the Abominable Snowman," he added.

Tenzing said that Nepal's climate is characterized by short summers and severe winters with much snow and ice. Getting back to his work, he indicated almost any healthy person can learn to climb, "but climbing can be very dangerous for persons who have not taken training."

Asked how expedition members avoided frostbite and fatigue from extreme cold, Tenzing said: "You've got to keep moving your arms and legs — this way and that. You must never stand still in an icy wind for very long."

Foam rubber sleeping bags and special tents enable a climber to keep warm on a slope "even if the temperature is 35 degrees below," he said.

The Bermas, who met the Norgays and the Gombus while visiting in Nepal and India, will accompany the couples on various visits and receptions in Pennsylvania.

On June 15, the entourage will fly to Chicago where Berman and Tenzing will receive the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement. They will be presented by retired news commentator Lowell Thomas, 81, who says that Tenzing is among his adventure heroes.

Mr. and Mrs. Berman are members of the Explorer's Club and have traveled extensively throughout the world, meeting adventurers of Tenzing's and Nawang's stature.

"If you have difficulty appreciating the climb that Tenzing and Hillary made to the top of Everest," said Berman, "the summit is higher than some jets fly. Birds don't go that high."

NOW THEY TEACH OTHERS — Tenzing Norgay, 59, (right) and nephew Nawang Gombu, 37, who achieved international fame by climbing Mt. Everest in Nepal, talk about their climbing school in Darjeeling, India. With them on yesterday's tour of Hess's department store in Allentown are their wives, Daku Norgay, 33, (second from right) and Sita Gombu, 32. They will make appearances in the Lehigh Valley during the next two weeks.

Macungie to Seek Data on Sewage

The Macungie Borough Council this week agreed to seek a private engineering firm to conduct a 30-day measurement of sewage flow from borough lines to an Allentown-owned interceptor.

The move stems from the belief of some borough officials that Allentown has been overcharging for sewage treatment services.

The study, council explained, will not only verify gallonage recorded on interceptor meters, which serve as the basis for city charges, but also will show whether there is infiltration of storm water into the system.

Concern for the elderly of the community led council to a decision to contact several contractors for cost estimates to relocate the office of Borough Secretary Clarence Mohr Jr. from the second to the first floor of Borough Hall.

Present access to the secretary's office is limited to a long flight of stairs, considered to be an imposition for elderly residents coming into Borough Hall to pay taxes and transact other business.

Councilman Lewis Weiss argued against the relocation. He said he would prefer that council purchase properties directly behind Borough Hall and consider building a new Borough Hall instead.

His suggestion, he explained, was based on projected growth of the municipality which, he feels, will make the present facility too small in the very near future.

Councilmen Louis Lentz and John Gehman, however, insisted that a change is needed now and recommended that steps be taken to accommodate the elderly.

Kyle Monroe was named by council to serve out the unexpired term of Robert Correll, who recently resigned as a member of the planning commission. The term extends to 1974.

The council, in a final matter, rejected a request of developer George Koneski of Emmaus, who asked for an exception to the borough plumbing code to permit the use of plastic pipe. Council instructed Koneski to follow the code as it stands.

Suit Claims 'Forced Labor' By 4 Ex-Mental Patients

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A class action suit charging mental patients have been subjected to "forced labor" in Pennsylvania's state institutions was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court here. The suit, filed by the Mental Patients Civil Liberties Project, is asking for $1 million in damages on behalf of four former mental patients.

Named in the suit are the State Department of Public Welfare and its secretary, Helen Wohlgemuth; William B. Beech, Jr. state deputy secretary of mental health; Haverford State Hospital, its medical director Jack B. Kremens, and its head of vocational service, Ogden Hackett.

The suit alleges that forcing inmates to sew rugs, repair electrical appliances and perform janitorial services without pay constitutes slavery.

"Such institutional slavery is an inexcusable and shocking violation of the right of hospital inmates," the suit charges.

