On their seventh heaven

Indescribable. That’s how SA climbers felt as they joined elite club on top of Everest today

When The Star spoke to Jan Disney today she said she had spoken to him briefly after their summit - and he had been unable to stop talking about the view from the top.

"He just kept saying that it was an indescribable feeling, absolutely amazing and that the view was beautiful," she said.

Their partner, Rene Hochreiter, said the pair had summited the 8848m peak at about 16h00 South African time (3:00am Everest time) and watched the sun come up with a window of “absolutely clear weather”.

There were no clouds and winds were blowing at between 5 and 16km/h.

The elated pair stayed to cook in their achievement for between 30 minutes and an hour.

"The wind started blowing hard at the top and they made their way down again," said Jan Disney.

Disney phone home at about 6am, once they had returned to camp 4, which is at 7368m.

From his home in Bramley, Hochreiter - who had hoped to summit with them, but had been forced to turn back after suffering frostbite - said: "I have never heard Sean as happy. He usually doesn’t say much, but this morning he was ecstatic.

"He said the sun rose just as they got there."

For 34-year-old Disney their summit - from the southern side - was his third attempt at the peak. The 85-year-old De la Harpe was luckier, succeeding on his first try.

They are the seventh and eighth South Africans ever to stand on Everest’s roof.

Hochreiter said the pair would have planted a small South African flag and prayed to thank God for their success.

"It was the wildest day," Disney reportedly said.

"I'm very happy for them," he said. "Obviously I am also a little sad that I couldn’t be there. But the mountain is still there and I’ll give it another bash in a year or two.”

Disney was part of the Discovery team that tried to climb Everest in 2000.

"The problem then was that they did it too early in the climbing season. He had to turn back at 8400m because of high winds," explained Hochreiter.

How greed ended a pooch named Shipton’s dream

He is known as Shipton the super dog, the intrepid pooch that almost conquered Everest but threw it all away for a couple of boiled eggs.

Over the last couple of weeks, Everest expedition websites have been reporting on a small dog’s incredible journey up the world’s highest mountain. But unlike the stories of climbers that came to conquer Everest, with their mountains of gear, Shipton appeared on the snowy slopes of the peak with nothing - not even an own.

"Climbing completely unsupplied (no tent or food, no porters or supplementary oxygen) is a dog called Shipton,” is how one website described the canine. Not even a pup tent, someone added.

No one is sure what prompted Shipton to begin his ascent of the mountain, but once Shipton got started it appeared he was soon bitten by the mountaineering bug, he just kept going up and up and eventually reached Camp 5, which is at 8680m. How the dog got there is a bit of mystery, but Shipton was to climb no higher.

One morning a Sherpa cook at Camp 3 discovered that 30 hard-boiled eggs were missing. Shipton was the prime suspect and was taken back to Base Camp.

Now the debate is whether Shipton holds the world altitude record for dogs.