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VOLUME 1

STEVEN J. OVERMAN AND
KELLY BOYER SAGERT

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ICONS OF WOMEN'S SPORT

Volume One

Steven J. Overman
and Kelly Boyer Sagert

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This book is printed on acid-free paper ♾
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To my niece, Erin Nicole, part of the next generation of amazing female athletes: from pitching on the Rosewood softball team (All-Star Most Valuable Player) to playing basketball for the Lady Longhorns and Clippers, you are blazing your own unique, athletic path to success.

—Kelly Boyer Sagert

To my wife, Elizabeth, and good friend Mary Margaret Bollinger, whose comments on the manuscript proved invaluable.

—Steven J. Overman

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Series Foreword

Worshipped and cursed. Loved and loathed. Obsessed about the world over. What does it take to become an icon? Regardless of subject, culture, or era, the requisite qualifications are the same: (1) challenge the status quo, (2) influence millions, and (3) impact history.

Using these criteria, ABC-Clio/Greenwood introduces a new reference format and approach to popular culture. Spanning a wide range of subjects, volumes in the Greenwood Icons series provide students and general readers a port of entry into the most fascinating and influential topics of the day. Every title offers an in-depth look at twenty-four to thirty-six iconic figures, each of which captures the essence of a broad subject. These icons typically embody a group of values, elicit strong reactions, reflect the essence of a particular time and place, and link different traditions and periods. Among those featured are artists and activists, superheroes and spies, inventors and athletes, the legends and mythmakers of entire generations. Yet icons can also come from unexpected places: as the heroine who transcends the pages of a novel or as the revolutionary idea that shatters our previously held beliefs. Whether people, places, or things, such icons serve as a bridge between the past and the present, the canonical and the contemporary. By focusing on icons central to popular culture, this series encourages students to appreciate cultural diversity and critically analyze issues of enduring significance.

Most important, these books are as entertaining as they are provocative. Is Disneyland a more influential icon of the American West than Las Vegas? How do ghosts and ghouls reflect our collective psyche? Is Barry Bonds an inspiring or deplorable icon of baseball?

Designed to foster debate, the series serves as a unique resource that is ideal for paper writing or report purposes. Insightful, in-depth entries provide far more information than conventional reference articles but are less intimidating and more accessible than a book-length biography. The most revered and reviled icons of American and world history are brought to life with related

sidebars, timelines, fact boxes, and quotations. Authoritative entries are accompanied by bibliographies, making these titles an ideal starting point for further research. Spanning a wide range of popular topics, including business, literature, civil rights, politics, music, and more, books in the series provide fresh insights for the student and popular reader into the power and influence of icons, a topic of as vital interest today as in any previous era.

Preface

In the year 2000, when the twentieth century flowed into the twenty-first, journalists and editors around the globe felt a collective urge to create "best of" lists that ranked people and events from the twentieth century. *Sports Illustrated*, in line with this trend, chose who they believed were the one hundred "greatest sportswomen" of the past century. ("Top 100 Sportswomen" 2000. Sports Illustrated Women. http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/siforwomen/top_100/1/. Accessed May 12, 2011.)

This list—and others like it—is subjective by nature. How can one compare, for example, women who played basketball with women who climbed mountains, or played golf? How is it possible to compare women who competed near the beginning of the twentieth century, when equipment, training, and opportunities were typically inferior, to women who competed near the end of the century? How can one compare a woman who suffered from prejudice, whether racial, cultural, or socioeconomic, to one who had comparatively more advantages and freedoms?

Nevertheless, *Sports Illustrated*—and the authors of *Icons of Women's Sport*—made those judgment calls. Although there is significant overlap between the *Sports Illustrated* list and the biographies selected to appear in the two-volume set of this reference work, there are also notable differences. We selected thirty-seven women. Many from the *Sports Illustrated* list do appear in these two volumes, while others in the magazine's list did not make our cut. We did not choose, for example, Marion L. Jones, an Olympic gold medalist in track and field from the United States. In 2007 Jones admitted to taking steroids before competing in the 2000 Summer Olympics, which meant that she needed to forfeit her medals. Because she lied to federal agents, she also went to jail. We mention this not to denigrate Jones; but, rather, to show the fluidity of such lists, since *Sports Illustrated* editors did not have this knowledge when crafting their rankings.

A significant reason that athletes appear in this work (who did not appear in the *Sports Illustrated* list) is that some women have accomplished incredible feats in the twenty-first century. For example, although Venus and Serena Williams were playing professional tennis before the year 2000, it is in part their longevity at the top of their sport that caused them to be included here. Other examples of modern-day athletes who appear in this set but not in *Sports Illustrated*'s list include race car driver Danica Patrick and skateboarder/snowboarder Cara-Beth Burnside.

Criteria for inclusion in this reference set include that a woman must serve as an icon in her sport by making history; challenging the status quo; influencing sport culture; and garnering wide public interest. Women selected as icons in these volumes can be celebrated for their accomplishments in advancing cultural diversity; their quest for gender equity; and their ability to break class barriers and to transcend stereotypes. These volumes feature athletes across a wide spectrum of women's sports, with appropriate attention given to the major ones. Readers, from high school students to college students and more, will find information about representatives from both amateur and professional sports, including Olympic athletes. The biographies were written by Steven J. Overman or Kelly Boyer Sagert. Those written by Overman include Stacy Allison, Joan Benoit, Bonnie Blair, Gertrude Ederle, Mia Hamm, Julie Krone, Lisa Leslie, Nancy Lopez, Donna Lopiano, Shirley Muldowney, Martina Navratilova, Danica Patrick, Manon Rheaume, Dorothy "Dot" Richardson, Dawn Riley, Picabo Street, Dara Torres, and Babe Didrikson Zaharias. Those written by Boyer Sagert include Zola Budd, Cara-Beth Burnside, Nadia Comaneci, Peggy Fleming, Dawn Fraser, Althea Gibson, Steffi Graf, Florence Griffith Joyner, Dorothy Hamill, Sonja Henie, Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Billie Jean King, Olga Korbut, Mary Lou Retton, Wilma Rudolph, Sheryl Swoopes, and Venus and Serena Williams

This two-volume set contains an introductory essay that shares the larger cultural impact and historical role that selected women have played in and through sports, along with thirty-six thoughtful biographies of the athletes, arranged in alphabetical order. Each biography is complemented by a sidebar that expands upon an issue relevant to the athlete or that provides information about another person who played a key role in her life. Each biography also includes recommendations for further reading about the woman profiled.

The volumes also contain a chronology at the beginning of volume one, highlighting either key events in the lives of the women included or important benchmarks in the sports they played. Events covered in *Icons of Women's Sport* take place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with historic perspectives on the timeline reaching back into the nineteenth century. Most of the athletes profiled are from the United States, while others came from places as far away as Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Norway,

Romania, South Africa, and the Soviet Union. This work cannot cover every female athlete worthy of an iconic designation, but it attempts to recognize and add to the information about those women who in many ways have given their lives to their sports. *Icons of Women's Sport* ends with a selected bibliography of recommended resources and a comprehensive index.

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Introduction

Icons of Women's Sport introduces readers to outstanding athletes who made their marks in the arena of competition and rose to the top of their sport. The biographies portray women who graced their areas of competition with remarkable feats of athleticism and fought the battles to gain access to the arena for all women. These amazing athletes—runners, racers, swimmers, sailors, skaters, ballplayers, gymnasts, jockeys—have shattered barriers, broken records, and carried off the laurels. They rise above the labels of sports celebrity and role model. They are icons.

Today, we take for granted that both sexes participate in sports. We watch young girls compete with boys on soccer teams at the neighborhood park; we attend women's high school and college basketball games; we turn on the television and watch women golfers hit drives and sink putts; we cheer for female athletes competing in the Olympic Games. But it has been a long struggle for women to attain this standing. Many of them had to fight for their right to step onto the gym floors, courts, rinks, and fields. Girls and women also have had to overcome the stigma attached to being an athlete. In spite of the formidable barriers, women's sports are replete with iconic figures who defied stereotypes and excelled in the arena of competition. The history of their triumphant achievements should not be forgotten.

In the Victorian Era, extending roughly from 1850 to 1910, the convention was for women to remain within the confines of the domestic life, except when escorted by men. Women were counseled to preserve their purity, rebuff strenuous exercise, and maintain the appearance of a delicate, feminine body. That women were more frail than men was accepted as a given. Contemporaneous medical opinions voiced concerns about the adverse effect of physical activity on women's bodies. The male-dominated health profession advised that activities like horseback riding and cycling might harm a woman's uterus and impair her ability to produce children.

While most women complied with these restraints, a few rebels defied the conventions. In 1876 an athletic event took place that might well be labeled the first "Battle of the Sexes." Mary Marshall, a five-foot-three-inch speed walker who had competed in six-day races against other women, challenged Peter Van Ness, a professional pedestrian from Philadelphia, to a twenty-mile contest. Marshall prevailed over her male adversary, winning two out of three races held on a circular track in New York City's Central Park. She accepted her $500 victory prize and retired. Marshall was an inspiration for other women who aspired to be athletes.

In 1877 thirty women in Staten Island, New York formed the Ladies Club for Outdoor Sports. They acquired a clubhouse and participated in archery, tennis, and other activities. Meanwhile, upper-class women were joining their husbands as members of country clubs that provided opportunities to play golf and tennis, and ride horses. Although joint membership was extended to wives, the playing fields weren't level. Women golfers weren't allowed on the club links during prime playing time, and female tennis players had to relinquish the courts to the men during daytime hours.

While some women were playing club sports, others took their game to the championship level. In 1887 Charlotte "Lottie" Dod became Britain's youngest tennis champion at age fifteen by winning Wimbledon. She played at Wimbledon four more years, dropping only one set in ten matches. Dod was an all-around athlete who won a silver medal in archery at the 1908 Olympic Games and also played golf and field hockey. Across the Atlantic, Eleonora Sears set the style for athletic women. Born in Boston in 1881, Sears competed in traditional men's sports like squash, tennis, and polo. She introduced riding britches and rode horses astride rather than sidesaddle. She also raced speedboats and once skippered a yacht that beat Alfred Vanderbilt's entry in a regatta. Sears was one of the few well-known women of the time to appear publicly in pants and with her hair cut short. Her public persona shocked both men and women of the era (Woolum, 1998, 216–18).

Sears' choice of garments underscores the fact that women's participation in sport was abridged not only by behavioral norms, but also by strict standards governing female attire. The exaggerated skirts and sleeves supported by crinolines or hoops, the tight corsets, and high-buttoned shoes didn't exactly encourage free movement. Sears wasn't the first woman to challenge clothing conventions. In 1851 Amelia Bloomer advocated that women adopt a short skirt and ankle-length pants to free themselves from the encumbrances of Victorian dress. This outfit, dubbed "bloomers," was adopted by feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, among others. She exclaimed, "What incredible freedom I enjoyed!" (Ginzberg, 2009, 83).

The bicycle craze following the invention of the safety bicycle in 1888 provided a further incentive to alter women's outfits. Some female cyclists adopted the split skirt, or "knickers," while others rode in bloomers. Suffragist

Susan B. Anthony has been quoted by many that the bicycle had done more for the emancipation of women than anything else. Estimates are that as many as 30,000 of their gender took up the activity in the 1890s. The suffragette and founder of the WCTU, Frances Willard, began riding a bicycle at age fifty-three. Her memoir, *A Wheel Within a Wheel* (1895), describes her cycling experiences and society's reaction. The liberalization of clothing styles led to other breakthroughs. At the turn of the century, promoters formed women's baseball clubs called "bloomer teams." Hundreds of women's teams cropped up across the continent, and some of the teams went on national tours.

Australian swimmer Annette Kellerman popularized women's swimming during the early twentieth century. She appeared on American beaches and on stage wearing sleek, streamlined bathing suits, both sleeveless and form-fitting. Kellerman became a vaudeville star, performing water acrobatics in an on-stage tank. Hollywood beckoned, and she became a film actress and early sex symbol. Kellerman gained notoriety with a skinny-dipping scene in the film *A Daughter of the Gods*, released in 1916. She is given credit for popularizing synchronized swimming and for inventing the one-piece swimsuit. Three years after Kellerman's risqué film scene, future Olympic medalist Ethelda Bleibtrey dared to strip off her stockings on a New York City public beach and was cited for "nude swimming" (Mortimer, 2008, 29). Other women joined the protest against ungainly swimming outfits. The Europeans had already abbreviated swimwear. Photos of the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm show women swimmers in sleeveless suits with no stockings. American swimmer Gertrude Ederle swam the English Channel in 1926 with a bare midriff to eliminate drag, thus creating the two-piece suit. Practicality had trumped prudery.

Meanwhile, another women's sport venue was coming into its own beyond the purview of public spectacle. Women's colleges began offering physical education classes and athletic programs following the Civil War. Over the next few decades, sports and exercise programs were offered by an increasing number of schools, notably the so-called Seven Sisters Colleges in the Northeast (Woloch, 2009, 15). Gymnastics was a staple of the early programs. The outfits, though cumbersome by today's standards, allowed women considerable freedom of movement. By the turn of the twentieth century, 85,000 women were enrolled in colleges in the United States.

A growing number of coeds were finding "masculine" competitive sport more appealing than formalized exercise programs offered by Physical Education Departments. The Women's Athletic Association, the first college sports association, was founded in 1891 by students at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Basketball soon became a popular sport, beginning at Smith College in Massachusetts in 1892. Four years later, the students began playing volleyball. The new profession of women physical educators promoted intramural competition in the popular sports. They viewed the more public men's intercollegiate sports as inappropriate for young women. However, the students

pursued their own agenda. Inter-school competition in women's sports like basketball and field hockey gained popularity, amidst criticism from some of the professors.

