

profiles

FOLLOWING OUR ALUMNI

# Personal Peak

John Amatt finds new adventure after conquering the world's most famous mountains.

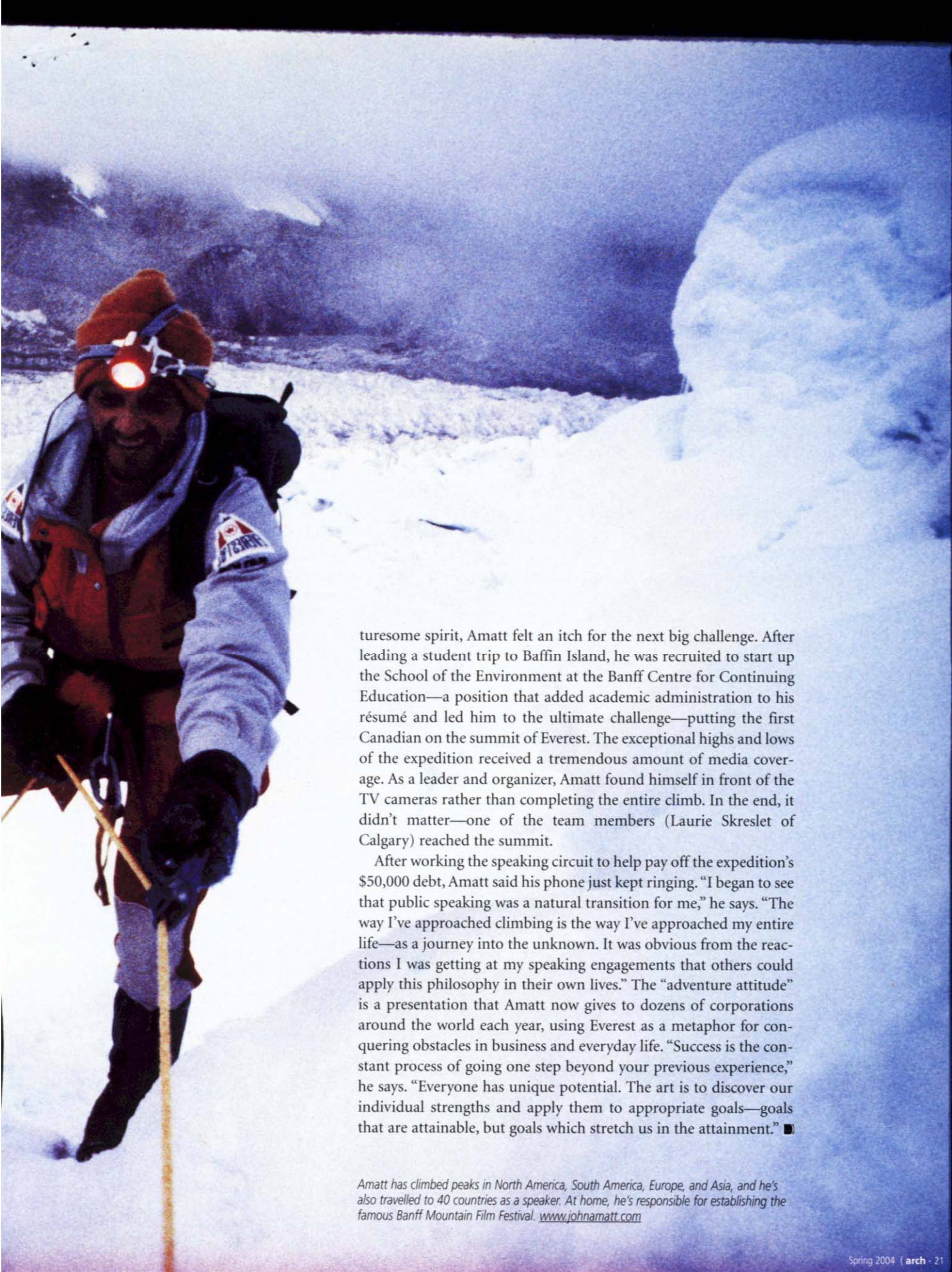
By Natasha Evdokimoff

**W**here do you go once you've conquered the world's highest peak? If you're **John Amatt**, BEd'75, you go "one step beyond." That's the name of Amatt's Canmore-based corporate training company—one that he founded after a resplendent background in teaching, administration, and world-class mountaineering.

The climbing bug bit Amatt at 15, and it became the catalyst for a lifetime of adventure. "I knew it was my niche early on," he says. "I wasn't very successful in school, so when I started climbing and found I could do it well, I gained the confidence and recognition that allowed me to take on other endeavours."

In addition to attaining a teaching diploma in his native England, Amatt "endeavoured" to make the world's first ascent of Norway's notorious Troll Wall, nicknamed the Vertical Mile—5,000 vertical feet that many experts deemed impossible. "It was a huge leap of faith, but the group was so wrapped up in accomplishing it that that didn't matter. We just took it one step at a time. Any huge task can seem overwhelming. You just have to focus on what's at hand rather than worrying about what will come next. After 10 days of clinging to a sheer rock face and sleeping on ledges no more than 2 feet wide, I felt there was nothing I couldn't do."

Amatt's passion for the mountains eventually led him to the Canadian Rockies, as well as Canadian citizenship. He took his first teaching post in Medicine Hat in 1968 and was living and teaching in Banff by 1973. Never one to rest on his laurels, Amatt earned his degree via off-campus courses and night school while teaching full time. He had the life he'd always dreamed of, but true to his adven-



turesome spirit, Amatt felt an itch for the next big challenge. After leading a student trip to Baffin Island, he was recruited to start up the School of the Environment at the Banff Centre for Continuing Education—a position that added academic administration to his résumé and led him to the ultimate challenge—putting the first Canadian on the summit of Everest. The exceptional highs and lows of the expedition received a tremendous amount of media coverage. As a leader and organizer, Amatt found himself in front of the TV cameras rather than completing the entire climb. In the end, it didn't matter—one of the team members (Laurie Skreslet of Calgary) reached the summit.

After working the speaking circuit to help pay off the expedition's \$50,000 debt, Amatt said his phone just kept ringing. "I began to see that public speaking was a natural transition for me," he says. "The way I've approached climbing is the way I've approached my entire life—as a journey into the unknown. It was obvious from the reactions I was getting at my speaking engagements that others could apply this philosophy in their own lives." The "adventure attitude" is a presentation that Amatt now gives to dozens of corporations around the world each year, using Everest as a metaphor for conquering obstacles in business and everyday life. "Success is the constant process of going one step beyond your previous experience," he says. "Everyone has unique potential. The art is to discover our individual strengths and apply them to appropriate goals—goals that are attainable, but goals which stretch us in the attainment." ■

*Amatt has climbed peaks in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia, and he's also travelled to 40 countries as a speaker. At home, he's responsible for establishing the famous Banff Mountain Film Festival. [www.johnamatt.com](http://www.johnamatt.com)*