

Peter becomes a member of a very select club

While many people in their later years are thinking of joining the bowls club or seeing what Probus offers, Peter Hameister, CEO of Logicoil, decided to accompany his son when he set out to climb Mt Everest. "Logicoil is owned by Peter Smith," said Peter Hameister, "and is a fuel reseller and distributor with locations around Australia. I'd had over 20 years with SCT and was appointed when Logicoil came under Peter Smith's umbrella, in 2009."

Peter trekked to Base Camp which is not as it sounds at the foot of the mountain, but is 5,400 metres up and the jumping-off point for the final push to the top.

"From Base Camp it is just over 3km to the summit, but as soon as you leave Base Camp you are in the high danger zone of the Khumbu icefalls," said Peter "and more people have died there than on any other part of the mountain. You are at very reduced oxygen levels." When asked how long he'd been a climber and how many mountains he's climbed, Peter said he wasn't and hadn't climbed anything before.

"In 2006 I walked the Kokoda Track with my son which we enjoyed and when we came back he was looking for another challenge," recalls Peter. "It was probably six months after that he decided to climb Mt Aconcagua in Chile. He said it would be a bit tough for me, because it's 26,500 feet. He climbed that saying afterwards he definitely wasn't a mountain climber and wouldn't do another one, but three months later was planning another and that led him to attempt Mt Everest in 2011.

"He invited me to go to Base Camp with him for a bit of support. The only way you can stay at Base Camp is if you are part of a climbing expedition which is attempting the summit and even then, you can only stay for a night because of the lack of facilities. So I was lucky to stay there for two nights.

"Base Camp is just set up for the duration of the summiting season which is only about two weeks each year. An hour up from there you're moving through the Khumbu icefalls." Peter said Everest is the only mountain in the world affected



Peter Hameister, CEO of Logicoil with his son, Paul, at Mt Everest Base Camp.

by jetstream winds, which can reach 300kmp/hour. The opportunity to summit occurs just before the Monsoon season starts, when the jetstream moves up into the atmosphere above the mountain. So everyone who wants to scale the summit gets into position for this window.

He said at Base Camp there can be 6 or 10 expedition groups having a crack at the summit and they're all jockeying for the best and highest position for their tents. "They have to level out the terrain for every tent, because you are on a moving glacier."

How long did it take his son to climb the mountain? "He was the first person to summit it this year and he achieved that on May 11th. He wasn't a climber until Chile and got the bug."

"SCT XPRESS" asked Peter what the most difficult part of the whole experience was for him? "The lack of oxygen. You don't understand how debilitating it is until you start. I was training in the Dandenongs every weekend, riding my bike during the week and trekking with a pack to build myself up, because I am

69 - pushing the years. But you just can't train for altitude here. You arrive into Lukhla that is 2,000 metres above sea level and you start trekking up from there. As you are going up, you don't realise you are running out of oxygen. An example is when you get out of your sleeping bag at night, by the time you get back into it, you're puffing like you've run 100 metres trying to get oxygen. The physical demands are enormous. The rescue helicopters work there all day every day. It's not that people aren't fit, but there is no warning sign for altitude sickness."

And the next challenge? "I don't know. I like a challenge. We talked about the death march in Borneo, prior to Paul going to Chile. He is occupied at the moment planning to climb Dinali in Alaska next May, then Vinson in Antarctica which completes the seven summits of the world, the majors at the South and North Pole and the one in the middle - Everest. So somewhere in between I'll come up with a challenge for me. I am lucky that I'm fit for my age."