

**Volume 11**

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**Quest for Mt. Everest - II**

**Lead: The challenge of Mt. Everest was clear from the time its height was determined in the 1800s, but attempts to reach the summit are not known to have begun until the 1920s.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The peak of Mt. Everest is one of earth's most hostile places. The air is thin. No crops can be grown there. No domestic animals can live there. Any attempt on the summit would require taking along those things necessary to sustain life. Long months of adaptation to the high**

**altitude, supplementary oxygen in tanks, food and water would have to be dragged up nearly impassible terrain which, in the early days, no one had ever crossed. The key to the eventual success of the assault on Everest was a nomadic people, Tibetan-speaking clans who struggled for survival on the lower slopes of the mountain by trading and herding livestock. These are the Sherpa. They were capable of carrying the large loads of supplies that made the climb possible.**

**Air transport supports modern expeditions, but in early attempts supplies had to be brought in by pack animals over many miles. Six tries were made on the mountain in the**

**1920s and 1930s, all organized by the British Royal Geographical Society, and gradually a pattern was established that remained the way of getting at the summit until the 1980s. It was called the siege approach and involved a series of base camps at ever-increasing altitudes. Climbers would reach a certain height, establish a camp, pause until they adapted to the elevation, and then move upward to the next camp. Perhaps the closest any of these pre-war expeditions came to succeeding was the June 1922 effort by George Mallory and Andrew Irvine. Both died in the attempt. Mallory's body was not discovered until 75 years later. Next time: the summit.**

# **At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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**<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/everest/>**

**<http://www.panoramas.dk/fullscreen2/full22.html>**

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