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Doctor completes Seven Summits

Forgive Dr. Gregory Konrath if he's going through "mountain withdrawal."

The Lafayette Orthopaedic Clinic surgeon completed the Seven Summits quest Dec. 28 in Australia. He is one of about 229 people to have climbed the highest mountain on each continent.

The Seven Summits are Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (South America), McKinley (North America), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Elbrus (Europe), Vinson (Antarctica) and Kosciuszko (Australia).

Konrath said the final climb on Mount Kosciuszko, elevation 7,309 feet, was the easiest and the most fun because he climbed with his 10-year-old son.

"The best memory is finishing with my son, Sean," he said. "Reaching the top of Mount Everest is a great memory.

"Having to leave early on my first attempt (at Everest) due to cerebral edema is clearly my worst."

Sean, who is a fifth-grader at Faith Christian School, said it was a great experience to climb with his dad. They spent nine days in Australia.

"I'm proud of myself because it was very windy at the top," he said. "It took between three to four hours. I was very happy.

"I felt really proud of my dad because he did the Seven Summits."

Sean said they only stopped once on the way up the mountain.

He said he's unsure if he wants to try the Seven Summits quest when he is an adult.

"I would like to go to Mount Kilimanjaro someday with my dad," he said.

Konrath said the pair quickly separated from a group that climbed Mount Kosciuszko.

"Sean and I were the first to reach the summit. He was a machine," said the proud father.

"I told Sean that while we left 70-plus degrees and sunny weather, the mountain would be cold and windy, and he would be tired and sore."

On Mount Kosciuszko's summit, they sat away from the wind. They enjoyed the view as they ate breakfast at the top of Australia.

"Walking down through the alpine meadows as it warmed up was great, as well," Konrath said.

"It was an awesome father-and-son experience."

Konrath estimated that he spent \$300,000 on the eight climbs, which included the aborted first attempt at Mount Everest. He said it also cost about \$700,000 in lost wages from time off work.

"It was clearly worth the expense and effort," he said. "It is the experience of a lifetime -- everyone should do something extraordinary to feel alive."

Konrath said conquering the Seven Summits was a thrill, but the experience was more than reaching the top of a mountain.

"I love meeting the wonderful people and learning about the cultures of the different parts of the world I have been fortunate to visit," he said.

"It also makes me appreciate what we have here in America and Indiana."

Thanks for sharing your adventures, doc.

Contact Bob Scott at Journal & Courier, 217 N. Sixth St., Lafayette, IN 47901; call (765) 420-5248; fax (765) 420-5246; or e-mail bscott@jconline.com

Additional Facts

For more online

More photos: See pictures from Dr. Gregory Konrath's mountain climbing adventures at <http://konrathortho.com/mountain/index.php>
