

**GEORGE  
 LOWE  
 1924 - 2013**

# Farewell to local hero with link to Everest

■ FROM PAGE 1

Moving to England, he made a point of returning to Hawke's Bay for some time at least once a year, often visiting his old school, and on one visit, in 2004, was accorded Freedom of the City in an investiture by Mayor Lawrence Yule.

Until his death he was the last surviving climber from the team that helped establish the final camp 300m below the Everest summit the day before Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the peak.

Sir Ed's son, Peter, yesterday remembered Mr Lowe as a talented man who shared his father's passions for climbing and helping others.

Mr Lowe had contributed to the mountaineering community in New Zealand and overseas, including the education of people living near Mt Everest in the Himalayas. Those people were "were real priorities for George", he told Radio New Zealand.

"That's perhaps one of the really significant things about today losing George. It just is another stamp of how important this New Zealand connection with Mt Everest is," he said.

He referred to the Mt Everest climbs involving his father and Mr Lowe and their later work building the schools and hospitals. "It's been a long New Zealand involvement with the highest mountain on the planet."

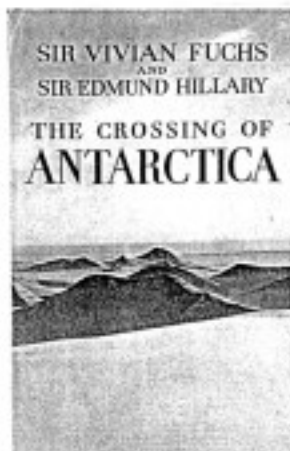


**FREE MAN:** George Lowe and Hastings Mayor Lawrence Yule in 2004, as Mr Lowe was conferred with Freedom of the City. PHOTO/RAZ

Sir Edmund Hillary



**HILLARY, Sir Edmund Percival KG, ONZ, KBE.** On January 11, 2008, passed away peacefully surrounded by his family, at Auckland City Hospital. Much loved husband of June, loved father of Sarah and Peter, and the late Belinda. Grandfather of Arthur and Anna, Amelia, George, Alexander and Lily. Stepfather of Robyn and Susan, grandfather of Rebecca, Amy, William and Sam. A state funeral will be held at St Mary's Holy Trinity Church, Parnell Road, Parnell on Tuesday, January 22 at 11am followed by private cremation. Sir Edmund will be lying-in-state at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Monday, January 21.



**BRIAN REEVE  
 57 PASADENA CRES.,  
 TOTARA PARK  
 UPPER HUTT, N.Z.**

**MEETING EVEREST MOUNTAINEER  
MR GEORGE LOWE  
FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1999**

**WHILE WE WERE ON HOLIDAY IN HAWKES BAY IN 1999 I HAD THE GREAT FORTUNE TO MEET MR GEORGE LOWE WHO WAS ON THE 1953 EXPEDITION TO DO THE FIRST CLIMB OF MOUNT EVEREST.**

