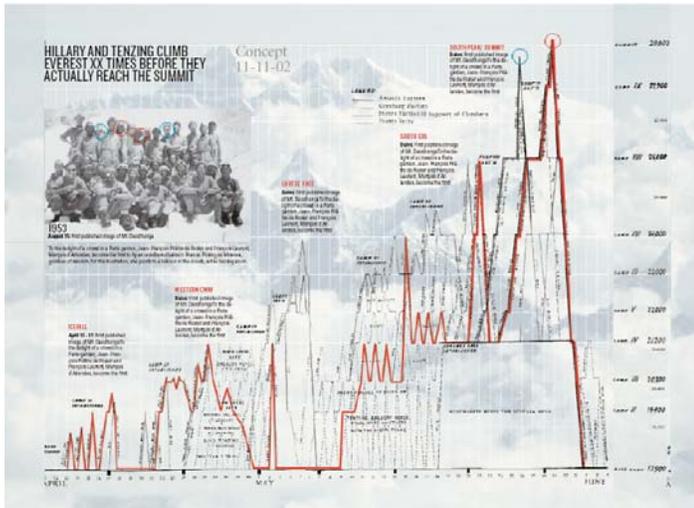


# ART TEXT GUIDE 5.03 Everest Timeline

NOT FINAL ART



## EVEREST ASCENT CHART

### BACKGROUND

In graphic form, this chart chronicles the first successful summit assault of Mt. Everest by Edmund Hillary. Highlighted in red, his journey on the chart encompasses April 11, 1953 through June 3, 1953—seven weeks. Black lines depict all teams led by or comprised of climbers in Hillary’s expedition, organized under Britain’s RGS, and led by John Hunt. All of the lead climbers, including Hillary’s summit partner Tenzing, are labeled on the chart and pictured in the inset photograph (except for Michael Westmacott, who is not pictured).

The x-axis is divided in days, weeks, and months; the y-axis horizontally divides the chart in 1,000s of feet. Geographic features further sub-divide the graphic narrative and determine the function and course of the lines; ascending from left to right : Khumbu Icefall; Western CWM; Lhotse Face, South Peak, and Summit.

Four functions divide the teams: the Assault Parties (thickest lines) begin at advanced base camp and comprise one team of Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans; the other of Hillary and Tenzing. Stores parties accompanied the assault teams at these more extreme altitudes. Prior to the assault, there were two parties: Climbing parties to establish camps and ferry parties primarily composed of sherpa teams, carrying heavy equipment. As noted in NGM Adventure’s Everest map supplement earlier this

year, the teams proceeded in a “leapfrog” fashion, with leaders often switching teams and functions; for instance, Hillary was on a ferry team just over a week prior to the first of the summit attempts.

### INTENT

The text must qualify this chart as a period artifact, not as an information graphic to be minutely analyzed by the reader, primarily because it is impossible to verify the research measuring the altitudes and functions of so many parties. The source of the chart is also unknown. Lines depicting stores ferries are difficult to read in the Western CWM and Lhotse Face. We have decided to preserve the hand-drawn aspect of this chart, and will verify only Hillary’s day-by-day course with an overlaid “fever-line”.

Just before Hillary’s summit at 29,002 feet on May 29, the assault team of Bourdillon and Evans climbed to within 300 feet of the summit before turning back. A blue circle marks their peak, and blue circles on the post-summit photograph mark Bourdillon and Evans.

### CREDIT (PLEASE CHECK FOR STYLE)

CHART PREPARED BY CHARTWELL PRESS, REPRODUCED BY RGS, THE PICTURE OF EVEREST, HODDER AND STROUGHTON, PUBLISHERS, 1954 “Cliff notes” on next page

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“Cliff notes” of *High Adventure* by Edmund Hillary, and *The Ascent of Everest*, by John Hunt; compiled by Josh Korenblat. Please note this is from my reading to the best of my ability, please double-check. —Josh

## Everest 1953

### *Khumbu Icefall*

Objective (Expedition leader John Hunt’s request)

Take party up Khumbu Icefall for reconnaissance and pave a route through the terrain, laying land bridges over the frequent crevasses. This route must be accessible and ease the way for porters carrying heavy loads. Hillary wants to get to top in 6 days before the arrival of Hunt at Basecamp. During this time, climbers and sherpas acclimatize to the altitude under more rigorous work.

