



# EIGHT SUMMITS

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## THE BILL BURKE STORY

THE OLDEST AMERICAN TO SUMMIT MT. EVEREST  
THE ONLY PERSON TO EVER CLIMB ALL EIGHT SUMMITS AFTER REACHING AGE 60

AMAZING

INSPIRATIONAL

ADVENTURE

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# EIGHT SUMMITS

## THE BILL BURKE STORY



FOR OVER 40 YEARS BILL BURKE WAS A CORPORATE LAWYER JUST DREAMING ABOUT WHAT HE WOULD DO IN RETIREMENT. LITTLE DID HE KNOW THAT HE WOULD ENTER THE RECORD BOOKS AND BECOME AN INSPIRATION TO MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

AT 60 YEARS OF AGE AND KEEPING IN MIND THAT HE HAD NEVER CLIMBED AN ALPINE MOUNTAIN IN HIS LIFE, BILL SET A GOAL TO CLIMB THE "SEVEN SUMMITS," THE HIGHEST PEAKS ON ALL SEVEN OF THE WORLD'S CONTINENTS. HE SUCCEEDED AND, AT AGE 67, SUMMITED MT. EVEREST, BECOMING THE OLDEST AMERICAN TO STAND ON TOP OF THE WORLD AT 29,035 FEET AND RETURN ALIVE. BECAUSE OF AN ONGOING DISPUTE ABOUT WHETHER AUSTRALIA IS A CONTINENT, AS OPPOSED TO AUSTRALASIA, WHICH INCLUDES A MUCH LARGER LANDMASS, BILL CLIMBED THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN BOTH AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALASIA, THUS CLIMBING EIGHT SUMMITS ON SEVEN CONTINENTS. HE IS THE ONLY PERSON TO CLIMB THESE EIGHT MOUNTAINS AFTER REACHING AGE 60.



HIS GRANDSON, OLIVER, WHO SUFFERS FROM A RARE DISABILITY CALLED ANGELMAN SYNDROME, INSPIRES BILL. "I WANT TO DO WHATEVER I CAN TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF THE DISABLED AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SOCIETY TO HELP THE DISABLED REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL" SAYS BILL.



EIGHT SUMMITS IS A REMARKABLE FILM THAT CAPTURES BILL'S STORY AND FOLLOWS HIM ALONG HIS JOURNEY INTO THE RECORD BOOKS. FROM HIS HOME TOWN IN CALIFORNIA TO MT. MCKINLEY AND MT. EVEREST, THIS COMPELLING STORY WILL HELP YOU REALIZE THAT ANYTHING, ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING, IS POSSIBLE IF YOU JUST WORK HARD AND BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

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EIGHT SUMMITS



*DreamQuest Productions presents*

A film by Allan R. Smith

# **EIGHT SUMMITS**

## **“The Bill Burke Story”**

**RELEASE DATE:** March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013    **ASPECT RATIO:** 16:9 (1.85)

**RUNNING TIME:** 46:00

**AUDIO:** LT/RT Stereo and 5.1 Surround

**FRAME RATE:** 29.97/59.94

**FORMATS:** HD CAM SR, HD CAM, DVD,

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Press materials available at: [www.eightsummitsfilm.com](http://www.eightsummitsfilm.com)

### **SYNOPSIS**

One man, one mission. Bill Burke had a goal after retirement, to stay active and healthy. With a goal to try mountaineering, little did he know that he would enter into the record books and become the oldest climber in the World to scale all eight of the highest peaks after age 60, then becoming the oldest American to summit Mt. Everest.

### **ABOUT EIGHT SUMMITS**

For over 40 years Bill Burke was a corporate lawyer just dreaming about what he would do in retirement. Little did he know that he would enter the record books and become an inspiration to millions around the world.

At 60 years of age and keeping in mind that he had never climbed an alpine mountain in his life, Bill set a goal to climb the “Seven Summits,” the highest peaks on all seven of the world’s continents. He succeeded and, at age 67, he reached the summit of Mt. Everest, becoming the oldest American to stand on top of the world at 29,035 feet and return alive. Because of an ongoing dispute about whether Australia is a continent, as opposed to Australasia, which includes a much larger land mass, Bill climbed the highest mountain in both Australia and Australasia, thus climbing eight summits on seven continents.

