

Andrew Hughes.mp3

Intro [00:00:02] Seeking The extraordinary is sponsored by The Colony Group, a national wealth and business management company that seeks the extraordinary by pursuing an unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering their visions of tomorrow. To learn more about how The Colony Group manages Beyond money, visit The Colony Group com.

Intro [00:00:28] Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary. Welcome to our shared quest. A quest not for a thing, but for an idea, a quest not for a place, but into deep, inner, unexplored regions of ourselves. A quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that. Extraordinary stories of overcoming anguish. Every single one of them had lost.

Intro [00:00:57] Somebody from their family. I will never give up on.

Intro [00:00:59] Trying to lessen that harm to people who have stood up to challenges with true courage in something in life. Did you have a passion for something that you enjoy and you find fulfilling? That's where you'll have the greatest success stories that will enlighten and inspire. What I said to them is absolutely a cliché, but the journey is more important than the end result. May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach? Join me now in seeking the extraordinary. I am Michael Nathanson, your chief seeker of The Extraordinary.

Michael Nathanson [00:01:36] Our guest today has accomplished something that only about 500 people in history have accomplished. He's climbed the seven summits, the highest mountains on each of the seven continents. And he's about to do something that only about 70 people in history have done complete what is known as the Explorer's Grand Slam by climbing all seven summits and by reaching both the South Pole and the North Pole. He grew up on a farm outside of Seattle, Washington, and became an outdoor adventurer of sorts at a young age. As he grew up, his career path took him in many directions, including law and politics. Our guest, you see, has a master's degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science, as well as a juris doctor degree from the Seattle University School of Law. He even joins your very own host in having a master of laws degree in taxation from the University of Washington School of Law. Our guests ran for the United States Congress, and though he didn't win, he did quite well at the polls. But after facing several unexpected hardships, he realized that his dreams conflicted with the norms of what society expected of him. And his path eventually led him to the mountains. Our guest not only has climbed the seven summits, but also six of the seven volcanic summits, the highest volcanoes on each continent. He became the fastest and first American man and third person ever to complete the Antarctica trifecta with his climbing partner, Roxanne Vogl, by consecutively skiing the last degree to the South Pole and reaching the summit of Mount Vinson, which is the highest mountain there, and Mount Sidley, the highest volcano in Antarctica. And his list of climbing exploration accomplishments is in fact so long that it might take the entire show just to go through them. Yet it seems like he's just getting started. In addition to pursuing the Explorer's Grand Slam, he's now pursuing multiple world records. He's attempting to climb the second seven summits, which are the second highest mountains on each continent and much more. But his expeditions have become focused on something that matters even more than summits making a meaningful impact on the world. He is committed to sustainability, conservationism and combating climate change. Raising awareness and funds for Human Rights Watch's work on the environment and human rights. He also

advocates for greater inclusivity and diversity in the outdoors and for breaking down social and economic barriers to provide greater access to our natural spaces. Please welcome the extraordinary Andrew Hughes. Welcome, Andrew.

Andrew Hughes [00:04:45] Thank you, Michael. It's an honor to be here.

Michael Nathanson [00:04:47] It's an honor to have you. You've had quite the career so far, and you're still a pretty young guy.

Andrew Hughes [00:04:53] I appreciate the young sentiment. Some days I feel a little older than others, for sure.

Michael Nathanson [00:04:59] Well, we all want to know more about the extraordinary part of you. After all, this show is called Seeking the Extraordinary. But let's actually start with the foundation. And why don't you start by telling us what I didn't cover in my introduction? That is to say. Tell us about your background, your family, or whatever it is that just makes you the person that you are.

Andrew Hughes [00:05:21] Yeah, I think growing up on a farm; it was actually a farm run as a bed and breakfast. And so from an early age, it wasn't just living on a farm, it was working within a small business with my family. My father left early on, and so it was just my mother and sister and me for a long time. And having incredibly strong women in my life has always kind of framed a lot of, I think, but later became this idea of searching for greater inclusivity in a space that I saw the play by males in the outdoors and what are doing going further back by my family, kind of. I started off as janitors way, way back in the early 1900s. There was this go and I remember this the story that my grandmother told me about this place in time where my great grandfather had almost nothing left financially left to his then business had shut down, and he was just walking the streets of San Francisco looking for jobs and opportunity with barely any money left yet. Kids at home kid on the way, and he always referred to this idea of tribulation, this idea of kind of the charity of the week where you kind of go through trials to find the kernels that are valuable. And I always found that I was a valuable yourself through tribulations and through trials. And it always stuck with me. And so from a young age, I was always trying to find ways to push myself and find ways to challenge myself, knowing that that would really refine and define myself as well. So I grew up in that kind of that small business, which is very, very housekeeping to oil painting fences, to serving afternoon tea for our guest as a beautiful way to grow up in a small town kind of outside. At the same time, my family was very international and my father was British, so we had family in Australia. His father had fought in the Royal Air Force and so much stronger, a top military man. And we were a small town from a young age, but it would pass. For example, when I was six months old, forgot my mom was for a minute when I got back, but at the same time I was heartbroken for her. But this kind of that sitting of experience, opportunity, even from a young age, I think also kind of framed the part that I would eventually refind myself, that I'm.

