

Mark Synnott 2_final

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SPEAKERS

Meg Oliver, Justin Angle, unknown, Lily Clark, Smoky the Bear, Mark Synnott

- M** Mark Synnott 00:00
You know, I'm sitting in a tent, and I'm having tea with, you know, these Indians that are trying to climb the mountain, or with Ukrainians, or Russians, or all these different nationalities. And I'm keeping an open mind because I think I'm an open minded person, and I'm hearing their stories and I'm communicating with them. And I'm looking right into their eyes. And we're talking about, you know, our climbs and the weather and our families and everything. And it didn't take that long before I realized, you know what, these people are just like me.
- J** Justin Angle 00:51
This is A New Angle, and I'm your host, Justin Angle. This show was supported by first security bank, Blackfoot communications, and the University of Montana College of Business. Hey, folks, welcome back. Today, I'm excited to bring back to new angle legendary climber and New York Times bestselling author and fellow New Hampshire native Mark Synnott. Mark's new book, The Third Pole, documents the amazing story of his team's mission to solve one of the greatest mysteries of Mount Everest history. Whether or not George Mallory and Sandy Irvin were the first people to stand on the summit. That mission is also captured in the amazing films Lost on Everest, and the shorter edit The Ghosts Above. It's a riveting story that confronts many of the dominant and oversimplified narratives associated with Mount Everest. Mark, really excited to have you back. Thanks for coming on the show today.



Mark Synnott 01:45

Yeah, thanks. This is awesome. Thanks for having me, Justin.



Justin Angle 01:48

So so many things to congratulate you on the climb the film's the book, How does it feel to be kind of through the other side of it all?



Mark Synnott 01:58

Well, I think it will feel good once I'm fully on the other side. But I feel like I'm not quite there. Sure. And I'm actually right, in the crux, really, of the whole thing, which is, you know, launching the book and actually sharing it with everyone. And it, it feels a little bit overwhelming, actually, not as deeply satisfying as, as you might think it's sort of weird in that climbing is kind of like that, too. And, you know, you get to the summit, and you you project a lot onto it. And you always think that it's, you know, gonna be this this epic climax, but then you get there. And usually you're just fried. And so it feels a little bit like that. The past, but it's like almost three years now that I've that I've put into this project.



Justin Angle 02:57

Yeah. And then you situate that and, you know, this time of COVID that we've been living through the last year or so it's like a hard time to pause and celebrate and just take a breath. So I can imagine like, just this this push you've been in is yeah, overwhelming seems like the right word.



Mark Synnott 03:16

Yeah, it does feel that way a little bit. And, yeah, COVID has been good and bad for me in some ways. I benefited personally because it made it easier for me to write, because I wasn't going anywhere. And all of a sudden, I was just at home, and everything kind of dropped off my schedule. And so I just sat down here in my basement office, cranking away day after day, which was kind of what you need to do. And it actually felt good to not be on the move so much for a bunch of years, I've been feeling like I needed to slow down and not travel as much and just take a break. I don't think it would have happened otherwise. But with COVID, you know, a lot of us were forced into that. And I mean, it's been awful. And obviously, the world has paid a terrible toll. But there has been a little bit of a silver lining for me personally.

J

Justin Angle 04:25

Indeed. I mean, I think for a lot of us, it's the simplicity of life, you know, and then just sort of forcing us to kind of reassess priorities. And some, you know, when you take some things off the table and off the menu, it's a little easier to force that. I think the, you know, the obvious place to start with this conversation is you know, why Everest? I mean, I sort of feel like the cadre of climbers that you've sort of rolled with throughout most of your career probably looked at that mountain with some disdain for many years. What what hooked you And trying to go after that objective?