Interscholastic and intercollegiate sports for women remained controversial into the twentieth century. Some states passed legislation that banned state basketball tournaments for high school girls. In the 1920s a contingent of women college faculty campaigned against highly competitive sports for women, as they considered them exploitive. Physical educators criticized the short-sleeved jerseys and shiny satin, high-cut pants that women basketball players wore in organized league play under the direction of men. The news media sensationalized women athletes, referring to them as "Amazons." Journalists, mostly men, emphasized the "feminine attributes" of athletes and played down their performance and sportsmanship. The undue focus on athletes' appearance would haunt women's sports for decades.

The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) took control of women's competitive sports in the World War I era. Promoters of AAU women's basketball tournaments often held beauty contests in conjunction with the competition. Winners of these pageants took their place on the victory stand alongside the recipients of the athletic awards. Women educators continued to denounce the commercial exploitation of female athletes, directing their harshest criticism at male coaches and managers. Travel schedules and large crowds of spectators were seen as additional perils to the women. In 1920 the women's division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) was formed to govern women's college sports.

Fewer constraints were placed on working-class women athletes. In the 1920s several American companies began to form teams that competed in leagues and tournaments, and these included women's teams. The company teams, typically coached by men, competed in intramural company events, industrial and municipal leagues, and increasingly in national tournaments. Bowling, softball, basketball, and track and field were popular sports. In 1925 Chicago hosted a city basketball championship that included women's teams sponsored by local businesses. The Hartford Insurance Company in Connecticut sponsored a women's basketball team that competed across New England. Babe Didrikson got her start, fresh out of high school, playing ball for a Dallas, Texas insurance company.

The AAU played a crucial role in defining women's sports over the course of the twentieth century. Founded in 1888, the organization became a major arbiter of amateur sport. Early on, the AAU had refused to sanction women's sports. A generation later, the union was sponsoring women's swimming and diving, as well as track and field competitions. The AAU organized a women's national swim meet in 1916, a track championship in 1924, and a basketball tournament in 1926. Despite these breakthroughs, traditionalists continued to cite reasons why women shouldn't participate in competitive sports.

However, it became more and more difficult to maintain that women were the weaker sex and deny them their place in the arena after nineteen-year-old swimmer Sybil Bauer broke the men's backstroke record in 1922, and four years later Gertrude Ederle conquered the English Channel, besting the men's record by more than an hour and a half. A decade earlier, Annie Smith Peck had made the first ascent of 21,000-foot Mt. Coropuna in Peru, proclaiming that she wanted to stand at a height where no man had previously stood.

Despite these heroic athletic feats, there was continuing resistance to women participating in team sports. The conventional view was that women should participate in sports that emphasized individual skill and displayed grace and beauty, the qualities characteristic of figure skating and gymnastics. Swimming, for example, was considered more appropriate and beneficial to women than "masculine" sports like basketball. The lines between competitive swimming and traditional feminine culture were blurred by beauty pageants that included swimsuits. Increasingly, women were seen at public beaches in swimwear that revealed their limbs. The term "bathing beauty" entered the lexicon, and newspaper headlines applied such terms as "nymphs" to women swimmers.

The truth was that women were now participating in several sports at various levels. The 1920s witnessed the first women sports heroes. Gertrude Ederle's swimming feats and Helen Willis' successes on the tennis courts were routinely reported in the *New York Times*. Willis and Ederle were dubbed, respectively, "America's Sweetheart" and "America's Girl." Both endearments revealed a note of condescension. Sonja Henie's gold medal in figure skating in the 1928 Olympics received wide acclaim. Henie followed her Olympic victory with performances in ice shows and a successful film career as a Hollywood actress. The female athlete was viewed as an entertainer, for better or worse. The assumption persisted that some sports were masculine and others feminine. The former included running, jumping, and throwing: sports that the tomboyish Babe Didrikson excelled in. Figure skating, with its aesthetic elements, gained wide support; however, women's speed skating had to wait three decades for its Olympic debut.

Popular fashion in the 1920s constituted a formidable counterforce to conventional views of femininity. The slim, boyish women known as "flappers" symbolized a break with tradition. Women athletes adopted the radical clothing styles of the decade. Colorful tennis star Suzanne Lenglen was emblematic of the liberated woman. She rebelled against the traditional long skirts, petticoats, and high-necked blouses. She appeared on the courts in a one-piece sleeveless dress reaching to mid-calf, with no petticoats and wearing a bandanna rather than a hat. Two decades later, in 1949, "Gussie" Moran would appear at Wimbledon in lace-trimmed panties peeking from under a ballerina skirt. Proper sporting attire for women had become a matter of personal choice—and public attention.

In the 1920s and '30s, newspapers and popular magazines began covering women's sports on a regular basis. Tennis' Helen Wills, known for her ruthless competitiveness (not considered a feminine trait), appeared twice on the cover of *Time* magazine. Henie appeared on the magazine's cover in 1939. Babe Didrikson, the most famous female athlete of the 1930s, was a publicity hound who pursued the press relentlessly. Her national renown dated from the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, where she won three track and field medals. That same year, Amelia Earhart made the headlines with her solo flight across the Atlantic. Babe and Amelia both had been quintessential tomboys. The young Babe not only played sports with boys and beat them routinely at their own game, she would challenge them to a bout of fisticuffs. The less combative Earhart loved horseback riding, played on the school basketball team, and wore bloomers. At finishing school in the east, she competed in field hockey and learned to fence. Earhart then learned to fly and competed in the Women's Air Derby, a popular but dangerous sport during the early years of aviation (Woolum, 1998, 110–13). Feats by these two sportswomen helped erode the lingering female stereotypes.

A select few women athletes competed with men in this era. German-American Helene Mayer won the 1938 fencing title by defeating the men's champion. She held the title for two days before the United States Fencing Association hastily imposed a ban on competition between women and men. That same year, Babe Didrikson entered the men's PGA-sponsored (Professional Golfers Association) Los Angeles Open tournament. She shot 76-81 to make the two-day cut, missing the three-day cut after shooting a 79. Babe was the first woman in history to make the cut in a regular PGA tour event. In 1945 she competed in three PGA tournaments.

International sports had been a habitual battleground for gender equity. Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, felt that the Games should be for men only and opined that women's sports were against the laws of nature. He was shocked by the sight of scantily-clad women engaging in athletic activity. The baron advocated that women's exclusive role in the Games should be to crown the medal winners. In his view, sports should be reserved as a showcase for male athleticism, with female applause as a reward. Nevertheless, women were allowed to participate in the early Olympic Games. The poorly-attended 1904 Games held in St. Louis featured women's archery competition. Women's tennis, archery, and figure skating were included in the Olympic festival during the 1908 London Games, but the Americans didn't participate. Women's swimming and equestrian were added in the 1912 and 1916 Games. The Americans sent their women's swimming team to the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium, where a total of sixty-five women competed in a handful of sports. The 1924 games in Paris were dubbed "The First Women's Olympic Games." They included women athletes from seven countries, including the United States. However, it wasn't

until the 1928 Games that women's competition became an equally recognized event.

The Americans continued to search for an appropriate model for women's sports. In the mid-1920s Lou Hoover, wife of the U.S. secretary of commerce and future president Herbert Hoover, organized a group called the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (WDNAAF) to broaden the opportunity for American girls and women to compete. The federation was most concerned about elitism infiltrating women's sport. It encouraged intramural sports in schools and colleges, while advising against intercollegiate sports for highly skilled women. Hoover's group opposed the practices of gate receipts for contests, as well as travel for athletes to sporting events and any publicity, because of concerns about young women being exploited. The WDNAAF criticized the industrial leagues and generally opposed Olympic competition for women.

Financial constraints during the Great Depression of the 1930s had an adverse effect on both women's and men's sports. Competitive swimming, which drew upon middle-class women in private clubs as athletes, endured relatively unscathed. The working-class sports of bowling and softball also survived, but track and field suffered. A women's track meet in Chicago in 1935 drew only one hundred spectators. Women's industrial leagues remained viable into the 1950s, when television and the population shift to the suburbs contributed to their demise.

In the 1940s significant developments took place in the nation's historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and Tennessee State in Nashville were among the schools to produce track and field athletes that would integrate the U.S. women's Olympic team. In 1948 the first African American woman—Alice Coachman, a former Tuskegee student—won an Olympic medal. This breakthrough was followed by Olympic track star Wilma Rudolph's record-breaking performances beginning in the mid-1950s. Women's tennis remained segregated in the post–World War II era until Althea Gibson broke the racial barrier. In 1957 Gibson won both the U.S. Open and Wimbledon tournaments. She would become the first African American woman to be voted Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 created more opportunities for African American women to participate in amateur and professional sports. The feats of track stars Wilma Rudolph and Wyomia Tyus in the 1960s afforded African American women an unprecedented status in the sport.

The gains made by African American women athletes were a reflection of both the declining gender prejudice and lingering racial prejudice. The concept of femininity for women of color wasn't strictly tied to the narrow set of attributes and activities projected onto white women. Black women hadn't been limited to feminine roles that the dominant culture defined as acceptable. Stereotypes of black prowess outweighed those of femininity, and black

women's femininity was discounted. Consequently, these women of color were seen stereotypically as more athletic than white women. Ironically, this prejudice translated into more freedom to compete in athletic events.

Women athletes joined in the national pastime in 1943 when Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley formed the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. The players all were white, predominantly working-class women. Wrigley's experiment would remain viable for a decade. In 1948 the league featured ten teams and drew close to a million fans. The women played in major league ballparks on the same days that the men's teams competed. Women ballplayers were advancing on their own initiative. Mamie "Peanut" Johnson played alongside two other women in the professional Negro League. In 1950 Babe Didrikson and a dozen prominent golfers formed the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). A modest purse was offered to tournament champions. Within the next five years, the monetary prizes moved into the six-figure range. It would be two decades before the women's professional tennis tour came into being, but the women were making steady gains.

Following World War II, attitudes began to change regarding girls' and women's participation in amateur sports, including college athletics. However, men continued to dominate organized sports. Notably, few women were given leadership positions within the AAU. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) also remained an all-male enterprise. In response, women created their own collegiate sports organization. The Division for Girls' and Women's Sports took over the annual collegiate golf tournament (formerly sponsored by the women's division of the NAAF) and in 1967 established a platform for women's intercollegiate sports. In 1973 DGWS affiliated with the professional association of physical educators and began sanctioning athletic scholarships for women.

Despite the advances during the post-war years, many college sports administrators and physical educators continued to have doubts about the emerging model of competition, imitative of men's sport. They felt it would induce women to adopt masculine dress, speech patterns, and mannerisms. While posture and dress of athletes were carryovers from the tomboy style of youth, popular opinion conflated the "unfeminine" appearance of women athletes with sexual preference. Athleticism implied failed heterosexuality. The term "Amazon," commonly employed by sportswriters, carried the connotation of athletes who might prefer women to men. Not until the 1980s, when tennis star Martina Navratilova competed as an openly gay woman, did the homophobia began to erode—although the initial response to Martina's "coming out" was negative.

The 1960s and 1970s were a period of tremendous gains for women athletes. Barriers began to fall in the wake of consciousness-raising sessions, demonstrations, lobbying, and lawsuits. Between 1965 and 1975, girls and women made inroads into several formerly all-male sports. While the 1960s were a

decade of significant breakthroughs, the 1970s generated a sexual revolution. The rise of feminism was a cultural development that greatly impacted sport. Women increasingly used the federal courts, new legislation, and political pressure to gain access to venues where gender discrimination existed.

Women broke into the various forms of racing—on foot, on horseback, and in automobiles. In 1966 Robin Gibb became the first woman to run in the Boston Marathon, followed by Joan Benoit. A handful of women had entered the ranks of professional jockeys. In 1969 Diane Crump became the first woman to ride in a pari-mutuel race, and in 1970 she rode in the Kentucky Derby. Motor sports had been a male bastion. In 1976 Janet Guthrie became the first woman to compete against men in a major U.S. stock car race. The following year, she qualified for the Indianapolis 500 and stunned the doubting spectators by finishing ninth. That same year, Shirley Muldowney became the first woman to win an NHRA drag racing event. These courageous women paved the way for countless other women in the highly popular racing venue.

In 1973 Billie Jean King defeated former top-ranked player Bobby Riggs in a tennis match billed as the "Battle of the Sexes." The event drew more than 30,000 fans and some 40 million television viewers. It was King who cracked the glass ceiling of pay for women athletes. The pay differential between men and women in professional sports endured, but it shrunk significantly in the following years when Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert competed on the tennis courts before enthusiastic audiences. Golf was the other professional sport that began to thrive. In 1978 the charismatic Nancy Lopez won $189,000 on the LPGA tour. The first magazine devoted to women's sport appeared in the mid-1970s. In 1973 *Ms.* magazine featured an article titled "Closing the Muscle Gap." But to a noticeable degree, the feminist movement marginalized women's sport as it downplayed the female body in sexual politics. Top priority was given to gender equality in economics, politics, and the labor market.

By the late 1970s, pre-adolescent girl gymnasts had become sports icons. Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci, at age fourteen, garnered a huge amount of media attention for her performance at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. These petite athletes were noted for their cute bodies and coquettish demeanor. Thus, their contribution to the women's sports movement contained an element of irony. The intense media focus was accompanied by a growing concern over eating disorders among female gymnasts. Meanwhile, the fitness boom in the late 1970s and 1980s spurred millions of American women (and men) to take up exercise programs and engage in so-called fitness sports. Greater numbers of women participated in community runs and other amateur sports events. The sports bra was introduced in 1977, making it more comfortable for large-breasted women to be active.

The era also witnessed the rise of women's sports advocacy groups. Billie Jean King led a 1970 boycott, along with eight other tennis players, including

Rosie Casals, to protest pay inequities on the professional tennis tour. She fought for a women's players union and then cofounded the Women's Tennis Association in 1973. The following year, King and a group of women athletes founded the Women's Sports Foundation. Sports activist Donna Lopiano became CEO of the foundation in 1992. The WSF continues to be an advocate for girls' and women's sport.