**SUZIE , HARRISON (AGE 4 YEARS )AND I WERE JUST LEAVING THE K-MART SHOPPING MALL ON THE CORNER OF ST AUBYN EAST AND KARAMU ROAD NORTH IN HASTINGS. A COUPLE HAD JUST PARKED THEIR CAMPER VAN NEXT TO OUR CAR.WE EXCHANGED SMILES . I RECOGNISED THE MAN AS THE FAMOUS MOUNTAINEER FROM THE 1953 EVEREST EXPEDITION MR GEORGE LOWE. I GRABBED A NEWSPAPER AND PEN FROM MY CAR AND RUSHED AFTER THEM INTO THE MALL. I FOUND THEM STANDING INSIDE THE MALL FOYER AND I INTRODUCED MYSELF I TOLD THEM ABOUT OUR FAMILY FRIEND ARTHUR HELM AND RELATIVE PETER MULGREW . HE KNEW BOTH OF THEM. GEORGE AND MARY HAD JUST SPENT TIME WITH ED AND JUNE HILLARY IN REMUERA AUCKLAND AND WERE DRIVING DOWN TO WELLINGTON TO SEE GEORGE,S SISTER IN SILVERSTREAM, UPPER HUTT .THEY WERE ON HOLIDAY IN A WHITE TOYOTA CAMPERVAN. GEORGE IS A TALL DISTINGUISHED MAN WITH WHITE HAIR AND BEARD. HE AND HIS WIFE MARY LIVE IN LONDON NOW AND ARE CURRENTLY HOLIDAYING IN NEW ZEALAND. HE WAS BORN IN HASTINGS IN 1924. HE TOLD ME THAT HE WAS GIVING AN ILLUSTRATED LECTURE TO THE ALPINE CLUB IN WELLINGTON ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, AND "WOULD I LIKE TO COME ALONG ? ". I SAID THAT " I WOULD" .BEFORE WE PARTED COMPANY HE SIGNED THE FRONT PAGE OF MY HAWKES BAY TODAY NEWSPAPER (19 NOV 1999) FOR OUR SON HARRISON.WHEN I RETURNED TO OUR CAR WITH THE SIGNED NEWSPAPER SUZIE WAS BEMUSED AND HAD NO IDEA WHY I HAD RUSHED OFF IN SUCH A BIG HURRY. I WAS SO EXCITED BY THE TIME I GOT BACK TO OUR CAR. IT WAS A THRILL TO MEET A MAN THAT I HAVE ADMIRER FOR SUCH A LONG TIME. I SAID TO SUZIE THAT " THIS IS THE REAL HIGHLIGHT OF MY HOLIDAY". I HAVE AT HOME GEORGE'S BOOK "BECAUSE IT IS THERE" ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 1999 I TURNED UP AT THE ALPINE CLUB MEETING AT THE WELLINGTON LAW SCHOOL IN THE OLD WOODEN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS WITH MY FRIEND DAVID CLEGG. WE HEARD HIS WONDERFUL LECTURE ALL ABOUT THE MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION. AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL ASCENT OF EVEREST ON 29 MAY 1953 IT WAS TO GEORGE LOWE THAT ED HILLARY MADE THE FAMOUS STATEMENT ....WELL... "WE KNOCKED THE BASTARD OFF"**

**GEORGE ILLUSTRATED HIS TALK WITH WONDERFUL COLOUR SLIDES TAKEN DURING THE EXPEDITION. HE IS A GREAT PHOTOGRAPHER AND THEY ARE SUPERB. AFTER THE LECTURE HE VERY KINDLY SIGNED MY COPY OF HIS BOOK ....BECAUSE IT IS THERE FOR ME AND ALSO A COPY OF MY HILLARY / FUCHS BOOK ON THE TRANS-ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION OF 1958 FOR HARRISON. WE HAD NO CAMERA BUT A KIND MAN CALLED PETER WITH A SMALL CAMERA CLOSEBY KINDLY PHOTOGRAPHED US WITH GEORGE. I HAD KNOW IDEA WHO HE WAS . I THANKED HIM VERY MUCH INDEED AND I SAID... "GOSH THAT IS A SMALL CAMERA " TO WHICH HE REPLIED " YES BUT IT IS A VERY GOOD ONE " MY FRIEND DAVID WAS VERY AMUSED AS HE COULD SEE THAT I HAD NO IDEA WHO I WAS TALKING TO. THE MAN INTRODUCED HIMSELF AND SAID " HELLO I AM PETER BUSH " HE IS A FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPHER WHO HAS TAKEN PHOTOS OF THE QUEEN THE BEATLES , RUGBY PLAYERS AND MANY CELEBRITIES. WE WENT TO PETER'S HOUSE IN ISLAND BAY TO PICK UP COPIES OF THE PHOTOS THAT HE KINDLY TOOK THAT EVENING. VERY KIND OF HIM ....BRIAN REEVE**

}  
}

}  
}

**THIS FOLDER  
ON  
GEORGE LOWE 1924 – 2013**

**WAS STARTED ON  
SATURDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2013  
BY  
BRIAN REEVE  
OF  
TOTARA PARK UPPER HUTT**