M

Mark Synnott 05:03

Well, that's kind of a big part of the story, Justin, because I think you could almost call me an anti Everest guy, for the majority of my career. And I never thought that I would go to Everest really just was not on my radar, I came of age as a climber in the 1990s, which is, I think, sort of the era when Everest developed, you know, this modern stigma that you're referring to. and myself, and, you know, my peers, the climb tribe, you know, that I've, that I was part of, a lot of us, especially the people that we're, you know, kind of in deep, were turned off by everything that we were hearing about Everest, and the idea that people were buying their way to the summit, and that the whole thing had become commercialized, and had come to represent, you know, all the things that climbing wasn't supposed to be about, you know, in the 1980s, before, they've ever as a guiding industry started, the mountain was the domain of, you know, the best alpinist in the world, and all the expeditions were, you know, what you might call just, you know, private, purist endeavors, where, you know, people would spend like, their whole career as climbers to sort of earn the right to climb the mountain or to be invited on one of those trips. And, and then all of that changed. And so that had a formative influence on the direction that I went with, with my climbing. And I think that's why I, you know, part of the reason why I went for so many different sort of obscure climbs, like if we listed them off, and, you know, some of them I talked about, in my, in my first book, you know, most people like the lay person who's not part of the climbing world wouldn't know anything about them, you know, wouldn't have heard of them or anything like that. So it was kind of weird the way that it came about, but it was also part of why this trip ended up being so special. And I, you know, I kind of I, I start the book with the genesis of this whole thing. But you know, as you as you referenced in your sort of opening there, it was really the mystery that, that sucked in. And, you know, I've always been kind of a student of, of history in general, but in particular, of mountaineering and exploration history, and I have read, you know, widely in that subject, especially when I was a young climber, I read every classic climbing book I could get my hands on, but I had fastidiously avoided all the Everest sagas. And the reason why is because, you know, I had just been so turned off by everything that I was hearing about it, you know, when I was coming up through the ranks as a climber. And

what happened was a good close friend of mine who lives right near me here in Jackson, New Hampshire, was giving an Everest talk. And the subject was the 1999 expedition, when which they found George Mallory. And he told that story in the talk. And it really captured my imagination. And it, it made me realize that I didn't know as much about Mallory and Irvin as I did about all other mountaineering history. And I remember going home and looking on my bookshelf, which is covered in mountaineering books, and I realized that I only had one Everest book and it was into thin air. And so my so so it was almost like the, the modern Everest stigma had kind of created the situation where these guys that that really, you know, should have been heroes of mine had been overlooked. And, and so then, as as an adult, as an older like career, kind of a anti Everest guy. I dove in, and I started reading all of these books about malar in urban and about the the early British Everest expeditions, and they totally captured my imagination in the same way that all the other stories, you know, that I've always read about exploration have, and that's ultimately you know, kind of what sucked me in and changed, you know, the path that I was following.

J

Justin Angle 10:01

Yeah, so maybe talk about is like, from there from that interest being piqued to how the expedition itself came together? I mean, because you were at the time, I think your your late 40s, you know, the sort of notion of, of going on an Everest expedition at that stage of life at that stage of career, once the kind of hook of the history was set with you, how do you then kind of get to an expedition? I mean, you could have gone down the rabbit hole of trying to tell the story as a as an historian, but you'd made the decision to go to the mountain. Talk about that, why were you determined to go? How did you sort of pull it off with family and a spouse and sort of being, you know, later in your career with with more commitments on the homefront than at other times? How did you how did you make it happen?

M

Mark Synnott 10:54

Well, I think you're exactly right, in saying that I, I could have approached the story from, you know, my arm chair, so to speak, just from, you know, the perspective of, like, academic perspective, as a historian, and I'm not sure why exactly, but I, I, I like stories where the writer immerses themselves into it. I think I like reading those types of stories. And I also, like being in them, you know, a great example would be a book that I, that I kind of got some inspiration from for this whole mission, which is The Lost City of Z by David Gran, you know, so he's writing about, you know, Percy Fawcett, and, you know, the search for this sort of fabled City of Gold. But instead of just, you know, writing it from home, he actually goes down and searches and is able to put himself into the