Title IX of the 1972 Education Act was a revolutionary breakthrough that required that girls and women receive equal treatment in both high school and college programs, including sports. Despite some resistance by the men's athletic establishment, the number of women competing in intercollegiate sports doubled by the end of the decade. Before Title IX, one in twenty-five girls participated in school sports. Following this legislation, eventually one in three girls would participate in interscholastic and intercollegiate sports. Before Title IX, colleges averaged two women's sports; presently, there's an average of eight sports per school. Basketball, volleyball, and cross country are the most frequently offered sports. The number of girls and young women playing on coed teams has also grown. However, women's programs still haven't reached parity. In the post–Title IX era, schools and colleges continue to prioritize men's athletics, especially football and basketball.

Little League baseball was exempt from Title IX provisions, as it received no government subsidy. However, in 1974 Little League opened up to girls. The rule was revised following a lawsuit filed by the National Organization of Women in New Jersey Superior Court on behalf of twelve-year-old Maria Pepe, who was banned from playing on the Little League team in her hometown of Hoboken, New Jersey. The rule change had a revolutionary effect on the sport. As this is being written, some 5 million girls have played Little League baseball.

The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), founded in 1971, became the chief advocate for women's college sports. The organization ceded control of women's intercollegiate sports to the NCAA in 1982, when the vast majority of college women's teams shifted their affiliation to the NCAA. The men's association offered attractive financial inducements. The NCAA began sponsoring national women's collegiate championships after the AIAW disbanded in 1984. Women continued to make strides toward equity under NCAA auspices. By 2008, women would account for 40 percent of athletes on American college campuses.

Progress was equally evident for women in international sports. A breakthrough for women Olympic athletes occurred in 1968 when several new sports were introduced into the Games. The 1996 Atlanta Summer Games proved to be a landmark in approaching parity. The Olympic Movement proclaimed it "The Year of the Women." More than one-third of the Olympic athletes at Atlanta were women, compared to only 26 percent at the Games in Seoul in 1988. Women's soccer made its initial appearance at the Atlanta

Games. More than 76,000 fans filled a Georgia stadium to watch the U.S. women's soccer team, which included Mia Hamm, win the nation's first Olympic gold medal in the sport.

But inequities persisted. Women were still underrepresented on the International Olympic Committee and on various sports-governing bodies. There were other tradeoffs; women lost coaching positions to men as women's sports became more competitive. As one notable example of the reigning prejudice: women had been competing in Olympic swimming since 1912, but it took nearly a century for the U.S. Olympic swim team to appoint its first woman coach, Teri McKeever, in 2010. Only recently have women been appointed to national Olympic sport committees in more representative numbers.

In the late twentieth century more women were competing in the "masculine" sports. Quebec-born Manon Rheaume became the first woman to play in an NHL game in September of 1992. In 1993 USA Boxing lifted its ban on women, and the following year fifty-four women registered. In 1995 women participated in a Golden Gloves boxing tournament for the first time in its seventy-year history. In March 2001 the daughters of Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier fought in a match that received wide media attention. Women were competing in the so-called extreme sports, as well. Sixteen-year-old Rachael Scdoris from Bend, Oregon competed in her first dogsled race in 1997 and finished fourth. She then entered the five-hundred-mile International Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race. The event is held in sub-zero temperatures and endures for eleven days. More remarkable is the fact that Scdoris is legally blind, though she has some vision. Women began running in ultra marathons at distances up to one hundred miles. A young Cara-Beth Burnside excelled in action sports like snowboarding and skateboarding. The Women's Professional Football League began its first official season in 2000, and the Women's (tackle) Football Alliance formed in 2008.

Women's bodybuilding gained popularity beginning in the 1980s, but the early women's events were little more than beauty contests held in conjunction with men's contests. In the mid-1980s the Ms. Universe competition was divided into two classes: "physique" and "figure." The film *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was released in 1985. Prominent bodybuilders included Lisa Lyons, Rachel McLish, Bev Francis, and Leslie Heywood. By the mid-1990s, women's bodybuilding was losing much of its popularity to fitness competitions. Ms. Fitness contest participants engaged in aerobic performance, as well as posing to reveal body shape and tone. Many women athletes questioned whether bodybuilding and fitness contests constituted a sport. Steroid abuse by body builders cast further doubts about the legitimacy of these activities.

A new athletic conception of female beauty began to take hold in the 1990s, with women's sex appeal based on fitness and visible muscles. Athleticism became fashionable. The new aesthetic was adeptly co-opted by American corporations, who cultivated the emerging market of women consumers for

their products and services. Women athletes were featured in advertisements for a variety of marketers, including shoe companies Reebok and Nike. Sales of women's athletic shoes topped men's by the mid-1990s. Venus Williams signed a $40 million deal with Reebok, the largest endorsement contract ever for a woman athlete. Women were being recognized for their athletic achievements as well as their attractiveness.

What became known as the "babe factor" referred to the controversy surrounding the marketing of female athletes based on their physical appearance rather than their performance. Feminists had long argued that this focus minimizes women's athletic achievements. But social mores and ideology were changing. The post-feminist perspective views women's use of their sex appeal as empowering. Some women athletes have exploited their physical attractiveness to promote their careers. Danica Patrick's sexy photos for Go Daddy put her in the national media headlines. On winning the 1999 World Cup, soccer player Brandi Chastain stripped off her jersey, exposing her sports bra. Her gesture imitated the way male soccer players celebrate victory, but it created a sensation. The image made the covers of *Sports Illustrated* and *Newsweek*. Prior to the 1990s, *Sports Illustrated* had featured only four women on its covers in the previous twenty years.

While women athletes signed lucrative endorsement contracts, women's professional sport in the United States was experiencing mixed success at the cusp of the new millennium. The individual sports of golf and tennis were more viable than team sports. The leading women golfers were grossing $1 million on the tours. By 2009, more than two hundred women tennis players had earned at least $1 million. American Basketball League games were aired on cable television, but the league disbanded in December of 1998. The Women's National Basketball Association, with support from the men's NBA, formed in 1997. The WNBA is still going strong. WUSA, a women's professional soccer league, formed in 2001 but then disbanded in 2003 because of poor attendance. Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) began play in 2009 and has six teams in the league going into the 2011 season. The bottom line is that women's professional sport—like men's sport—has become increasingly dependent upon television revenue and commercial sponsorship.

Whether or not female professional athletes reach parity with men in the near future, overall progress cannot be denied: women are no longer relegated to the sidelines, "cheering on" the men. They are active participants in the arena of competition, while more and more fans, including men and boys, are now rooting for them. Young girls aren't stigmatized by the label of "tomboy"; instead, they embrace their physicality. Schools and colleges are providing opportunities for women to compete in organized sports along with men. At gyms and fitness clubs, men and woman train side by side. In local 10k runs, spectators observe an integrated mass of male and female heads bobbing up and down, as they run together.

And somewhere on the playgrounds, courts, and playing fields, in the gymnasiums and swimming pools, the future icons of women's sport are honing their skills.

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Chronology

1884	Tennis singles competition for women debuts at Wimbledon, England.
1895	First women's amateur golf championship is held at the Meadow Brook Club in Hampstead, New York.
1896	First women's intercollegiate basketball game, between Stanford University and University of California, Berkeley.
1900	Women compete (unofficially) in the Summer Olympic Games for the first time in Paris, France.
1906	The International Skating Union sponsors the first world figure skating championships with a separate ladies' competition.
1923	Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) sponsors first outdoor track and field meet for women in Newark, New Jersey.
1924	A small contingent of women, including eleven-year-old Sonja Henie, compete in figure skating at the first Winter Olympics in Chamonix.
	The first U.S. women's sailing championship is held at the Boston Yacht Club.
1926	Gertrude Ederle becomes the first women to swim the English Channel.
1928	Sonja Henie wins the first of three consecutive Olympic gold medals in figure skating.
1932	Babe Didrikson wins three medals in track and field at the Los Angeles Summer Olympics.
	Amelia Earhart is the first woman, and second person, to fly solo and nonstop across the Atlantic.

1933	The first American Softball Association national fast-pitch championship is held in Chicago.
1936	Sonja Henie wins her tenth World Championship in figure skating.
1943	Chicago Cubs owner Philip K. Wrigley establishes the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.
1947	Babe Didrikson Zaharias wins the British Ladies Amateur Golf Championship and the U.S. Women's Amateur Golf Championship.
1949	Women compete in the U.S. Volleyball Association national championships for the first time. Eight teams enter the tournament.
1950	Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) chartered.
	Babe Didrikson Zaharias is named "Greatest Woman Athlete of the Half Century" in an Associated Press poll.
1953	Mamie "Peanut" Johnson becomes the first woman pitcher in the Negro Leagues, signing with the Indianapolis Clowns.
1956	Althea Gibson becomes first African American woman to win a tennis Grand Slam title at the French Open.
1960	Wilma Rudolph becomes the first American woman to win three Olympic gold medals in track and field at the Summer Olympic Games in Rome.
1964	Dawn Fraser wins her third consecutive Olympic gold medal in the 100-meter freestyle at the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo.
1966	Roberta Gibb becomes the first woman to run in the Boston Marathon.
1968	Peggy Fleming wins the gold medal in figure skating (singles) at the Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France, and the World Championships.
1969	Diane Crump becomes the first woman jockey to ride at a pari-mutuel track, at Hialeah, Florida.
1970	Billie Jean King and eight other women organize the Virginia Slims Tennis Tournament in Houston.
1971	The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women is founded with representatives from 278 colleges and universities.
1972	President Richard Nixon signs into law Title IX of the 1972 Education Act, banning gender bias in athletics in educational institutions.

	Olga Korbut wins three gold medals and one silver in gymnastics at the Olympic Games in Munich.
1973	Billie Jean King defeats former Wimbledon champion Bobby Riggs in an exhibition tennis match billed as the "Battle of the Sexes."
1974	The Women's Sports Foundation is founded by tennis' Billie Jean King.
	Little League Baseball announces that teams will accept girls.
1975	Title IX goes into effect in June.
	Shirley Muldowney becomes the first woman in the United States licensed to drive top fuel dragsters.
1976	Nadia Comaneci wins three gold medals in gymnastics, including the gold for all-around, at the Montreal Olympic Games.
	Dorothy Hamill wins the gold medal in figure skating (singles) at the Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, and the World Championships.
1977	Janet Guthrie becomes the first woman to compete in the Indianapolis 500 auto race.
	Shirley Muldowney wins her first of three National Hot Rod Association World Championships.
1978	The Amateur Sports Act of 1978, prohibiting gender discrimination in open amateur sports, is passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law.
	Martina Navratilova wins her first of nine Wimbledon championships.
	Nancy Lopez, at age twenty-one, wins five consecutive tournaments, and shoots a record thirteen under par to win the LPGA Championship.
	The first AAU international power lifting championship for women is held. Sixty-eight women compete.
1979	Billie Jean King wins her twentieth Wimbledon title.
	Joan Benoit wins the Boston Marathon, knocking eight minutes off the women's record.
	Lyn Lemaire becomes the first woman to run in and finish the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon (2.4-mile swim; 112-mile bike race; 26.2-mile run).
1982	First NCAA national women's basketball tournament is held.

Stacy Allison reaches the summit of Ama Dablam (22,300 feet) as a member of the first all-women's team to climb the Himalayan peak.

1984 Dorothy Hamill wins her first of four consecutive World Professional Figure Skating championships.

Joan Benoit wins the first women's Olympic marathon at the Los Angeles Games.

Mary Lou Retton wins five Olympic medals in gymnastics, becoming the first female gymnast outside Eastern Europe to win the all-around title.

South African runner Zola Budd, at the age of seventeen, breaks the world record in the 5000-meter race.

1986 Anita DeFrantz becomes the first woman to serve on the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

1987 Jackie Joyner-Kersee becomes the first female athlete to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

1988 Jackie Joyner-Kersee breaks the seven-thousand-point mark in the heptathlon and sets an Olympic record in the long jump with a distance of twenty-four feet, three and one-quarter inches.

Stacy Allison becomes the first American woman to climb Mt. Everest.

Steffi Graf wins all four Grand Slam singles titles and an Olympic gold medal in tennis at the Summer Games in Seoul, South Korea.

Florence Griffith Joyner breaks the world records in the 100-meter and 200-meter races and wins three gold medals at the Olympics in Seoul.

Picabo Street wins the national junior downhill and Super G skiing titles.

1990 Martina Navratilova wins her eighteenth Grand Slam championship at Wimbledon, which included four U.S. Open titles.

1991 The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) elects Judith Sweet as its first woman president.

1992 Manon Rheaume becomes the first woman to play in the National Hockey League, in an exhibition game for the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Dawn Riley becomes the first woman to crew on an America's Cup Team, on the winning yacht, *America*^{3}.

	University of Texas women's athletic director Donna Lopiano is appointed CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation.
1993	Julie Krone becomes the first woman jockey to win a Triple Crown race, riding Colonial Affairs in the Belmont Stakes.
1993-94	Dawn Riley skippers an all-woman crew on the racing yacht *Heineken* that completes the Whitbread Round the World Race.
1994	Speed skater Bonnie Blair wins her fifth Olympic gold medal at the Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway.
	The Colorado Silver Bullets begins their inaugural season as a women's professional baseball team. The team disbands in 1997.
1995	Steffi Graf wins her sixth Wimbledon singles title.
	Skier Picabo Street becomes the first American woman to win the World Cup in the downhill.
1996	U.S. Women's soccer team defeats the Chinese for the gold medal at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. Dot Richardson hits the first home run in Olympic softball history.
1997	The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) begins play in June. Sheryl Swoopes signs with the Houston Comets.
1998	Snowboarding becomes an Olympic sport at the Nagano Games. American Shannon Dunne wins a bronze medal in the half-pipe.
1999	Steffi Graf wins her twenty-second Grand Slam title at the French Open.
2000	Mia Hamm's 127 career goals make her the leading scorer in the history of women's soccer.
	Sandra Baldwin is the first woman elected chair of the United States Olympic Committee.
2001	The Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) begins play in the spring.
	Sisters Venus and Serena Williams complete a career Grand Slam in women's doubles at the Australian Open.
2003	Cara-Beth Burnside wins a gold medal in vert skateboarding at the Summer X Games.
2004	Sheryl Swoopes wins her third Olympic gold medal as a member of the U.S. women's national basketball team at the Summer Games in Athens.
2005	Indy Racing League rookie Danica Patrick, the fourth woman to qualify for the Indianapolis 500, briefly leads the race and finishes fourth.