-2nd acclimatization group: Westmacott (who earned praise from Hunt for his work on the Icefall throughout), Band, Lowe, Hillary, 5 high altitude sherpas and 39 sherpa coolies (half of whom were women)

### April 12

By mid-day the Icefall party reaches the site of the prior year’s Swiss basecamp, a "Barren, rock-strewn expanse of ice with enough flat places to pitch a few tents." Hillary laments the lack of sun-glare protection for the sherpas, some of whom were snow-blind party following the climb to basecamp.

### April 15

Hillary, Lowe, Band depart from basecamp to establish Camp II at 19,400 feet, halfway up the icefall. They return to basecamp.

### April 16

Hillary unhappily receives news that Hunt is arriving earlier than expected; he departs with Lowe and Band to expedite the surmounting the Icefall. The expedition cinematographer Tom Stobart, physiologist Griffith Pugh and 3 sherpas also accompany them. They spend a harrowing night listening to avalanches around them on the Icefall.

### April 17

Lowe, Hillary, and Band make it to edge of Western CWM, descending down the Icefall to Camp II, where they find Hunt and Ang. All descend to basecamp by the evening. The party has established a route through the Icefall for ferrying equipment and goods.

### April 18-20

Hillary rests and mends gear. The climbers then head back up to Icefall, which needs constant oversight, as it is moving.

### April 20

Westmacott, Noyce, and Ward are working on the upper icefall.

### April 22

Westmacott and Hillary establish Camp III at the entrance of the Western CWM, but they are cut off from the Western CWM by an enormous crevasse. Spend the night here.

### April 24 (Chart here is inconsistent; Hillary says the 25th)

Westmacott and Hillary try to force a route through the crevasse but return to Camp II, having decided that porters cannot go through it. That afternoon, Hunt, Evans, Noyce, Gregory, and Tenzing arrive with many sherpas, whom they meet at Camp II.

-For the first time on the Everest expedition, Hillary’s climbing partner Tenzing has climbed up from basecamp, where he had busied

himself with organizing stores, coordinating mail routes, and keeping the sherpas in good spirits.

-The first big lift of stores and goods up the icefall takes place. Westmacott returns to Basecamp with sherpas (line not drawn on chart); Hunt, Evans, Noyce, Tenzing, and Hillary go up to edge of the crevasse (Camp III) in an added attempt to bridge it; Noyce and Tenzing return to Camp III nearby to answer an expected call from Basecamp. (line not drawn on chart).

### *Western CWM*

#### **April 25 (Chart here seems incongruent; Hillary says the 26th)**

First big day on western CWM. Hunt and Evans are tied on one rope; Tenzing and Hillary are tied on another. The morning's goal: complete a route as far as Camp IV—established the prior year by a Swiss expedition. Noyce and Gregory follow behind in support with 6 sherpas. This was the first time Hillary had ever seen Tenzing climb. Tenzing was enthusiastic to be climbing again after organizing the sherpas at Basecamp. They divert to gather food left by the Swiss at their Camp III nearby. Hillary and Tenzing climb to the area that would become Camp IV.

-After a couple of hours here, Tenzing and Hillary head down to basecamp at breakneck pace. They race down the CWM and catch up with Noyce and Gregory and the sherpas with them. They descend to Camp III, where they meet Bourdillon and Ward with sherpas ferrying stores. The scene impresses Hillary, who notes that the icefall lift is now "on in earnest."