environment and sort of follow and in in Percy Fawcett's footsteps, and I really loved that, that model and kind of like that template for, for a book. And, you know, when I, you know, when I, when I got sucked into to the mystery, I just quickly asked myself that question, you know, what would, what would a journalist a writer do, if they wanted to tell this story, in in that kind of immersive style. And it, it was plainly obvious that, you know, you would, you would go to Mount Everest yourself, and you would try to solve the mystery. And there was kind of a funny thing that happened at that point where that idea resonated deeply as soon as I had it. And it's weird that it did, because on the surface, I'm supposed to be, you know, not into Everest, and kind of against all of it, but, but as a, as a lifelong climber, you know, I couldn't help but be intrigued by it. And the whole scene and everything you hear about it, but I also just kind of wondered, as someone who spent a lot of time in the mountains, what's it like up there? You know, what, what's it like at 8000 meters? What, what would it be like to be where Mallory and Irvin were, you know, they were last seen at 28,200 feet on the Northeast Ridge. What would it feel like to be at 28,200 feet? What does it look like? And, you know, how does how does it feel? What does it sound like? How does it smell? That's sort of where my curiosity led me in the in the thing is, is it was something that I had always been wondering about, because I had done all this climbing, but I had never been that high. And I obviously knew about it. And I knew other people who had it, I was intensely curious to know what that was like. And so I had to kind of battle through this thing where, you know, I'm supposedly not into that, and I don't want to climb this mountain. But once I let my guard down, even a little bit, I realized, actually, I, I do want to go up there. Yeah. And, and when we, when we first pitched the trip, the the idea was, well, we're not going to try to climb the mountain. We're just gonna go and try to solve the mystery and won't it be kind of cool as the sort of anti Everest people that we'd be up there and maybe we could summit but we'll choose not to and very quickly, I realized that that was all just a farce. And when especially when I got there, and I remember the moment when we pulled into base camp, the whole mountain was totally covered in clouds, and you couldn't see anything, it was actually kind of grim. Because it's just this like gravel floodplain at the snout of the Rongbuk Glacier. And it was snowing out, the ground was covered in snow, I was like, wow, this is like pretty grim, windy, like, this is where I'm gonna live, you know, for the next, like, six weeks or whatever. And the clouds lifted out. And I came out of my tent, I saw the mountain for the first time. And, I mean, it was absolutely stunning. But it had some kind of magnetic pole on my psyche. And I looked up there. And I just thought, that's really intimidating. But I, I want to go there, I want to go up to the top, I want to see what that's like.

J

Justin Angle 15:58

And that ends up being a big theme in the book and you know, and in the films is this dynamic with the support team, the local support team, and, you know, they're not

necessarily on board with this idea of not going to the summit, going to the summit for the guides and for the locals is a really big kind of career accomplishment, right, it puts them in a position to get hired on for more expeditions that talk about that dynamic with the support crew.

M

Mark Synnott 16:28

All of that kind of hinged on the fact that we were in this kind of tricky position, in that the Chinese don't really want people messing around with the mystery of Mallory and Irvin. And the reason is because they ultimately were the ones who made the first ascent of the Mallory and Irvin route, the Northeast Ridge, you know, they were trying to do it in 1924. That route was eventually climbed to 1960 by the Chinese. And I've been told that the ascent represents, you know, in Chinese culture, what the moon landing does here for us, in the US, it's that big, and that important thing. And I go into all of this in the book. But, you know, as we were working all this out, we were told that, that the Chinese wouldn't really look favorably on an expedition that was going to try to solve that mystery, because if you could somehow prove that those guys submitted in 1924, it would, in some way, shape or form, it would taint the Chinese ascent in 1960, maybe taints the not the right word, but in the history books, there would have to be an asterisk that said, well, these were the first people to get up and down it alive. Somebody actually had made it to the top before the same would be true, you know, for the first ascent in 1953, by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, and so, so we, well, we worded things specifically on our permit, like we're doing historical research, without laying it all bare. And then we had to communicate with the Sherpas as well, the climbing Sherpas in terms of what the intentions were for the expedition. And I do I do go into this. And for people who want to know more about how all this went down, I would say, please read the book, because I describe it all carefully there. But the truth of the matter is that we told the Sherpas what the plan was, and that doesn't come out well in either of the films, but they did know the plan. Okay. They did know the plan, but it wasn't in their best interest to be really forthright about it, because they knew that the Chinese didn't necessarily approve of what was going on. So there's some nuance there. And, and some layers to it that you know, that didn't that didn't come out in the in the films, but the bottom line is that we and I think myself personally really benefited when you know, when this whole thing kind of came to a head because our guide, Jamie McGinnis, who's a kiwi veteran Everest guy essentially told us we're not going to have enough time, up high, to search and go for the summit. And that was, you know, something that we all kind of had to accept it. But it was hard because I think by that point, a lot of us, a lot of us, you know, the, you know, the members of my team, were getting summit fever. And, and that's when the the Sherpa, you know, said, hey, like, we're not really, we're not really down with that plan. And, you know, as I describe it in the book, you know, that's what I kind of turned to Jamie and said,

