

80-Year-Old Japanese Climber Aims for Everest Record

An 80-year-old Japanese mountain climber who has had heart surgery four times is heading to Mount Everest to try for a third ascent of the world's highest peak and will become the oldest person to reach the top if he succeeds.

Yuichiro Miura climbed to the summit of the 8,850 meter (29,035 ft) mountain in 2003 and 2008. He skied down Everest from an altitude of 8,000 meters (26,246 ft) in 1970.

Miura and a nine-person team will climb up the standard southeast ridge route, pioneered by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay when they became the first people to reach the summit in May 1953.

"The record is not so important for me," the white-haired Miura told Reuters in the Nepali capital, Kathmandu, before setting out for the mountain.

"It is important to get to the top."

The record for the oldest person to climb the mountain is held by Nepal's Min Bahadur Sherchan, who reached the summit at the age of 76, in 2008.

A doctor specializing in heart ailments is in the team to keep an eye on Miura's health. The group hopes to summit in May.

Miura has skied down the highest mountains on each of the seven continents, and is merely following family tradition. His late father, Keizo Miura, skied down Europe's Mont Blanc at the age of 99.

"If you wish strongly, have courage and endurance, then you can get to the summit of your dream," said Miura.

He already has a new dream. He wants to ski down Cho Oyu, the world's sixth highest mountain at 8,201 meters (26,906 ft), also in the Himalayas.

"Maybe, when I become 85 years old, and if I stay alive, I want to climb and ski down Cho Oyu," Miura said. "It is my next dream."

About 4,000 climbers have been to the top of Everest and about 240 people have died on its slopes.

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