He is the only person to climb these eight mountains after reaching age 60.

Bill is inspired by his grandson, Oliver who suffers from a rare disability called Angelman Syndrome. “I want to do what ever I can to raise awareness of the needs of the disabled and the responsibility of society to help the disabled reach their full potential” says Bill.

Eight Summits is a remarkable film that captures Bill’s story and follows him along his journey into the record books. From his home town in California to Mt. McKinley and Mt. Everest, this compelling story will help you realize that anything, absolutely anything is possible if you just work hard and believe in yourself.

### **THE MAKING OF EIGHT SUMMITS**

April 2012, arriving in Katmandu, Nepal the team assembled at the offices of Asian trekking and went over the details of the expedition. A new solar power system provided by Goal Zero, a sponsor of the expedition would be used in base camp for the first time by the film crew and Asian Trekking.

The challenges of filming at altitude were a concern and after much research, it was decided that we would bring Canon EOS 7D cameras along with a Panasonic HVX 200 P2 HD Camera, said Allan. Excellent HD quality was a must, as well as lightweight and portable. The team also carried new SWANN Freestyle HD cameras that are similar to the Go Pro style camera to capture the action on the mountain as it unfolded. These small cameras would prove to be invaluable.

Little did we know that this would be one of the most deadliest and tumultuous years on Mt. Everest. Trekking through the Kumbu valley on way to base camp proved to be an adventure as the team came under assault by female Yak herders throwing rocks at the team yelling, no photo, no photo. After dodging that encounter with no harm done, the team arrived at base camp.

Quickly the team noticed that things seemed uneasy on the mountain and two days after arriving, a Sherpa died in base camp. This was to be the start of things unfolded this year. Within the first week Allan's role unexpectedly increased as he was asked to assist Asian Trekking and become the Eco Everest BC manager and handle all Everest weather reports, bogging and media reports while in base camp. This would help frame part of the Everest story.

Using footage from Bill's previous climbs and hours of footage shot this year, editor Andrew Fink had a challenge with different file formats and story layout. With over 10 years of climbing footage from the eight summits, the challenge for Andrew was not just putting the puzzle together, but capturing the incredible story of one mans quest into the record books.

Along comes music composer Chuck Jonkey, known as the Indiana Jones of the music industry and veteran of such films as Rambo, Survivor & The Doors, to name a few. Music is an emotional piece for me and can certainly change the dramatics of a scene. What Bill has achieved is remarkable and laying the music down on such a great film is a joy.

### **Q&A WITH FILMMAKER ALLAN R. SMITH & BILL BURKE**

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*How did you first meet Bill.*

I first met Bill at the Los Angeles Adventurers' Club when he was giving a presentation.

*When filming Eight Summits, what cameras did you take?*

That was really a concern. But with some research I choose to take two Canon 7D's and a Panasonic HVX 200 HD Camera, along with Swann "Freestyle HD Cameras".

*What were your challenges filming at high altitude?*

Well outside of the lack of oxygen and cold, probably keeping the gear in working order. I ended up handling all media, weather reports & blogging for the Eco Everest expedition. So suffice to say outside of altitude and cold, I had a lot on my plate.

*Was this your first time in Nepal?*

It was my first time in Nepal and I can truly tell you that I am hooked. The people of Nepal are incredible. They have so many challenges, but yet they have such a positive outlook on life. In fact I hopped on a scooter in Katmandu and started filming as we rode throughout the city and side streets. It was a great experience that I hope to have again soon.

What were some of the challenges filming Eight Summits?

Probably the biggest challenge was the altitude and cold. Not only was it hard to breath, but also I was concerned about the equipment and keeping it warm and in working order.

*What do you hope to achieve with Eight Summits?*

Bill climbs for his grandson Ollie, who suffers from what they believe is a condition called "Angelman's Syndrome". It is very similar to Downs Syndrome and my hope and I know Bill's hope, is that Eight Summits will bring recognition to the disabled.