hey, like, that you did tell these guys like, what we're all about, right? And he was like, yeah, I, I did actually. And, and I, and I believe that that was the case. But they, they just said, Hey, like, you know, we're here, we're here to climb the mountain. And, and we, you know, we don't really like, you know, messing around with, with, you know, dead bodies on the mountain, that's kind of a taboo for us. And, and so, in this kind of cool way, we ended up in this position where we had to decide to go to the summit, and then do whatever searching we were going to do on the way down. And, and I was secretly, silently, you know, kind of pumping my fist under the table when this decision was made, because I'm like, oh, holy shit, like now I actually, you know, might might be able to, to climb the mountain. But in terms of, you know, in terms of the whole idea of like the Sherpas being betrayed or anything like that, that and I think it might have come across that way a little bit. And in in one of the films that was not the case.



Justin Angle 22:03

A New Angle is supported by First Security Bank, Blackfoot Communications, and UM's College of Business. Access to capital, broadband and education are three ingredients any community needs for success.



unknown 22:16

Raging wildfires have scorched a record number of acres and killed at least 31.



unknown 22:19

It continues to climb from those devastating wildfires.



Justin Angle 22:22

Last year, wildfires scorched a landmass nearly five times the size of Yellowstone National Park. It was the largest area burned since reliable records began. Fires are getting bigger and hotter, and more devastating than ever before. What all that fire means? And what to do about it depends on who you ask.



Lily Clark 22:44

Experience of a forest, taking fire is really something.

- U** unknown 22:48
Not only a gift to us, but it's more more of a gift to the land.
- U** unknown 22:53
There will always be fear of fire. I know that and I don't pretend there won't be but in certain situations, there shouldn't be.
- J** Justin Angle 22:59
I'm Justin Angle. And for the last couple years, I've been talking to scientists, historians, and firefighters themselves to hear their stories.
- U** unknown 23:09
You owe it to the guys that died.
- J** Justin Angle 23:12
I wanted to figure out how did we get here.
- U** unknown 23:15
We're going to knock fire out at the landscape.
- S** Smoky the Bear 23:17
Remember, only you can prevent forest fires.
- U** unknown 23:21
It was a crazy ambition.
- J** Justin Angle 23:22
And where do we go? It's just knowledge is freakin power.
- U** unknown 23:27

I'll talk about in a calm way. But this is me hitting the panic button.

U unknown 23:32
Am I making any difference here with the science? That's what I wonder sometimes.

J Justin Angle 23:38
This is Fireline, a six part podcast series for Montana public radio and the University of Montana College of Business about what wildfire means for the West, our planet and our way of life.

M Meg Oliver 24:03
This is Meg Oliver, CBS News correspondent, and you're listening to A New Angle.

J Justin Angle 24:11
And so talk about you know, some of this decision making and communication is happening along the way. And some of it's happening up high on the mountain, I would have to assume it's just talk about what it's like being up that high and, you know, trying to communicate effectively make good decisions, all all sorts of all sorts of issues that when you're when you're up that high under such stress. You know, what does it feel like? How does it play out?

M Mark Synnott 24:40
It's pretty, yeah, it's hard. It's stressful. You know, we had I guess we had six team members. And when it came down, time to finally go up the mountain. By that point, we had lost three of them. them, too, you know, sort of various problems. One guy got some pulmonary embolism early on in the trip, and had to bail out. So we lost him. My partner, you know, the the guy who kind of inspired the whole thing, Tom Pollard had some kind of weird neurologic incident where he got facial paralysis right before we were supposed to head up to the summit. And then Jim Hurst, who was the sound guy for the film, and was one of the strongest members of our team and had previous high altitude experience. Something weird happened to him, and we don't know what. But when we got to the north call, he had to drop out. So it's, it's sort of like a war of attrition that you go through to on Everest to get to the point where you, you know, would would set off for the summit. And when we finally got to that point, I felt like, wow, you have to actually be kind of lucky to kind of run the gauntlet and get through everything, and not get sick or hurt. And when