-They drop quickly down to Camp II and find George Lowe with another group of sherpas; Hillary promises himself to prove his friend Lowe wrong, who believes they cannot make it down to basecamp that night. They would have to get down in an hour. Eschewing caution, Hillary and Tenzing run down the icefall. Instead of crossing a set bridge over a crevasse just past the "Atom Bomb" area, Hillary jumps, landing on an ice lip that then collapses. Tenzing, keeps his cool and pulls a thankful Hillary from disaster. They reach basecamp at 5:00 pm, However much he regrets his recklessness, Hillary is glad to make good on his forecast to Lowe.

#### **April 26-May 1**

Continuous lifts of gear through the icefall and Western CWM; higher level lifts from Camp III to Camp IV.

#### **May 1**

Expedition leader Hunt, now back in basecamp, decides to give closed-circuit oxygen sets a thorough testing out at higher altitudes, and enlists Bourdillon and Evans to try climbing with oxygen. The party will also conduct a preliminary reconnaissance the Lhotse Face, climbing above the Western CWM. Hunt will support the climbers.

-Hunt, Bourdillon, and Evans establish Camp IV—the future advanced basecamp.

#### **May 2**

Of all Hillary's trips, this sharp peak proved to be the catalyst for Hillary's ambition and ultimately the summit assault. With Hunt, Bourdillon, and Evans blazing higher on Lhotse Face; Hillary idles at basecamp in restless envy. He creates a proposal so he can climb again: test the unused open-circuit oxygen apparatus. In Hillary's opinion, the scheme has scant merit, but would showcase his endurance and climbing skills. Hillary conveys the plan to Hunt in other terms: He and Tenzing would go from basecamp to Camp IV and back in one day breathing the open-circuit oxygen. Without supplemental oxygen, this trip would take two days; by doing this "speed climb", the open-canister oxygen will have proven its worth. Hunt enthusiastically agrees to the plan. The trip would be a success, and would lead to Hunt's assignment of Hillary and Tenzing to the second summit assault team, using the open-circuit oxygen.

-At basecamp that morning, Hillary knew that the closed circuit team would be attacking Lhotse face, and he wanted to be at Camp IV for their return on May 2nd.

-Their trip to basecamp to Camp IV in the Western CWM takes about two hours, and wait for Bourdillon, Evans, and Hunt. When they arrive, Hunt is very tired and opts to stay the night at camp, and jettisons his agreement to descend with Hillary and Tenzing,

-Hillary and Tenzing descend rapidly and perilously in a snowstorm and encroaching darkness, but they arrive at basecamp safely.

#### **May 3-6**

Hillary descends from basecamp to the Lobuje valley at 16, 168 feet, a sojourn attended by much of the party. Here, he rests and

enjoys the change of scenery.

-Bourdillon and Evans continue to climb the Lhotse face as reconnaissance:

May 3: Set Camp V on, from here, Hunt descends to basecamp.

May 4: Set Camp VI

May 5: Climb above VI for more reconnaissance and return to VI for the night.

May 6: Return to basecamp and assess Lhotse as very difficult, but say the closed-circuit oxygen worked very well.

### **Assignments at basecamp**

#### **May 7**

Hunt gathers his men and draws up the assignments for the remainder of the expedition, and states the final goal given the experience so far and the objective from the outset:

1. Establish an advanced basecamp at Camp IV
2. Lhotse face
3. South col
4. Establish a very high camp at 28,000 feet
5. 2 assaults of the summit—one with closed-circuit oxygen; the other, open-circuit. The assaults are intended to be complementary, not competitive. If both fail, a third assault would be needed.

-For climbing Lhotse face, Hunt enlists the expert ice climber Lowe, and Westmacott and Band. The two latter climbers would drop out from altitude difficulty and sickness, respectively, shifting the burden almost entirely to Lowe and the sherpa Ang Nyima.