*Bill Burke*

*I thought there were Seven Summits? Why do you refer to Eight Summits?*

"Why did I name my website "Eight Summits"? Planet earth is divided into seven continents. What few people realize is that there is a controversy over whether Australia is a continent or is part of the larger continent of Australasia, which includes New Zealand and many of the countries in the Pacific region, such as Indonesia. This makes a huge difference in the mountaineering community for those attempting to climb the Seven Summits. If Australia is the 7th continent, the highest mountain is an easy walk-up called "Kosciusko," which is only 7,310 feet high. If the 7th continent is Australasia, the highest mountain is "The Carstensz Pyramid," which located in West Papua, New Guinea and is 16,023 feet high. The Carstensz Pyramid is hard to get to and is an extremely difficult and technical rock climb. So, there are two versions of the Seven Summits. To hedge my bets, I climbed both Kosciusko and The Carstensz Pyramid in one trip. So, I have climbed Eight summits on seven continents." Thus, the name of my website: "Eight Summits."

"Approximately 3,700 people have climbed Mt. Everest and 275 people have climbed one version or the other of the Seven Summits. Only about 82 people have climbed all Eight Summits."

*Tell us about climbing the Eight Summits and why you climb*

"I am often asked why I climb these dangerous mountains, especially at my age. I always struggle with the answer. I think the best answer is that the mountains and mountaineering bring together so many of the ingredients of life and daily living: beauty, adventure, drama, danger, risk, hopes, dreams aspirations, life, death, success and failure. Many people my age take up golf, tennis, reading or travel. Those are fun and noble pastimes, and maybe some time I will pursue them too. But, they don't combine the elements that make the mountains so attractive to me."

*What challenges have you had climbing the Seven Summits?*

"The Carstensz Pyramid presented quite a challenge for me. That is the only mountain of the 8 summits that is a technical rock climb. Part of the climb is rated 5.9 in rock climbing difficulty. I remember lying in my tent night after night thinking of all the ways I could plunge to my death down that rock face. But, once we began the climb, all those fears vanished as I focused on what I had to do to make it to the summit and back safely."

"Vinson Massif, on the continent of Antarctica, was a fabulous and memorable climb. We flew from Puntas Arenas, Chile, to the continent of Antarctica on a Russian troop carrier. We landed on the 8,000 feet deep blue ice of Antarctica, and, when we disembarked, it was like standing on the moon. I made a lot of close friends on that trip, including my dear

friend, David Liano. After we summated, we encountered some really bad weather and were stranded for over one week on the continent."

"Aconcagua, also known as the Stone Sentinel, is the highest mountain in the world outside of Asia. It is a challenging climb. We had a lot of drama on Aconcagua because we had very bad weather on the ascent and two of the members of our team became quite ill at high camp, and one almost died of pulmonary edema. Three of us had to assist him down to a lower camp where he was put in a gamow bag. When his condition did not improve, we called for a mule to be sent up along with a doctor to accompany him down the mountain. This poor fellow had to ride 20 miles down the mountain on the back of the mule in the middle of the night. He was taken to the hospital where he fully recovered."

"Mt. McKinley, was memorable because I got into an argument at high camp with the guide on summit day. Half of our 8-person team wanted to go down. The other half, including me, wanted to continue up. Our guide decided we would all go down. I led a palace coup in revolt of this decision. After a huge argument he stood by his decision, but I had clearly shamed him. The next morning he changed his mind, obviously fearful of the repercussions. Our team summated, but things were never the same. The guide called me selfish, among other names. The guide and assistant guide didn't get along and the guide later tried to get the assistant guide fired. Also, this is the one mountain where I got frostbite on my fingers."

"Mt. Elbrus, the highest mountain in Europe, is not a particularly difficult climb. But, we decided to make our summit attempt in a raging storm. When I finally set foot on the summit, the first thing I did was empty the contents of my stomach on the white snow in front of everyone. I vomited, not from altitude sickness, but from sheer exhaustion. Surely, not one of my finest moments in the mountains."

