

# Bay Terrace father, daughter conquer Mount Kilimanjaro

Sunday, September 14, 2008 By CAROLYN RUSHEFSKY  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER



Alex and Pete Fanizzi reach summit on Mt. Kilimanjaro

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- At age 20, Peter Fanizzi parachuted from the wing of a propeller plane at 3,000 feet.

For his 50th birthday in July, Fanizzi, owner of Going Places Travel, Castleton Corners, fulfilled his longtime dream of climbing to the snow-capped top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania -- Africa's highest peak, at 19,340 feet.

Accompanying Fanizzi was his eldest daughter, Alexandra, 20, a junior at Stonehill College, Easton, Mass. His younger daughter, Gabrielle, 16, a junior at Notre Dame Academy, was unable to make the trip.

Father and daughter began their climb with two guides from Tanzania's Good Earth Tours, who provided them with food and camping equipment for the six-day, five-night journey.

"In the early part of the climb, the temperature was cool in the early morning, with wet ground, followed by hot sun -- but not anything we couldn't deal with," Fanizzi said. "At higher elevations, you think it's foggy and that there's a drizzle, but actually, you're in the clouds," he said.

"We definitely were not the fastest on the mountain, but our guides insisted on 'pole pole' (which means "slowly, slowly" in Swahili) on the way up so we would acclimate properly for a successful climb," he said.

"On the night we climbed to the top, it was very cold -- below freezing at 10 to 20 degrees," Fanizzi said. "But by the time we reached the summit at 10 a.m., the sun felt strong. We had hoods and hats on to prevent getting a bad sunburn."

GRUELING CLIMB

Ms. Fanizzi recalls: "The entire night that we climbed to the summit, I found myself looking back and wondering how we would make it back down. That night's gruesome battle made attaining the summit even more rewarding. And once you reach the top, it's unreal -- you are standing on Africa's roof."

For their descent, the guides showed them a neat trick, demonstrating how they could move their feet so they could skid down the steep, rocky, sandy terrain instead of walking slowly in a zigzag path, she said.

Fanizzi spent a year preparing for the climb of the nearly 20,000-foot summit. "I did, and still do, my one- to two-mile run. Every Sunday morning I was running, walking, playing racquetball and working out with pro Ken Kramer from Results Fitness in Meiers Corners," said Fanizzi, who lives in Bay Terrace.

"I did everything I could to give myself the edge I needed, including doing the Tunnel-to-Towers Run (which retraces the route of Firefighter Stephen Siller, who ran in full equipment through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel to lower Manhattan on Sept. 11, 2001).

"I am certain without that steady activity I would never have been able to go through the grueling tedium of climbing up the mountain for five to seven hours per day, with the last evening totaling about 15 hours of walking to the summit and back down to a camp.

"I believe anyone can do this, but you have to prepare both physically and mentally to achieve this goal," he said.

"This was a dream-come-true trip," Fanizzi continued. "I have been to Nepal and trekked up to 15,000 feet, I have skied in Switzerland from heights above 11,000 feet.

"But climbing Mount Kilimanjaro was so special because this was such a challenge for me; and having my daughter achieve this on her own, as well, gave me a feeling of special pride," Fanizzi said.

## DONATED ITEMS

Just before their climb, Fanizzi donated soccer jerseys along with soccer balls, lollipops, colored pencils and a few other goodies, with help from Mike Lanza of Legends Sporting Goods, Pleasant Plains. "We gave it to about two dozen kids from a local community center called Tacoda, which was started by an American for orphans," Fanizzi said.

"I have been interested in all types of experiences -- but this one has always been something I wanted to do," said Fanizzi, who inherited Going Places Travel ([www.mygoingplaces.net](http://www.mygoingplaces.net)) -- and a love of travel -- from his parents, who started the business in the early 1970s.

Ms. Fanizzi noted: "It's always an adventure going with my Dad. Our trip to Newfoundland, Canada (a few years ago), was pretty impressive. We did a hiking trail along the rocky cliffs, and from one of the hiking points, we did some whale watching.

"Though nothing compares to Mount Kilimanjaro," she said.

Her dad added: "I am glad for my daughter and myself. It really was an accomplishment."

The Fanizzis, meanwhile, are already planning their next adventure.

Like father like daughter, Ms. Fanizzi said, adding that for her 21st birthday, she plans "to parachute from a plane."

"I think I'll go with her," Fanizzi said.

Carolyn Rushefsky is a reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at [rushefsky@siadvance.com](mailto:rushefsky@siadvance.com).