"These institutions, which could not function without the forced labor of inmates, exploit the time and energy and health of those persons who are theoretically receiving treatment."

The suit also asks an injunction against further inadequate pay and seeks back pay for the patients.

Amon those represented in the suit is a patient who worked in the Fairview State Hospital library while an inmate there from 1938 through 1969.

Pen Argyl Lets Pact On Streets

Pen Argyl Borough Council has approved a $39,283 contract with Herbert Imbt, Stroudsburg, R.4, for paving and street improvements in the borough.

Streets involved in the project include Schanck, Jory, Jackson, Birch, Hazen and Mountain avenues, and Ridge Street.

Council has also decided to make Heller Avenue one way north from Pennsylvania Avenue to Mountain Avenue, and Lobb Avenue one way south between the same streets. It is hoped this move will alleviate traffic problems.

Council reminded borough residents permits are needed for any swimming pool two feet or deeper, whether above or below ground. Permits can be obtained from William Savercool, zoning officer.

Lions Installation

The Lehighton Lions Club will install officers at a dinner at 6:30 p.m. June 14 in Trainer's Inn, Lehighton R.4.

Three Facing Burglary Counts

A burglary at an Allentown restaurant last month resulted in three city men being held yesterday for Lehigh County Court action.

Rufino Morales, 21, of 134 N. 5th St., and Jose Rodriques and Angel Luis Ocasio Aquirrio, 19, both of 242 Hamilton St., are each charged with burglary, larceny and receiving stolen goods.

All three pleaded not guilty to the counts during a hearing before Justice of the Peace Bennie Rizzotto of Allentown, who ruled a prima facie case was established against each.

The charges stem from a burglary at the Caomeno Restaurant, 240 Hamilton St., on May 22.

TPA AUXILIARY TO MEET

The auxiliary of the Travelers Protective Association, Post L, will meet at 1:30 p.m. today in the Woman's Club of Allentown building.

Planning Chairman Steps Down

The chairman of the Easton Planning Commission has resigned, citing business pressures.

Joseph W. Grollman, elected head of the commission in January, said yesterday he has sent a letter of resignation to Easton Mayor Fred L. Ashton Jr.

Grollman is owner of Grollmans, a women's clothing store at 18 Centre Square, Easton. Contacted last night, he said he felt he could not properly attend to his business and the needs of the commission.

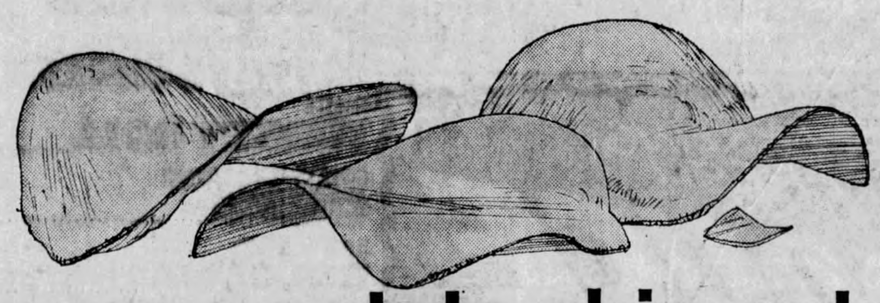
"There is a lot taking place in this business," he said. "I've found this out during the last year."

Admitting that there have been differences of opinion among the commissioners and the city planning staff, Grollman stated this would not have caused him to quit.

He was appointed in October 1971 to fill the unexpired term of resigned Commissioner E. Jerome Brose. That term ran out in January.

However, Grollman was requested to remain in the post until replaced by the mayor.

Tender as a french fry inside.



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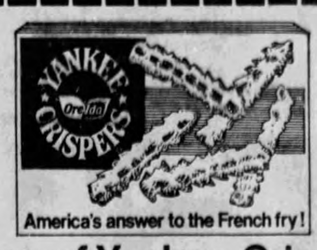

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