-Interesting note: Ang is a chain smoker, but proves an eager and capable high altitude climber. At Camp VI, Hunt admires Ang's efforts and notes of his smoking that "we were at pains to send up supplies to pander to this habit. He deserved it."

-For getting large numbers of sherpas to the South col, Hunt enlists Noyce and Wylie.

-The first assault party is named: Bourdillon and Evans, who will use the closed-circuit oxygen and whose nominal goal is the South peak, as the ridge leading to Everest is still mysterious, its difficulty yet to be ascertained.

-The second assault team is named: Hillary and Tenzing, using open-circuit oxygen.

### **Lhotse face**

#### **May 9-14**

Hillary works on CWM with sherpa teams, ferrying stores from Camp III to Camp IV and back again under heavy snowfall. This is the main ferry party between III and IV. The majority of stores is lifted through the icefall and is on their way up the CWM. By May 14, most of the expedition has moved up to live at Camp IV.

-Hunt moves goods from the Camp IV to the site of the prior year's Swiss Camp IV.

-Tenzing and Gregory are conducting low-level ferries in the icefall.

-Bourdillon and Evans are resting in the Lobuje valley.

Meanwhile, Lowe and Ang Nyima are transforming Lhotse Face, from a highly technical route to one a porter carrying heavy packs could follow:

May 11: Based on Camp VI, they embark on Lhotse Face

May 14: Lowe establishes Camp VII, returns to VI for the night. Noyce replaces Ang, who needs rest.

-As of May 14, Hunt notes that each day 2 teams went up from Camp IV; 1 went up to Camp V and back, carrying further stores to complete assault dump. The other team goes to VII to dump loads for the South col when the time came for the climbing parties to go up the Lhotse face and to the South col.

#### **May 15**

Hillary begins a series of shuttles between Camp IV and V with sherpas ferrying stores, swapping places with John Hunt's stores ferry team. The stores ferries were still not complete, and Hunt activated the swap following the arrival of Bourdillon, Evans, Noyce, and Gregory to Advanced basecamp (not shown on the chart). He wanted to organize the final move of the whole party from III to Advanced basecamp. Hillary gets his first close look at Lhotse Face.

-On May 15th, Hillary journeys from Camp IV to VII and back in one day, again demonstrating his speed and endurance. He is bringing up gear for Lowe and Noyce. (Shouldn't this line be long dashes, as this is support for climbers? On the chart it is solid.) He will be followed by support teams, which are led by Ward, Band, and Bourdillon,

### **Progress Delayed near the *South col***

#### **May 16**

The expedition begins to stall. Lowe and Noyce attempt to climb from VI—VII but return halfway; Lowe had taken a sleeping pill and kept falling asleep. They make little progress toward the South col. From 2,800 feet below, Advanced basecamp, Hunt and the expedition watch the distant climbers and are dismayed when they turn around. According to Hunt, Lowe falls into a deep coma-like sleep at Camp V. (This does not match the chart, which shows Lowe sleeping at Camp VI.)

#### **May 17**

Lowe and Noyce reach Camp VII and conduct short reconnaissance. Noyce returns to base with sherpas (line not shown on chart); Ward—who usually does not climb because of his medical duties—ascends to relieve Noyce and also accompanies sherpas.

#### **May 18**

Lowe, Ward, and sherpas went shortly above VII and return to camp.

-From the Advanced base camp, officially established with the arrival of Wylie and Tenzing with remaining gear from basecamp, (summoned at Hunt's request), Hunt watches Lowe and Ward and is disappointed in their drive.

-Hillary argues with Hunt, claiming that Lowe is exhausted as the expedition (including Hillary) idles at Advanced basecamp; in High Adventure, he writes, "Why couldn't some of us go up and finish the job?" p.148

-Hunt refuses; he does not want his assault teams to expend their energy on Lhotse Face.

#### **May 19**

Still no progress. Band takes sherpas up to Camp VII and returns to report Lowe's opinion: "it's too windy to go." The progress up the mountain has now reached a standstill.

