

# EXPEDITION NEWS

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***EXPEDITION NEWS*, founded in 1994, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.**

**October 2019 - Volume Twenty-Five, Number Ten  
*Our 25th Anniversary Issue!***

## **EXPEDITION FOCUS**

### ***Expedition News* Celebrates 25 Years of Exploration and Adventure Storytelling**

By Jeff Blumenfeld, editor and publisher

It was October 1994, 25 years ago to be exact. It was the birth of *Expedition News*, a monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures.

Today, 300 issues and an estimated 1.2 million words later, we're still at it, having never missed a single month. Still at it celebrating the field of exploration and adventure, with an emphasis on those projects you might not read in *National Geographic* or anywhere else for that matter.



*EN editor and publisher Jeff Blumenfeld celebrates 25 years of exploration and adventure storytelling.*

For a quarter century, we've been fascinated by projects that stimulate, motivate and educate. We've been inspired, as well, by the steadfast determination of people such as Norman D. Vaughan, determined to climb a mountain in Antarctica named after himself. Or by Reid Stowe, an artist and sailor who completed history's longest non-stop, self-sufficient sea voyage - 1,152 days without once coming ashore.

To avoid taking ourselves too seriously, we've written about the quirky side of this business of always trying to discover what's over the next hill, to see the unseen. We've gently covered Sir Edmund Hillary's spectacularly bad haircuts; Andy Warhol's phallic image left on the moon by Apollo 12; and peak baggers upset that Rhode Island's 812-ft. highpoint is on private property.

We wrote about an adventurer who hit 510 golf balls 1,319 miles across Mongolia (a par 11,880); a Polar Capsule, once thought lost, that floated from the North Pole to the northern coast of Ireland three years later; an adventurer in a pedal boat who achieved the fastest human-powered west-to-east crossing of the Atlantic (40 days); and the environmentalist who

drove from London to Athens on nothing more than cooking oil that he begged from restaurant French fryers and schnitzel shops along the way.

Were these significant expeditions, which I define as trips with a nobility of purpose? Hardly. But *Expedition News* nonetheless honored their persistence and dedication to fulfill a personal dream.

We've been profoundly saddened right down to our very core by the untimely demise of explorers and adventurers we've met and have come to admire. Japanese adventurer Naomi Uemura, British mountaineer Alison Hargreaves, American alpinist Jeff Lowe, and freediver Audrey Mestre who tragically died before our eyes at a competition in 2002.

After meeting polar explorer and environmental educator Will Steger in 1985, who four years later agreed to be my Explorers Club co-sponsor, it occurred to me that the hundreds of excellent expedition proposals I used to review as a public relations representative for The Du Pont Company, needed to continue circulating once the textile giant took a pass.

In our business plan, I wrote that *Expedition News* would shine a light on well-developed sponsorship proposals and provide credit for sponsors who find value in demonstrating product performance of their expedition gear and apparel in extreme conditions.

So it was that *Expedition News* began as a modest fax, then became a printed edition mailed each month. An early form of e-mail called MCI Mail was also used to communicate with subscribers.

Today, through direct e-mail distribution, a website, blog, Twitter account, and excerpts in The Explorers Club *Explorers Journal*, we reach an estimated 10,000 explorers, adventurers and corporate sponsor each month.

While not particularly remunerative, publishing *Expedition News* for so long did lead to book deals with Skyhorse Publishing in 2008, and Rowman & Littlefield in 2019. It also resulted in three separate invitations to serve as a guest speaker on cruises to the Mediterranean, Western Caribbean, and Canary Islands. It was an opportunity to take over the main stage on three Celebrity cruise ships, sharing the success and failures of numerous explorers and adventurers with hundreds of passengers.

Had the talks not conflicted with bingo games, or handbag sales, there would have been hundreds more cruisers in the audience. But still, being a cruise ship lecturer was a great gig.

## **Lessons Learned**

So what have I learned these past 25 years?

\* **Fully Embrace Social Media** - Every project needs to fully embrace social media, if for no other reason than to provide maximum exposure for sponsors. Typically, an expedition leader is entering into a marketing agreement with a sponsor. You want funding? Your benefactors will want to receive credit and assistance in selling their product or service.

\* **Everest is an Annual Train Wreck** - It's the mountain the media loves to cover. Much as I try to avoid writing about it every spring, to paraphrase the character played by Al Pacino in *The Godfather: Part 3*, just as I thought I was done writing about it, the mountain pulls me back in.

Want to impress someone? Tell them you climbed the world's second tallest mountain. We admire mountaineers such as Vanessa O'Brien who became the first American and first British woman to climb K2 (as a result of her dual nationality). Everest has been summited over 5,300 times, according to *National Geographic*. K2 and dozens more challenging peaks, not so much.

\* **There's Never a Shortage of Expedition News** - Our initial concern that we would be struggling for material has proven unfounded. There are always more projects than we can jumar into each issue. There are new firsts to cover; historic mysteries to solve such as the disappearance of Amelia Earhart or loss of Mallory and Irvine's Vest Pocket Kodak (VPK) camera on Everest; and an entire category called cryptozoology that relies on exploration techniques to solve unexplained phenomena (yes, we're looking at you Bigfoot).

\* **The So What? Rule Still Applies** - A tourist comes back and tells you about all the countries he or she bagged; an explorer will mention countries, but more importantly, will explain why those visits mattered.