Michael Nathanson [00:07:40] Great and well, let's continue to pursue that path and look, we're going to get to the mountain, certainly. But I read a quote from you and it says that you, "came to realize the path toward what society deemed as success was in fact, distancing you from your dreams. So tell us about more. Tell us a little bit more about where you were going and why that wasn't where you ultimately decided to go.

Andrew Hughes [00:08:06] Yeah, Yeah. That that concept for me kind of led to this this very, I think, simple phrase of seeking beyond summits. And for me, some of these are

way beyond this. The mountain themselves, They are in a milestone or moment in our lives that we put on potentially an unrealistic amount of expectation or value for that singular moment. And that can be everything from getting into college or starting a relationship, getting married, getting your first job in the mountains. 85% of injuries happen on the descent. And if you flatten out those summits and think of them as simply another hour of a longer journey, then you realize that just getting to those valuable moments is not words about. And if you only save all your energy, put all your value into that so you end up getting into college, but then don't show up to class or getting into a marriage and then aren't ready to do the work of being in a relationship or letting that first job and not being willing to kind of like have humility and reach out for mentorship and other opportunities to you to work hard than you're generally going to fall victim to what happened to me, which was I got into a relationship that I thought I had to be in a relationship, got married too early, potentially in my life with seeking career paths that were highly, highly intellectually engaging, an incredible tool kit to go on. And definitely nothing was ever wasted, but definitely something that wasn't building the authentic self and in me. And so when all those things kind of fell apart like a country song in my head and the wife left, the ex wife left and the dog died and the job, I didn't get elected it. It was an extremely challenging time because at my early thirties I felt I was starting over where everything around me. I saw people kind of on more traditional societal path of being a relationship, started families in kind of more traditional careers, and I felt more loss of the moral element of her. But in that loneliness there was also opportunity and there was a chance for me to reconnect and start finding a part of myself that somewhere along the way I had started to give away in order to kind of get ahead a little bit more and get into something that people externally I could explain. Cocktail parties were anxieties filled opportunities for me because I'd go out and kind of explain what I was doing at that point in my life when everything was fine. Part was so, so hard because I felt it was so much easier for people who would simply lay off the resume basically right out of the gate and then move on to the next thing. But in those moments or have discovered, there was also a redefining and a rediscovery of me, which for a limited hour. And now.

Michael Nathanson [00:10:45] So the challenges that I mentioned earlier that come right out of your biography, the challenges you're speaking about our are the breakdown of your marriage and your political loss frustration. And it was like that ...

Andrew Hughes [00:10:58] Yeah. I think what happens a lot for me and I think a lot of people is that we fill our lives with so much that we never have to sit with ourselves. And so of the things and that moment and space that was given to me also forced me to go back to an abusive and absent father and to do things that were in my childhood of not really having a male figure or somebody to raise or a friendly, strong mother and an incredibly loving sister. But there was always this huge hole. I feel like growing up where you just feel. The difference is what they knew that haven't been dealt with. And we can go on a long time in life because life is so busy. And if you allow it to continue to be busy, that can keep you from being there either for relationship to relationship, job, job, opportunity, opportunity and never give your self the space to really extract the full value of what you've gone through. And all of those things kind of like coming of art created that space, which then I live in and the mountain stage, this opportunity to really go deeper into that. But it was it was a gift given from what was changing.

Michael Nathanson [00:12:10] Well, thank you so much for sharing so much personal information. You seem very comfortable doing that, and I really admire and respect that. One of the quotes that you bit that that I really appreciated was where you say that you,

quote, relearned to turn discomfort and challenge into growth and gratitude. And I can really relate to that.

Andrew Hughes [00:12:30] Yeah.

Michael Nathanson [00:12:30] And seeking beyond summits. Is that trademarked or can I steal that ...

Andrew Hughes [00:12:34] You can steal it. I mean I've been using it for a while. It kind of just for me it became this idea and the concept of everything that I want to beyond go back to that I go back to it's it's it's a long term vision of life and how you approach it.

Michael Nathanson [00:12:49] I love it. And I love when you talk about about, you know, the importance of the descent as well. And that just really I can really relate to that. I love that. So we're going to get to to your your career of adventure in a minute. But I just want to ask you one more question, that which is, do you ever sit around thinking about what would have happened had you won that election?