2006	Cara-Beth Burnside leads a proposed boycott of the X Games over gender-based pay disparity. ESPN eventually capitulated and parity was reached four years later.
2007	Lisa Leslie becomes the first woman to dunk a basketball in a WNBA game.
	Venus Williams wins her fourth Wimbledon tournament and sixth Grand Slam title.
2008	Danica Patrick becomes the first woman to win a major Indy car event with her victory at the Japan 300.
	Lisa Leslie wins her fourth gold medal at the Beijing Olympics as a member of the U.S. national women's basketball team.
	Venus and Serena Williams win their second gold medal as a team at the Beijing Olympics.
	Dara Torres, at age forty-one, wins three silver medals at the Summer Games in Beijing, her fifth Olympics, with a total of twelve medals.
2009	Serena Williams wins her tenth Grand Slam title at the Australian Open.
2010	The Vancouver Winter Olympics sets a record for women's participation, with more than one thousand women athletes competing in thirteen sports.
2010	In 2010 Serena Williams becomes the sixth tennis player ever to hold number-one rankings, worldwide, in singles and doubles.

Stacy Allison climbing Mount Everest. The first American woman to summit Mount Everest, Allison reached the top after twenty-nine days on the mountain, on September 29, 1988. (Courtesy of Stacy Allison)

Stacy Allison (1958–)

Why do people climb rocks and mountains? What is the attraction of scaling the vertical face of El Capitan or trudging up the ice-covered slopes of the Matterhorn? The most famous answer came from British mountaineer George Mallory who, when asked why he wanted to be the first person to stand on the summit of Mount Everest, replied, "Because it is there." His response says everything, and yet explains nothing. Mallory perished while attempting to climb the world's tallest mountain on an expedition in 1924. His body remained there until 1999, when it was finally located and recovered. It's not certain whether he made it to the summit. What is certain is that few sports entail the risks of climbing. While reading American rock climber Lynn Hill's autobiography, one is struck by the number of mentions of fellow climbers' deaths. She seemed to be attending funerals almost as often as ascending slopes.

So why are we drawn to climbing natural objects? Writer and rock climber Stefani Jackenthal (2000) has addressed the question at some length. She speculates that the impulse may be part of human nature, noting that most of us were trying to climb before we could walk. Toddlers climb chairs, stairs, everything in sight. A few years later, we are climbing trees and scaling jungle gyms, clearly the most popular apparatus on the playground. A favorite childhood hero is Spiderman, the building-climbing comic book character, now in films and on stage. Climbers, like climbing, fascinate us. At the same time, psychologists point out that fear of heights is a common phenomenon; they've even come up with a clinical term for it: acrophobia. Not surprisingly, some phobics become climbers to overcome their fear of heights.

Mountain climbing is more popular than ever. Hundreds of amateur climbers sign up for guided expeditions up Mount Everest and other famous peaks. These adventurers are pulled upward by the combination of risk and challenge. High places provide an escape from humdrum life. Throughout history, mountaintops have been home to the gods, and they offer modern mortals a taste of immortality. Maybe this explains why humans continue to climb. Still, Mallory's rationale for climbing is the one that resonates. Stacy Allison became the first American woman to scale Everest in 1988. When asked the same question as Mallory, she quipped, "Because I'm here" (Ortner, 2001, 288). In truth, her motives for climbing were somewhat more complex.

CHILDHOOD

Stacy Allison was born October 18, 1958, in the small town of Woodburn, Oregon, south of Portland. She was the second of five children, four girls and a boy. The Allison kids were subjected to a structured upbringing with enforced household rules and reprimands for noncompliance. Both of her parents were educators. They made it clear that Stacy and her siblings were to

take school seriously. All of them were expected to go on to college. Stacy's parents also believed in keeping children occupied. When the school year ended, Stacy was kept busy with summer school classes or picking berries in the fields of the Willamette Valley. During the school year, the Allison children were enrolled in lessons of various types including piano, tap dancing, skiing, and swimming. Stacy competed on swim teams into her teens. She was good at it; maybe too good. She recalls that she never learned how to lose. When she finally did lose a race, she realized how much she dreaded swim practice every day after school. Stacy gave up competitive swimming.

Stacy Allison's childhood wasn't all work and no play. She was the typical tomboy, usually outdoors throwing baseballs and Frisbees with the neighbor kids. She recalls her first climbing adventure in a hollowed-out Douglas fir when she was seven. Several boys had failed to shinny up the inside of the trunk, but she made it up and out onto a high branch. She was literally "out on a limb," not having considered how to get back down. Stacy had to be rescued by her father. He admonished, "Just stay on the ground from now on" (Allison, 1993, 12). She took his advice but she developed a partiality for the high ground.

When Stacy turned twelve her father accepted a position at the local boys' reformatory. It was a promotion that came with considerable pressure. She remembers that he spent more time away from home, began drinking heavily, and was moody. Two years later, the family fractured. Stacy's parents developed marital problems, and her father left. He continued to support the family financially, but she saw little of him after that. Stacy compensated by hanging out with her high school friends. She went out for the track team and began swimming again. On weekends Stacy rode bikes in the countryside with her sister Wendy. The teenager kept her grades up but began to rebel against her mother's authority. By her senior year, she was cutting classes to go skiing on nearby Mount Hood. For young Stacy Allison, racing down mountain slopes was a way to exert her independence. Ultimately, she would find a purpose in life climbing mountains.

BEGINNING TO CLIMB

After graduating from high school, Allison enrolled at Oregon State University, an hour's drive south of Woodburn. She began classes unsure of what she wanted to study, questioning why she was in college at all. She found more meaning exploring the foothills of Corvallis. Stacy found a like-minded friend in Evelyn Lees, a nineteen-year-old geology major who shared her love of the outdoors. Evelyn had taken a mountain-climbing class, and was one of the few women climbers in a sport dominated by men. A male friend of Evelyn's introduced Stacy to climbing. He taught her about the gear—ropes, harnesses,

carabiners—and how to rappel. Stacy enjoyed the sensation of descending from heights on a rope. She soon fell in love with the sport of rock climbing, drawn to its blend of structure and freedom.

Curt Haire, a graduate student who worked in Stacy's dormitory, invited Evelyn and her to accompany him on spring break to Zion National Park, known for its towering cliffs and massive canyon walls. Stacy purchased a helmet, harness, and sleeping bag, along with some warm clothes, and the three students headed for southern Utah. There she met climbers Scott Fischer and Wes Krauss, instructors for the National Outdoor Leadership School. The guys tutored Stacy in basic rock climbing skills: how to tape her hands, connect the harness, and belay fellow climbers. When spring break ended, Stacy and Evelyn decided to stay at Zion. The two women climbed with Scott, and then began climbing by themselves.

Stacy lost interest in college; all she wanted to do was climb. Her mother wasn't happy with her about her decision to drop out, but they compromised. Stacy agreed to return to school after taking a semester off. She went on climbing jaunts in Oregon with Evelyn and Curt. On one outing, Curt introduced her to expert climber Shari Kearney, a Yellowstone Park ranger who had climbed in Alaska. Stacy had found a role model. When summer arrived, she moved back in with her mother, got a job, and began saving up for the next climbing expedition.

At the end of summer, she joined Evelyn and Curt, along with his friend Chris, and the four headed to Yosemite National Park in California. Yosemite is the Mecca of rock climbing in the United States. El Capitan, its most famous rock formation, features an imposing three-thousand-foot vertical wall. Yosemite was where Stacy Allison first came into contact with "climbing bums," the inveterate devotees of the sport who haunt the campsites for weeks or months on end, often living from hand to mouth. Stacy realized that rock climbing was a world unto itself. But it was no longer a man's world, since Beverly Johnson successfully scaled El Capitan in 1978. Curt and Chris bypassed El Capitan and opted to guide the two novice climbers up the one-thousand-foot wall on Half Dome, a granite cliff known for its difficulty. The four climbers took turns leading. This was another important skill for Allison to master. Steadily, she was becoming adept at the repertoire of skills required to climb rock faces.

Climbing encompasses a variety of forms. Indoor wall climbing became popular in Europe and the United States in the 1980s, but most climbing is still done outdoors. The variations include rock climbing, ice climbing, bouldering, buildering (climbing the exterior walls of buildings), and mountaineering. Climbing mountains is by far the most risky type of climbing, and many climbers consider it the most rewarding. Every mountain offers a distinct set of challenges. An ascent often entails a combination of hiking, skiing, scaling ice walls, and roping up glaciers.

Most mountain peaks are covered with snow and ice. Climbing an ice cliff with two axes, one in each hand, and boots fitted with crampons (metal points) is an unrivaled physical and mental challenge. Mountain climbers run into unexpected snow storms even in the middle of summer, and avalanches are a recurring threat. A climber faces both external and internal obstacles. Veterans relate that some of the greatest challenges they encountered were inside their heads. Mountaineers experience a full range of emotions—from boredom while waiting out storms for days on end, to the terror of falling or being buried in an avalanche. Climbing, more than any other sport, requires intense focus on the task at hand. Moreover, climbers must be able to gauge current and impending perils, as well as their own physical limitations—and those of their fellow climbers. Mountain slopes are no place for daredevils. Climbing instructors warn that the deadliest thing in the mountains is the male ego, but this is not to say that woman climbers aren't also risk takers.

Following several months of rock climbing, Allison felt she was ready to attempt a mountain. In January she, Lees, Haire, and Chris headed for Mount Washington, a seven-thousand-foot peak in Oregon's Cascade Range. They ascended the north face through heavy snow and ice. The foursome made it to the summit by noon, in spite of strong winds and biting cold. Allison learned that mountain climbing, while rewarding, could also be a brutal endurance event. Getting to the top was only half the battle. The descent in fading light took the climbing party longer than expected. Haire slipped and fell. Luckily he landed on a shelf without sustaining any serious injuries. He could have fallen hundreds of feet. Allison took home another lesson: climbing mountains is dangerous.

Allison and Lees headed back to Utah in the spring after purchasing a full complement of rock-climbing gear. The two women found jobs and climbed throughout the summer, by themselves and with some of the guys in the area. Lees headed back to college for the fall semester, but Allison stayed in Utah and climbed with Haire. The two spent more and more time together and became romantically involved. In the winter Allison returned to school in Corvallis, but she dropped out again at the end of the term. (Allison would eventually graduate from OSU in 1984.) She and Haire moved to Portland, and he found a job. Allison accepted an invitation to climb Alaska's Mount Huntington, the 18,000-foot peak near Mount McKinley. Haire remained in Oregon, and she headed north.

Upon arriving in Alaska, Allison and fellow climbers Chris Mannix and Bobby Knight booked a flight on a small plane that flew them to a high glacier where they set up base camp. The three waited until the weather cleared, and then began their ascent of the avalanche-prone mountain with ice axes and crampons. The climbers were caught in a minor snow slide. Allison lost her footing and tumbled some two hundred feet down the slope. During the fall, she lost hold of her axe. The climbers had no choice but to return to

camp for a replacement. Allison began to feel that she was in over her head. The first rule of ice climbing is to hang on to your ice axe. The three picked up the spare and headed back up the mountain. But Knight began to suffer from altitude sickness, complaining of headaches, nausea, and dizziness. Things went from bad to worse. He then broke his axe on a rock, ending the expedition. It had proved a hard lesson in climbing, but a valuable one for Stacy. Failure to reach the summit left the apprentice mountain climber downcast. Mannix consoled Allison by pointing out they had come to climb, not to stand on top.

A PASSION FOR HIGH MOUNTAINS

Despite the setback, Allison returned to Portland with a passion for high mountains. She began running and working out with weights to improve her strength and endurance. While in Alaska she had been captivated by the dominating presence of Mount McKinley (Denali to the aboriginal Alaskans), the highest point in North America. She and Haire planned an expedition to climb the difficult Cassin Ridge on the 20,300-foot peak. In July of 1980 the couple drove to Canada to climb Alberta's Mount Robinson. The 13,000-foot mountain would provide them with some valuable experience climbing an ice face. The climbing trip proved to be a near disaster. The two were caught in a terrible blizzard on Mount Robinson and were fortunate to make it down alive. The adverse episode didn't deter their resolve. The climbers moved to a small mountain community near Seattle and found jobs at a ski resort. But they were struggling financially, and much of the romance had gone out of the relationship. Inspiration came from the map of Mt. McKinley hanging on the bedroom wall of their modest house.

Despite their dire financial straits, Allison and Haire were able to pool enough money for the Alaska trip. A few weeks prior to leaving, Allison got a call from Shari Kearney. She remembered Allison from their climbing in Yosemite. Kearney was involved in the early planning stages of an all-woman expedition to climb 22,000-foot Ama Dablam in the Himalayas. She asked Allison to consider joining the expedition. It was an exciting prospect.

In May Haire and Allison arrived in Alaska and flew to the McKinley staging area. They spent a week in camp acclimating and exchanging information with other climbers. Then they began the climb up the high-altitude slope carrying sixty-pound backpacks. Allison could appreciate the benefits of training. She realized it wouldn't get any easier. The two climbers spent six hours digging an ice cave for shelter on an 18,000-foot ridge and holed up for two days during a storm. When the weather cleared, they resumed the climb. After more than a week on the icy mountain, they made it to the summit. The climbers looked down at the world from the highest point on the continent before

heading back to base camp. Allison felt a surge of confidence: she could climb the highest mountains.

