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**WORLD-RENOWNED CLIMBER AND FILMMAKER DAVID  
BREASHEARS RETURNS TO THE SCENE OF MOUNT EVEREST'S  
WORST TRAGEDY**

**FRONTLINE presents  
*STORM OVER EVEREST*  
*A David Breashears Film***

**Tuesday, May 13, 2008, from 9 to 11 P.M. ET on PBS**

**Watch a trailer at [www.pbs.org/everest](http://www.pbs.org/everest)**

“Everybody always says that the definition of character is what you do when nobody is looking. And when we were up there, we didn’t think anybody was looking. And so everybody did pretty much what the inner person, the real them, the exposed them would do.... I got to witness those acts—the good ones, the bad ones. And the individuals that came through, that did well, that were selfless. ... Every one of them to me is a hero....”

— Beck Weathers, storm survivor and author, *Left for Dead*

In May 1996, the world-renowned climber and filmmaker David Breashears was making his third ascent up Mount Everest, leading an IMAX film team, when a swift and ferocious storm unexpectedly hit the mountain, trapping three exhausted climbing teams near the top of the world’s highest peak.

In the FRONTLINE special presentation *Storm Over Everest*, airing Tuesday, May 13, 2008, from 9 to 11 P.M. ET on PBS (check local listings), Breashears returns to summit Everest and to reflect on that fateful storm that resulted in the deaths of five climbers on the south side of the mountain. Combining breathtaking original cinematography with dramatic recreations of the storm conditions of May 1996, the two-hour, high-definition documentary transports viewers to the slopes of Mount Everest. Interviews with climbers who survived the harrowing ordeal recount the events that occurred—and the decisions that were made—that resulted in seasoned mountaineers losing their lives alongside less experienced climbers drawn to the mystique of Mount Everest.

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“The mountain doesn’t care whether we’re here or not,” Breashears says in the film. “Everything it means to us is only what we bring to it. It’s what the mountain reveals about us that has any lasting value.”

In *Storm Over Everest*, survivors recount the progress of three separate expeditions up the South Col of Mount Everest—and the near-intoxication some climbers felt as they approached the prized summit on May 10, 1996.

“You’ve gone so far up the mountain, you’ve come so far from home, and you spent six months preparing for this goal,” climber Charlotte Fox says. “There’s no way you’re going to turn around unless things are really going south.”

Go south they did, and quickly. As victorious climbers celebrated on the summit and waited—perhaps too long—for the rest of their parties, an intense storm roared across Mount Everest, transforming what had been a beautiful day of mountain climbing into the ultimate struggle for survival.

“Within the space of five minutes, it changed from really a good day with a little bit of wind to desperate conditions, something I’d never experienced the ferocity of before,” climber John Taske says.

The expeditions began a frantic descent toward the safety of camp, even as their two experienced guides remained high on the mountain assisting other climbers. Hurricane-strength winds reached 80 miles an hour, and temperatures plummeted to 30 below zero. Then darkness fell. The climbers found themselves hopelessly lost in an unrelenting blizzard—blinded by the wind-blasted ice and unable to find their way back to high camp.

“People who have all run out of oxygen, some of them really start collapsing, and those of us who are still able to walk try and pick them up, make them keep walking,” recalls climber Lene Gammelgaard. “This is survival.”

*Storm Over Everest* recounts the next pivotal 48 hours, when those in the wind-battered tents wrestled with whether to risk additional lives by attempting to rescue the missing climbers. Taske reflects on a life-or-death decision made in the chaos of the storm—ultimately to leave two climbers where they lay, frozen and barely conscious, one of whom had gone blind. “The decision to leave [them] where they were was not really a difficult decision...,” he says. “Here were these other

people exposed to phenomenal winds, at least 80 miles an hour, 20, 30 below zero at night. We thought it was kinder to leave them rather than cause them pain, even in a semiconscious state, by dragging them over to where we were. They were basically dead.”

In the end, some climbers would miraculously find their way back to camp. Others would be rescued by the heroic efforts of those who risked their own lives by venturing out in the storm to lead them to safety. Five climbers—two of them expedition leaders—would not return.

*Storm Over Everest* is a Working Title production in association with Arcturus Motion Pictures, Inc., presented by Universal Pictures in association with StudioCanal. The film is produced and directed by David Breashears. The executive producers are Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner. The co-producer is Callie Taintor Wiser. FRONTLINE is produced by WGBH Boston and is broadcast nationwide on PBS. Funding for FRONTLINE is provided through the support of PBS viewers. Major funding for FRONTLINE is provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Park Foundation. FRONTLINE is closed-captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers and described for people who are blind or visually impaired by the Media Access Group at WGBH. FRONTLINE is a registered trademark of WGBH Educational Foundation. The executive producer of FRONTLINE is David Fanning.

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