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5 MINUTES WITH... **Peter Wells**

Becky Wilson chats to Peter Wells: *Sydney Weekender* presenter, ocean ironman and intrepid traveller, who climbed Everest on one of his recent adventures.

Who has been the most memorable interviewee in your TV career?

Interviewing Jack Thompson over a beer at his pub in Katoomba [in Sydney's Blue Mountains] was fantastic. Here's this bloke; a legend actor and Aussie icon who has worked with some of the biggest names, like David Bowie in *Merry Christmas*, *Mr Lawrence*, yet he's so laid-back and keen to talk about his love for his country and his pub.

You decided to raise funds and awareness for Bowel Cancer Australia during your recent trip to Everest. Why is this charity important to you?

A couple of my buddies on the climb had been personally affected by the disease. Steve had lost his father the year before, and Sandy is herself a survivor of the disease. Many people I know have been touched in some way by bowel cancer. I wanted to raise awareness of the condition, since early detection saves lives. The money we raise for Bowel Cancer Australia goes towards education, research and awareness programs.

Were the mental challenges greater than the physical challenges of climbing Everest?

Yes. The mind is always objecting to what's being asked of the body. I think going to Everest in peak physical condition is essential, so at least you're not cheating your mind into thinking the body can do something that it can't. Also, the many mental challenges are greater because it is dealing not just with pain, but also with fear and uncertainty.

Allegedly, the Icefall is the scariest and most challenging section of Everest. What was it like?

Huge, four-storey high towers of ice leaning toward you as you climb towards it. These things crack and collapse, and have taken many lives. It was so hard at first but it gets easier as you properly acclimatise.

What were your thoughts when you reached the summit of Everest?

It was an emotional moment. At 5.19am on May 23, 2010, I stepped onto the 8,848-metre summit and whispered "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" I looked over the edge and could see climbers approaching the summit from the other side – from Tibet. The huge triangular shadow cast by Everest, all the way to the horizon, is a sight I will never forget. I could last only 22 minutes before I lost feeling in my fingers and toes and had to get out of there! I was relieved I had made it, but not relaxed. I knew the descent was going to be hard and exhausting, and is where most lives are lost.

You scattered some sand at the summit when you reached it. Why?

I had sand in little containers from my two favourite beaches; Shellharbour [NSW's South Coast] and Narrabeen [Sydney's Northern Beaches]. Shellharbour being my home beach since birth, and Narrabeen, where I've lived for the last 10 years. These beaches mean a lot to me. It was my gift to the mountain, in a sense. It's also kinda cool thinking that still, up there on top of the world, is a little piece of the South Coast and the Northern Beaches. 🌊
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