Andrew Hughes [00:13:10] Yeah, no, I think it's one of the greatest losses I've ever had. I only bank some of the the greatest fives ever have are the ones that I didn't make the summit and the greatest opportunities that are the ones that didn't turn out. We think of all these like places where we failed supposedly, but in fact, like there is always finding and failure. And for me, if I had continued to go down, there was this sense of going in it with the right intention, but losing the intention along the way. And I was young, like 2930, I think, when I ran, and the problem was that I didn't have. My authentic voice at that point in time, the authenticity of who I was, I. It wasn't there. I lost it. And so I was speaking to the things I cared about. But there was definitely a disconnect between like who I was and what I was truly passionate about and how I wanted to be the advocate for the things I cared about. In politics, that all takes over. So many people go into it where they used to go into it for the right intentions, and so often they have to sacrifice so much simply to be a part of that system. And I just started seeing opportunities externally where you could influence and impact. And I realized also that all politics at the end of the day are local. And so if you could impact locally, you have as great of an impact as anybody know on a more national or global scale.

Michael Nathanson [00:14:34] So let's get into your career of adventure and let's just start with your your first what was your first great adventure, Your CV, which I took a look at, says that you started climbing in 2014.

Andrew Hughes [00:14:46] Yeah, Yeah. So growing up in the northwest Mt. Rainier and it was been to Seattle area, if you're lucky and generally feel like most people get sunny days and they go out there, they get a view of Mount Rainier, which is so special when you think about mountains. And so it's a major metropolitan area. It just sits there and it's really a part of, I think, any northwestern identity. I mean, there's definitely I think everyone parts of the country, the world who have promised to do something kind of natural beauty are drawn to it, whether it's that if you live by the water or something else, you just kind of you grow with it, you're drawn to it. And I definitely spent time leading up to 2014 doing a lot of things that were, I think, more more dangerous skydiving and bungee jumping and and doing things that were kind of, I would say, shorter duration, but a heightened sense of kind of discomfort and facing fears. I grew up on Afraid of Heights. So that was always my challenge is to like, push that fear and to challenge that fear that they said it was possible, hopefully new myself into a more neutral territory to coexist with it. But I always want to

climb and no one would. But I mean, we have a lot of great island companies based in the Northwest, so I just signed up well, and know what? None of my friends wanted to go with me. And it was the entire process of preparing for that climb. The months of like kind of like training and learning about the gear. The climb itself was was wonderful, as is the two days on Mount Rainier. But I was told afterwards there was something about it that created this beginning of like a fire inside of me. I was moving meditation, I was climbing, and I just know I needed to learn more about that. And so from that point on, it kind of became. The seed that took root abortion. I also ended up that's when I got back that summer were not the wife who bought a house and was going to divorce over the mountains up essentially a shelf for about a year and a half. But once that was all settled, there was nothing really left for me to kind of or me down here. And so I just left and went to finding as much as I could and explore as much as I could.

Michael Nathanson [00:16:53] So you actually had a fear of heights and then you attack that. It's a it's a bit of a Bruce Wayne story here where Bruce was so afraid of bats and he embraced the fear, embrace the bad in him and he became Batman.

Andrew Hughes [00:17:06] Yeah. No, I mean, I remember we did a leadership camp when I was 17 years old, and it had one of those kind of ropes courses in the woods out of the northwest. That was just a simple pole you climb up to. And I literally never like shooting my whole body, vibrating out of fear and getting up there hating every minute and probably was crying. But it was one of those things where it's natural to face or have fears. And I think it's just finding out how to kind of coexist with them oftentimes, especially if there's something that you're positive about that they're going to be a part of, which is in my bad, but they're always there in some capacity. So.

Michael Nathanson [00:17:47] So fast forward five years from when you Clough climbed Mount Rainier and I have seen Rainier only in the distance what I'm Yeah. Yeah it's it's it's quite a spectacle It's it's a sort of it's that shadow, you know, figure in the back and it's just so huge. But five years later, you became effectively a professional. You started to become sponsored. So how did you make that transition to becoming effectively a professional?

Andrew Hughes [00:18:13] Yeah, I mean, I think the way a lot of people and it happens for me as well, is that you begin with getting sponsorship of all kinds of all kinds of forms, and it started off through a mitigation, the money spent on gear by people providing us gear. Then there was small amounts of money coming in for content and for association would take photos on the field with staff and that there was actually, I mean, covered for taking so much away. I think also it was a lot of time and energy required to have an idea. I had just started getting a product and as a brand. So associations going into are coming out of that. Everest was about two months away and I was really kind of pushing for banks to do everything, stop the whole world and. In that gap. It also kind of created a shift in kind of what I wanted the mountains to be for me on board. And so I started doing outreach to brands that more aligned not just with kind of getting gear to go to do things. They're getting funding to do things, but ones that also a similar ethos, whether it's advocacy for sustainability or their their willingness to support local communities or just products that I really believed in and I could get behind because I'd use them from expeditions. And so it was a slow kind of process over 2020 leading into Everest in 2021, where I really built out my first big collection of sponsors, which was wonderful. They were incredibly generous and provided a lot of opportunity for me to kind of actually give back even to the local that believes what my gear that they provided. And then with Everest, that just kind of thinking you'd be evolution once you find Everest separate becomes its

own little entry point into and that next slap on the salmon some ascents but it's just one of those things where the end of the day it's it's very much like politics. There's a lot of people doing incredible things out there. And you have to be your own advocate from an early stage. And this is why I always feel like nothing is ever wasted, including the fact why I ran for office and knocked on over 100,000 doors over the course of like four months and did all those phone calls like reading rejected and going through a process of genuinely asking and being unaffected when something goes wrong or someone says no to you, you just have to have that. I think a lot of people think of first these days. And for me it just became part of a process of reaching out to as many people as I could and and finding relationships that really made sense.

