

# Things are looking up



With Mount Kilimanjaro in the background, Bob Riley poses for a photo upon arriving in Tanzania.

## Bob 'Babu' Riley summits Africa's tallest mountain to raise money for charity

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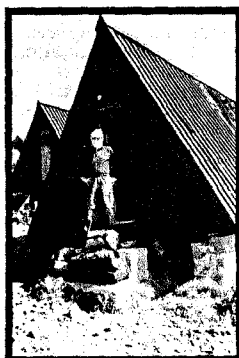
Bob Riley challenges people to stand up for their convictions. In his words: "You either talk the talk or you walk the talk."

Riley, 66, isn't one to just talk — he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in January to raise funds for three charities he supports.

A semi-retired salesman from Lily Lake, Riley devotes the balance of his working hours to volunteer work. He used the 19,340-foot mountain as a fund-raising tool, asking people to pledge a certain amount per foot. For example, a pledge of 1/8 cent per foot yields a donation of \$24.35; a pledge of ¼ of a cent yields a \$48.50 donation.

The actual climb started at 6,000 feet, and reached the highest summit 20 miles higher during a six-day adventure.

Riley has raised \$20,000 for the Climb for Sight organization, a group of ophthalmologists who help underprivileged children receive medical treatment for eye problems — similar to the Doctors without Borders program.



At 15,000 feet, climbers rest in Kibo huts before beginning their trek to the top at 11 p.m. They start the last leg of their journey at that time in order to reach the 19,340-foot summit at sunrise. Bob Riley is pictured standing in front of his hut.

He also raised \$30,000 for the Farm of the Child orphanage in Honduras, which he and his wife, Sue, have supported for years.

Now Riley is hoping to help the Shalom Center raise \$25,000 to help the city's homeless.

Riley has volunteered at the Shalom Center for about 10 years, and joined the board of directors this year. He works in the food pantry and soup kitchen, and says the Holiday House distribution

of food at Thanksgiving is one of his favorite activities sponsored by the center.

"It's such a beautiful organization. I'm proud to be part of it," he said.

He got the idea to climb Mount Kilimanjaro from a friend who is involved in the Climb for Sight organization. The challenge of climbing the highest mountain in Africa appealed to Riley — a veteran of 11 marathons and 10 150-mile bike rides to raise funds for multiple sclerosis.

Mount Kilimanjaro, in northeastern Tanzania, is the tallest free standing mountain rise, and its highest point is Uhuru Peak at 19,340 feet. (Mt. Everest is the highest point in the world.)

Riley was in good physical shape before the climb — he runs four miles every morning — but further prepared for the rigors of the climb by working with a personal trainer at Aurora Fitness Center.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Bob Riley reached the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, on Feb. 1, 2008.

while wearing a 16-pound backpack.

The training was well worth it, Riley said. "It was like a six-day marathon," he said. "You have to have a lot of desire to complete it."

He began the climb in a tropical climate, which became progressively cooler and drier as he reached higher elevations. Camping at a base camp each night, the group of climbers covered 20 miles up, then 20 miles back down in six days, Jan. 28 through Feb. 2.

Some became sick because of the high altitude, but Riley did not. Temperatures ranged from 70 degrees during the day to zero at night.

The last leg of the climb began at 11 p.m., with a goal of reaching the summit at sunrise.

The last 4,000 feet along the rim of the volcano were the most challenging — climbing up rocks in ice and snow, with temperature in the 20s.

"The wind is picking up as you walk a path the width of a sidewalk up to the summit," Riley said.

"I said three rosaries going up," said Riley, a member of St. Alphonsus Catholic Church in New Munster. "You have to focus

on something to keep you going."

Hiking back down wasn't easy either. "The pressure on your body is six times greater, climbing down," Riley said. He had to run over the shale near the volcanic rim so he didn't lose his balance.

After a one-hour stop to rest and eat, the group had to hike several more hours to reach a lower base camp — almost 24 hours of hiking that day. After six hours of sleep, they concluded the climb with a five-hour descent to the mountain base.

Riley said he was exhausted, but the effort was well worth it. He enjoyed the interaction with the African people he met — who called him "Babu," which is Swahili for grandpa.

Riley has been talking about his climbing experience at area churches. People interested in contributing to the mountain climb fund-raiser for the Shalom Center may contact Riley at: [briley@wi.rr.com](mailto:briley@wi.rr.com) or at (262) 492-4557. The Shalom Center Web site is: [www.shalomcenter.org](http://www.shalomcenter.org).

For further information on the Farm of the Child orphanage, visit: [www.farmofthechild.org](http://www.farmofthechild.org). For more information on Climb for Sight, visit: [www.foshpa.org](http://www.foshpa.org).



Halfway up Mount Kilimanjaro climbers can see glacier formations that have created a black-and-white stripes known as zebra rock. Pictured, from left, are Edwin Levery, guide, Bob Riley, Shaun Brown, Joshua Mwakalinga, head guide, and Cathy Brown.