

## ***Eulogy to a Faithful Friend by Clive Darley***

**SNOW!** It came like a wraith in the night, silently blanketing the frost-hard ground and creating an aura of silence and serenity. It is YOUR world, old friend, one in which your many virtues still find expression. Now, like your owner, you bear the scars of 60 years of service and much abuse. Tears, like manly wrinkles, only serve to bear witness to a life well-lived. You hang there on your hook somewhat forlorn, awaiting a resurrection of purpose and meaning, always available, forever loyal.



Do you recall the day we first met? You were pristine then, your scarlet cloak and vivid blue liner an immediate attraction that led the fashion aficionados to covet you. But you were not destined to be a fashion accessory!

Your forbears had been to the top of Everest and other Himalayan peaks with successive British expeditions. To the more discerning and knowledgeable it was your insulation of pure duck down and your proud record that courted interest.

And so, it came to pass that the young man in his prime and you in your pristine youth forged a bond that 60 years have failed to weaken. As companions for six decades we have experienced not only the worst that the elements could throw at us but the sublime satisfaction of inseparably weathering life's storms. Do you remember the blizzard that pinned us down for three days on the Biafo Glacier in the Karakorum and the subsequent spiritual experience of camping in your enveloping warmth at 17,000' near the Hispar La? Seemingly within reach of the firmament, we gazed in wonder and awe at the incalculable numbers of stars and galaxies so near, so bright in the stillness and clarity of the night. We were together in the Himalayas as we camped at Gokyo Lake and completed the

ascent of Gokyo Ri. I embraced you then as we looked out on the huge face of Everest, seemingly a stone's throw away.

Our alpine expeditions continued our odysseys into the environments for which you were so diligently designed. We were together through winters in the Lake District and Scotland, climbing in some of the worst conditions imaginable. You continued to offer comfort and solace like all true friends do. You never failed me.



In your later years, you were forgiving of the indignities unwittingly visited upon you. Your leaking down held in place by patches gave you the appearance of a battered teddy bear, a patina of relevance that commanded respect and generated affection. You ignored the slurs, the insults of those who should have known better, comparing you ignobly with the new synthetic versions that have become de rigueur for the impressionable.

And so, here we are towards the end of our days and our long association. We have seen some wonderful sights and enjoyed many memorable experiences together. You may be a shadow of your former self but so is your owner. This has been a love affair without end. It is snowing. Let us go out for a walk together for one last time, think deep thoughts and dream dreams in the way that once we did. You are unique, life's partner in the good times and bad.

Thank you!