Michael Nathanson [00:20:43] So let's get to Everest, since you mentioned it and and you've summited it, and we're going to get to that in a minute. But you didn't quite make it the first time you tried, did you? So maybe tell us a little bit about that experience.

Andrew Hughes [00:20:56] Yeah. So like taking it a little further back then, is that my very first of seven, someone said, we're going to drop in Congo. Down in Argentina, I was coming, which is the.

Michael Nathanson [00:21:04] Tallest mountain in South America.

Andrew Hughes [00:21:06] South America. Yeah. And it's it's pretty it's over twice, 3000 feet, but it's not viewed as highly technical. The altitude is the technicality that can definitely have storms like any mountain. But overall, when it comes to exposure to a lot of other issues, it's not a big deal. I came in and it was my first mountain. My team was a bit older than me at the time. I was in my I was 36, I think, and I just came in with so much hubris and too much confidence in my physical abilities just to conquer an adventure. And that mountain quickly reminded me of the humility it takes when you start reaching for great heights. And so I was flown off day after day to do a base scan after I'd trekked and there was some kind of form of regulatory issue. And so fast forward to Everest about five years later. That was again, like I said, one of the greatest summits I'd ever reached because it taught me so much about how to respect the mountain, but also how to listen to your body and set ego aside when you ascend. And we were camp to we were waiting. It was 2019, so I was the big year. There was sort of last year, it turned out because of the weather, add some slick blows down the mountain, which led to a large concentration of people where they still Nevins was doing his world record of that year and everyone was kind of like stuck at that camp waiting to go. And I felt great when we got up there. But what I didn't know was that I had contracted bacterial pneumonia from somebody probably down during our drop back or dry base at base camp. And so it was a blossoming within my long and the morning before we're supposed to leave, I just woke up with this horrible thing, cough that dropped me to my knees. And I mean, you don't get to catch your breath at over 21,000 feet, which is where we're at without oxygen living there, too. And I just had this feeling that if I do tinue to go out, I might make the top, but I wouldn't make it home. And knowing what happened that year and sadly, seeing people that did go up there and didn't make it back that were part of that year. I just it's one of the best decisions that ever made, but one of the hardest as well, because you invested years of your life to get to that moment. You've invested all the money, the time you're already you're literally two days away from the summit. On your summit push after climbing through the Khumbu Icefall multiple times already, which is super dangerous. But it was, I felt. The necessary moment to test my humility again and test. And I learned the lessons that had been planted in me when I started this path. And I just. No one told me not to go. I simply said I'm going to stay here. If I get better, I'll try to go ahead and get better. And over the days, the next two

days, I listened to my team as they radioed back and I waited until my health descended as they ascended. And I remember the night that they were going to their summit Bush. I just was going through. My ozone levels were dropping. I was in my tent. I was having, like, these weird pains because my lungs essentially I couldn't get oxygen. I was actually to later on I was completely coated with pneumonia on the inside, and I just felt like I was burning. And as I carried off my clothes, I just thought losing it a little bit in my tent and we had this amazing guy to hang out with me and just was like there at the same time, managing our team, going out for me to say, meet with adventure consultants. And I just remember listening to the summer call backs of my friends reaching the summit and hearing their celebration while I lay there dying essentially, and they're in my tent at the same time, though I was so happy for them. It's just such a mix of emotions to be in other places, but. When, like eventually they got it all doctor in helicopter in the office of captain, which is hard to do. So we like, figure out whether to ask all stay at a hospital for a little bit. It was never a question of whether I was to go back or whether I made the wrong call, but it was just an opportunity for me to learn everything I could for the next time, do better and just find peace. And those are the paths. Never stray. And sometimes to ascend, you have to descend again to find the road. And for me, it brought so much more value to me when I return the next year, because without that failure, I wouldn't have found all these wonderful sponsors and wonderful organizations to advocate for like Gay Rights Watch. Those things came because I was given extra time and extra space to kind of build into it.

Michael Nathanson [00:25:48] So as the next year that you finally did get the summit.

Andrew Hughes [00:25:51] Oh, it would have been. But it was Covid. So I was all packed and ready to go. So 2019 failed. I went to an archivist at those records, which kind of got me geared up to feeling great and my bags by the door really even like mid-March, which is why I drove it, closed out everything. So the bag stayed by the door for for about two months. And then I got to rebuild everything up for 2021, which is why I went back up at that time again, was that failure that led to the finding and that at a time was absolutely crucial to kind of building a everything that I'm really reaching for now.

Michael Nathanson [00:26:26] What's it like to stand on top of Mount Everest? What's that like?