Allison began spending more time away from Haire. She headed back to Zion with an old college roommate and hooked up with climber Randy Aton to do some rock climbing. They were joined by his friend Mark Meinert. Meinert was a builder and outdoorsman who had done some serious climbing. Allison was infatuated with him, despite warnings from mutual friends about his temper. The two began to see more of each other, and soon they were a couple. Meinert, who was divorced, asked Allison to marry him. She told him she would think about it and headed back to Washington State. She returned to her job and began training for the Ama Dablam expedition. Meinert called and asked her to come back and live with him. Allison returned to Utah and found a job with the ski patrol. The couple skied together, and Meinert taught her the building trade. Meanwhile, she continued to prepare for the Himalayan expedition. The plan was for Meinert to follow her to Nepal, and they would get married there in May.

AN ALL-WOMAN CLIMB

Allison met up with Sue Giller, the leader of the Ama Dablam climb. Giller was a backwoods feminist with the rhyming nickname "Killer." The muscular thirty-year-old was one of the best-known climbers in the country. Allison was a latecomer to the expedition and wasn't involved in the fundraising phase. (Expedition budgets could exceed $200,000.) She knew most of the other climbers, at least by reputation. There was one foreigner in the group, Swiss physician Heidi Ludi. In March the Americans flew from Chicago to Kathmandu. Once in Nepal, it took some two weeks to traverse the back roads to base camp perched on a plateau at 16,000 feet.

An all-woman climb was still rare, although this wasn't the first one. In 1978 an all-woman expedition led by American Arlene Blum succeeded in climbing Nepal's Annapurna, the world's tenth-highest summit, despite two fatalities. However, sexism persisted within the male-dominated climbing community. The traditional viewpoint was that women didn't have the physical prowess to climb the world's tallest peaks. In fact, women had been climbing mountains since the early nineteenth century, when France's Marie Pardis made it to the top of Mount Blanc, the highest point in the Alps. Japanese climber Junko Tabei reached the summit of Mount Everest in 1975. Ama Dablam was first summited in 1961 by members of an expedition led by Sir Edmund Hillary, one of the two climbers to first reach the summit of Everest. Now it was the women's turn to attempt the 22,000-foot peak.

Any residual prejudice against women climbers was giving way to practical considerations. Major expeditions were becoming prohibitively expensive

without sponsors. Women attempting to climb the world's highest mountains had commercial appeal. Climbing expeditions would invite a woman or two because it made fundraising easier. Allison had done much of her climbing in groups that included both men and women. She saw the two sexes as complementing each other in their character traits and physical attributes. Still, she enjoyed the novel experience of joining an all-women's climb.

When the women's expedition arrived in Nepal, everything went on schedule, although the high altitude made Allison dizzy. She initially suffered headaches but fortunately did not develop nausea or breathing problems. These were classic symptoms of altitude sickness, which, along with hypothermia, were serious concerns above 10,000 feet. Fortunately, the headaches subsided once she became acclimated.

After setting up the requisite camps, the expedition began its ascent of Ama Dablam. Following an arduous climb, Stacy made it to the summit. She stood on the mountaintop with three of her fellow climbers and surveyed the horizon. Mount Everest was a haunting presence, looming some six thousand feet above them. After a brief interval on the summit, the climbing party began their descent. When they reached Camp 1, the site above base camp, a radio message came through for Allison. It was Meinert; he was waiting for her below. They were married in a Buddhist ceremony by a ninety-year-old priest from a nearby monastery. It had been quite a trip, rewarding and romantic.

Back in Utah, Allison worked with her husband in the building trade as the two made a life together. They planned to build a house in the canyon. In their leisure they climbed Zion's rocks and cliffs. But married life soon took a downhill turn, according to Allison's accounts of physical abuse by her husband. A frightened Allison left to stay with her mother in Oregon. Her husband called and begged her to come back. She agreed to return to Utah, but once there she found little time to climb and no encouragement from Meinert.

Allison's old climbing buddy Scott Fischer obtained a permit for a climb up the North Face of Everest. He invited her husband and her to join the expedition as equipment directors. The group scheduled a practice climb for the following spring up Pik Kommunizma in the southern Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Allison's marriage continued to deteriorate. According to her autobiography, she discovered that Meinert was unfaithful to her while he was away on a trip. She also reported that he didn't trust her to run the construction business in his absence. By now, her mother was quite upset with her for remaining in the relationship. It was providential that Meinert decided not to take part in the Soviet climbing expedition. Allison headed to Seattle to meet up with the climbing team and flew with them to Moscow. Their Soviet minders helped the eleven-member team load their gear into trucks, and they headed south to the Pamir Range on the edge of the Himalayas. The team included future U.S. senator Mark Udall and his wife Maggie, a lawyer for the Sierra Club, both avid climbers. At the advanced base camp, the group took a few days

to acclimate. At more than 24,000 feet, Pik Kommunizma was the highest mountain that Stacy had attempted, but it was still some 5,000 feet lower than the summit of Everest. It wasn't an easy climb. The group estimated it would take them from ten days to two weeks. They carted provisions up the slope to the advanced camps in preparation for the attempt on the summit. Then a storm kept them tent-bound for days. When the weather cleared, they began the final ascent. On the second day, they reached the last camp at 23,000 feet. Allison and two fellow climbers made it to the summit at noon. The expedition was a success, but the descent took an exhausting twelve hours. One of the climbers, Steve Monfredo, known affectionately as "Fredo," developed edema. As his lungs filled with fluid, breathing became more difficult. With great effort, Fredo made it below 15,000 feet but then stopped breathing. He had died from an acute form of altitude sickness. The group dug a shallow grave in the snow and buried him, with crossed skis serving as a marker. It was a sobering experience for Allison and the other climbers.

Despite the tragic loss of life on Pik Kommunizma, Allison felt that she was reaffirming her own life. On the mountain away from her husband, she felt a surge of self-confidence. The contrast to life in Utah was palpable: she didn't have to feel helpless. Following her return, she and Meinert took a short vacation to New York City, but it became clear that little in the relationship had changed. The couple signed divorce papers in December of 1986, and Allison moved back to Oregon in time to spend Christmas with her mother.

MOUNT EVEREST

Following the holidays, Allison moved in with her married sister Wendy in Seattle. While there, she spent the next couple of months working with Scott Fischer, the Everest expedition leader, assembling the huge amount of necessary equipment. Mountain climbing is a gear-intensive sport and an enormous tactical enterprise. Unlike the typical weekend rock climb in Yosemite or Zion, major climbing expeditions require a couple of years to put everything together. Such projects entail recruiting team members, acquiring government permits, attending trade shows to convince sponsors to donate money and equipment, purchasing airline tickets and scheduling flights, assembling and transporting the supplies to the staging area, arranging housing at the destination, and setting up the base camp—all prior to the actual climb.

The American Everest North Face expedition, named for the approach, would require personal gear for fifteen climbers, plus food and fuel, cooking gear, tents, bedding, oxygen tanks, and the other sundry items required for high-altitude climbing. In all, there would be 30,000 pounds of food and equipment packed in 460 boxes, to be transported halfway around the world. The budget for the expedition was $250,000. Part of Allison's job as

equipment director was to convince manufacturers to donate some of the gear. Climbing expeditions courted corporate sponsors with promises of advertising their names and logos. By the late twentieth century, commercial sponsors had become an indispensable component of large expeditions.

In July 1987 the members of the Everest expedition flew to Kathmandu. An ascent of the North Face meant crossing from Nepal into Tibet under control of the Chinese government. Once the bureaucratic paperwork was completed, the team rented three trucks and headed to the base camp on the high Tibetan plateau. As the roads gave way to mountain paths, the team hired yaks from the locals to carry the equipment to the advanced base camp perched at 17,000 feet. Allison and her fellow climbers were shocked by the amount of trash and debris left in the area by previous expeditions. Adventurers had been climbing Everest since mid-century, and hundreds of climbers had attempted the ascent. By the 1980s, the Everest experience resembled camping out next to a garbage dump. This expedition was committed to cleaning up after themselves, exemplary of what became the Everest environmental movement.

The expedition members worked in shifts to establish a route up the mountain and stock the advanced camps, a process that often takes weeks. It was strenuous climbing at this altitude day after day with full packs. The work parties climbed early in the morning, avoiding the midday heat that might trigger avalanches. Allison's old friend Evelyn Lees and her husband Rick were members of the Everest team. He was an avalanche forecaster back in Utah where the couple resided. Evelyn and Rick had hopes of making it to the summit of Everest, but both developed lung congestion and stomach cramps, eliminating their chances.

When they join an expedition, climbers don't know whether they will stay healthy enough to complete the climb. The combination of high altitude and freezing cold can be brutal. Lips crack and bleed; blood thickens in the veins, causing the skin to turn blue; climbers suffer sleep hypoxia (oxygen starvation); lungs fill with fluid (edema), and pneumonia may develop. Frostbite is a constant threat to the body's extremities; climbers sometimes lose fingers and toes. Even eyeballs can freeze over, and the thawing process is particularly painful. In addition, climbers suffer bruises and occasional bone fractures from slipping and falling on icy surfaces. Scaling high mountains becomes an exercise in how much punishment the body can withstand.

The preparatory stage of the climb functions like a relay, with groups of climbers ratcheting up the slopes for the final assault. By the middle of September, the team on Everest had stocked Camps 3 and 4, the latter just three thousand feet below the summit. Expedition members were then divided into summit teams of no more than three. The decisions determining who would climb with whom and the order of ascent were crucial. Allison longed to be the first American woman to climb Everest. On her birthday, her summit team left base camp to make the initial attempt on the summit. As they climbed,

the wind velocity reached 100 mph. The team of climbers had to huddle in a snow cave they dug out as a blizzard roared outside. Inside snow caves, the temperature hovers around 32 degrees Fahrenheit, while outside it can drop to 30 below. By chance, Allison's team had to run into one of the worst storms in years. The anxious climbers waited in the cave for several days. It's a dreary existence inside with nothing to divert the mind in the dim light. Only sleep interrupts the tedium.

An avalanche that covered the entrance to their cave suddenly allayed the summit team's boredom. They had to dig their way out. After ninety-six hours in the cave, they stepped out into clear air. For the next two days, the climbers trudged upward into the thin air. It was tough going, and they were becoming exhausted. To make matters worse, the ropes they had pre-positioned had disappeared in the recurring avalanches. Then the winds picked up again. The climbers were running short of supplies and oxygen. They paused to assess their situation. The team concluded that they had no choice but to turn back. So close, and yet so far away.

Stacy Allison wouldn't be the first American woman to reach the summit of Everest. Not this time. She hoped for another opportunity, but it was no sure thing. There was plenty of competition. Various women climbers from the United States would make nearly two dozen attempts to climb the world's highest mountain by the end of 1987. None of them were successful. And no one on Allison's Everest expedition made it to the summit.

THE FIRST AMERICAN WOMAN TO SUMMIT MOUNT EVEREST

The expedition members headed home. When Allison reached Seattle on the flight from Bangkok, her sister Wendy and Wendy's husband were there to meet her. The following day, Allison went to see Scott Fischer. He was already working on the next Everest expedition, aimed at the South Col (ridge). This route up Everest had a reputation for high winds but less snow than the North Face. After meeting with Scott, she headed back to Oregon for Christmas. While there, Allison got a call from David Schute, the brother of an old friend. The two had dated casually prior to the previous Everest expedition. Schute, an amateur climber, was completing his medical residency in Portland. They began seeing each other on a regular basis. She found a house in Portland and got a job working for a construction company in the area. She continued to work out in the afternoons to stay in shape. Meanwhile, plans for the next Everest expedition were progressing. In March, Allison attended an outdoor trade show in Las Vegas with a couple of the team members to talk up the planned expedition with equipment manufacturers. The "first woman" angle was losing its draw among sponsors. Allison had to come up with $9,000 of her own money to join this expedition. She would be one of three women on

the team, and any one of them had a chance to be the first American woman to reach the summit of Everest.

Schute's and Allison's relationship had become serious. He preferred that they be together in Oregon but understood how important climbing was to her. He encouraged her to make another attempt on Everest. The early American naturalist John Muir, a mountain climber himself, had exhorted, "Come to the mountains and bathe in the fountains' love" (Miller, 1999, 75). Stacy realized that she was in love: with David and with climbing. She didn't want to choose between the two, and it felt good to have a partner who supported her.

The current expedition received a good deal of publicity. The Pacific Northwest had a historical connection with Mount Everest. Jim Whittaker, the first American to climb the world's highest mountain in 1963, was a native of Seattle. The *Seattle Times* assigned reporter Sherry Stripling to accompany the planned expedition to the Himalayas to write a story. The American team flew to Kathmandu, hired a team of Sherpas, loaded the trucks, and headed for the small village of Jiri at the end of the road. The trek to the base camp took a couple of weeks. They reached camp on the 17,500-foot Khumba Glacier on August 19, a day ahead of schedule. Allison shared a tent with Peggy Luce and Diana Dailey, the two other women on the expedition.

One day while exploring the icefall above camp, the climbers found the frozen, decayed body of a Sherpa, a grim reminder of what the mountain had to offer. Icefalls are particularly dangerous. These jumbled masses of pulverized ice are crisscrossed with deep crevasses, some apparent and others hidden. This particular fall was given the nickname "Mouth of Death." The grim epithet didn't seem to deter climbers. The Americans arrived in the late summer of 1988 amidst a veritable traffic jam. Seven other expeditions were staked out in the immediate vicinity. Allison's group decided to work in tandem with the Korean expedition in setting the route through the icefall. The two imminent dangers were falling into a crevasse or being buried by an avalanche. Climbers were routinely startled by the explosive sound of snow and ice crashing down from above camp. It was disconcerting, especially when climbing parties were out on the slope. Luce was knocked over and carried some ten feet by rushing snow. She was fortunate, as were two of the men on the expedition. They were buried by a small avalanche, yet able to crawl out, bloodied by the sharp ice.

