arriving at Mt. Everest on April 1 for a trip up the mountain’s south face. The team hiked for 10 days to base camp at 17,000 feet, where they stayed for five days, acclimatizing to the altitude.

Delehanty had a rocky start, catching a cold, pulling her chest muscles twice in coughing fits, then tearing a muscle in her back. In the thin air, healing was slow.

The climbers spent the days and weeks practicing, getting accustomed to the higher altitudes and thinner air and climbing parts of Everest and nearby mountains. Delehanty’s injuries sometimes kept her from climbing with her team, and she couldn’t complete one of their acclimatization climbs. “Most of us arrive with pre-existing conditions, like ankle, knee or hip prob-
lems,” she said. “But we’re generally prepared to deal with them. We’re generally prepared to deal with these issues, to continually adapt and practice on treacherous parts of the mountain face, such as the rope and ladder crossings of the shifting Khumbu Icefall. Weather was unpredictable and extreme – sometimes cloudy and cold, others bright and hot.

After reaching Camp 4, at more than 26,000 feet, the team planned its final summit push. Delehanty’s squad left around 1 a.m. May 23. Her legs ached as she pushed through snow and wind. Visibility was only about 10 feet as she traversed the Cornice knife-edge ridge, with falls of 8,000 feet off one side and 10,000 on the other.

After climbing more than eight hours, Delehanty heard her Sherpa, Lakpa Nuru, cry “Summit!” “I saw my team members’ smiling faces,” she said, “and I was happy to be there with them.”

She was sure she’d weep when she reached the top. Once there, she said, “I got teary-eyed. I realized I was there because I wanted to be, because I wanted to be there to experience it and to feel the thrill. It’s the things we’re not prepared for that make this tough.”

“IT’S SO FOREIGN AND STRANGE UP THERE. IT’S A THREATENING ENVIRONMENT. YOUR FOCUS NEVER CHANGES. YOU STILL NEED ENERGY TO GET DOWN THE MOUNTAIN.”