**MR LOWE DIED ON  
WEDNESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2013  
AT RIPLEY NURSING HOME IN  
CENTRAL ENGLAND ( AGED 89 YEARS )**

**I HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING MR GEORGE LOWE  
TWICE.**

**FIRST, IN HASTINGS N.Z ON FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> 1999.  
SECONDLY, AT THE WELLINGTON ALPINE CLUB MEETING  
IN WELLINGTON ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 1999. THE MEETING  
WAS HELD IN THE LAW FACULTY LECTURE ROOMS AT THE  
OLD GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN LAMBTON QUAY.  
HERE HE GAVE A WONDERFUL SLIDE - ILLUSTRATED  
LECTURE ON THE 1953 ASCENT OF MOUNT EVEREST.  
HE KINDLY SIGNED TWO BOOKS FOR ME THAT EVENING.  
MY FRIEND DAVID CLEGG AND I ALSO HAD OUR  
PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN WITH HIM BY THE FAMOUS  
NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHER**

**MR PETER BUSH**

**DAVID AND I BOTH DID NOT HAVE CAMERAS WITH US, SO  
IT WAS VERY KIND OF MR BUSH TO TAKE OUR PHOTO**

**Hastings** Friday, April 5, 2013

A memorial service is expected to be held in Hastings for Mt Everest-conquering expedition climber George Lowe, who died in England last week. He was 89. Lowe was born and raised in Hastings. His funeral will be held on April 8 in Derby, England. But brother Reuben, who lives in Hastings, said his widow Mary Lowe was keen for a memorial service to be held in Hawkes Bay at a later date.

# Gifted mountaineer, prized companion

**Wallace George Lowe,**  
mountaineer; b. Napier,  
January 23, 1904; in (1)  
Susan Hart (wid.) & (2)  
Mary Richards; d. Kananaskis,  
England, March 20, 2003;  
aged 99.

**G**EOFFREY LOWE was a key member and the last survivor of the 1952 expedition in which Sir Edmund Hillary conquered Mt. Everest.

Lowe played a crucial part in the party's success, displaying phenomenal strength and vision to ferry his up to the South Col, just shy of the peak, from where Sir Edmund, Sir Bill and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay pushed on to the summit.

Spending day after day at altitudes of more than 7000 metres, Lowe often had to make through wind a high ascent to reach overhanging ice where it needed to be.

According to John Hunt, the British-led expedition's leader, Lowe "put up a performance which will go down in the annals of mountaineering as an epic achievement of tenacity and skill."

"It was nothing less, that added to his tenacity. The Army of Everest, that is an 'unbelievable feat of endurance.' Such was the effort that at one point Lowe became the 'toughest and wisest'."

When Sir Bill and Norgay were descending from the summit of Mt. Everest, it was Lowe, coming up from the South Col camp, who was the first to meet them.

He tackled the last a mile of snow, ice and rock that Sir Edmund and Norgay had to cross to reach the summit.

He also passed Lowe a fragment of your two lives. Millions of years earlier the rock had formed part of the sea floor. In 1952, it was a mountain from the highest point on the planet.

Lowe had displayed superb ice craft over 18 days in approaching a route up the Lhotse face, immediately below the South Col.

But he was not just a climber. He also served with King a Royal British II, operating many images that effectively made him deputy to the official expedition cameraman, 'Tom Blanton.'

When the party reached altitude that Blanton, weakened by a bout of pneumonia, was unable to reduce, Lowe provided the photographic record.

"The film of the triumph, The Conquest of Everest, was itself a great success, and constituted the only film that was made on the ice and with film secured, Lowe was recruited as official photographer in the Thome-



**Top image:** George Lowe was the last surviving climber from the team that made the first successful ascent of Mt. Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary.

**According to John Hunt, the British-led expedition's leader, Lowe 'put up a performance which will go down in the annals of mountaineering as an epic achievement of tenacity and skill'.**

Antarctic Expedition of 1957-58, which made the first successful overland crossing of Antarctica via the South Pole.