The American team began the step-by-step preparation for the climb to the top of Everest by setting up the advanced camps. Allison climbed with various team members to lay out the route. As they prepared for the final ascent, tension among the team members increased. Everyone wanted to be in the first group to attempt the summit. It was getting late in the season when the expedition established Camp 4 at 26,000 feet. The group then reassembled at Camp 2 to determine the summit teams. Allison was chosen to be on the first team, along with leader Jim Frush and Steve Ruoss. The three returned to

base camp to prepare for their assault on the 29,000-foot mountaintop. In all, there would be four summit teams.

On the fourth day in camp, Stacy, Jim, and Steve awakened in the predawn and started up the slope. The sun came up as they approached Camp 1. The plan was to reach Camp 2 before the heat of the day when the threat of avalanches was greatest. They arrived at Camp 2 in late morning. The weather was perfect, and a dozen climbers from other expeditions could be seen heading for the summit. The next day they reached Camp 3 as the temperature hovered near zero. The following day they climbed up to Camp 4 with oxygen cylinders attached to their backs. The climbing party arrived at the high camp in the early afternoon and rested in their tents for the next day's three-thousand-foot climb to the summit. Allison, Frush, Ruoss, and the three Sherpas began the final leg of the climb just after midnight, as the temperature dropped to 20 below. They climbed in the dark, switching leads. At 7 AM the team was within one thousand feet of their goal. They calculated that they had six hours of oxygen left for the remaining five hours it would take to reach the top. Two of the Sherpas suddenly deserted, but the lead Sherpa, Pasang Gaylsen, was still with them. This unexpected development limited their options. The three Americans drew straws to determine who would make the climb to the summit. Allison won; Pasang would accompany her.

The two climbers began the final ascent, with Allison taking the lead. As they inched up the icy rock face with axes and crampons, a strong gust of wind blew the pile hat off her head. In the distance, they could see a party of Koreans already on the summit. At 10:30 on the morning of September 29, 1988, Stacy Allison made it to the summit of Everest. The Korean climbers reached out to shake her hand. She had realized her goal of being the first American woman to stand on the top of the world. Pasang arrived ten minutes later. Allison handed the camera to a Korean climber to take the historic photo of her and Pasang. Two months of preparation suddenly seemed worth the effort.

Allison went through the obligatory ceremony of hanging the corporate banners across the span of the mountaintop and recorded the display on film. After forty-five minutes on the summit, the climbers headed down. They descended wearily for hours on end, finally arriving at Camp 2 as the sky darkened. They were completely exhausted. Frush passed the word of their success down to base camp. He handed Allison the radio for a short interview with the *Seattle Times* reporter. Retiring to her tent, the hungry climber fired up her stove, thawed out some freeze-dried chicken and rice for a quick meal, and then collapsed in her sleeping bag.

The 1988 Everest expedition had been a success. They had put the first American woman on the summit. On October 2, three days after Stacy Allison's triumph, Peggy Luce made it to the top. Eight women had now climbed Everest. Allison remained in camp for the next two weeks while others on

the expedition made their assaults on the summit. She was homesick for Oregon. She realized how much she missed David. On October 19 the expedition members headed home.

When Allison arrived back in Washington State, she was the toast of the town. A crowd awaited her arrival at the airport. She entered the Sea-Tac terminal amidst applause and the glare of flashbulbs. Schute and her family were there to great her. Allison held a brief press conference. Schute informed her that TV host David Letterman's producer had called about an appearance on his late-night show. A six-inch pile of interview requests awaited her response. When Allison got back to Portland, the phone was constantly ringing. The mayor of Woodburn, her hometown, declared Stacy Allison Day. The town organized a parade and named a street after her. *Time*, *Life*, and *Climbing* magazine all did stories on her and Peggy Luce.

Allison appeared on the Letterman show and on *Good Morning America*. The television appearances made her a national celebrity. She decided to go on the speaking circuit to share her inspirational story. She had gotten speaking requests from several corporations and organizations around the country.

AN EXPEDITION TO K2

As time passed, life got back to normal. Allison started a construction business in Portland, and she and Schute planned a wedding for 1992. But the call of the mountains still beckoned. Stacy began to think about organizing an expedition to climb K2, the world's second-tallest peak. K2 stands on the border between Pakistan and China. Its outline resembles the famous Matterhorn in the Alps, but it would take a few dozen Matterhorns to equal K2's mass. It's a more difficult climb than Everest. The routes up the mountain have a reputation for being challenging and dangerous, and the weather can be savage and unpredictable. Indeed, K2 claimed the highest failure rate among the world's 8,000-meter (more than 26,000 feet) peaks. A handful of expeditions had put climbers on the summit, but that was only half the battle. There are no easy routes down K2. Another grim statistic cautioned climbers: the world's second-highest mountain had the highest fatality rate among the world's tall peaks. Five climbers died in a blizzard on an ill-fated 1986 expedition.

While Allison worked as a builder renovating houses in the Portland area, she also worked to acquire the necessary permits for the planned expedition to the Himalayas and began putting together a team of climbers. The expedition took two years to plan, and the budget reached $100,000. Stacy planned a scaled-down expedition with the goal of making a minimal impact on the landscape. The team decided to make the attempt on the summit without expensive and cumbersome oxygen tanks. Members included Canadians Jim

Haberl and Dan Culver, and American Phil Powers. Powers had been part of an unsuccessful expedition on K2 in 1990. Getting to K2 involved a thirty-plus-hour flight from North America to Rawalpindi, Pakistan; followed by a twenty-five-hour bus trip along mountain roads to Skardu, the principal town in the region; then a journey by Jeep to the trailhead in Askole; and finally, an eight-day hike to the base camp with an entourage of one hundred porters lugging the team's food and equipment.

The month-long trek and acclimatization tested the patience of the climbers. In mid-July, Haberl, Culver, and Powers made the initial attempt on the summit. Powers reached the summit first and notified base camp on his walkie-talkie. Two hours later, Haberl and Culver made it to the top. The two years of planning had paid off. Allison had led a successful expedition up K2—but at a terrible cost. On their descent, Dan Culver lost his footing and catapulted down the slope out of sight. His two stunned teammates returned to Camp 4 with the news. Allison organized a search party, but a blizzard intervened before they could locate Culver. The skyline disappeared, and they had to turn back. The party followed the colored glacier wands down the route in the near-blinding snow flurry. An avalanche buried two of the climbers waist deep, but they all made it back to base camp. Culver's body was never found. He left a widow in Vancouver, British Columbia, where a memorial service was held upon the team's return to North America. Haberl was the first surviving Canadian to climb K2, but the feelings of triumph and celebration were muted. His good friend Dan Culver had perished. Allison fully appreciated that death on the mountain was always a possibility. Expedition members freely chose to accept the risk.

DIFFERENT LIFE CHALLENGES

Upon her return from the K2 expedition, Stacy Allison and David Schute married and began a family. He asked her not to join any more high-risk climbing expeditions following the birth of their first son in 1994. She made a pledge that she would give up climbing dangerous peaks. It was a personal sacrifice, but her primary responsibility now was to her family. Besides, she was acutely aware of the growing number of widowed climber's spouses, and she didn't want to leave her own widower. Alison Hargreaves—who climbed Mount Eiger in the Alps while five months pregnant and who was the second person to climb Mt. Everest solo and without oxygen—died on the slopes of K2 in 1995, leaving two children without a mother. In 1996 Allison's climbing partner Scott Fischer died on Everest. His body remains there. The death toll among mountain climbers has been staggering. By the end of the century, the climbing community would tally over one hundred bodies buried on the slopes of Everest. K2 also interred its share of climbers.

Stacy Allison continues to reside in Portland with husband David and their two sons, Zachary and Andrew. David has a medical practice, and she is president of Stacy Allison General Contracting, a company that specializes in residential restorations. For recreation they cycle, ride the surf in kayaks, and travel to out-of-the-way places to raft the Northwest's rivers. Allison still runs to stay in shape. The former tomboy whose initial vertical adventure was up a hollow tree—and who later became the first American woman to stand on the summit of Everest—now limits herself to horizontal diversions.

Allison continues to travel the country on the speaking circuit, where she shares the leadership lessons of climbing with corporate audiences. She remains active in civic affairs. She serves on the Board of Trustees of National University, a private, nonsectarian school in California, and she heads the Oregon Lung Association's *Reach the Summit* fundraising project.

Stacy Allison surmounted both geological and personal obstacles during her maturation as a rock climber and then a mountaineer. Sports psychologists note that a combination of "push factors" and "pull factors" account for an athlete's choice of sports. The mountains provided Allison with an escape from a broken home, and later, refuge from an abusive marriage. As for the pull of climbing, she was drawn to the sport for more personal, less

ALPINE STYLE CLIMBING

Traditional mountain climbing expeditions—consisting of a dozen or more climbers and scores of local guides and porters accompanied by convoys of trucks or herds of pack animals, transporting hundreds of boxes of equipment—resembled armies on the move. This approach to climbing grated on the sensibilities of the more sporting mountaineers.

Alpine style climbing developed as an alternative. Alpine climbers carry only the bare essentials of gear, food, water, and bivouac equipment. They climb fast and light, disdaining pre-stocked advance camps and fixed lines. Alpine climbers begin their ascent early in the morning before dawn and climb quickly to avoid the afternoon sun when avalanches are most likely, in what's known as the "Alpine Start."

Alpine style climbing was popularized in the 1970s by European climber Reinhold Messner, who climbed K5 (26,500 feet) in the Himalayas with Austrian mountaineer Peter Babeler without the aid of oxygen tanks. In 1980, Messner made it to the top of Everest alone and without oxygen.

The main drawback of Alpine climbing is the relative lack of backup measures in an emergency. Alpine climbers consider this risk an acceptable tradeoff. Their approach to climbing is easier on the budget, takes less time, and is less intrusive to the pristine mountain environment.

situational, reasons. When asked why she climbed, she replied, "Because I am here." Climbing was Allison's way to discover not only where she was on her life's journey, but also who she was. Scaling mountains was her way of attaining self-esteem and independence as a young woman.

Allison was driven by her ambition to become the first American woman to stand on top of the world's highest mountain, and she attained that goal. Yet, she came to realize that the experience of standing on a mountaintop in triumph is ephemeral, while the climb entails days or weeks of intense, and often rewarding, effort. As such, mountain climbing provides an apt metaphor for life. Stacy Allison's life was a challenging climb that included a setback or two, but she made it to the summit of personal and professional fulfillment. She became not only a celebrated athlete, but a successful businesswoman, wife, and mother. Through her example, she provides inspiration to young women and men who seek to discover themselves through sport. As her mentor Chris Mannix once pointed out, it's the climb that's important.

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Joan Benoit waves the American flag on August 5, 1984, after her Olympics gold medal win in the women's marathon, which concluded in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. (AP Photo/Lennox McLendon)

Joan Benoit (1957–)

The women's 800-meter race at the 1928 Olympic Games was destined to determine the future of distance running for decades, although the competitors didn't realize it at the time. Women's track and field had made its initial appearance at the 1928 Summer Games in Amsterdam. During the 800-meter race, one of the runners collapsed in the infield at the finish. The spectacle of female exhaustion alarmed the crowd of spectators and persuaded Olympics officials to strike the event from competition. Thenceforth, female Olympians would be limited to running no farther than 200 meters. This ruling would prevail until 1960.

Male Olympians continued to compete in various distance events, including the marathon—set at 26 miles, 385 yards for the 1908 Olympics in London—despite similar incidents of exhaustion. An Italian marathoner, Dorando Pietri, collapsed upon entering the stadium at the 1908 Games and was assisted across the finish line. Four years later at the Stockholm Olympics, Francisco Lázaro, a runner from Portugal, died from dehydration while running the marathon: his death was attributed to having covered his body with wax to avoid sunburn. Thus, the fatality of a male runner could be condoned but female exhaustion could not. Women were still viewed as the weaker sex, to be protected from their own excesses. In point of fact, women had been running marathons prior to the Amsterdam Games. Great Britain's Violet Percy ran a 3:40:22 (hours: minutes: seconds) marathon in 1926, but this feat was conveniently ignored by the International Olympic Committee. Not until the 1960 Rome Olympics would the IOC allow women to run as far as 800 meters again. Similar restrictions on women's running events were imposed by various sport-governing bodies.

In the United States the longest women's track event sanctioned by the Amateur Athletic Union through the 1960s was 880 yards (one-half mile), while the length of a cross-country race was limited to a mile and one-half. Women like Bobbi Gibb and Kathrine Switzer were running marathons on their own but were not allowed to run in AAU-sponsored events. The most prestigious American race was the Boston Marathon, an all-male event that had been held annually since 1897. Kathrine Switzer entered the 1967 Boston Marathon as K. V. Switzer. Bobbi Gibb had slipped into the previous year's race, wearing her brother's hooded sweatshirt, and finished; but Switzer was the first woman to officially register and wear a bib number. Her appearance in the run infuriated an event director, who attempted to physically eject her in mid-race. Switzer escaped from the director's assault with the help of her burly boyfriend who intervened with a body block, and she was able to complete the race. News photos of the confrontation upstaged the inveterate Gibb, who crossed the finish line an hour ahead of Switzer. The altercation proved a watershed moment for women's distance running. In 1972 the Boston Marathon officially admitted women for the first time. Seven years later, Joan Benoit won the Boston Marathon, setting a course record for women.

She won again in 1983. Her time of 2:22:43 would have prevailed in every men's Olympic marathon through 1956. So much for the "weaker sex."

CHILDHOOD

Joan Benoit was born May 16, 1957 in the small coastal town of Cape Elizabeth, Maine. Her father, André, had been a member of the Tenth Mountain—ski troops—during World War II. Joan's mother, Nancy, a former high school athlete, was introduced to skiing by André during their courtship. The couple continued to ski following their marriage and the arrival of four children. Skiing became a Benoit family affair that included Joan and her three brothers. She learned to ski at age five, wedged between her father's knees as they negotiated the more gentle slopes on Sugarloaf Mountain. Joan caught on quickly and was soon skiing on her own. The petite skier had to climb up on the T-bar for return trips up the slope, or hitch a ride with an adult. Every Saturday during ski season, Nancy Benoit would pick up the four youngsters following Catechism and transport them up the mountain. André would join them on the slopes following Mass on Sunday, his day off. The entire family attended church in their ski outfits.

