

EVEREST AND BEYOND

Adventure isn't hanging on a rope on the side of a mountain," explains John Amatt (pronounced Aim-at) to the gathering of business people - Adventure is an attitude that we must apply to the day-to-day obstacles of life - facing new challenges, seizing new opportunities, testing our resources against the unknown and, in the process, discovering our own unique potential."

John Amatt has given this talk hundreds of times to hundreds of people at a time for organizations such as the Molson Companies, IBM Corporation and the Regent Hotel in Hong Kong.

But Amatt is not one of those motivational speakers whose biggest brush with adventure is sitting rinkside at an Oilers game. When he talks about hanging on a rope, he's done it. He's been scaling



The highest point on earth - the 29,028 ft. summit of Mount Everest

peaks for 30 years, experiencing first hand the terror and exhilaration of shivering on mountainsides, sleeping on narrow ledges, inching his way to the summit. Amatt's participation in the successful 1982 Canadian expedition that scaled Mt. Everest was the culmination of his climbing career.

After fulfilling this 16-year dream, Amatt was at loose ends. He wondered what to do next. "You've conquered Mt. Everest, now you've got to go 'one step beyond,'" his wife Peggy argued.

A year later he had formed an adventure consulting firm dedicated to helping others reach their peak - **One Step Beyond**. Amatt and his associates deliver keynote presentations, wilderness-based team-building seminars, and audio-visual materials to help organizations meet the challenges and changes in their lives.

Inspired by his father and his collection of mountaineering and adventure books, Amatt began climbing during his boyhood near Manchester, England. His first major climb, undertaken with two friends at the age of 20, was the north face of Norway's infamous Troll Wall. At 1,500 metres, the world's tallest vertical rock was considered by experts as impossible to climb. Bad weather forced them to abandon their first attempt, but succeeded on the second spending six days clinging to cold, barren rock, roped to each other, drinking water that dripped off the outcroppings.

A succession of equally challenging and ground-breaking climbs - Alpamayo in Peru, Sondre-

Trolltind in Norway - followed as Amatt gained a reputation among the climbing community. Mt. Everest seemed the ultimate challenge.

Amatt moved to Canada in 1968 with a teaching degree and a dream to live and work in the mountains. But the closest he got was Medicine Hat, Alberta, where he met Peggy from nearby Golden Prairie. In 1973, he moved to Banff, where he taught school.

Amatt's vision of education and training was formed even then. When asked what subjects he taught, Amatt responded: "I teach kids, not subjects." He explained: "It sounds a little flippant, but what I'm trying to say is that I saw my role as attempting to develop the strengths of those individual children, to find out what they were good at, to develop a focus."

From teaching high school, Amatt went to conducting management seminars through the Banff Centre for Continuing Education. In 1979, he signed on as business manager for the Mt. Everest climb.

He raised \$1 million. But putting himself on the line asking for money was only one of the challenges Amatt faced. The climb itself was fraught with problems. An avalanche killed three sherpa guides and the team photographer was accidentally killed in an icefall. The real learning came, Amatt says, not in reaching the summit, but in the journey to get there.

In recent years, Amatt has branched out to pursue other passions, including emulating the great explorers. In 1989, he travelled



**John Amatt
inspires
others
to find
adventure in
everyday life**

over 2,000 miles in an inflatable boat while supporting a canoe expedition re-enactment of Alexander Mackenzie's 1789 journey to the Arctic Ocean. He has also self published a book profiling other Canadian Adventurers - **One Step Beyond: Rediscovering the Adventure Attitude**.

"Life, like Everest, is a series of challenges, from valleys to peaks," Amatt says. "We attain goals, we suffer setbacks. The lessons of Everest are lessons for us all: accepting the challenge, preparing, working as a team, treating people as equals, adapting to changing conditions, facing inner fears, setting goals that stretch us, coping with setbacks, recognizing the need for support and remaining open to the next horizon - and the next and the next."

- by Elsie Rose and Anita Thompson

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