

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.

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Celebrating Our 23rd Year!

EXPEDITION UPDATE



Vanessa O'Brien (Photo courtesy AAC - NY Section)

Vanessa O'Brien, First American Woman to Summit K2, is AAC Guest of Honor. Vanessa O'Brien was guest of honor at the American Alpine Club - New York Section dinner in New York on Nov. 11. On July 28, 2017, at the age of 52, she succeeded in her three-year mission to become the first American woman (and first British woman) to summit the so-called Savage Mountain located on the China-Pakistan border, the world's second tallest peak at 8611m/28,251 feet.

The summit push, involving 11 other climbers, including six Nepali Sherpas, lasted 16 hours and was met by deep snow, horrific winds, increasing precipitation and extreme cold.

After being stretchered off K2 in 1953 with frostbitten feet, American climber George Bell (1926-2000) famously wrote: "It's a savage mountain that tries to kill you." In fact, K2 is a mountain known for killing one out of every four that reach its summit peak.

O'Brien estimates total Everest summits at 7,600, while K2 has only been summited 386 times. Of that, only 18 women have survived the climb to the top. In fact, O'Brien says about three times as many women have gone into outer space than have stood atop K2.

O'Brien says she's in awe of the climbers of the 1930s and 40s. "These were climbers who just climbed. They went up. They didn't know about the Death Zone, didn't know about high altitude pulmonary edema.

"Winning in the alpine climbing game may include merely surviving," she said. "I had to do this for country and I had to do this for women." A previous attempt was thwarted by avalanche. "When a mountain has excess precipitation it avalanches," she told the 100 dinner attendees.

"That's what mountains do. Like a wet dog that shakes. The problem is when you're on it, in the way." Speaking of her historic 2017 expedition, she said, "It was very gracious that the mountain allowed us to summit."

Opening speaker was high school teacher Greg Morrissey, who was a 2017 AAC Live Your Dream grant recipient for his work bringing outdoor recreation to today's youth. Their Global Opportunities Scholarship enables financially restricted high school students to participate in travel adventures. "I usually address 16-year-old boys, so it's great to address people who are actually awake," he joked.

The AAC dinner was sponsored by the law firm Proskauer. The Arc'Teryx Soho store sponsored a K2 trivia contest.

In a related story, it's not too soon to consider applying for the American Alpine Club Live Your Dream Climbing Grant, powered by The North Face. The grant funds \$200 to \$1,000 to individuals or small teams in pursuit of their personal climbing dreams. The emphasis of the grant is on projects that have significant positive impact on grantees' progressions as climbers, as opposed to cutting-edge or exploratory objectives. The two-month application period is open February 1 through March 31 each year. Recipients will be announced in May.

For more information: www.americanalpineclub.org