

"I climb for the moment when I get back to my tent and can say, 'Wow, I can't believe I just did that.'"

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

> SARA MCGAHAN '17, *Mountain Climber*



How did you get into climbing?

My dad and I decided to climb Kilimanjaro when I was 12, and the next year we went to climb Mount Elbrus in Russia. I had never even been camping before I climbed Kilimanjaro, so I had no idea what I was getting into. Mount Elbrus is more technical. We got stuck in bad weather and couldn't summit. My dad said we shouldn't quit on a bad note like that, so the next year we did Mount Aconcagua in Argentina.

How do people react when they find out you've climbed six of the seven continents' tallest peaks?

People are really surprised. A lot of them think I'm a lot younger than I am—because of my height, 5-foot-2, and because I don't have huge muscles.

How do you train while taking classes?

I carry a backpack with water bottles as weight around campus. I do the stadium steps a lot, different hikes around the Upper Valley and a lot of running. Some weight training, too, but a lot of it is walking around with a pack, being on my feet for a long time.

Have you always felt safe?

No. Any time you're walking under ice rocks or in avalanche terrain it's always scary. One of the reasons I turned around on Everest in 2011 was because I felt the risk outweighed the reward I would get from summiting.

Will you go back to Everest?

I think this year will be a big year of transition and uncertainty after the avalanche last year that killed 16 people and the Sherpas deciding not to work on the south side. I was planning on going this spring but decided I'd rather wait a year.

What about the cost of these expeditions?

I'm very lucky that my parents are willing to pay for this. Because of how much money and effort and time is put into an expedition, people sometimes feel they have to summit because there is so much on the line. It sometimes pressures people in ways that are not good. That is an odd aspect of this sport. I've never felt that pressure. I'm lucky I've been able to climb for the experience.

—Lexi Krupp '15