Andrew Hughes [00:26:31] I'm a summit crier to begin with. So but I never understood growing up why you see professional athletes prior the Super Bowl or cry like when they won a championship or like Olympians crying and they were in something. But it's because there's a few things that I think for me that I feel. One is I feel more connected than ever in my life because I realized that no summit you stayed on by herself, everyone who has ordered you and been a part of your life and allowed you the space and the love to kind of get that point. Everything from that people are heard. The foundations of like where you came from to like the people that helped you on that very expedition. So all have a hand in you standing where you are, and so you just feel so. And there's just something for me personally. And it goes back to like this evolution for me. When it came to mountain bike, a lot of people go because they're trying to conquer something and themselves. And so the mountain becomes the embodiment of that conquering I that like myself, I had a heartbreak and a sense of loss and a sense of loneliness. And and they want to, like, beat some day to make them feel better and. I think at a certain point in time, if you're lucky, that evolves to realizing that this is a place where you can commune and connect to something greater than yourself.

Michael Nathanson [00:27:54] Yeah.

Andrew Hughes [00:27:54] And for me, that's why Everest, like after this long meditation, up the stairs on the mountains, was just such this euphoric moment. I kind of think of it as some people are like, Why Everest or other big mountains that less proud? And I mean, they're not Everest, but why that one? And it's just I, I look at it as almost impossible to lose faith. And you every time I go back to the mountain, it's like it's like hearing another sermon and feeling another connection to something and to something greater than myself, which was worthy cause whatever you believe in. And so to go to Everest is like pain. Is that going to Mecca or the Vatican? Or is what about it's this place of high worship and it's a place of holiness where the people that live there. And so to stand there and on top there is just it's just epicenter of emotion and connection. It all comes together. Now, I also proposed to my now wife, who wasn't there on the summit, but who I wanted to also know. Like that. She you're on top of the mountain was with me and was the most important part. So that was like the first time. It's like I pulled out and had my friends record me. So I mean, yeah, that. It's a pretty life changing moment.

Michael Nathanson [00:29:09] How long do you stay on there? Do you do you do you stay up there for several hours? You come off because you can't stay that long?

Michael Nathanson [00:29:16] Yeah. I mean, if ...

Andrew Hughes [00:29:17] The weather's good, you can be up there for maybe only 30 minutes or so. Okay. I think sometimes longer. I mean, like, you can be up at that altitude depending upon your option, like usage or a good amount of time. And we waited on our summer place because there was crowds light leading up in from the summit. And so we just like hunkered down. And there was such a relatively nice day and a death zone. We just kind of like tucked in like several of us and just like sat there back and just watched people and helped them as they asked. And just the danger usually is in the mountain, but the people that are around you that are kind of running their wheels are trying to get to the summit. And when they come down, they're just kind of wailing and falling and they've they haven't used their energy maybe properly. And so we just wanted to be safe. And also when we got up there, there was just. Just the seven of us. Really just being out at the weather was like when deep, but we were able to do our mask off and take photos and but it was a disability. You can never live on the summit, right? You don't get to live in those moments forever. So go there. You take what you can and try to capture as much as you can and keep that with you the rest of your life, but that you're only halfway there. So.

Michael Nathanson [00:30:30] Do you do you think you experience fear like like the rest of us? I mean, people die regularly climbing Mount Everest and you've climbed Mount Elbrus as well. And my understanding is that that is a that's we had we had Dan Egan on our show, who is considered by many to be one of the pioneers of founders of what we now know is extreme skiing. And boy, he tells a horrific story about when he climbed Mount Elbrus.

Andrew Hughes [00:30:55] Yeah... busloads of people I remember when we'd find that somebody had just disappeared I think that a few days before because it's at one of those mountains and in general I feel the more accessible the mountain is, the more dangerous it is because people have down their guard and they assume accessibility leads to easiness as well. And so, I mean, you look at places like Everest and it has deaths, but it has maybe a handful of deaths, too. But I think I had two deaths last year and four deaths year before when I was there. But you look at places like Mont Blanc and they have about 100 deaths a year on that mountain, or even Guagua has by the eagle. And it's less

tangible, but they have about an equal amount of deaths. And I think everybody here has either ignored the Everest every year only because I think people have debilitated Elbrus and said you can actually get up the mountain pretty easily. But what you don't recognize is that if the weather changes, if our blooper day those mountains are yeah, only doable and most people can go up there and with minimal skills follow the all the track and trail that has been pounded in there from previous people. But those kind of opportunities can become particularly dangerous the moment the conditions change and they can change so quickly. And that's what happens on Elbrus. Its path is very clear until a storm comes in. And then when that happens on either side of where you're going at that scale and back with the drone and look down at it, it is just this huge for masses. And so if you go a little bit off on either side, you're gone, right. Never to be sound and is a couple we did before we got there there was a TARP team just disappeared and they never found the and they just kind of walked off and went down over bass and there's just in the middle of the storm is so easy to kind of like a white out so you still lose your way and there's the trail or the track that you're on and we're kind of going in there you wanted. And that's what happened a lot. So.