"Kilimanjaro was one of my favorite mountains. Kilimanjaro is 19,341 feet high, and is the highest free standing mountain in the world. It's not a difficult climb, and is made easier by government regulations which require all teams to employ local porters and cooks who do all the hard work. But, it is a beautiful mountain graced with many eco-systems, including a rain forest, grassland, moorland, heather, alpine desert, highland and glacier. We summated Kilimanjaro in a fierce storm, so I never saw the crater of the volcano or the gorgeous summits views. I loved that climb."

"Mt. Kosciuszko is, by far, the easiest of the 7 summits. It is located in Australia and, at 7,310 feet, it is a walk-up. In fact, you can take a ski lift half way up the mountain, and the rest of the trip is on a raised wooden platform across a grassy marsh. Just to be fair, I didn't take the ski lift. The highlight of my trip was the annual jazz festival in Thredbo, which I was lucky enough to enjoy. After climbing Kosciuszko, I traveled to West Papua New Guinea to climb The Carstensz Pyramid."

"Chomolumna--Mother Goddess of the Earth. It is hard to describe Mt. Everest in the words of mortals: beautiful, magnificent, stunning, powerful and fearsome are frail attempts. It is always the same, and it is never the same. The mountain shows neither malice nor mercy to those on its flanks. It does not share our hopes, dreams, fears and aspirations. It is indifferent to our joy, our sorrow and our pain. When climbing Mt. Everest, it is not "us" vs. "the mountain," as some like to say. The mountain does not care. Whether you climb Mt. Everest solo or as part of a team, you must always be laser-focused on your strengths and your weaknesses if you want to survive. The mountain will not take care of you. I have

been on that mountain 5 times, and I have never had a bad year. I love Mt. Everest and, in a strange sort of way, am obsessed with it."

On May 23, 2009, in a vicious storm, I was coming up and over the famous Hillary Step on the Southeast Ridge. Ahead of me, I could see some climbers sitting in the snow directly in my path. I wondered to myself why these folks would pick this spot, in these conditions, to rest. As I got closer, I realized they were celebrating on the summit of Mt. Everest! I was stunned and shocked to realize I had reached the top. There was no further I could climb. I dropped to my knees and said a prayer of thanks. Then, I soaked in the feelings of joy and euphoria, knowing that I had accomplished my dream of climbing the 8 summits."

*Have you had any close calls on the mountain?*

I have had two close calls, both on Mt. Everest.

"When I was coming down from the summit of Mt. Everest on May 24, 2009, I was rappelling backwards down the famous "Yellow Band" of rock on the Lhotse Face. As I approached the bottom of the Yellow Band, my crampons hit an ice patch and skittered off the face of the mountain. My entire body swung sideways on the fixed line so the right side of my body was resting against the mountain and my legs and feet were dangling helplessly. The only thing holding me in place was my figure 8 rappelling device, which was attached to the fixed line on the mountain. As I looked down, all I could see was a 3,000-foot fall down the sheer ice of the Lhotse Face. I first began to hyperventilate from exhaustion and fear. At the same time, there was a team above me with a camera crew watching this drama unfold. The leader of this team began to yell at me hysterically, telling me what to do. I was too exhausted to do anything in that circumstance. As he continued to shout instructions, I told him that I appreciate his concern, but I know what I need to do to get back to safety. I just need time to compose myself and summon the energy to remove myself from this perilous predicament. After a few moments, I felt better, and I jerked my feet under me, all the while hoping my figure 8 would hold me place on the fixed line. It did. With my feet under me, I was able to spider crawl back to safety. I will never forget that moment."

