

Journal Inquirer

An independent newspaper.

Published Monday-Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings by Journal Publishing Co. Inc.

306 Progress Drive
Manchester, CT 06045-0510

Telephone: 860-646-0500
Toll-free from Enfield, Somers,
Stafford: 1-800-237-3606
Fax: 860-646-9867

Internet: www.JournalInquirer.com

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Monday-Friday 8a-7:30p
Saturday and holidays 7a-noon

Manchester area: 860-643-8111
Enfield, Somers, Stafford toll-free:
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Photography

Assignment requests Ext. 303
Reprints: www.JournalInquirer.com

Postal information

Postmaster: Send address changes to Journal Inquirer, Circulation Dept., 306 Progress Drive, P.O. Box 510, Manchester, CT 06045-0510. Periodical postage paid at Manchester, CT. USPS 583-180.

Subscription rates

Single copy, \$1 daily, \$2 weekend. Carrier delivery, \$5.70 weekly. Office-paid home delivery, \$74.10 for three months, \$140.79 for six months, \$266.76 for one year. Postage will be added for mail subscriptions. All subscriptions may include as many as six premium editions per year, for which subscribers will be charged up to \$2 each. These charges will reduce the length of subscriptions.

Manchester man climbs Mount Everest, his 5th of Seven Summits

By Joe Cooper

Journal Inquirer

When Manchester resident Mark Milewski reached the summit of Mount Everest last month, he carried his Boy Scout Troop 25 neckerchief with him.

Under blue skies and with negative 30-degree temperatures — before wind chill — Milewski spent 20 minutes on the mountain's peak in the early morning with 20 other climbers doing his best to embrace the moment.

"Much of what I've learned about leadership, teamwork, and the outdoors came from Troop 25," Milewski, the troop's scoutmaster, said. "We have a large and incredibly skilled staff, all volunteers and all wholeheartedly devoted to providing an outstanding program to our Scouts."

He has been involved with Boy Scouts of America since he was a child, serving as Troop 25's assistant scoutmaster for 26 years and as scoutmaster since 2014.

The Everest expedition took 50 days to complete. Milewski has now reached the summit of five of the highest mountains on the seven continents, also known as the Seven Summits.

Milewski, 46, previously climbed the summits of Mount Elbrus in Russia in 2007, Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa in 2008, Denali in Alaska in 2009, and Mount Aconcagua in Argentina in 2009.

The dangers of his latest expedition were clear, as climbers had not been allowed to summit Everest for the last two years because of fatal avalanches. Three tourists and a guide died on the mountain in May.

Aconcagua set stage

Climbing the earth's highest mountain was not a life-long dream, Milewski said, adding his interest grew after he started high-altitude climbs in 2004. However, reaching the summit of Mount Aconcagua, the highest mountain outside of the Himalayan range, gave him the confidence to consider the idea.

"It occurred to me that only Mount Everest was higher on the Seven Summits list, and that somehow over the years I had actually developed the skills to climb it competently," he said.

He scaled the 29,029-foot mountain with Adventure Consultants, a guide service based in New Zealand. Milewski and three AC climbers made it to the top, with three withdrawing for health reasons.

It's crucial to have professional mountain guides to climb high-altitude summits, Milewski said.



Mark Milewski of Manchester is shown climbing Mount Everest in May.

"The experience and judgment that the guides bring to the expedition are invaluable," he said.

The journey left Milewski with minor frostbite, sunburn, and trip costs over \$65,000 — but Milewski describes the experience as "priceless."

"Everything is below you. I swear I could see the curvature of the earth," he said. "Approaching the summit was a pretty profound moment."

Growing up in Manchester, Milewski attended Highland Park Elementary School, Assumption Middle School, and Kingswood Oxford School in West Hartford.

He earned a bachelor of arts in political science from Syracuse University, a master's in history from the University of Connecticut, a master's of business administration from Bentley University in 2000, and completed a teacher-preparation program at Yale University.

An assistant professor of business

administration at Tunxis Community College since 2010, Milewski took a leave of absence during the spring semester to attempt the climb.

Hiking began with family

Milewski said hiking in the mountains with his family while growing up shaped his passion for the sport. In his youth he hiked mountains in Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Colorado, and Utah, he said.

"All these experiences taught me to be comfortable in the outdoors in almost any weather conditions, to be a good team member, and to organize and execute detailed plans successfully," he said.

As an adult, he reached the top of Mount Rainer in Washington, all 48 mountains in New Hampshire's White Mountains, hiked over 200 miles on California's John Muir Trail, and spent six months hiking over 2,100 miles of the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine, among

many others.

He now has his sights set on the highest mountains in Australia and Antarctica, the last two of the Seven Summits.

Naturally, he will first opt for the more challenging of the two — the 16,050-foot peak of Vinson Massif in Antarctica.

Flag protocol: Half staff

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