Lowe joined the 12-man party of expedition leader British explorer Vivian Fuchs, which set out from Shackleton Base on one side of the continent, while Sir Bill led the support party from Scott Base on the other side, dropping supplies and establishing depots.

Fuchs relied on Lowe's expertise to spot crevasses that were, Lowe later noted, "white, deeper and harder to detect" than any he had previously encountered, and which posed a mortal threat to the team's dog team and themselves they

needed to get around.

In the event, Sir Bill reached the South Pole first, on January 3, 1958.

The team met when Fuchs arrived on January 29.

Wallace George Lowe was the seventh of eight children. The father was a fruit grower.

April 3, he watched the base in his left arm just above the elbow after falling off the edge of the crevasse at home. The base would not set correctly and had to be replaced seven times.

His subsequent skill as an instructor was all the more remarkable because the accident left the back almost totally without strength.

He was educated at Hastings Wood and Hastings Boys' High School and soon developed an interest in photography, playing tennis to being around the estate of a widow Port van Assch, who was taking large landscape photographs from the air.

Lowe even joined van Assch on several flights.

After qualifying as a school teacher, Lowe spent the immediate post-war years teaching at a primary school.

During the school holidays, however, he trained as a mountain guide, frequently teaming up with Sir Bill, five years his senior, in the Southern Alps, where they perfected their technique on peaks such as Mt. Cook and Mt. Trueman.

In 1950, the two men joined a four-man, four-month, New Zealand expedition to the Himalayas. The team had hoped, before setting off, to conquer one 8000-metre-plus summit. In the event, they scaled six.

On the strength of this experience, he and Sir Bill were invited in 1952 to join Sir Edmund Hillary's attempt on Mt. Everest's neighbour, Cho Oyu

(8028m), a journey which would also involve exploring the Karu Valley in the same region. Their talents ensured that both succeed their plans on what was to prove the historic Mt. Everest expedition the next year.

However, planning in 1952 was not always up to the mountain standards that would set. Planning short of supplies on the return journey to the Lhotse base, Sir Bill was forced to bargain with loads for one absolute foodstuff — bananas. According to Lowe, in an ensuing competition, Lowe convinced Sir Bill to single Sir Hillary was their battle by eating six.

After his return from the Antarctic in 1958, Lowe settled in England and became an inspector of schools in St. Albans retirement in 1984.

In 1988, he helped found the Sir Edmund Hillary Himalayan Trust in Britain, established to improve conditions for Sherpas in the Himalayas. Lowe served as chairman (1992).

With his ready wit, amiable face and skill for industry, he was an entertaining and moving raconteur. Few of his companions will forget his battles of wits and words for Sherpas, a condition suffered by some people of high altitude.

His 1952 book, *Everest: A Day There*, recounted his experiences on his two major expeditions.

He was appointed OBE for services to mountaineering and exploration.

He owned himself Sir Bill's oldest friend. Before his own death, Sir Bill wrote the foreword to *The Conquest of Everest*. Original photographs from the Legendary First Ascent, which Lowe compiled with Sir Bill, Lowe Jones and it is to be published soon.

According to Sir Bill, Lowe "saw my life a few times over the years."

"Down in Antarctica, I remember when we were trying to get our ship, *Thorn*, clear of the ice and I was standing with George on an ice floe, cutting a channel. A steel cable broke. The propeller just as a rope and I flicked and looked around my side. Suddenly, yet calmly, George managed to knock it free before it came tight. A moment later and I would have been stuck under..."

Lowe's home in Derbyshire was filled with boxes of memories from his climbing adventures — slides, press cuttings and the like. But above all, he treasured the fragment of rock from the summit that Sir Bill had given him, and which he kept on his desk.

"It was always fairly simple," he noted recently. "The mountains were a deep source of joy and happiness. They represent a sort of share of heaven too, but it's the joy that always wins out."

— Telegraph Group

GEORGE  
LOWE  
1924 - 2013

# 'Marvellous No 2' happy to follow Hillary's lead

by Phil Taylor

# Fellow Kiwi to Hillary on Everest team dies at 89

## Obituary

George Lowe CNZM, OBE  
15.01.1924 — 20.03.2013

The *Weekend Herald* has a special memory of the last time it spoke to George Lowe, because it reflects his stoicism and renowned humour.