Michael Nathanson [00:32:56] So is it scary? Do you feel fear?

Andrew Hughes [00:32:59] You go to a different place. I think fear is healthy. I think it's fear is I would be afraid if I'm with somebody with no fear. Be honest. I think bear woven with fear is humility. And for me, that's important. I don't want somebody who is looking for the edge all the time because eventually they're going to find it. And I don't want to be there with them when they fall over. So. I view it like that then is that you are constantly I guess they're redefining that notion with this comfort zone, pushing against fear and pushing against it's alchemy. Nobody wants to dig a lateral room or review ladder or a gigantic four basket Khumbu Icefall like you don't want to do that. It's natural thing for anybody, but you'd realize that this is your path and if you do it right, you'll be safe. But I'm also somebody where if the conditions are not right, I will not push myself into a bad conditions that I know are life threatening. I think some people will will continue to do that. And unfortunately, whether it's avalanche like territory or it's heading off into a storm that they can hunker down just as this applies to it and try to wait out the storm, because they just want to do it at a certain time frame. Those things, I think, are are the mountain in nature testing you and giving you opportunities to see how you're going to react. And usually I've sadly seen a lot of people get away with a lot of bad decision making, but eventually the house always wins and those enjoy it. And eventually, like when things go wrong, they usually are deadly.

Michael Nathanson [00:34:32] You you you have a Guinness World record, correct? Yeah. Yeah. So tell us about that.

Andrew Hughes [00:34:36] It's a fun one. I mean, so part of also being on COVID was I and a lot of time I'd be all day to kind of go down. So altitude records are are amazing, as are so many of them. However, I fully on the fact that I am more spirit to a turtle than I am a cheetah. And so speed records are generally not going to be usually my thing. And so there's a lot of people know a lot of the fastest to do this and the fastest to do that. For me, I wanted records to be as much about community building as possible, and so I actually got the highest altitude Tea Party. But it was great because we did it at camp. We did it at Camp. Stu So at 21,000 feet, we tried a base camp, but it was too low by from a hundred feet. So we just really blew our water by doing it up. But that is very easy to like to set a record, but to get it kind of verified by Guinness World Records is a much more challenging thing I've been to realize. But it was it was great because we had some

wonderful partners like Mia, who creates a bunch of kind of bottle wear and and different kind of like thermoses. Some of the donated \$1,000 worth of gear that we were then able to give to the local Sherpa and kind of Nepalese climbers orders. So that's just something to get up there. And we did the first one where our entire kind of slide, All right, all the people from the expedition level that orders climbers, everybody. And I hosted it. I brought Girl Scout that is in from New York. There's a little group out there that, like, helps with the foster girls and the system. So especially what of those like hundreds of dollars of that to bring that out and just tear them all up there, secured them all the way across the room, the world up to base camp and up to get you. And it was just one of those things where what I missed the most about COVID when it came to the mountains was not the mountains themselves, but was that family and that candy, I think, and the connections to people there that I miss having. And so I wanted a chance for us to come together. And I was going to get very serious for a lot of people. So a moment of levity and lightness. It was something that I wanted to bring and I made sure that everybody it was a part of it as part of that record, because I just want them all to know that it's read like there's enough people doing based on themselves in this world, and things generally move a lot better when there's multiple people moving them and celebrating and.

Michael Nathanson [00:36:56] Will you break other records?

Andrew Hughes [00:36:58] Yeah, there's a lot coming up. I mean, I got a bunch in the pipeline right now. So there's. I mean, yeah, there. There's more coming up on the way right now, so.

Michael Nathanson [00:37:07] But you don't want to talk about which ones.

Andrew Hughes [00:37:09] People are very touchy about records.

Michael Nathanson [00:37:11] I see. I see.

Andrew Hughes [00:37:13] But there are so there's there's one kind of they're, they're they're ones that will remain to be kind of within high altitude of the mountain, but will also be incorporating other elements of adventure in kind of sports that I love bringing them together. But yeah, there's going to be more I mean, like like you said, like sports Grand Slam is a huge one for me. Like.

Michael Nathanson [00:37:33] Yeah. Tell us about that. Tell us about the Explorer's Grand Slam.

Andrew Hughes [00:37:36] Yeah. So that I mean, it's it's a classic kind of challenge. And challenges are super brilliant in their galaxy. But for me, I love a good list of things to kind of go after and push. And it's an opportunity to capitalize on to go to places that I potentially would never have had it not been for. These is challenges, but it's a unique collection of people from around the world and there's variations to it as well. People have done a full traverse, but unfortunately what the North Pole right now and the ice melting in the fall triggers on the Arctic to the North Pole is almost impossible. And so the people that are going to fall will probably be the last ones that would really be able to do that. So we're left with an opportunity to complete these last degrees, which are about a week and a half. So they're not too challenging usually, but it's it's a collection of people that are actually from, I think, just 73 Soviet forties and places of our era. People have gone and so far I'll be a parade the American and I'm a dual citizen so 13 British person to ever do that and I

would like to complete the seven authentic some as well but the last mountains in Iran so that's not happening at any time so.