When it comes to seeking sponsorship, there needs to be a reason for the trip. A news hook, perhaps. Or a charitable tie-in. Or legitimate scientific study. Otherwise, sponsors ask why they should sponsor your vacation.

\* **Firsts Still Count** - Scoff though you may that the list of firsts is being sliced thin. However, stories of fighting adversity to become the first to summit blind or disabled or as a transgender, still matters to the millions who are blind, disabled or undergoing a change in their sexual orientation. Summiting a mountain continues to be a metaphor for overcoming adversity.

\* **The Expedition Isn't Over Until the Last Powerpoint** - Unless you were self-funded, or the project was funded through donations with no payback expected, explorers and

adventurers have a duty to tell the rest of us, those who didn't get to go, how they overcame adversity and why the project mattered.

Climbing that peak, crossing Antarctica, or descending the Amazon was the hard part; captivating the audience with your unique perspective of that part of the world should be the most rewarding, especially as it relates to inspiring future explorers.

Thus has it always been. Whether through magic lanterns, Kodak slide carousels, or Powerpoints, the public still loves a great adventure story well told.

Hopefully, our storytelling journey will continue for the next 25 years.

***Cleanup Crew*** - A Bally-sponsored effort this May helped rid Mount Everest of litter as part of its Peak Outlook initiative. (Photo: Samir Jung Thapa)

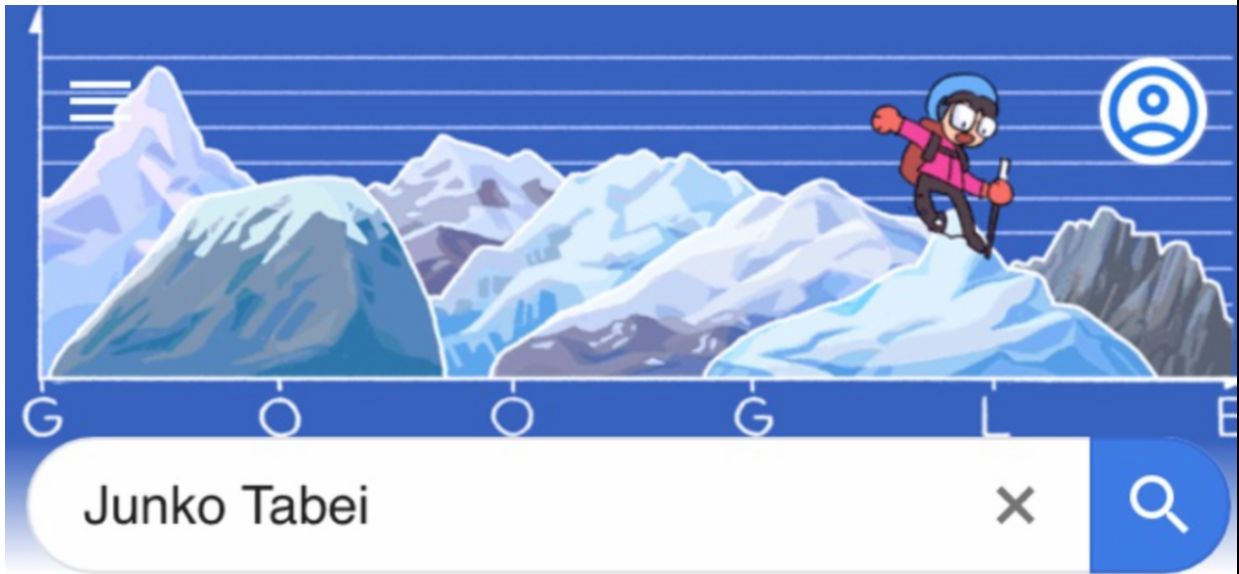
Last spring, the Swiss fashion house Bally sponsored a mission to remove garbage from the slopes of Mount Everest, even in the so-called Death Zone above 26,000 feet. In September, Italian watch manufacturer Panerai will take about 15 customers diving off the island of Moorea in French Polynesia, hoping to catch sight of whales.

And from August through December, the Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen will underwrite a round-the-world flight for a restored Spitfire airplane that first went into production in 1943.

"Premium marketers have been compelled to look beyond traditional advertising, driven in part by consumers' desire for brands with a sense of mission," writes Nat Ives.

"Rarefied land, air and sea environments fit luxury marketers' ambition to project an aura of exclusivity. None of these brands are cleaning up Times Square, after all, or crossing the country in an Amtrak train."

## WEB WATCH



### Juko's Doodle

On Sept. 22, the Google Doodle celebrated the 80th birthday of the late Japanese mountaineer Junko Tabei, the first woman to summit Mount Everest. She was also the first woman to climb the Seven Summits. She passed away in 2016 at the age of 77.

Tabei is celebrated for breaking stereotypes about women, both in her culture and internationally. The whimsical animation is a high honor indeed. In 1998, Google's co-founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, were on their way to Burning Man and wanted to message their trip to the world. So they took Google's signature logo, which greets visitors to the company's homepage, and replaced the second "o" with an image of the festival's icon. They considered their "out-of-office" message a public inside joke.

This is how Google Doodles began - and the company, only a few months old, wasn't even incorporated yet.

Now, 21 years and several thousand Doodles later, the daily sketches are the quirky face of one of the world's most powerful companies, seen as part of five billion searches per day.

See the Doodle here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o27MD7Y9oA4>

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