the day comes, and you get your weather window, to actually be, you know, healthy and fit enough to, to do the climb. The other the other part about it, you know, that that I hadn't really anticipated that once you start the climb, it's incredibly difficult to eat, and to sleep. And I, I am not exactly sure I know I ate a little bit. But I might not have slept at all the entire way. And let's see, it's 4 or 5 days round trip. And I get I slept after, after we made it to the top. And I don't even know if you could call it sleep. It was more like unconsciousness. Sure. But on the way up. I don't know if I even really dozed off at all. And, and I couldn't eat. And I had no appetite. And I'd heard all about that, you know, from people. But for me, it was a very real thing. And I couldn't I mean, I couldn't even take a bite of anything. I mean, I was forcing myself to just ingest a little bit of calories, but I couldn't do it. And I would actually I mean, I threw up from from forcing myself to eat that food was that nauseating to me. So basically, you know, you're under a tremendous amount of stress. And that makes everything more difficult. But what it did for me was it just made me realize how remarkable it was what, what what the British were doing back in the 1920s. In the days before. High altitude albinism really even existed as a human endeavor. They were basically inventing it as they went. And as everyone knows, I mean, the equipment that they had in the in the 1920s was appalling. You know, part of the research that I did for the book was I went to the Royal Geographical Society in London, and I saw a lot of the artifacts including Mallory's boot, and it straight up looks like the kind of boot that you would wear, you know, going hiking in Colorado in the summer. And the thought of like climbing that high and not even using crampons, so they just said little hobnails in the boot, I saw the rope, which was not even what I would call a clothesline, I mean, skinnier than my pinky about, you know, about stick around as a big pen, and it's made out of flax. I mean, you could pull hard on it, and just part it.

M

Mark Synnott 29:16

And, of course, the clothing that they were wearing and all of that, you know, that was what sucked me into the story, initially was just thinking about the spirit that those guys must have had. Mallory himself called it the spirit of adventure. And, and I really wanted to learn more about that spirit. And, you know, that kind of goes back to what you were asking me about, you know, immersing myself in the story. There's no better way to appreciate that than to, to go up there and actually follow in their footsteps. But also, to be up there with all of these modern day everyone climbers, and they're the ones that we're all kind of told that in the, you know, in the media that we need to hate, you know, because they're bad people, and they're doing it for the wrong reasons, and they're ruining the mountain. And they're trashing it all that, but I couldn't help but tip my hat to them. There was there was one expedition on the mountain, which was all underprivileged Indian teenagers, who essentially had no mountaineering background at all, they got chosen out of the schools, I think, in southern India, and went through a course and then

just went to Everest. And those kids were up there. And, and, and they were doing the climb. And you know, you might, you might sort of say, like, sitting from your armchair at home, like, this is insane, like, what are they doing? Like, and I would think that myself, then I was up there, you know, climbing side by side with these kids at times. And just thinking, wow, like, hats off to you guys. Like you got a lot of grit. Sure, getting credit, give some credit, where credit is due. And you know, what a lot of them submitted. And I know personally how hard that is. So I was really impressed by that.

J

Justin Angle 31:16

Yeah, so maybe talk a little bit more about some of those. We started the conversation talking about some of these sort of dominant over simplified narratives, I mean, talking about how your view of the peak and all the, you know, all those narratives changed. You've mentioned some of it, but you know, specifically what it was, you know, what changed your mind during this trip?

M

Mark Synnott 31:39

Well, I think that, you know, one of the, the main, you know, takeaways that I had in terms of modern day Everest, is that, you know, I don't, I don't look down on these people anymore who want to climb Everest. I think that's a really popular thing to do nowadays. I mean, I, I see stuff about this on the media all the time. And you know, last year was a disastrous year, whenever us there were 11 deaths. And just to put that in perspective, in 1996, which was, you know, the famous tragedy that Krakauer wrote about and into thin air if there were eight deaths. So they're actually more people who died in 2019, than there were in 1996. And then there was also that viral photo, that anybody who has access to the internet pretty much saw or anyone who consumes media saw the picture of the conga line, right, with all the people, I'm sure you saw it, like, everybody in the world did. And you saw the headlines, you know, that, that went along with it. And they all just sort of paint a picture of, you know, the, the people that are trying to climb Everest as a bunch of selfish jerks. Right. And quite honestly, I mean, I know a lot of people think that and, and I thought that, because that's what I was told that's how it is. And so I kind of went into it, thinking, Okay, well, that's, you know, who I'm going to be rubbing shoulders with on the mountain. And then, you know, I'm sitting in a tent, and I'm having tea with, you know, these Indians that are trying to climb the mountain, or with Ukrainians, or Russians are all these different nationalities. And I'm keeping an open minded an open mind, because I think I'm an open minded person, and I'm hearing their stories, and I'm communicating with them. And I'm looking right into their eyes. And we're talking about, you know, our climbs and the weather and our families and everything, that it didn't take that long before I realized, you know, what, these people are just like me, they're, they're

