

Presentation of Dr. Geoff Tabin at Utah Valley University

On December 11, 2013 Utah Valley University hosted Dr. Geoff Tabin, famous Utah ophthalmologist and mountaineer. It was a part of the International Mountain Day activities which UVU held for the fourth time with an ultimate goal to raise an awareness in the State of Utah about the importance of the mountain cause promotion. Geoff Tabin's presentation was titled: "Impossible Dreams: Everest and Eradicating World Blindness."



Dr. Geoff Tabin during presentation at UVU

Dr. Tabin was a great speaker. He started off introducing himself and telling us about his climbing past. He referred to himself as a "climbing bum," and then after that, told us how he went from that, to changing peoples lives. He showed a video about people in Ethiopia who had Cataracts Disease. Many people who live there grow old, and then go blind. It's just a part of the lifestyle. The video showed several old people trying to make live their life while being blind. Their stories were heartbreaking. One woman

said that she sometimes would hear her daughter praying that she would die, so she wouldn't be a burden on their family anymore. Another man said that he didn't go to the bathroom for four or five days at a time because it was too treacherous trying to make it there by himself being blind. Another man said that his dream was to go back to work. Because of his disease, he wasn't able to do anything for himself and felt very frustrated about that. Geoff Tabin traveled there with a team of doctors and did surgery on hundreds of Ethiopians who had Cataracts disease. There was a line of them who were waiting for the surgery, and a line of them who were waiting to see if the surgery worked. It was very touching to see them as they took their bandages off, and started laughing and crying and shouting because they were so happy that they could see again. They were so appreciative of Geoff Tabin and you could see the pure joy and love they had on their faces.



Patients in Ethiopia after surgery

The next part of the presentation was about how he traveled the world as a climber. He first got a scholarship to Oxford and was going to medical school there. He was also taking a course in outdoors things and Oxford would sponsor some of their trips in order for them to do studies while they were gone. The first major trip he took was to New Guinea. They landed their plan in an abandoned field, and found a tribe of people there. They communicated with them in order to find their way around and to find the mountain that they planned on climbing. The people of New Guinea took them through the forest for weeks as they were taking the trip to the mountain. They showed them the ways in which they lived. Tabin described how on one of the first days, they stopped to make camp. He said that in the time it would take him to set up a regular tent, they gathered wood and practically built a house. This shelter kept them dry and they were able to build a nice fire in it. He said that him and his crew were miserable and freezing, but the tribe was basically naked, and they were just really happy to be there and never complained.



Mark Petersen, President of UIMF (L) and Dr. Bob Palais, Advisor of UIMF (R) present a certificate of appreciation to Dr. Geoff Tabin (C)

This whole adventure opened up his eyes to the different cultures throughout the world that most people seem to be naive about. By spending so much time with these people who were so kind to him, he wanted to do something bigger than just climbing or becoming a doctor in some doctors office. He decided that he wanted to do something in International Health, and that is where he decided to help the people of New Guinea.



Dr. Tabin signs copies of the book

At the end of the event Dr. Tabin signed copies of the book about his project in Himalayas to eradicate Cataracts disease.

It was a truly great presentation of a remarkable individual, who loves mountains and who is so eager to help people living in the mountains. I hope that UVU will continue that tradition to bring more such type of extraordinary people to commemorate mountain life and International Mountain Day as well.

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