

Member Highlight

Bo Parfet is a member of the Kalamazoo Country Club and has written a book called ***Die Trying: One Man's Quest to Conquer the Seven Summits***. Below are some questions that were asked of Bo about his expeditions that are interesting to reading about.



On Mt. Everest, 2007

Q. What first attracted you to mountaineering?

A: I love the excitement and danger involved with climbing, and I also like being among a small group of people who thrive in the most rugged places. A few years ago, I was lucky enough to go on a climbing expedition into the mouth of Kilimanjaro, which is an active volcano in Tanzania, topping out at about 19,000 feet. The ground was so hot that the soles of our shoes were melting, and you also had to wear a mask over your nose and mouth to limit the sulphur gasses.

I was part of a team looking for new species of micro-organisms called *extremophiles*, which are creatures that can live in the harshest, cruelest environments. I am not completely sure what it is about my physiology that enables me to excel at mountaineering, but I do know that I have the personality of an extremophile. This is just another way of saying I'm a thrill seeker. Its just part of my nature that I want to do and try everything.

Q. In your book you mention running into many obstacles trying to get to the mountains. Talk about one of those obstacles.

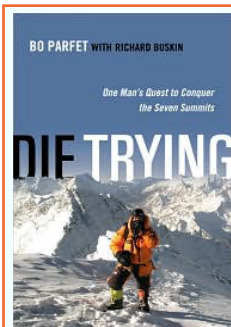
A: Probably the toughest obstacles I encountered en route to a mountain were in Indonesia, when I was there to climb Carstensz Pyramid. That was one of my favorite chapters in the book, because even as I was writing it, the story just didn't seem real. Carstensz, locally known as Puncak Jaya ("Peak of Glory"), is on the famed island of Irian Jaya, which is famous for its stories of cannibalism among local tribes. That charming little practice has supposedly stopped, but it's hard to tell when you are looking into the face of a man who is painted from head to toe in ceremonial body art and wearing nothing but a gourd over his nether regions. The mountain itself is located next to the world's largest gold mine, and since the road to the mine had been closed some years before due to the ongoing civil war, there was really no way into the area unless we snuck our way past multiple teams of armed guards. A series of bribes resulted in us being bundled into the back of an old truck under canvas tarps, and we then had to lay in that truck for about eight hours before we were secreted into a small shed no more than 100 yards from the guard station. Suffice it to say, we made it to the mountain, only to be confronted by the most technical of the Seven Summits, including a 3,000-foot vertical rock face...

Q. After you summited Everest, you asked your sherpa, Top-Jin, if he had any advice. What did he tell you?

A: When I asked for his advice, I fully expected him to tell me to sharpen my ice ax, eat plenty of food, and get enough sleep. Instead, he remarked, "Be humble... When you are humble, you are aware of your surroundings, you respect them. I am sure that, when you left for Everest, you felt pressure from yourself, from your family, and from your community to accomplish the goal of the summit. However, if you climb this mountain thinking you have something to prove, you will waste precious energy, and you don't have any energy to waste. Wasted energy can be the difference between life and death. When you are humble you experience each moment, you focus on each step, and you discard thoughts of what others – and you, too – think about the process."

Q. What climb are you planning next?

A: I am training to climb Manaslu, which is in Nepal, this September. Manaslu is one of only 14 peaks above 8,000 meters, and I've spent the last few months walking uphill on a treadmill with an 80 lb. pack. I've done a lot of strength training to bulk up since, at high elevations, your body starts to consume itself. In August, I will start sleeping in a hyperbaric chamber in order to begin acclimatizing up to about 18,000 feet. It's a bit extreme, but it can mean the difference between life and death.



You can find Bo Parfet's book ***Die Trying: One Man's Quest to Conquer the Seven Summits*** at Kazoo Books, 407 N. Clarendon, Kalamazoo. He will be at the Kalamazoo Country Club on **Tuesday, August 17 @ 7 p.m.** to sign copies of his book and show some of his climbing gear, and at Kazoo Books on **Friday, August 20 @ 5:30 p.m.** where he will speak about his experiences climbing the seven summits.

We would love to hear about our member's accomplishments and recognize them in the Kalamazoo Country Club newsletter. If you are willing to share your story of growth, please contact Kerri Barker at kcc@kalamazoocc.com or call 345-6149.