"On the North side of the mountain in 2010, my Sherpa and I were coming down the steep and dangerous headwall leading up to the North Col. There was a heavy snowfall and we were in whiteout conditions, with no visibility. I could not see the trail ahead of me because of the whiteout conditions. My Sherpa moved up and over a ridgeline and disappeared from view. As I moved forward, trying desperately to place my crampons on the invisible snow trail, my right foot landed off the trail and on the steep vertical face of the mountain. This pulled my entire body off of the mountain. My right leg and arm were dangling helplessly down the vertical face of the mountain and I was clinging to the trail with my left leg and arm. There was nothing I could do because the weight of my body slipping down the face of the mountain kept me from pulling myself back to safety. I yelled for help from my Sherpa. He could not hear or see me. I continued to yell as my body slowly slipped off the trail and down the mountain. Finally, after several agonizing and frightful moments, my Sherpa came back looking for me and saw my predicament. He hauled me back up on the trail, and we continued safely down the mountain."

*What do you have planned next?*

Everest 2014 for a double summit at age 72. My race has not been run!



## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

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### Allan R. Smith – Director/Producer

Born and raised in Hollywood, California, Allan has been in the heart of the film and television industry for over 30 years. Beginning at age 6 performing in Armor Hot dogs commercials, to appearances in the feature film's "Chinatown", "The day of the Locust", "They Only Kill Their Masters" to television appearances in "The Brady Bunch", "Gunsmoke", "Barbury Coast", "Canon", "Medical Center" and many more. This experience has led to a career of producing and hosting television programs such as "The Alaskan Experience", "Carolina Road Trips", "Cruising the World" and more. With a focus on producing documentary films and adventure television shows, he has had the pleasure of working with broadcasters around the world.

His most recent film "RESCUE MEN – The Story of the Pea Island Life-Savers" has won 9 industry awards and has led the naming of a new Coast Guard Cutter.

The owner of DreamQuest Productions an award winning full service production company, Allan was instrumental in the early adoption of new media and content distribution. He currently works with several companies on their social Media campaigns and digital content distribution.

He is an accomplished adventurer and is the only person to have retraced the footsteps of the "Lost 49er's" from Cedar City, Utah to Death Valley, California, on foot and a feat that was accomplished in the dead of winter for over 300 miles. Allan is the Past- President of the Los Angeles Adventurers' Club and member of the Explorers Club. He is a Medal of Valor recipient from the California Highway Patrol and Governor of the State of California. A former United States Marine, he is a member of the Writers Guild of America, the Producers Guild of America and the International Documentary Association.

### Steve Essig – Director of Photography

As a camera operator, Steve has handled assignments for television documentaries, feature films and commercials under a wide variety of conditions, ranging from sub-zero cold in mid-winter Alaska to 120 degree heat in Bad Water, Death Valley.

Steve, has had the pleasure of working with National Geographic, Hansen/Gervasoni Productions, the California Chevrolet Dealers Association and High Desert Productions to name a few. A graduate of the Brooks Institute of Photography for over 40 years he has captured stunning footage from around the world and worked as the director of photography for the award-winning documentary "Rescue Men – The Story of the Pea Island Lifesavers".

### Vivian Callahan – Film Editor

A dynamic film and television executive, she most recently co-wrote, edited and was post-production supervisor on the documentary "RESCUE MEN" which currently has won nine industry awards at various national and international film festivals. With over three decades of experience working in network television, most notably as the Executive Director of Creative Services and Director of On-Air Promotion for FOX Broadcasting Company and manager of On-Air Promotion for CBS.

She is a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and has won numerous awards and accolades for her work.

**We would like to thank the following sponsors**



Thirty-four men sat down at the first dinner of the *Adventurers' Club* given at Joel's Restaurant in New York in the year 1912. They were soldiers, sailors, hunters, trappers, travelers, journalists, authors and scientists. Four toasts were offered: "To Adventure, the Shadow of Every Red-Blooded Man;" "To the Game;" "To Every Lost Trail, Lost Cause, and Lost Comrade;" and last "To Gentlemen Adventurers."

Thus was the first Adventurers' Club inaugurated and such are the personnel and spirit of all of the Adventurers' Clubs.



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## EIGHT SUMMITS

### **FILMCREDITS**

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Directed by  
Allan R. Smith

Produced by  
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Vivian Callahan

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Bill Burke

Director of Photography  
Steve Essig

Sound  
Travis Brown

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