-On the 19th or 18th, Evans goes up to V to assist in ferry to VII (not shown on the chart)

-Hunt decides to commence immediately with carrying food and equipment up the South col despite the difficulty of establishing a route to the area. The expedition could no longer afford to wait for further progress in the preparation of Lhotse face.

#### **May 20 (Chart is incongruent, shows Wylie ascending, not Noyce. Accounts by both Hillary and Hunt clearly state that Noyce ascended on May 20, so the chart might be wrong here.)**

Noyce blazes a route with 8 sherpas, and climbs slowly up to Camp VII.

Lowe, Ward, and Da Tensing cross Noyce as they descend back to Advanced basecamp.

(Again, the chart shows Noyce ascending with 8 sherpas on May 19 and spending the night at Camp V, meeting Lowe and his party on the 20th. So only the ascent date of Noyce and where he slept does not match from the chart to the written accounts.)

-Noyce claims there are problems with the oxygen bottles at camp VII. Hunt determines an additional supply of bottles must be laid there for the 2nd assault party. He asks Lowe to play this support role for Hillary and Tenzing for the 2nd assault. Hunt suspects Lowe's objectives are to go even higher on the mountain. They find out later that the oxygen problem was overstated.

### ***South col***

#### **May 21**

Noyce and sherpa Annullu climb above Camp VII; the remainder of the sherpas are exhausted and refuse to climb further. They climb up Lhotse Glacier and reach the South col; the expedition has finally arrived at the hard won spot.

-From Advanced basecamp, Wylie and a second group of 9 sherpas ascend, climbing to Camp VII. (Again, the chart shows Wylie ascending on the 20th, so both Noyce and Wylie are shown leaving one day too early on the chart.)

-Hunt is alarmed to see just two men climbing from Camp VII to VIII, and needs a pair of climbers to support the carry. He elects Hillary and Tenzing because they are fresh (had not been high on Lhotse face), are the second assault team, not the first, and because Tenzing could rally and provide inspiration for the sherpas remaining on Camp VII.

-Tenzing is happy, he has spent most of his time leading low level ferries, organizing rations and firewood, sending and receiving mail carries, maintaining order at Basecamp, and keeping sherpas cheerful. Hillary and Tenzing leave at midday.

-Hillary and Tenzing meet up with Wylie and 9 sherpas, all weather the night at Camp VII. It turns out to be a successful day, with the South col attained and the happy camaraderie of a large group at high altitude.

### *South peak*

#### **May 22**

From Camp VII, Wylie and 14 sherpas (the ones remaining at Camp VII have rallied, except one) leave with Hillary and Tenzing ahead. The caravan completes a dump of stores on the South Col. They return to Camp VII, where they spend the night. (I might have misread this but in Hunt's account he says they come all the way back to Advanced basecamp later that night)

-Hillary and Tenzing have performed another endurance feat. In about 30 hours the two went nearly 5,000 feet and back—nearly two miles of high altitude technical climbing.

-From Advanced basecamp, the first assault team departs carrying the closed-circuit oxygen: Bourdillon and Evans. They are using the path blazed earlier by Lowe.

#### **May 23**

As Hillary and Tenzing descend to Advanced Basecamp, they cross paths with the ascending first summit assault team of Bourdillon and Evans.

#### **May 24**

First Assault party of Bourdillon and Evans, supported by Hunt, Da Namgyal, and Ang Tensing reach the South col; Hillary and Tenzing are at Advanced Basecamp.