Joan grew up participating in sports year round. She played kickball and baseball with her brothers during the warm months. She was very competitive. The summer following her eighth birthday, Joan joined her cousins who were competing in a gymkhana in Connecticut. The exotic-sounding event was a track and field competition for youngsters. Joan was captivated by the boys' 880-yard race. She was particularly impressed by the running style of the winner. She decided to enter a half-dozen events on her own and ended up winning five blue ribbons. She continued running at field days sponsored by the progressive elementary school she attended, winning some dashes and finishing second in the distance run. Benoit recalls that virtually everything she was interested in had overtones of boyishness. Approaching adolescence, she felt the pressures to conform, as she didn't want to be labeled a tomboy. Her devotion to running became personal and more reclusive. While running on country roads, she'd slow to a walk and pretend to be looking at wild flowers when a vehicle passed. Despite the prevailing stigma toward athletic girls, Joan enjoyed a rich childhood competing in sports. She benefited from a combination of natural talent, ample opportunity, and encouragement from her parents.

Running track and playing ball occupied Joan's summers, but her real passion was skiing. Early on, she had set a personal goal to become a world-class skier. She began skiing competitively at age ten and enjoyed some success. Later, during vacations from school, Joan would take jobs at mountain resorts so that she could be near the ski slopes. She begged her parents to let her

enroll in a Vermont ski academy, but they told her that her education came first. Joan's father felt that she was taking sport a bit too seriously. At an age when most girls were experimenting with makeup and beginning to date boys, Joan was totally focused on athletics. There weren't a lot of organized sports for girls in Maine in the early 1970s. She played pickup ball with the guys, tennis with a girlfriend, and ran on her own. The Benoits owned a summer home on an island off the coast. During the annual two-week family vacation, Joan would row around the island and swim in the surf of Casco Bay. She always seemed to be immersed in physical activity of some sort.

Joan's skiing aspirations were disrupted when she broke her leg during a slalom race, an event that requires skiers to make sharp turns around closely placed poles arrayed on a steep decline. When the cast came off, the fifteen-year-old athlete was advised to incorporate running into her rehabilitation program. Running replaced skiing as her sport of choice; however, Joan was never content pursuing a single activity. At her high school, swimming was "the sport," but it wasn't Joan's strong suit. She played field hockey—her mother's sport—and joined the newly formed girls' track team. The diminutive five-foot-three-inch runner tried the 100m, 200m, and relay races but found her niche in the longer distances. The Maine high school association allowed girls to run the mile for the first time in 1973. The following year, Joan added this event to her repertoire. In her senior year she set a record in the 880-yard race and won the state high school championship in the mile. By then she had decided to give up field hockey and devote all her time to running. It proved to be an opportune decision. Women's distance was coming into its own. Across the continent in California, the first AAU American Women's Marathon Championship was held in February of 1974.

During the fall and summer, Joan ran cross-country and in local road races. Her regimen of five miles a day paid off. She ran strongly in several AAU events and won Maine's Great Pumpkin Classic. When Joan turned sixteen, a friend invited her to Boston to meet John Babbington, the coach of Liberty Athletic Club, a women's running club. Eventually she would join the LAC, and John would become her mentor. Meanwhile, Joan continued to enter races in the Northeast. In 1975 she competed in the National Junior Olympic Cross-Country Championships. The young runner from Maine made a respectable showing in the 2.5-mile race, her first national competition. Meanwhile, Joan was chipping away at the five-minute-mile mark, having run a 5:01:1 in a meet in August. Clearly, she had a promising future as a miler.

BECOMING A DISTANCE RUNNER

Benoit faced a dilemma upon graduation from high school. She wanted to enroll at Bowdoin College, a prestigious liberal arts college in Brunswick,

Maine. Bowdoin recently had gone coeducational but didn't have a women's running program. Benoit decided to enroll anyway and play on the college's field hockey team, with the hope that something would develop. She practiced with the men's track team and ran in a few meets. She also ran on her own before and after hockey practice to stay competitive. However, the fifty-miles-a-week regimen began to affect her hockey game, and the coach demoted her to the junior varsity squad. Benoit realized that she needed to set some priorities. Her quandary about which activity to pursue was reconciled by a chance injury. She stepped into a hole on the hockey field and badly twisted her knee. The college physician, a family relative, posed a question while treating the injury: why would she want to compete in a lateral-motion sport that was hard on knees when her obvious talent was distance running? Suddenly, the choice seemed obvious. She decided to become a full-time runner.

This was an era when women's running shoes were still a rare item on retail shelves. Benoit cherished the pair of Nike trainers she was awarded when she won a three-mile race in New Hampshire. She was welcome at the Bowdoin cross-country practices, where her brother Peter was a team member. She ran the mile for the men's junior varsity team but did most of her running with Liberty AC. Coach Babbington would pick her up at the Boston bus station and take her to meets. She continued to train over the winter and broke the five-minute-mile barrier with a 4:57 finish at the New England AAU Championship meet. She traveled to Philadelphia in April for the prestigious Penn Relays and finished fourth in the 1,500-meter race. Benoit focused on training for this distance, as it was the longest women's Olympic event. She ran in her first L'eggs Mini Marathon in New York City in May, finishing fourth. The race sponsored by the hosiery manufacturer was exceptional for the time, in that only women ran. The big event of the summer was winning the seven-mile Falmouth Road Race on Cape Cod, the first time Benoit ran in the event.

Women's distance running was beginning to get the recognition it deserved in the 1970s. The Falmouth Road Race, inaugurated in 1972, was one of the few running events of the era that invited both men and women. In the 1960s women had been disqualified from AAU competition for running in men's races. The experiences of Kathrine Switzer and Bobbi Gibb in the Boston Marathon were typical. In 1972 the male-dominated AAU finally capitulated to what had become a fait accompli and allowed women to compete in races of all distances. However, women runners were notified initially that they had to start marathons ten minutes before the men. The AAU's ruling provoked a protest at the New York Marathon, and the provision was dropped. Meanwhile, Benoit continued to run as a college athlete and in other races on her own.

Colleges fielding women's track teams had shown an interest in Benoit. They may have assumed she was a high school student running under the Liberty AC banner. During her junior year at Bowdoin, she decided to attend North Carolina State University as an exchange student. Russ Combs,

the track coach at NCSU, had offered her an athletic scholarship. It was a big adjustment moving from the Northeast to North Carolina, from a small liberal arts college where the professors knew all the students by name to a state university with 13,000 students. But tuition at Bowdoin was expensive, and Benoit realized that the scholarship would be appreciated by her parents. Running with a sanctioned women's team proved a valuable experience. Coach Combs accommodated her request to run in independent road races when they didn't interfere with university cross-country meets. However, a lingering bout of mononucleosis hampered her performance. She ran a disappointing 3,000-meter race while carrying a fever at the AAU Indoor Championships. She ended up missing much of the outdoor track season and had to postpone her final exams until she recovered.

The summer preceding Benoit's senior year, she was back home and running six miles every morning prior to arriving for work at a local greenhouse. She preferred to train alone, once commenting that when running with someone else she felt like she had to keep up her end of the conversation. It affected her concentration. This solitary approach to training seemed to work for her. She won the Falmouth Road Race again in August and then returned to Raleigh, North Carolina in September, physically fit and ready to compete. The NCSU women's team finished second in the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) National Championships in Colorado, and Benoit was named All-American. Running on her own that October, she set a world record in the Bonnie Bell 10k race (10 kilometers = 6.2 miles). The win generated significant attention by the national press. Nike offered her a contract, and the athletic shoe manufacturer provided her with much-appreciated running equipment.

While Joan Benoit was in her third semester at North Carolina State, Bowdoin College initiated a women's track program. She returned the following semester to run in her home state. The Bowdoin track coach granted her a weekend leave from the team to run in a 10k race in Bermuda. She won this event and decided on the spur of the moment to run in the marathon. She surprised herself by finishing with a time of 2:50:54, good enough to qualify for the Boston Marathon in April. The nomadic runner arrived back in Maine on a Monday morning, scheduled to run in a meet against Bates College that same evening. But Benoit was tired and her heel was bothering her. She finished poorly at the Bates meet. The team physician lectured her about overdoing it and the consequences of not resting an injury. She faced another setback that spring. She had to petition to graduate with a degree from Bowdoin, having failed to meet the senior residency requirements because of her extended enrollment at NCSU. A college committee determined that she would have to complete another term the following fall. Although Benoit wouldn't be able to graduate with her classmates, the additional semester provided the opportunity to spend more time with her boyfriend and future husband, Scott

Samuelson, who was a year behind her. She had met Samuelson, a six-foot-three-inch pole vaulter, at a fraternity event when she was a sophomore.

WINNING THE BOSTON MARATHON AND OTHER RACES

That spring Benoit began training for the 1979 Boston Marathon. She increased her regimen to one hundred miles a week prior to the Boston race. Patti Lyons was the women's favorite. Lyons had won the 1978 Honolulu Marathon with a time of 2:43:10. The weather in Boston on race day was cold with a drizzling rain. Benoit decided to wear Bowdoin's colors for the run. She started at the back of the pack but took the lead on Heartbreak Hill and held it for the remainder of the race. Her winning time of 2:35:15 set a course record and a new American record for the marathon. The underdog from small-town Maine became an instant celebrity and the darling of the media. She was accorded a police escort to her post-race press conference. Four days later, the president of Bowdoin hosted a reception for her. She received a pewter plate from the college and a congratulatory telegram from U.S. president Jimmy Carter. President Carter then telephoned and invited her and Bill Rodgers, the men's marathon winner, to a reception at the White House. She had her picture taken with First Lady Rosalynn Carter. On her return to campus, she was inundated with fan mail and requests for personal appearances. She even got a call from a Hollywood talent agent who implied that there was a movie role in the offing.

Once all the hoopla subsided, Benoit returned to her studies and to running. She competed for Bowdoin at the AIAW Nationals at Michigan State University, where she won the 10,000-meter race with a time of 33:40 and finished third in the 3,000m. She enrolled in her final semester at Bowdoin somewhat fatigued by all the obligations that accompanied her recent celebrity. Interruptions in her training schedule contributed to a disappointing third-place finish at the Bonnie Bell 10k run in October. But she recovered to win the annual Turkey Trot in her hometown of Cape Elizabeth. The busy student-athlete completed her final exams in December and contemplated her post-college running career.

Benoit set a long-range goal to run a sub-2:20 marathon. Norway's Grete Waitz held the current world record with a time of 2:27:33 at the 1979 New York City Marathon. Benoit's immediate goal was to continue running and improve her personal best time—but it was difficult to train and compete without a source of income. Traveling to events was a major expense. Nike offered her the opportunity to train and run in New Zealand, which offered warm winter weather in the southern hemisphere. With the 1980 Olympics scheduled in Moscow the following summer, she stayed focused on the 1500m. She headed for New Zealand in January, with stopovers in Oregon

to go skiing with friends and then San Francisco, where she received the Best U.S. Female Distance Runner Award from *Runner's World* magazine.

The New Zealand sojourn turned out to be challenging. Benoit had come down with chills on the Oregon ski slopes and had difficulty running the island's steep hills in the intense humidity. The experience was a lot different from training on the temperate coast of New England. She ran in three races in New Zealand: she competed in the 1500m at Christchurch, the largest city on South Island; the following week in hilly Auckland she ran against Mary Decker, who set a world record for the mile with a remarkable 4:21:7 (Benoit ran a 4:45); then in February she set a new record for American women in the Auckland marathon with a time of 2:31. Only Grete Waitz had run a faster marathon. Benoit detected an infected sweat gland under her arm following the race and cut short her stay in New Zealand. Back in the United States, doctors diagnosed the lump as a cyst. She delayed surgery until late March so that she could first accompany the U.S. Cross-Country team to Europe. She finished twenty-sixth in the run in Longchamps, France, and felt too tired to run in Milan, Italy. In the wake of the long trip back to Maine, she continued to feel tired and suffered from chills. Despite her infirmities, the determined runner headed to Florida for the Shamrock Run. She somehow summoned the energy to win the race, but then began feeling worse. She ended up at a local hospital diagnosed with an inflamed appendix. Following surgery, she received another lecture from a doctor about ignoring physical symptoms. She had been fortunate the appendix didn't burst during the race.

Home in Maine, Benoit underwent minor surgery to have the cyst under her arm removed. She signed on as a substitute teacher with Cape Elizabeth Schools to support herself while living with her parents. She would rise at 5 AM and run before teaching gym classes all day, and then run again after school. It was a demanding routine. By late April, she was again competing. She won the 3,000m in Syracuse, New York, and then teamed with Frank Shorter, the Olympic marathoner, to run in the Trevira Twosome through Central Park in New York City. She continued to run over the summer. Like most American athletes, she was disappointed by the Carter administration's decision to boycott the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. With no incentive to train for the Olympic 1,500-meter event, she began to focus on longer distances.

Joan Benoit shared the plight of many American runners of the era. They had to earn a living while devoting the requisite time to training and competing. Logging more than a dozen miles a day, traveling to running events, and holding down a full-time job could prove a taxing regimen. The economic dilemma was aggravated by the code of amateurism enforced by sport governing bodies that forbade runners to receive monetary compensation and retain their amateur status. The conservative Amateur Athletic Union had been the organization that established standards and sanctioned running events in the United States. Congress responded to widespread criticism of the AAU and

passed the Amateur Sports Act of 1978. This act removed AAU from any governing role. In its place, the Athletics Congress was created. This new body administered a trust fund to support athletes, although available money was disbursed to running clubs and not directly to individual athletes. (The Athletics Congress changed its name to USA Track & Field in 1992.)

