

# EXTREME VACATIONS



As many of us get ready to travel with our families on vacation across the continental U.S., to Alaska or Hawaii, or perhaps overseas over the summer months, we take this opportunity to applaud some of the women who have participated in what might be regarded as extreme vacations: scaling mountains and traveling to the Polar Re-

gions. This month, we highlight Arlene Blum and Ann Bancroft who are profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*, and Barbara Hillary, who will be included in the ebook and paperback editions of our book, scheduled for publication in 2012 and 2013.



In 1970, biophysical chemist, author and mountaineer **Arlene Blum**, Ph.D., was part of the first women's climbing team to reach the summit of Alaska's Mt. McKinley (also referred to

as Denali). When their team leader became ill, as deputy leader Blum (at age 25) assumed command of the six-person team. In this role, she led the successful summit. In 1976, she was the first woman to attempt to ascend Mount Everest, as part of the American Bicentennial Everest Expedition. She led the first all-woman ascent of Annapurna, a mountain of the Himalayas in north-central Nepal, in 1978. Blum has been inducted into the Hall of Mountaineering Excellence.

Blum grew up in Chicago and began climbing during her college days. Her senior thesis on the topic of volcanic gases on Oregon's Mount Hood, allowed her to combine her course requirements with her love of climbing. Her mountaineering books include *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* and *Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life* which detail the challenges, dangers, failures, and successes inherent in climbing the world's tallest mountains. *National Geographic Adventure Magazine* named *Annapurna* one of the 100 top adventure books of all time.

Blum was a researcher and professor in the 1970s, who took time off to raise her daughter. She returned to science and policy work after her daughter went to college. Blum received a Purpose Prize, awarded to people over 60 who are solving society's largest problems. Blum is currently working to protect human health and the environment from toxic chemicals. One of her accomplishments was her campaign to ban a carcinogen that is used as a fire-retardant in children's pajamas.

Although she does not climb mountains, [Ann Bancroft](#), one of the world's preeminent polar explorers, has also had her share of challenges, dangers, failures, and successes. Today, she is an internationally recognized leader who is dedicated to in-



spiring women and girls around the world to unleash the power of their dreams.

In 1986, Bancroft dogsledded 1,000 miles from the Northwest Territories in Canada to the North Pole, as the only female member of the Steger International Polar Expedition. This trek earned her the distinction of being the first known woman in history to cross the ice to the North Pole. Six years later, she led the first American women's east to west crossing of Greenland. The next year, 1993, Bancroft led the American Women's Expedition to the South Pole, a 67-day expedition of 660 miles.

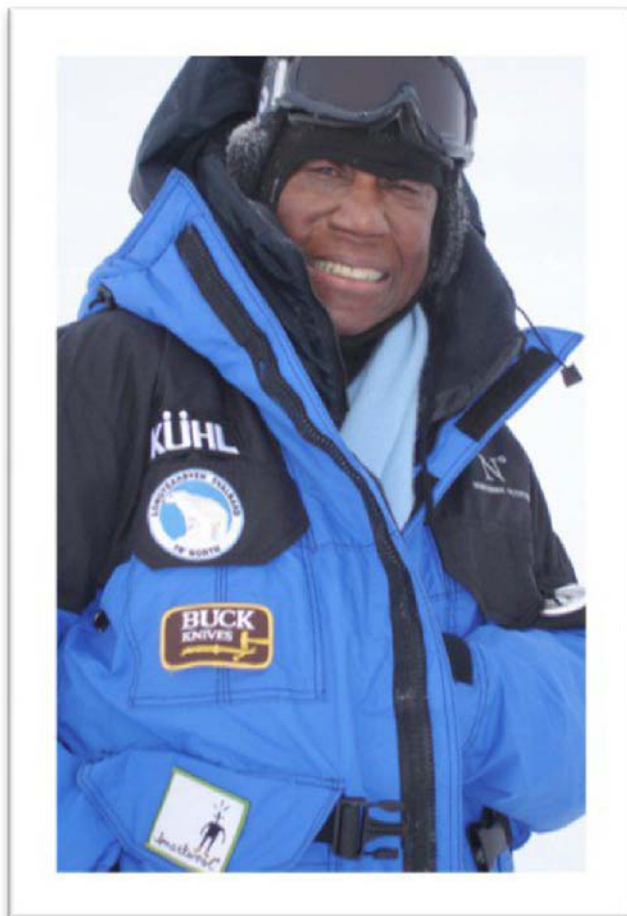
This journey, by four women, was accomplished on skis. This effort earned her the distinction of being the first woman who we know of, who has crossed the ice to both the North and South Poles.

Bancroft's love of exploring started back in her childhood. Her father often took her on camping and canoe trips in northern Minnesota. At age eight, she began to lead her own mini-expeditions, cajoling her cousins into accompanying her on backyard winter camping trips.

Through her various roles as an explorer, educator, sought-after speaker and philanthropist, Bancroft believes that by sharing stories related to her dreams of outdoor adventure, she can help inspire a global audience to pursue their individual dreams. She developed a foundation, now named the Ann Bancroft Foundation. The vision of the Foundation is that every girl and woman in the United States, who dares to dream, will have the support, inspiration, and resources that will help make her dreams come true. Bancroft has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

On April 23, 2007, at age 75, lung cancer and breast cancer survivor **Barbara Hillary** became the first African-American woman to reach the North Pole – and one of the oldest people to achieve this amazing feat! When she reached the South Pole in January 2011 (at age 79), she became the first African-American woman to have reached both poles.

After retiring as a professional nurse, Barbara Hillary became fascinated with arctic travel. She found new challenges when she



took up snowmobiling and dog sledding in the United States and Canada. During this time she became aware that no African-American woman had reached the North Pole; she set that as her goal. Hillary was able to achieve that goal in 2007, after overcoming many obstacles. To prepare for the rigorous travel to the North Pole, Hillary trained for six to nine months – even pulling a tire tied to a waist harness up and down the streets of Queens (New York) while she was in training.

Hillary encourages everyone to live life to its fullest. She muses: if a 75-year-old African-American woman can ski her way to the North Pole, then what is stopping you from taking on anything in your personal life? Everything is within your reach, she believes.

We truly salute these amazing adventurers who demonstrate to all of us that most of life's challenges can be overcome with passion, determination, and persistence. If they can do it, we all can do it, too!



**Charlotte S. Waisman**, PhD, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker. As an executive coach, Waisman coauthored *50 Activities for Developing Leaders* and *The Leadership Training Activity Book*. She is a principal with a consulting company specializing in leadership and workforce excellence initiatives.

**Jill S. Tietjen**, PE, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is an author, speaker and electrical engineer. Her other books include the *Setting the Record Straight* series. Tietjen is a top historian on scientific and technical women. She is President/CEO of *Technically Speaking*, a consulting company that specializes in improving career opportunities for women in technology.

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