just normal, cool people. And they saved up their money and they want to do they want to do something big. And they, they're, they don't seem to me like they're just driven by their ego. They, they want to have a sublime experience in the mountains. That's kind of what I saw. And I think that's actually the same spirit that that Mallory and Irvin had. You know, this is not to say that it's not a screwed up situation, when you have 11 people dying, and the whole conga line, like that's a problem that needs to be fixed. I think that I, I go deep into this, and I do a lot of reporting on this in the book and I have a chapter in there that's called The Day Everest Broke. And it's sort of the story behind that viral photo, like what was really going on because that was happening on both sides of the mountain on the Chinese side, and on the Nepal side, and what happened in 2019, is that the weather was terrible. You can only climb Everest, when the Jetstream basically releases its grip from the summit, essentially, I think the Jetstream shifts to the north, when the monsoon comes up.

M

Mark Synnott 35:24

You know, for complicated reasons, the Jetstream kind of moves out of the way, and then the wind will drop, and you can go to the summit. I think it was, I guess, yeah, 2018. I think this is right, the year before. This, that summit window. So when the Jetstream moved away, and it's okay to go up the summit window was 11 days. In 2019, it was one day. And so when it's 11 days, all the Outfitters, they can coordinate. And they can say, hey, when are you going? Okay, cool. Yeah, that makes sense. We'll go the next day, or we'll go the day before you will go two days later, because the the, the weather window looks really good. So let's spread ourselves out. And, and that's why you didn't hear very much about 2018, because it was a good year on Everest, and not that many people died. 2019 was a really bad year. And as a result, really bad year, weather wise, as a result, everybody had to go to the summit. At the same time, the thing that people need to understand is that nobody wanted to be in that line. Sure. They, they, they got dealt a shitty hand. And they had no choice. And it was either that, or, you know, not attempt to get to the summit that year. So, so that I think is is a problem that I think will be hard to prevent. But I think it has more to do with the management of the mountain in terms of how many permits are going to be given out by the Chinese and the Nepalese versus something that you would put onto the shoulders of the people who want to climb the mountain itself, the mountain is kind of getting trashed as a result. That's a problem that needs to be fixed. And that's sort of a deep subject. But not all of the people up there are doing that, like our team, for example, we took everything down off the mountain that we brought up, and there were a lot of other expeditions that that did, there were some that didn't, and they left their stuff up there, you know that that's a problem that needs to be fixed. You know, there's a lot of now newer discount Everest Outfitters, who are offering up the chance to climb Everest for like a much smaller price tag, and they seem to be less stringent in terms of who

they're going to allow on the mountain. I think that's wrong. And you should, you should have to submit a resume and, and, you know, be someone who has the qualifications to climb the mountain. But ultimately, there were a lot of people up there who didn't have those qualifications, these Indian kids for for an example. And, you know, I don't know if I personally say to them, no, you shouldn't be here. And you can't, you know, you can't do this. Because I don't know, I kind of like the idea that there. There aren't any rules, I think that should be fixed. But at the same time, I didn't hold it against those people, personally. So I guess what I'm saying in a convoluted way is that, you know, it's right, that there should be some haters, because there's, there's, there's a screwed up situation going on up there. But I think, you know, more of it should be directed at kind of the management of the whole business kind of what I call Everest Incorporated, and less animus towards the, you know, the climbers themselves who, you know, my experience having actually been there with the mountain is that they're good people.

J

Justin Angle 39:14

Yeah, yeah, that that's important nuance is that you can't put it on the individuals stacked up in that conga line, they're all responding to the, you know, the incentives in front of them the reality of the weather, the constraints of the management system. And you can't just say that because they're there, they're bad people or just, you know, single minded, privileged buying their way to the summit. All those narratives, I think, are much more complex than, than we think and, you know, being there must have been, you're there and you're kind of a part of it at the same time must have been a surreal experience to, to kind of be experiencing all that high altitude world but also your mind has to be swimming, sort of thinking about all these new people you're meeting, as well as, as well as, like, the reality might be much more rich and complicated than what you would thought.

