

Despite being clearly inspired by his father, he describes their adventures together as "precious moments", he just wasn't interested in the ultimate just yet.

But after completing what he describes as his "apprenticeship", challenging climbs across Europe, the Antipodes and North America, he moved on to the Himalayas and then the 29,029 feet of Everest became a goal for him too.

He scaled the mountain in 1990 for the first time and was to do so again nine years later, when the famous "Dad? It's Peter, we are on the summit of Everest, can you hear me?" call was made to Sir Edmund.

Although around 1,200 people have also achieved that feat, he is keen to point out that there is a "world of difference" between the accomplishment of experienced climbers and those that bought their way to the top.

"The difference between what people like Dad did and what

managed is enormous," said Mr. Hillary, preparing to launch into yet another aviation analogy, which he uses to explain many of his main points.

"It's the difference between someone adapting a small single-seater plane and flying across the Pacific and someone else buying a seat in economy and making the same journey on a 747.

"There are many different ways to the top of Everest. Those who have built up experience and skills serving their apprenticeship on lesser mountains are a hundred times more accomplished than those who, using a military style operation designed to get a client to the summit, are prepared to put the lives of others at risk just to say they have done it."

Mr. Hillary is not being an 'Everest snob', he is just keen to ensure that in an ever-increasing world of adventure tourism, where you can even buy your way to the Moon, the skills of

are still recognised.

"Many people think that advances in technology will have made what we do a lot easier," he continued.

"But, although there have been some welcome steps forward in mountaineering technology, to climb to the top of a 8,000 metre peak still takes dedication, commitment, inner-strength and skill – and technology can provide you with that.

"The challenges that faced people like Dad in getting to the top of Everest still face climbers today."

And the challenges that do face people like 'Dad' and his son are great indeed.

Although losing a little of his frankness and detail when answering questions about what took place atop Pakistan's notorious mountain, K2m on August 13, 1995, Mr. Hillary still gave a hint of what he went through in becoming the sole survivor of a doomed expedition.

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Like father, like son, adventure is a way of life

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He turned away 1200 feet from the summit due to an impending storm, but seven others, including the first woman to conquer Everest, Alison Hargreaves, did not. Six died there on the mountain, another later in hospital.

"One of the things you need in mountaineering is a survival instinct," said Mr. Hillary with a look as icy as the mountain graves of his former colleagues.

"People ask you whether calling off an expedition, which you have spent months planning and undertaking, just before the summit, is a shattering thing.

"And the answer is often 'no'. When you are faced with a situation when if you push on you will die, it is a straightforward thing to turn back.

"There have been times when we have been in some unpleasant places, up a mountain, an isolated place, riveted with fear.

"But you have to take control, focus and do what you have to do to get down. Panic, although an easy option, is not going to help in those situations."

The bodies, to this day, remain atop the mountain. Sentiment can't come into it when on the question of corpse recovery.

"Recovering bodies from these

"We don't even know where they are. We just know that they're right up near the top somewhere, so that's where they're going to have to stay.

"If the lifeforce has gone, then the lifeforce has gone. We would try and move the body into a crevasse or bury them, to give some dignity to the death, but bringing down bodies simply cannot happen."

But the obvious dangers and the stark reality of death at altitude are not enough to put him off, as he demonstrates with a return to aviation analogies.

"If every time you were to get on a plane you worked out the statistics of you being killed in a crash, maybe one in ten million, but thought that today would be the day, what sort of life could you have?" he questioned.

"During a climb you can find yourself with a view of the world that only a very select few can ever have shared. It is moments like that that make all the fearful, frightening and painful times worthwhile.

"It is the hard work and the challenge that makes the ultimate achievement so worthwhile – and that is the same in all walks of life.

"If you spend your life in deckchairs, sipping drinks, you are not going to scale Everest or climb

many expeditions are successful and you know that if you apply all of your skills, experience and training to what you are doing – plus that survival instinct – you can achieve your goals and gain all the satisfaction that can give you."

And this survival instinct will be one of the themes of Mr. Hillary's talk at the BUEI on Sunday, one of a number of events to take place during this weekend of fund-raising and celebration.

In this, the 50th anniversary of his father's historic ascent, Mr. Hillary accompanied by fellow esteemed climbers, and even one of the original party from Sir Edmund's expedition, have been touring the world and running all manner of celebratory and commemorative events to mark one of man's great 20th century achievements.

But, and this is what around 60,000 people probably want to know, why come to Bermuda to continue the commemorations, an Island all-but bereft of anything resembling a hill let alone a mountain?