

## **Adventurer Victor Vescovo has been to highest and deepest points on planet**

**T**he story goes that Victor Vescovo, 23 at the time, was traveling solo to Nairobi to begin a safari in the Serengeti.

He couldn't help but stare at Mount Kilimanjaro in the distance, breaking through the clouds.

Vescovo's guide saw him staring and remarked: "You know you can climb that, right?"

Since then, life for Vescovo, now in his mid-fifties, has been a series of one adventure after another.

Vescovo discussed his storied career as an adventurer during a "Life's Tough, Explorers are Tougher!" podcast hosted by Richard Weise, president of the Explorers Club. The podcast is available for download through major podcast platforms.

### **'Grand Slam'**

Eventually, Vescovo did climb Mount Kilimanjaro, as well as other iconic mountains. In 2017, he became the 12th American to complete the "Explorer's Grand Slam" – a challenge that consists of climbing the highest summit on each of the seven continents (the "Seven

Summits") and skiing at least 100 kilometers to the North and South Poles.

Vescovo's pursuit of the "Seven Summits," was not always smooth. The first time he attempted to climb Aconcagua, a mountain in Argentina that features the highest summit in the Western Hemisphere, he nearly lost his life.

According to an account of the incident in a Dallas publication, "D Magazine," published last year: "He (Vescovo) stepped on a boulder and it gave, sending him cartwheeling backward. Rocks hit his face, chipping his teeth. A 70-pounder struck his spine. He blacked out. When he came to a few seconds later, he couldn't speak. But he could understand what his climbing team was discussing: the possibility of leaving him and returning the next day with help, whether the incoming cold would kill him. The three didn't think they had the strength to carry him back to camp."

As it turned out, a group of French climbers nearby came over and carried Vescovo to an emergency shelter. He spent a recovery period in Mendoza, Argentina, until he was able to travel back to the U.S. He returned to Aconcagua a few years later and made a successful ascent of the mountain.

### **Deep dives**

Two years after wrapping up the "Slam," Vescovo, at age 53, became the first

person to have reached the deepest points in all five of the world's five oceans, when he took his submersible, called "Limiting Factor," down 18,212 feet to the bottom of Molloy Deep in the Arctic Ocean on Aug. 24, 2019.

Vescovo began the "Five Deeps Expedition" on Dec. 19, 2018, by visiting the Puerto Rico Trench in the Atlantic Ocean at a depth of 27,480 feet. After that, the intrepid adventurer went to the South Sandwich Trench (24,390 feet) in the Antarctic Ocean on Feb. 3, 2019; the Java Trench (23,596 feet) in the Indian Ocean on April 5, 2019; the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench (35,843 feet) in the Pacific Ocean on April 28, 2019; and then his final destination in the Arctic. The Challenger Deep, approximately 150 miles southwest of Guam, is the deepest known place in the oceans, about 7 miles down.

In September 2014, four years before Vescovo began the "Five Deeps Expedition," he emailed the president of Triton Submarines in his quest to build a submersible that could explore the deepest parts of the oceans. Triton's president had already harbored an interest in developing such a vessel and Vescovo assured him that he had the resources to invest in the project. The two met in 2015, and eventually Triton came up with a plan for building a unique submersible, one that could withstand up

to 16,000 pounds of air pressure per square inch. The standard pressure at sea level is 14.7 psi.

The white titanium sphere, which Vescovo named for a spaceship in a sci-fi book series, was designed for repeated trips to the greatest ocean depths (a first). It has two seats, one for a pilot, one for a scientist, and a viewport by each seat. Vescovo, however, completed his five deep dives as the lone occupant aboard "Limiting Factor."

In addition to the submersible, Vescovo had to acquire a ship to transport the submersible and a support crew around the world, wherever the next dive was scheduled. He found a ship in Seattle. The vessel – built in 1985 – had been used by the Navy for tracking Russian submarines. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had also used the ship for research activities. A retrofit was required.

As he did with "Limiting Factor," Vescovo used the name of a spaceship from a sci-fi book series when he named his new support ship "Pressure Drop."

### **Professional background**

Vescovo is a managing partner and co-founder of Insight Equity, a private equity firm based in Texas. Earlier, he worked at Bain and Company, in merger integration, and at Lehman Brothers in mergers and acquisitions.

He served for 20 years in the U.S. Navy Reserve as an intelligence officer, retiring in 2013 as a commander.

The Dallas native has an MBA from Harvard Business School. His degree had a concentration in finance and operations, and he graduated as a Baker Scholar (in top 5 percent of class). He also earned a master's from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he studied defense analysis with an operations research focus. And, he received an undergraduate degree from Stanford University, majoring in economics and political science.

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**Story by Gerald H. Levin**

*Life's Tough, Explorers Edition*