Michael Nathanson [00:38:45] Nice.

Andrew Hughes [00:38:45] But yeah I mean there's like less than ten people that are on all seven and seven and, and the two bowls. So there's no doubt that this kind of keep me out there. But a lot of what I'm hoping to do is by mounted walls, kind of more obsidian bar mentalism and sustainability in these places and trying to kind of be a better advocate and elevate other issues that are connected the less I go to versus just simply going for my own experience.

Michael Nathanson [00:39:10] So a couple of questions. So first, when you go to the North Pole, are you basically saying that it's not possible to do that anymore? I mean, is the North Pole now just, you know, part of the is it just the ocean? So the ice there?

Andrew Hughes [00:39:25] Yeah. So an uncle still there so you can get up to the North Pole on the sea ice. But a pole traverse which usually started from, say, either Russia or Canada and you would kind of like begin essentially on like the continental like ground. But once you're on the ice, it's all sea ice, which is like Antarctica, which you start kind of on the shell, which is almost the reverse of the Arctic, where as you start off on about a more sea ice, then you end up on the continent. Jamal But you're you're on land, the Arctic of the North Pole. You leave the land onto the sea ice for the duration of it. So you're dealing with a substantially more dynamic environment, which I'm really excited to see and experience, but one that is ever changing the. Vanessa And so and you have pressure ridges and instead of proboscis, you have open water leaves, which are just to get places where you have to navigate around those. You have polar bears that are definitely there and definitely curious. And so with climate change though, the ability to really start on these external kind of parts of this traverse have probably some impossible, I think. So the last attempts that were successful were like four or five years ago. And then on top of that, there's just been an issue of this is the first time in five years that it won't be able to build what they call Baggio Ice Camp, which is this temporary camp that build on the ice in order to then launch scientific expeditions from there and kind of ski expeditions or dog expeditions. And seasonally last year about five or six weeks. And there's still ways to get to the non biology like an icebreaker person like that. But kind of the old manual way which we're going to do by skier and a boss, that's just not a not a lot of other options right now.

Michael Nathanson [00:41:12] So how how long did it take you to ski the last degree to the South Pole?

Andrew Hughes [00:41:17] That was about just till about almost two weeks. Yeah, I think around there it was. Yeah, it was awful. It was. It was tough. Like my arms broke on my back, and so I gave myself a little bit of whiplash really, on the trip. So I got my skis, but it was. Antarctica is such a beautiful place. But it's I think that's actually one of the hunger on expeditions that I've ever been on, simply because. It's. There's nothing there. There's there's no line of sight. So when you're Target dropped off, truly feels like you're on this otherworldly planet where there's no mountains in any direction, there's nothing on the horizon. It's just flat. And so as the light changes, it kind of puts you in this weird state of feeling like you're moving without moving. And. And if the debtors are just wet, sort of cold. Extremely cold. Got frostbite on that trap. So it's just it's just it's one of those things where you just. Yeah. I think like for me mentally, is one of the most challenging lives I've ever done.

Michael Nathanson [00:42:18] It sounds like everything you do is challenging, but I love I love this stuff. So when you head up to the North Pole, my understanding is you're going to produce a documentary and may else I also understand that you're going to be raising money for Human Rights Watch. Is this something people can follow you in real time on or do they have to sort of see it afterwards?

Andrew Hughes [00:42:39] So I'm trying to work out on I should have an object tracking information that I'll put out that I say go on both my website and for Instagram. I'll put it as like one of my links in there. So you will kind of track as we go. Whereas as I drop pens and I work with Human Rights Watch for a few years now and the goal is to build the photojournalist, go back and put together a small documentary that we can then go and do events and raise money for that using this as a portal because. It's such a rare experience to get up there and see these things. And I and I kind of had this belief that. When you have like the ability to create connection, then it turned out that be once you have the ability to have an acrobatic an action, you can create impact. And for me, having these visuals are super important and the hope as well. Human Rights Watch has been doing a lot of work about Nexus kind of climate change with indigenous populations that are tired of living at the front lines of the climate like wars, or whether it's island nations or Sami in the north of Lapland, in the Nordic countries or people at Amazon with all kind of like rainforest environments and ecosystems. And so the goal is create a feeling and maybe eventually something more from that. That really isn't about me. But again, I don't want to share hotel. There's enough people highlighting cells and and different things, but I want my, my entry to simply just be the key that opens up a greater amount of conversations about the ecosystems and communities and the climate change impacts about those things.

Michael Nathanson [00:44:22] And you're involved in in other organizations as well. I read that you're on several boards at the University of Washington. You're a peak society member, your busy guy.

Andrew Hughes [00:44:31] Yeah, Yeah. So I'm it's I, I try to remain as much in my community as possible and what I'm actually going to be able to do some some science scientific research for that. So the researchers at English in Washington that are part of the polar is is there so I'll be able to kind of take measurements along the way, drop your best little bitters, lots of observational science information that it's hard for them to get because you can only really get that by being out there or taking an icebreaker up. So hopefully I can bring back something valuable for them as well and kind of help them along. As many partners as I have that I can be impactful for and use it for something more than just my time. That's what I want to do.

