



AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
KATHMANDU

Press release
(25 June 2010)

***Celebrating 50 Years of Australian Mountaineering
Feats and Friendships in Nepal***

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY BOOK LAUNCH

The more I go to Nepal, the more I love it. It has a way of growing in your heart, doesn't it? For me it's the people. There's an exuberance of life I find very addictive. The mountains, the many cultures, the creativity of artists in all fields, from film-making to painting, music and writing. That's what does it for me.

Brigitte Muir

Kathmandu, Nepal, 25 June 2010: The Australian Embassy Nepal announced today the launch of *Celebrating 50 Years of Australian Mountaineering Feats and Friendships in Nepal*, a book marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Nepal.

The **Acting CEO of Nepal Tourism Board** Mr Subash Nirola will officially launch the commemorative publication at the Australian Embassy in Bansbari on 25 June, 2010 from 4.00pm to 6.00pm.

The book tells the stories of nine notable Australians whose achievements on the mountains are matched by their achievements as friends of Nepal - both on an individual level and through their philanthropic works.

It opens with a candid interview with Alfred "Greg" Gregory, mountaineer and official photographer on the 1953 Everest expedition, recorded just two weeks prior to his death in February this year.

Andrew Lock's steady determination to set records on 8,000m-plus peaks, while committing himself to the role of private philanthropic organisation the Australian Himalayan Foundation's (AHF) first ambassador has earned him great respect the world over.

A woman's innate determination and sense of intuition in the face of uncertainty, threat and often prejudice are embodied in Brigitte Muir's story. Her freeness of spirit and independent philanthropic work with communities in rural Nepal are testament to her strength of character.

The life of the “faceless porter” has improved dramatically over the past couple of decades, due largely to Dr Jim Duff’s great efforts in the establishment of the International Porter Protection Group with his equally-devoted partner Rejane.

Defying death in Everest’s icy clutches, Lincoln Hall’s story is nothing short of a miracle. His positive attitude and selflessness not only prevented him from becoming another statistic, yet another tragedy on the mountain, but have also driven him to become a major contributor in the AHF’s vast rural education projects.

Peter Hillary has spent a lifetime in the Himalaya, both as a record-setting mountaineer, and as an active supporter of numerous philanthropic organisations in the Solu Khumbu region. His co-establishment of the AHF has proven vital in the strengthening of the Australia-Nepal connection.

Future tourism, self-sustainability and, most importantly, the generation of mutual respect between cultures were Robin Boustead’s ultimate aims when he made his epic traverse of the Great Himalaya Trail, treading paths previously unseen by foreigners.

Sue Fear was loved and highly respected by all who knew her. But despite her untimely death on Mount Manaslu in 2006, her fearless feats in the mountains along with her devotion to both the Fred Hollows Foundation and the AHF will remain her legacy for years to come.

In 1984, when Tim Macartney-Snape set foot atop Everest with Greg Mortimer on the first successful Australian ascent, they set new horizons for Australian mountaineers. In 1987, his co-establishment of the Nepal Eye Program Australia (NEPA) also set new horizons in the future of eye care for Nepal. NEPA’s support was a significant contributing factor to what has become one of the country’s greatest success stories - Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology, which is headed by medical director Dr Sanduk Ruit.

Chief guests at the event include Australians Simon Balderstone (executive director of AHF) and mountaineer Robin Boustead.

The event will also be attended by Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology’s medical director Dr Sanduk Ruit and the chairman of the Himalayan Rescue Association Mr Vikram Neupane.

Australian Ambassador to Nepal Her Excellency Ms Susan Grace said: “This book honours a special group of Australians who have made their mark through mountaineering achievements, as well as the special friendships forged with the people of Nepal through philanthropic works. The spirit of ‘giving something back’ is embodied in the Australian Himalayan Foundation, a number of whose members are featured in the book. I believe this collection of stories of notable Australian mountaineers is a fitting way to celebrate 50 years of friendship between Australia and Nepal.”

The book is for commemorative purposes only and not commercially available. Its purpose is to celebrate a half-century milestone while providing an optimistic outlook for the strengthening of diplomatic and personal relations between Australians and Nepalese into the future.

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Note to Editors:

About the Author

Miriam Fisher is a freelance journalist from Perth, Western Australia. She has worked as a writer and editor for a number of Nepalese, Indian and Australian publications and organisations and is now based in Kathmandu.

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