



0. FIRST TO THE SUMMIT - Story Preface

1. K2

2. ICE CAVES AND CREVASSES

3. MOUNTAIN SICKNESS

4. AVALANCHES

5. FIRST TO THE SUMMIT

6. DEATH ON THE MOUNTAIN

7. THE MYSTERY CONTINUES

8. ED VIESTURS

9. VERTICAL LIMIT ON LOCATION

This image depicts Lino Lacedelli who—together with Achille Compagnoni—reached the summit of K2 in 1954. The photo of Lacedelli, climbing K2 in 1954, was taken by an unnamed photographer. Online via Wikimdia Commons.

Despite daunting obstacles and numerous failed expeditions to reach the summit of K2 (including a disastrous 1953 effort by an American team), the mountain was finally conquered in 1954.

An Italian team, headed by Professor Ardito Desio, reached the second highest point on earth in the summer of 1954. Desio (who lived a very long life) had first tried to scale the summit in 1929.

The triumphant team started out from base camp on May 31, 1954. During the two-month ascent, one climber (Mario Puchoz) died from High Altitude Pulmonary Edema. Desio had carefully planned the route to the top, but storms on the mountain caused many delays. Patiently and methodically, the team pressed on.

Late in the day on July 29, 1954, Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli reached the summit. They had climbed the most dangerous mountain in the world.

Their remarkable achievement occurred fourteen months after Edmund Hillary (for whom Hillary Rodham Clinton was named) and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit of Mt. Everest. (This video, combining historic footage and recreations, commemorates that important event.)

Daylight was nearly gone by the time Compagnoni and Lacedelli reached the top of K2. After taking pictures and planting flags, they descended—in darkness—to the highest camp on the mountain.

True to his egalitarian approach, Professor Desio did not initially disclose who had reached the summit. In his mind, the entire team deserved the credit. Later, however, the world learned who had taken the first steps on the summit of K2.

Many people have followed in those footsteps, despite the notoriously treacherous storms and avalanches that strike unexpectedly. Many people have died trying to climb the unrelentingly steep mount that has come to be known as "Savage Mountain."

Death, on the world's high mountains, is more common than one might think. And the *circumstances* of death are as frequently shrouded by mystery as the summits are shrouded by clouds.

The most famous mystery of all swirled around the disappearance of George Mallory—whose quote begins our story. When he said

*What we get
from this adventure
is just sheer joy
And joy is, after all,
the end of life*

he was two years from the end of his own life. For 75 years no one knew exactly where he was—or what had happened to him. Until ... the spring of 1999.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FIRST-TO-THE-SUMMIT-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FIRST-TO-THE-SUMMIT-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/FIRST-TO-THE-SUMMIT-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-M)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/FIRST-TO-THE-SUMMIT-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-M>

Media Stream



K2 - Italian Climbing Team

Image online, courtesy Il Tabloid website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-Italian-Climbing-Team>



Ardito Desio - Famous Mountain Explorer

Image online, courtesy the [Himalayan Club](#).

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ardito-Desio-Famous-Mountain-Explorer>



Ardito Desio - In Later Life

Image, described above, online courtesy Amateur Astronomers Group, an Italian-language website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ardito-Desio-In-Later-Life>



K2 - At the Summit in 1954

Image, described above, published in "Italianische Karakorum-Expedition 1954," *Berge der Welt*, vol. 10, pag. 39-72 (1955). In English: "The Italian-Karakoram Expedition of 1954," *Mountains of the World*, volume 10, at pages 39-72 (1955).

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-At-the-Summit-in-1954>



K2 - Lacedelli and Compagnoni At the Summit

Image of Lacedelli and Compagnoni at the summit of K2 - 31 July 1954 - from the archives of *Corriere della Sera*.

Quoted passages from *K2: The Price of Conquest*, by Lino Lacedelli, Giovanni Cenacchi and Mark Worthington - online, courtesy Google Books.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-Lacedelli-and-Compagnoni-At-the-Summit>



Everest - Hillary and Norgay Scale the Summit

Tribute to Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary, online courtesy escalador78 Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Everest-Hillary-and-Norgay-Scale-the-Summit>