Michael Nathanson [00:45:11] Before we get to our extraordinary teaching segment, I wanted to ask you also about dialed out doors that I write about. Tell us about that.

Andrew Hughes [00:45:20] Yeah. So it's it's in the works right now. Been prototyping a number of different products. It started years ago just kind of with bantering in ten inside like different tents after expeditions about things that were our pain points and made a great point where I wanted to actually solve those. So prototyping a number of specifically mountaineering kind of cold weather items to start off with, with the help of then evolving that into a brand and that will kind of expanded through beyond this fall weather, but more on kind of the overall experience of individuals that are underrepresented. I would love to have my colleague partner is as a woman and she has perpetually dealt with kind of

regressive design elements in her experience, the outdoors. And so growing upwards of the mom and his sister, finding a company that can dial it in for the people that are underrepresented while also opening up and becoming an advocate platform for people as well. Because I think that in the day we so many of us go out there, explore an experience without thinking about the venture things or the very land that we're kind of going into and how the impact that's out will only be something that taps into the same bands that like Patagonia, people that are be doing. And I'm trying to be a good steward as as well as a company going for, but it's a little passion project. I'll be launched later this year.

Michael Nathanson [00:46:43] Love it, Love it. Okay. We'll move into our extraordinary teaching segment. And I'm going to now ask you several rapid fire questions. And these are questions that I ask of all of my guests.

Intro [00:46:58] Seeking the extraordinary presents, extraordinary teachings, a deeper look at the qualities that allow people to do extraordinary things.

Michael Nathanson [00:47:09] Andrew, What's been your most satisfying accomplishment in life so far?

Andrew Hughes [00:47:13] I would say reaching the summit of Everest and everything that kind of gave rise to course.

Michael Nathanson [00:47:20] Any regrets in life?

Andrew Hughes [00:47:22] Lots of regrets. However, removing regrets I would never do because I think they define me and upset me on my path to where I'm at.

Michael Nathanson [00:47:30] What single tip would you offer that has helped you be your most extraordinary self?

Andrew Hughes [00:47:36] I think redefine your relationship with discomfort and better define yourself in doing so.

Michael Nathanson [00:47:42] Love that. What's the best advice you've ever given or received? Or is it the same? Same answer?

Andrew Hughes [00:47:47] I think the fact is that someone told me early on that nothing is ever wasted. And it's a very simple thing. But I think when you do that, it changes your perspective and you're able to better, positively approach even the hardships and the things are going wrong and you can always find opportunities for improvement then.

Michael Nathanson [00:48:04] What have been your best learning opportunities?

Andrew Hughes [00:48:08] I think refining and failures are always the best. Like I said earlier, sometimes I haven't reached the opportunities that didn't turn out at all. I think led me to even greater experiences and opportunities in my life.

Michael Nathanson [00:48:20] Do you have any key role models or mentors that you'd like to mention?

Andrew Hughes [00:48:24] I honestly feel that every person is an opportunity to be a teacher. Growing up with kind of a vacuum with certain traditional male vagaries in my life,

I've always looked to my mother for the big of the teacher, for my sister, and the people in my wife who has been so full of love and support. And that kind of view of trying to connect and being loving, empathetic in this life, in this world is really foundational to me.

Michael Nathanson [00:48:50] Love that. Do you have a personal mission?

Andrew Hughes [00:48:52] Yeah. I mean, I guess it would be to all this world in a way that leaves it better than when I came into it.

Michael Nathanson [00:49:02] And that, my friends, is the extraordinary Andrew Hughes. Thank you, Andrew.

Andrew Hughes [00:49:07] Thank you, Michael ... been an honor; my pleasure to talk with you.

Michael Nathanson [00:49:09] It's been great having you here. And I think we're to end this show with a quote from Andrew. And here's his quote. There exists and explore within us all. Anyone who is willing to seek out the unknown and new knowledge explore the depths of one's own life and push the perceived limitations we place on ourselves. Is an explorer of self taking part in the greatest expedition of all the living of one's life. Great quote, Andrew. Thanks a lot.

Andrew Hughes [00:49:42] Thank you.

Michael Nathanson [00:49:44] You can learn more about Andrew at Andrew Hughes Dotcom. You can also join me in following Andrew on Twitter at @AndrewIHughes and on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. And thank you to our sponsor, The Colony Group. The Colony Group is a national wealth and business management company with offices across the country that itself seeks to extraordinary as it pursues its unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering their visions of tomorrow. Learn more about The Colony Group and how it manages Beyond Money. Visit TheColonyGroup.com. You can also follow The Colony Group on LinkedIn and on Twitter @colonygroup. For Seeking the Extraordinary, I'm Michael Nathanson. Follow me on LinkedIn and Twitter at @Nathanson_MJ to learn more about my ongoing search for the extraordinary.