

Keeping the spirit of youth alive

Two Mountain Ascents for Seniors



Peter Aimer on his climb of Mt. Sefton with Alpine Recreation guide, Wolfgang Maier. Photo: Wolfgang Maier.

On the 20th of October 68-year-old Graeme Donovan stood atop Lendenfeld Peak (3194m) and fulfilled a long-held dream of climbing a mountain over 3000m or 10,000ft. On the same day 75-year-old Peter Aimer climbed the 3151m high Mt Sefton, proving himself capable of extending his climbing career way beyond his wildest expectations.

Graeme, originally from New Zealand and now a US resident, had come all the way from West Virginia to fulfill this goal, preparing himself determinedly with regular gym visits and hill walking. Peter, from Auckland, added Mt Sefton, - albeit considerably later than most people would attempt - to his list of climbing achievements: Mt Aspiring, Mt Cook, Malte Brun (only two years ago) and many others. Peter said he prepared himself by regular walks, sometimes carrying a considerable weight of bricks in his pack up and down local hills, along with a couple

of visits to Tongariro National Park for mountain training.

Peter was wading through knee-deep snow for much of the Sefton ascent, which added to the physical demands of the climb and had no qualms about sleeping on a thermarest in a bivvy bag on the snow after the climb. Next day he was awed by the steep descent beside a waterfall down Scott's Creek, negotiating classic West Coast wilderness with house-sized boulders in the stream-bed through lush rainforest. After all these challenges Peter and his guide, Wolfgang Maier, were rewarded with a relaxing soak in the hot pools at Welcome Flats in the Copland Valley, absorbing their feat as they gazed back up at the summit of Sefton from the pools.

Meantime Graeme had returned to the eastern side of the Southern Alps and tacked on a quick two-day romp over Ball Pass for good measure, astonishing his guide, Andrew Finnigan, with his level of fitness, especially with the early-season more-snow-than-usual conditions. Both Wolfgang and Andrew were full of respect and admiration for their senior clients in achieving summits which many much-younger aspirants would struggle to achieve. Both men took leave of their guides with a sparkle in their eyes and the vitality of their younger selves very much alive.



Mt Tasman in the centre with Lendenfeld Peak immediately on the left.



Mt Sefton viewed from Ball Pass. Peter's ascent route was on the right-hand (western flanks) of the peak.



Wolfgang & Peter relax at Welcome Flats and the welcome hot pools! Photo: Wolfgang Maier.