Meanwhile, Bill Rodgers and a group of runners organized the Association of Road Racing Athletes, or ARRA, during the 1979 Boston Marathon. Joan Benoit and Mary Decker were early members of this group. ARRA formed as a runners' union with the aim of creating a circuit of races with monetary prizes. They petitioned governing bodies to implement "open" competition, where professional runners were allowed to run with amateurs in the same events. They also lobbied for a meaningful voice in the governance of their sport. Pressure was exerted on the Athletics Congress, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), and the International Olympic Committee to change their arcane rules. The IOC had directed IAAF, the international governing body, to disallow amateur runners from competing against athletes who took money for their sport. This was known as the "contamination" rule. In reality, athletes had been taking money "under the table" for quite some time. Moreover, the running clubs overtly funneled money to their runners. Following a contentious couple of years, ARRA prevailed on the issues of open competition and compensation. Running events were opened to professionals during the 1980s, and prize money was distributed to a limited number of finishers. Runners also could accept consulting fees.

A professional running circuit requires sponsors with money. Sponsorship emerged thanks to the increasing popularity of recreational running. Some 25 million Americans had begun running during the fitness boom that exploded in the late 1970s. Business corporations were quick to recognize the potential market for leisure- and sportswear. Companies like Jordache, a manufacturer of jeans, sponsored a number of running events including the $100,000 Los Angeles Pro-Am Marathon. Nike also began sponsoring races, and ARRA was able to put together a six-race professional circuit in the fall of 1980. The revision in rules meant that prominent runners could openly sign endorsement contracts to supplement their prize earnings. The financial status of the top runners changed dramatically. Bill Rodgers had once gone on food stamps while out of a job and running full time in the 1970s. In 1981, fellow marathoner Tom Fleming received $25,000 for winning the Los Angeles Pro-Am.

Women marathon winners were taking home prizes of several thousand dollars by the early 1980s. However, women's purses typically were half the amount of men's. Despite the gender inequities, there were other promising developments. In the late 1970s marathoner Kathrine Switzer created the Avon International Running Circuit for women. Avon sponsored the first women's marathon in Atlanta in 1978. The 1982 marathon was one of the first "open" prize money races for women, offering a $15,000 "developmental

training" purse. During its eight-year history, the Avon Series under the direction of Switzer would sponsor some two hundred running events in two dozen countries. The Avon Series was an integral factor in the decision to include the women's marathon in the 1984 Olympics. Joan Benoit received support from the Nike Athletics Assistance program and later joined the Nike Athletics West team. She would train for the 1984 Olympics at Nike's facility in Oregon, running in their shoes and supervised by the company's coaches. Sponsorships allowed top women runners like Benoit to pursue their sport full time.

In 1980 Nike offered Benoit a position at its New Hampshire–based sports exercise laboratory, with the understanding that she would be free to take time off to compete. She participated in the testing of shoes by running on the treadmill. Her maximum oxygen consumption—a measure of aerobic capacity—tested off the charts. She had inherited the genes of an endurance athlete. Combined with her work ethic, she had the potential to become a world champion. The following year, she competed on the Anheuser-Busch Half Marathon circuit, breaking the American record at a race in New Orleans and again in San Diego with a time of 1:11:16. She ran in the Boston Marathon in April, finishing third. She was disappointed with her finish but excited about a potential opportunity to work with runners at Boston University. She had met B.U. track coach David Hemery while in Boston, and he invited her to help him coach the distance runners beginning the following school year.

Over the summer Benoit ran with mixed success. She set an American record for the 25k at a race in Michigan but began feeling fatigued. The soreness in her heels had returned. In addition, she had a slight leg-length discrepancy that sporadically caused soreness in her leg muscles. Undeterred, she pushed herself to run ninety miles a week. That August she recorded a disappointing time in the Avon International Marathon in Ottawa. The persistent fatigue prompted her to have her hemoglobin level checked over Thanksgiving. The test indicated she was anemic, and her heels continued to bother her. She underwent surgery to remove bone spurs in December and left the hospital in walking casts. Scott Samuelson was there to drive her back to Maine in a pouring rain. The couple had a minor accident on the turnpike exit, but neither was seriously hurt. All in all, things were looking rather dark on the eve of 1982. But there would be a new dawn.

The leg casts came off in January, and Benoit was running eighty miles a week by March. She accompanied the Boston University runners to the AIAW Nationals in Iowa early that month. The B.U. coaching position was a new experience for her. She assisted Coach Hemery in recruiting athletes during spring semester. Meanwhile, she pursued her own running career. She missed the Boston Marathon but finished second in the L'eggs Mini Marathon behind Grete Waitz on Memorial Day. That summer she set a record in the Falmouth Race and then ran her first sub-2:30 marathon at the Nike/Oregon Track

Club Marathon, establishing a new American record of 2:26:11. She seemed to be back in championship form. She returned to her coaching duties in the fall, as the NCAA assumed control of women's college sports. Women athletes and their coaches had mixed feelings about the demise of the AIAW. However, distance runners around the world were elated by the IOC's decision to include a women's marathon at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

THE 1984 OLYMPICS

Joan Benoit's goal was to qualify for the U.S. Olympic team in the marathon and the 3,000k. She won the 3,000k in Boston in January and then ran her best time in the mile at a Boston Track Club meet. She traveled to England in March for the cross-country championships, where she was the top finisher among the Americans. She was ready to run in the Boston Marathon again. The favorite was New Zealander Allison Roe, who had won the race in 1981. Benoit took an early lead in the 1983 race and maintained a blistering pace. Despite developing a stitch in her side, she still had plenty of energy when she reached Heartbreak Hill, the bane of many runners. She felt soreness in her feet coming down the hill, but her spirits were lifted by the B.U. women's track team perched on a subway station roof two miles from the finish, cheering for their coach. She crossed the finish line at 2:22:43, a time that would stand for eleven years. Following the marathon, she was back on the B.U. campus coaching one final semester before returning to Maine.

Benoit purchased an old farmhouse near Freeport, Maine on Casco Bay, that served as her home base. She continued running competitively over the following summer. She won the 3,000m at the 1983 Pan Am Games in Caracas, Venezuela in August, and then won two 10k races in the fall. It proved to be an intense year of competition, and she felt tired. In December, Scott Samuelson proposed marriage. She was getting a lot of personal attention. Nike wanted her to film a commercial, and ABC Network did a film profile to have on hand in case she ran in the Olympics. She divided her time in early 1984 between remodeling the house and training for the Olympic trials. She would drive to nearby Cape Elizabeth and run the familiar twenty-mile loop. While running up a hill in March, she felt a sensation in her knee and had to slow her pace to a walk. She got a cortisone shot in her knee and tried to resume running the following week, but the joint tightened up again. When running became difficult, she swam and lifted weights to stay in shape. It was April and the Olympic trials in Olympia, Washington were just a month away. She tried running with a brace on her knee, but it again locked up. She had little choice but to undergo surgery and hope for a miraculous recovery in time for the Olympic trials. This would allow her just seventeen days to recuperate from the operation.

The first of May following surgery, Benoit began running again while undergoing intense physical therapy on her knee. The Olympic trials were on the twelfth of the month. On the ninth she ran sixteen miles, ten short of the marathon distance. The knee seemed strong enough to give it a try. On race day, Samuelson was there to provide moral support. Benoit ran what she called "the race of her life." The knee held up, and she finished first with a time of 2:31:04—she was going to the Olympics! She headed back to Maine to train. In June she won a preview 10,000-meter race in the Los Angeles Coliseum. This convinced her that the knee was fully recovered. She returned to L.A. the last week of July for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games.

Benoit opted not to stay in the Olympic Village that housed more than six thousand athletes. Instead, she lodged at a friend's guesthouse in Santa Monica. She needed to get away from all of the hubbub in order to focus on the upcoming race. The ascetic New Englander had a distinct approach to mental preparation for a race. Distance running can be a most solitary sport, and she always seemed comfortable running alone on isolated country roads. Yet, the marathon itself is unmatched among sporting events in the press of humanity and general commotion. Thousands of runners compete in the major races. The mass of competitors congregate at the starting area as miles of spectators

THE PERSONALITY OF THE DISTANCE RUNNER

What type of person gets up before the sun and clocks a dozen or so miles, six or seven days a week, in soaring heat and biting cold—who actually enjoys the solitary existence of distance running?

It goes without saying that these individuals are dedicated, mentally and physically tough. But distance runners must balance their intensity with restraint. Too much intensity leads to overtraining and chronic injuries; too much restraint and they're no longer competitive. Mostly, a distance runner has to be patient and persistent, a marathoner not a sprinter.

To the bystander, distance runners may appear to be somewhat obsessive, even masochistic as they run with pain and through pain. Indeed, some runners have "gone over the line" when it comes to intense training. Psychologists have identified cases where running has become an addiction. The runner's all-consuming passion leads to neglect of other important aspects of life. Obsessive runners have little time for family or friends, and show up at work exhausted. When injured or too weary to run, they suffer withdrawal. Idle runners feel guilty and become depressed.

According to most doctors and running experts, the key to healthy running is balance: don't neglect eating, sleeping, working, and socializing. Run to live, don't live to run.

line the streets. The venue is cluttered with tents, refreshment stands, and rows of portable toilets. Banners, flags, commercial signs, and posters festoon the carnival-like setting. Bevies of orange-vested photographers and TV commentators mill around, adjusting their paraphernalia. Dozens of police officers, mounted on horses or motorcycles, patrol the route demarcated by bright rubber cones and sawhorses. Within this frenetic milieu, individual runners must summon their concentration.

On Sunday, August 5, 1984, forty-nine elite runners from twenty-eight nations gathered at the starting line at Santa Monica College to begin the women's Olympic marathon. Kathrine Switzer was covering the race for ABC TV. She described Benoit at the start as appearing "totally vacuous . . . her jaw slack, mouth open slightly, and eyes glazed." At the sound of the starting pistol the pack headed for relatively smog-free Los Angeles. Benoit ran in a white painter's cap to keep the sun off her head. She took the lead at the first water station and headed for the stretch of freeway. By mile sixteen, she was leading by more than two hundred meters. As the Los Angeles Coliseum came into sight, she could see the huge mural of her winning the Boston Marathon that Nike had erected on the side of a building. She entered the Coliseum tunnel, the dim, muffled passageway to victory. When she emerged into the sunlight, she heard the roar of 77,000 fans. Completing the final lap around the stadium, she waved her cap at the crowd. She broke the tape a minute and a half ahead of second-place Grete Waitz. Joan Benoit had won the first women's Olympic marathon. At the afternoon award ceremony, the Benoit family was in attendance to applaud their famous runner as she received the Olympic gold medal.

Benoit braced herself for the celebration of her historic victory. She signed autographs for a good hour. Dole Foods, one of her sponsors, threw her a party that lasted until midnight. The next day she was up early to appear on ABC's *Good Morning America*. All she wanted to do was return to life in Maine, out of the limelight. She quietly flew home prior to the closing ceremonies. She had a wedding to plan and invitations to mail. Maine, however, had prepared for its own celebrations. Portland, the capital city, threw her a parade, and she was inducted into the Maine Sports Hall of Fame—even though she hadn't yet retired. In late September, Joan and Scott were married. She described the wedding as an "intimate" ceremony with five hundred guests. The couple then flew to Bermuda for a brief honeymoon. Joan, for one, needed a break from all the public attention. She confessed to loathing publicity so much that she once considered giving up running just to be left alone.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

In January Benoit was invited to New York to accept a Woman of the Year award from *Ms. Magazine*. At first she demurred, but she was persuaded to

accept. She continued to be deluged with requests for appearances and found herself spending a great deal of time traveling to ceremonial affairs. She reduced her running regimen to seventy miles a week in order to spend more time with new husband, but what she really wanted was to run competitively again. In April Norway's Ingrid Kristiansen set a new marathon record. This feat motivated Benoit to return to competition. Back on the circuit, suffering from borderline anemia, she finished poorly in the L'eggs Mini Marathon. She realized she had to cut back on her hectic schedule in order to recover between events. Over the summer her performance improved but her heels began to bother her again, requiring more cortisone injections. She prevailed in a mini-marathon in Philadelphia in September. She then won the Chicago Marathon, beating Ingrid Kristiansen. Benoit's time of 2:21:21 set an American record that would endure until 2003. In recognition, she received the 1985 James Sullivan Award as the top amateur athlete in the United States. But heel surgery kept her out of the 1986 Boston Marathon. It would be the first year since 1979 that she hadn't run in at least one marathon. The folks in Maine hadn't forgotten her, however. Her hometown of Cape Elizabeth erected a statue of their Olympic champion poised in mid-stride, carrying the American flag.

The married marathoner once quipped that she divided her running career into BC—"before children"—and AD—"after diapers." Benoit ran in the 1987 Boston Marathon while three months pregnant and then gave birth to daughter Abigail in the fall. She chose not to run in the trials for the 1988 Olympic Games. A son, Anders, was born in 1989. In 1991 Benoit was diagnosed with asthma, but this didn't deter her from competing. She finished fourth in the Boston Marathon. Now ensconced in "AD" mode, she became more selective about choosing events in which to compete. She didn't participate in the qualifying trials for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Meanwhile, she continued to run the local thirteen-mile loop near her home in Freeport, logging seventy or eighty miles a week. In the winter she and Scott headed to the ski slopes for some cross-country and downhill skiing. The two youngsters joined them when they were old enough to stand up on skis. The veteran athlete continued to promote the sport of distance running and remained active in the community. In 1997 she founded the 10k Beach to Beacon Race held each August in Cape Elizabeth. The Maine native also found time to serve on the governor's council on physical activity.

Benoit decided to compete in her third Olympic marathon trial in 2000, but she didn't make the cut for the Sydney Games. Two years later, she set the record for the women's 45–49 age group in the Chicago Marathon. In 2003 she won the Maine Half Marathon, running against much younger women. The following year she became the second-oldest Olympic trials qualifier in history at age forty-seven. She then paced cyclist Lance Armstrong for the final sixteen miles of the 2006 New York City Marathon, which he finished. She ran in her fourth and final Olympic trials in the spring of 2008 at age fifty, setting