M

Mark Synnott 40:11

Yeah, most things in life are are like that, you know, you know, I thought it was, you know, gonna be a bunch of lawyers and CEOs, you know, and that, that, that kind of thing. And, I mean, most of the people that I met, were just scrappy dreamers, who didn't have a lot of money, who saved up, you know, to, to go and do it. So, so the reality on the ground was, was a was a little different, you know, than, than what I was expecting. And, you know, one of the things that I wanted to do with this book was I, you know, I wanted to have, you know, the main narrative really is kind of the historical piece interwoven with me, you know, my first person, modern day story of following in their footsteps to try to figure out what really happened back in 1924. But, you know, because I'm actually up there and climbing the mountain in 2019, I wanted to paint a portrait of, of what Everest is today. And, and it's, I think, it's, it's a, you know, it's a multi layered, it's a multi layered

thing, I personally found really fascinating to report on, and to share with the readers and, you know, sort of my early readers of the book, the book is out, but but you know, there's been enough people now who have read it. Um, a lot of them have said that they, they're finding the modern day narrative, you know, the, this this portrait that I paint of Everest to, you know, potentially be more compelling, you know, than the historical piece.

J Justin Angle 42:05

Absolutely. I mean, I'm, you know, tearing through it, I can't put the thing down. And you know, it is, it's much like this podcast, Mark, like, you go into these complicated stories thinking that are these these oversimplified stories, thinking the story has to be much more complicated than it is, and your book does a great job of bringing that to life. I'm excited for you, I'm excited for it to hit the shelves, I'm excited for our listeners to get a chance to, to share in the story as well. It hits the shelves next week. Both actual and virtual? Where would you want to point people who who want to get the book and experience it?

M Mark Synnott 42:50

I would say I would say to people that they could grab it anywhere where they buy books, you know, whether it's their local bookstore, or any of the online retailers, you know, the the audio book, or the the E book, or, you know, just a copy of the hardcover, if if anybody wants a signed copy, which is, you know, kind of a tricky thing to do in COVID. Basically, you and me talking like this is my book tour. Last time, you know, I traveled all over the US meeting people in person and signing books. But there is a bookstore here in North Conway, New Hampshire, where I live, where I'm going to go in and sign a bunch of books. So if somebody wanted a signed copy, you can purchase it from White Birch Books in North Conway. And, yeah, I hope people check it out. That's the whole point, obviously, and telling the story is to share it with other people. I didn't do it just for myself, I want to share it with you and with, you know, as many other people out there who are interested in AI, you know, I hope they will be and yeah, the response has been super positive. So I think this is this is potentially worth people's time if this subject matter something they're interested in.

J Justin Angle 44:12

Indeed, well, Mark, good luck getting through this last sort of big push of the project, the promotion of the book, I know, I know how you have mixed feelings about that piece of it. And I appreciate you freeing up some time to share the story with our listeners. Yeah, and maybe the summer we can actually connect in person in New Hampshire. That'd be fun.



Mark Synnott 44:33

I was just thinking that I still have not ever been face to face with you, even though we've because we've had these conversations and then we've had other ones off the record. So I feel like we have a kindred spirit. But I like we've never actually hung out in person. So I think that does need to happen.



Justin Angle 44:51

Well, let's get her done it. Yeah. And hopefully it'll be a more settled downtime where we can each sort of pause and reflect.



Mark Synnott 45:00

That sounds good. Well, I look forward to that.



Justin Angle 45:05

Thanks for listening to a new angle. We really appreciate it.



Justin Angle 45:09

We're coming to you from Studio 49, a generous gift of UM alums Michelle and Lauren Hanson. A new angle is presented by First Security Bank, Blackfoot Communications and the University of Montana College of Business with additional support from consolidated electrical distributors, and drum coffee. AJ Williams is our producer. VTO Jeff Ement, and John Wicks made our music and Jeff Meese is our master of all things sound.



Justin Angle 45:35

If you have any questions, suggestions, comments, insults, whatever, please email me at anewangle@umontana.edu. If you liked what you heard, tell your friends about it. Thanks a lot. See you next time.