

Mystery on Everest

1 Were Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay really the first people to reach the top of Mount Everest? Some believe British climbers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine reached the summit **previously**—
5 in June 1924. Unfortunately, this is hard to **prove** because both men vanished on the mountain.

Recently a team of climbers visited Everest, hoping to solve¹ this mystery. Near Everest's First Step, on the way to the summit, the team found Mallory's
10 oxygen tank—evidence that he and Irvine were near the top. Close by, a member of the team, Conrad Anker, discovered Mallory's body.

When the team examined Mallory's body, they found items like a knife and matches, but no photos. Why is this **significant**?
15 Mallory carried a photo of his wife with him. He planned to leave it at the top of Everest, if he reached the summit.

Did Mallory and Irvine **achieve** their goal and reach the top? Probably not, says Anker. Here's why:

Difficult path/Poor equipment: Mallory and Irvine were last
20 seen near Everest's Second Step. This is a 27-meter (90-foot) wall of rock. Climbing this **section** of Everest is extremely difficult, even with modern climbing equipment. Without the right tools, it is **doubtful** Mallory and Irvine were able to **proceed** to the top.

No frostbite: Mallory and Irvine were near the summit late
25 in the day. Climbers who reach the summit at this time need to camp at the top. If you do this, it is common to **suffer** from frostbite. But Mallory's body had no sign of frostbite.

So what happened to Mallory and Irvine? Anker thinks they probably turned back just after the First Step. When Mallory
30 was going down, perhaps he accidentally fell. Irvine's body has never been found. **Whatever** happened, they will always be remembered as early Everest heroes.²

¹ If you **solve** a problem, you find an answer to it.

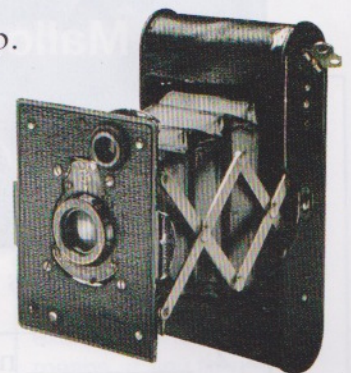
² A **hero** is a brave person, someone who does something great.



▲ Mountain climber Conrad Anker discovered Mallory's body on May 1, 1999.

“Because it is there.”

—Mallory's response when asked why he wanted to climb Everest



▲ Mallory took a camera like this on his climb. It has never been found.

The Missing Pilot



▲ The path of Amelia Earhart's 1937 round-the-world flight

A Dangerous Journey

On July 2, 1937, Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan left New Guinea for Howland Island in the Pacific. This was the longest and most dangerous part of their trip around the world. Earhart had trouble shortly after takeoff. The weather was stormy, so she had to fly at 3,000 meters (10,000 feet). Going this high, the plane used gas quickly.

After about twenty hours, Earhart and Noonan **approached** Howland Island. The island was only about 105 kilometers (65 miles) away, but the **bright** sun was **shining** in their faces so they couldn't see it. Near Howland, a ship, the *Itasca*, was waiting. Earhart contacted the ship: "Gas is low," she said. The *Itasca* tried to **maintain** contact with her but got no **response**. Finally, the *Itasca* called for help. People searched for Earhart and Noonan for days. Despite the searchers' **efforts**, they found nothing.



▲ Not only a pilot, Amelia Earhart was also one of the most stylish women of her time.

Missing!

What happened to Amelia Earhart? No one knows for sure. During the **flight**, she probably **headed** in the wrong direction because the sun was bright and it was hard to see. So she got lost; soon after, her plane ran out of¹ gas, and she died at sea. Another idea is that she survived the plane crash,² swam to an uninhabited³ island, and later died there. Still others think she survived the crash and secretly returned to the U.S. with a new identity.

Although the first theory seems most likely, none of these ideas has been proven. Today, people are still **investigating** Earhart's and Noonan's **disappearance**. (Noonan's body has also never been found.) Whatever happened, Amelia probably died as she wished. "When I go," she said, "I'd like best to go in my plane."

¹ If you **run out of** something, you have no more of it left.

² A **crash** is an accident in which a car, plane, etc. is damaged or destroyed.

³ If a place is **uninhabited**, it has no people.