It was January 2008, the week Sir Edmund Hillary died, and I had travelled to Diamond Harbour to interview Lowe at his New Zealand home to which he returned from England for each southern summer.

As we arrived, Lowe's wife, Mary, hurried to tell us that Lowe had had "a



George Lowe

turn". He was pale and speechless. He improved but wasn't up to an interview so Mary became his voice.

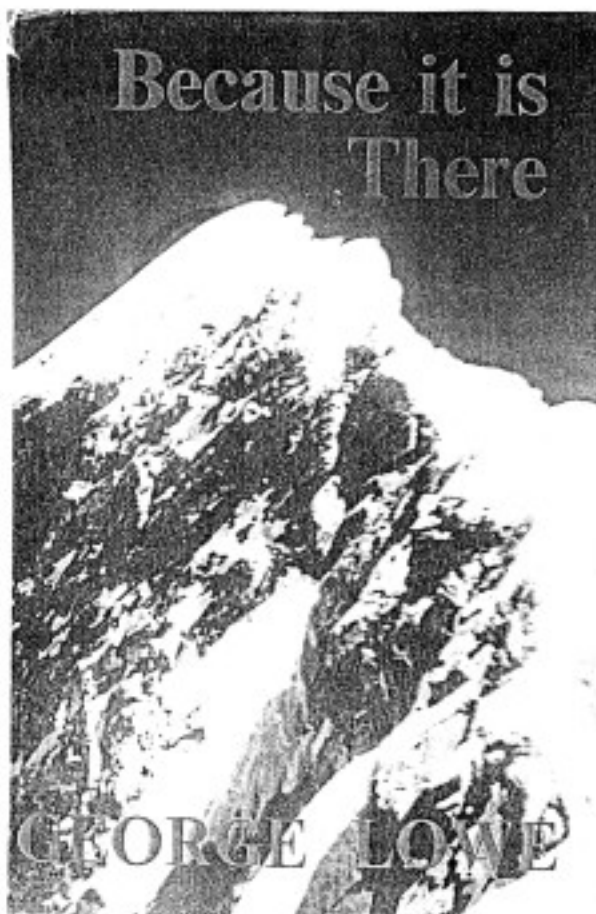
Lowe, 89, died in England at a nursing home, the last surviving climber of the team that conquered Mt Everest. What's not widely known is that it could easily have been Lowe on the summit. He was among the strongest but expedition leader Lord John Hunt preferred the symmetry of a Westerner and an Easterner.

Lowe helped set up Sir Ed and Tenzing Norgay's final camp 300m from the top and cut ice steps to ease their final push. Mary said Lowe made a "marvellous number two". "George didn't want to be the leader. He was much happier working with a leader."

The themes of that afternoon were the team effort it took and that Lowe's friend was most suited to the fame the exploit bestowed.

"I'm absolutely delighted I didn't have the life Ed's had . . . I wouldn't have had the diplomacy," Mary relayed. An hour later, Lowe felt well enough to walk to the dining table on which photos and other memorabilia from their expeditions were spread.

Tapping a finger on a photo of himself and Hillary on Everest, he spoke his only sentence of the afternoon, four whispered words that could be his epitaph: "Been there, done that."

