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**A Lifetime of Thin Air:
Mountain Researcher Examines the Joy and Peril of High Altitude Expeditions**

American mountaineer Dr. Charles Houston will explore the fascinating history of high altitude medical research at the Banff Centre's first Mountain Speaker's Series event of 2003. "This is the story of a group of friends, a story of mountaineering and altitude research in the golden age before commercialization," says Dr. Houston. His presentation takes place Thursday, February 20, at 8:30 p.m., in the Max Bell Auditorium at The Banff Centre.

Medical doctor, mountaineer, university professor and author, Dr. Charles Houston first brought high altitude pulmonary edema to the world's attention. Born in 1913, Houston has spent over fifty years studying medical problems caused by lack of oxygen and examining how the body adapts to high altitude.

Houston's mountaineering career began in 1925 in the Alps. In 1936, he led a British-American Expedition, which climbed Nanda Devi (26,250 feet) in northern India. Then, in 1938 Houston led the first American expedition to K2 (28,250 feet) in Pakistan. In 1950, he was part of the first reconnaissance group to the south (Nepal) side of Mt. Everest. He returned to K2 in 1953 and to Everest in 1981.

Houston has written many books and scores of articles about mountain medicine and his own climbs. His book, *Going Higher: Oxygen, Man and Mountains*, published by The Mountaineers Books, won the Mountain Exposition Award at the 1998 Banff Mountain Book Festival.

Since 1975, Houston has organized the International Hypoxia Symposia – which bring leading researchers on the effects of oxygen deprivation together for an annual conference. This year's symposium takes place February 19-22 at The Banff Centre.

Admission to Dr. Charles Houston's presentation on Thursday, February 20 at 8:30 p.m. is free, thanks to the support of the International Hypoxia Symposia.

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The Banff Centre is Canada's centre for creative excellence in the arts, leadership development, mountain culture, and conferences. Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre promotes understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places by creating opportunities for people to share – and find inspiration in – mountain experiences, ideas and visions.