Outcomes | Intermediate Reading Text

Page 101 Unit 11: The strange story of Maurice Wilson

Looking at the photo – the clear blue sky and queues of people – you might 1_____ that this 2_____ a group of walkers on a summer's day climbing a popular local peak. But this 3_____ the summit of Everest – almost 9,000 metres high, with temperatures of -15 and winds 4_____ at 50km/h on a 'good' day. What's more, at this altitude the lack of oxygen 5_____ confusion, slow your movements and make it almost impossible to keep warm. It's so dangerous they 6_____ this place 'the Death Zone'.
Some argue that pictures like this create a false impression. They attract too many amateurs who 7_____ a romantic idea of reaching 'the top of the world' and 8_____ rich enough to pay $70,000 to make their dream come true. However, they 9_____ no proper concept of the risks when they climb Everest. They 10_____ too heavily on using fixed ropes and the support of their guides and they 11_____ the skill or experience to cope when things go wrong.

But amateurs on Everest 12_____ nothing new. In the 1930s, some eighty years before this photo 13_____ taken, a man called Maurice Wilson attempted to climb Everest. His plan 14_____ to fly from Britain and land on the Great Rongbuk glacier, and from there 15_____ to the top. There 16_____ only two problems – he 17_____ how to fly a plane and he'd never climbed before.

In fact these weren't the only barriers to achieving his goal. He 18_____ been shot during the First World War and 19_____ only partially use his left arm. The British government tried to stop him even getting to India because they 20_____ him as dangerous; the authorities in Nepal and Tibet also refused to let him enter their territory.

Incredibly, then, just two months after his first flying lesson, he 21_____ to fly solo all the way to India in a tiny second-hand plane – a huge achievement for the time. He then managed to enter Tibet by disguising himself as a Tibetan monk and 22_____ several hundred miles to reach the Rongbuk monastery at the foot of Everest.

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Without a guide, Wilson 23_____ off up the glacier. He frequently 24_____ lost among the towers of ice and it 25_____ him three days to reach Camp 2, which 26_____ been established by a previous expedition. There 27_____ climbing equipment at the camp but he ignored it and continued up the mountain. At 6,500 metres a storm hit and he 28_____ forced to sit in his tent for two and a half days. When the storm eased he 29_____ back to the monastery – starving, half blind and his arm in great pain.

However, he rested for just two days before he 30_____ again. This time he persuaded two local Sherpas to help him carry supplies up the mountain and guide him through the glacier. With their help he 31_____ higher up to Camp 3 but once again high winds and snow stopped them going further. As the weather cleared, Wilson continued up the mountain on his own, reaching around 7,500 metres before returning to Camp 3. He 32_____ by this time exhausted and six days at such high altitude 33_____ him headaches. The Sherpas desperately 34_____ to persuade him to give up, but Wilson 35_____ on trying one more time. The last words in his diary are still full of optimism. 'Off again. Gorgeous day.' He never returned. His body 36_____ found a year later. He 37 _____ wearing green boots, a grey suit and a purple jersey – almost as if ready for a walk in the park on a chilly London afternoon.

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