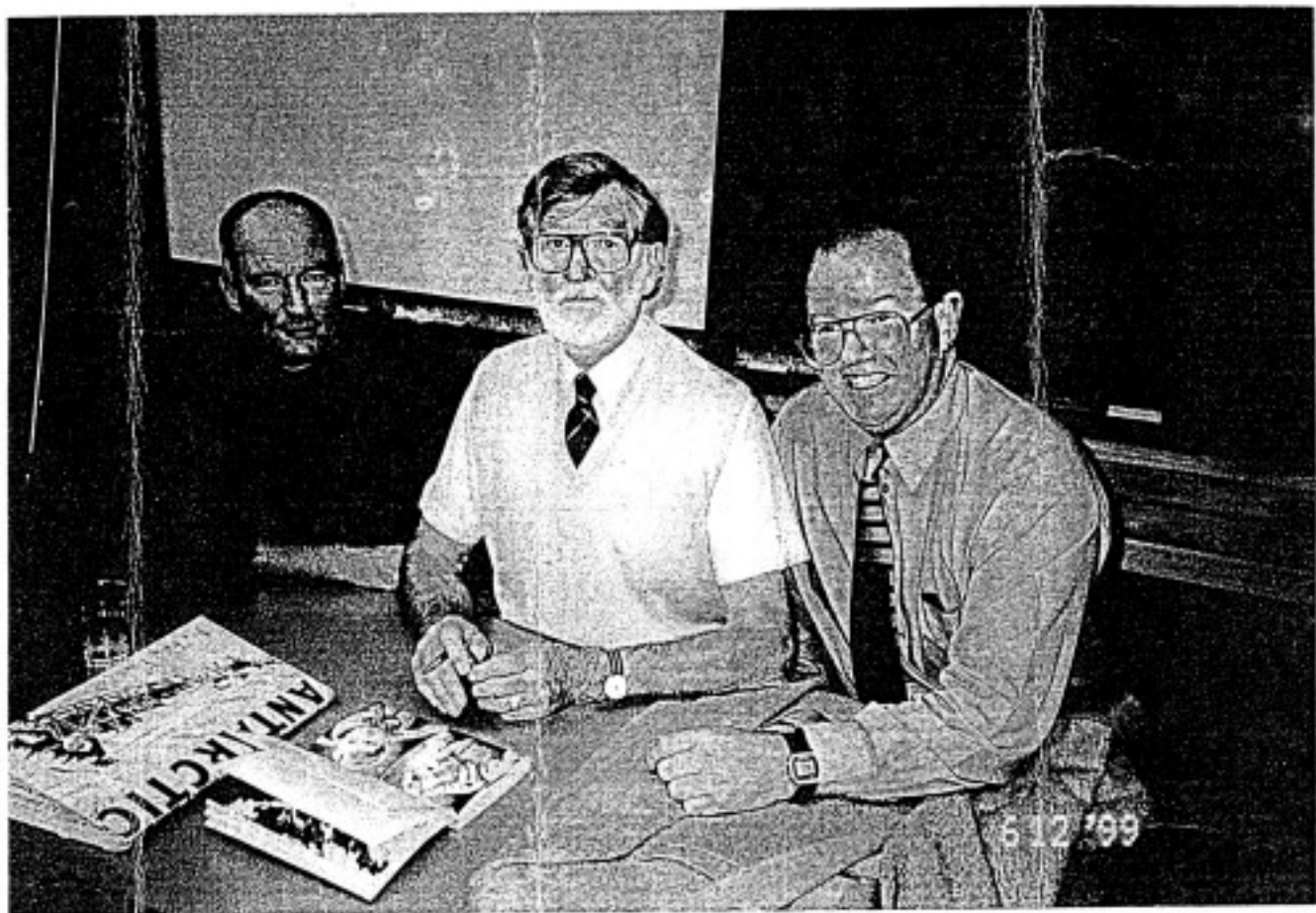


*Robin*

## GEORGE LOWE 1924 - 2013

Robert Miller  
◀ Collection

BRIAN REEVE  
57 PASADENA CRES.,  
TOTARA PARK  
UPPER HUTT, N.Z.



GEORGE LOWE'S LECTURE TO THE ALPINE CLUB  
6 DEC 1999 PHOTO BY PETER BUSH, WELLINGTON  
L to R David Clegg; George Lowe; Brian Reeve

My Mother in laws cousin  
was Peter Mulgrew  
Ed Hillarys best friend.  
We lost Peter and  
Aunt Kit Watson on Erebus in 1979

BRIAN REEVE  
57 PASADENA CRES.,  
TOTARA PARK  
UPPER HUTT, N.Z.

*Brian*



For Harrison Reeve,  
With best wishes

Ed Killam

29<sup>th</sup> May 1997