**May 25 (Chart here is incongruent with Hillary and Hunt's accounts. Chart shows Hillary and Tenzing leaving on May 24—again, 1 day too early—and spending the night at Camp V. But according to Hillary they spent only about 10 minutes or so at V and kept climbing to Camp VII, the total trip taking 3 and a half hours from Advanced Base to VII. So the Chart turns a 1 day trip in Hillary's account into a 2 day trip.)**

-Hillary and Tenzing begin second assault from Advanced basecamp and reach Camp VII at 12:30 pm. They prepare everything for the next day. Lowe and Gregory are climbing with them in support, with 8 sherpas. 3 of the 8 sherpas would carry loads for Camp VIII. All sleep at Camp VII. (Hillary's account, not matched on chart)

#### **May 26**

Climbing to 25,000 feet, Hillary, Lowe, and Tenzing and the 8 sherpas excitedly admire Bourdillon and Evans climbing from high above, moving along the Southeast ridge, nearing the South peak. Hillary wonders if they would go for the summit itself. Tenzing is silent. Later he would confide to Hunt that he felt a sherpa should have been in the first party to reach the top of Everest.

-Bourdillon and Evans reach the South peak. They have set an altitude record.

-Hunt and Da Namgyal carry loads up the S.E. ridge and dump their stores at 27,350 feet.

Too exhausted to progress any higher towards the goal of 28,000 feet for a final camp (set by Hunt on May 7), they begin their descent back to Advanced basecamp.

-Hillary, Lowe, Gregory, Tenzing, and the sherpas reach South Col (Camp VIII). The sherpas descend.

-Ward and Noyce come up from Advanced basecamp to Camp VII to support the parties on the South Col.

-Later, an exhausted Bourdillon and Evans come back down and meet up with Hillary, Hunt and the rest of the group at Camp VIII. As it turned out, the first assault team turned back 300 feet short of the Everest summit. Evans's closed-circuit oxygen canister was not working quite right, and was too depleted by the time they reached the South peak. Evans could not go on, though Bourdillon deeply wanted to go for the summit. The ridge leading to the summit looked very treacherous to both men, and because they were seeing it foreshortened, it was too difficult to tell how long it would take to ascend. They could not come up with a proper estimate of oxygen flow rate. Any poor estimate would mean death for Bourdillon. Given all of these factors, both decide to descend together

short of the summit.

### **May 27**

Bourdillon and Evans descend from the South col despite a maelstrom and bad weather that keep Hillary's party in place for the day. Both members of the first assault party are very tired and Bourdillon collapses; they will need someone to accompany them down for safety. Hunt selects Lowe, who argues that he cannot because he needs to carry equipment up to support Hillary. Hunt wants to be at VIII for the second assault but agrees to descend with Bourdillon and Evans—the expedition leader, after all, is support for this first assault team.

### ***Everest summit***

### **May 28**

Hillary and Tenzing climb from the South Col and establish Camp IX at 27,900 feet at 2:30 pm. Lowe, Gregory, and Ang Nyima climb in support, and descend to the South col upon establishing the camp. Hillary was carrying a 63-pound pack. They had to carry extra stores to camp from the premature stores dump at 27,350 feet.

-Hillary determines they would have just enough oxygen to make it for the summit assault the next day. In their precarious tent for the night, Hillary notes that Tenzing, though asleep, nearly overhangs the south face of the mountain.

### **May 29**

Hillary and Tenzing progress to the South summit, arriving at 9:00 am. The weather is ideal, but they get the first look at the ridge that concerned Bourdillon and Evans. At first glance, it appears highly treacherous. Hillary asks Tenzing if they should continue, and Tenzing replies "as you wish". Hillary discovers the snow is very tightly packed and not as dangerous as his first impression. As they work across the ridge, Tenzing has difficulty breathing and Hillary clears ice from his oxygen mechanism. They encounter one particularly difficult step, and after surmounting it, Hillary knows that they have made it. They climb to the summit and he lays a crucifix given to him by John Hunt, Tenzing unfurls flags, and they take pictures. Hillary photographs Tenzing but does not photograph himself because Tenzing is not familiar with the camera. Even at the summit, Hillary writes that he was surveying the great mountains beneath him, wondering if they too could be climbed.