



wendy booker
explore with me

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ADVENTURER WITH MS REACHES THE TOP OF THE WORLD

Wendy Booker, a 57 year old climber, runner, and explorer with multiple sclerosis, has beaten the odds yet again... this time conquering the North Pole via dog sled.

April 23, 2011: Overcoming sub-zero temperatures, high winds and unfavorable conditions on the arctic ice, today Wendy Booker became the first person with MS to stand at the North Pole.

After trekking the last degree to the North Pole with her canine and human teammates, Wendy awoke to near blizzard conditions and frigid temperatures on Easter morning at the top of the world. April 24th is her birthday, and a birthday celebration on ice at the North Pole was the best present Wendy could receive!

The first leg of a long and arduous mission, the North Pole is only one of three arctic expeditions that Wendy plans to undertake on her way to completing the Polar Trilogy. In December of 2011 she will follow up her North Pole triumph with a cross-country ski trek to the South Pole. 2011 will mark the 100th anniversary of the famous Scott and Amundsen race to the Pole in 1911, and Wendy is honored to participate in this historic centennial year. Next spring, she'll be tackling the frozen expanse of Greenland to complete the Polar Trilogy, again supported by dog sled.

How does a New England interior designer come to find herself mushing to the North Pole?

Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1998, Wendy was initially devastated. But it took little time for her to transform anguish into inspiration by running the Boston Marathon. Over the past decade she has continued running with ten marathons under her belt – the latest being the New York Marathon in the fall of 2010.

Not content with running, Wendy joined a team of climbers with MS who were attempting to summit Denali (Mt. McKinley) in Alaska. With no previous climbing experience, she dedicated a year to hard training and set off with them in 2002. Although weather conditions prohibited the team from summiting, Wendy attempted Denali again in 2004 and she succeeded, becoming the first person with MS to stand atop the highest mountain in North America.

On Denali an idea was born. Why not try for the Seven Summits? The loftiest heights on each continent... A holy grail for climbers... Why not do it in spite of MS? In that moment, Wendy Booker began a decade long quest to reach the top of the highest mountain on each continent, successfully climbing Mt. McKinley, Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Elbrus, Mt. Aconcagua, Mt. Vinson Massif and Mt. Kosciusko.

After two grueling attempts on Mt. Everest in 2009 and 2010, Wendy was faced with the stark realization that the highest peak on earth would elude her. She had simply taken her body as high as it could go. In the process of finding contentment in climbing 6 and ½ of the Seven Summits, Wendy realized that she was not finished with the 'top of the world' just yet. Everest had held that place in her heart for years, but what about the *geographical* top of the world?

And so the North Pole became the answer.

After crossing innumerable open water leads, chopping trails through countless pressure ridges, and navigating the arctic ice with her intrepid team of dogs, on April 23, 2011 at 2:45 pm Wendy Booker reached 90 degrees north - the top of the world.

To learn more about Wendy Booker and read dispatches straight from the ice, visit www.wendybooker.net.

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If you would like more information about Wendy Booker, or to schedule an interview or appearance, please contact Trish Thomas at 720.224.4923 or email trish@wendybooker.net.



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FACT SHEET / April 2011

ABOUT WENDY BOOKER

PERSONAL: Age 57, single mother of 3 grown sons, lives in Beverly Farms, MA. Previous career was interior design.

DIAGNOSIS: Diagnosed in June 1998 with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) after experiencing numbness in her legs for several months and, eventually, falling down at work.

MISSION: To raise awareness of Multiple Sclerosis; to inspire others to overcome adversity; to explore the farthest reaches of the globe – including the Seven Summits and the Polar Trilogy (North and South poles and Greenland).

UPBRINGING/EDUCATION: Originally from Rye, New York. Attended Westminster College in Salt Lake City; graduated from Ohio University in 1976 with a major in Education and minor in Theatre and English.

INFO ABOUT MS: An autoimmune disease, MS is an inflammation of the nervous system. More than 400,000 Americans have it (with some estimates as high as a million). Currently, there's no cure for MS, but thankfully it's not fatal. Symptoms include an increasing loss of coordination, muscle weakness and numbness.

MOUNTAINS AND MARATHONS: After receiving her diagnosis, Wendy became a serious runner and soon after that, a mountain and ice climber. She is on a regimen of MS drugs and her MS is mostly in remission. On her quest to climb the world's Seven Summits and complete the Polar Trilogy, the mountains, marathons and ice conquered by Wendy include:

MOUNTAINS:

- May, 2009 & 2010: Attempted Summit #7, Mt. Everest (Asia), 29, 035 ft.
- November, 2008: Completed Summit #6, Mt. Kosciuszko (Australia), 7,310 ft.
- January 2008: Completed Summit #5, Mt. Vinson Massif (Antarctica), 16,067 ft.
- January 2007: Completed Summit #4, Mt. Aconcagua (Argentina), 22, 834ft, her 2nd attempt.
- July 2006: Completed Summit #3, Mt. Elbrus (Russia), 18,481 ft.
- June 2005: Completed Summit #2, Mt. Kilimanjaro, (Africa), 19,340 ft.
- June 2004: Completed Summit #1, Mt. McKinley (Denali, Alaska, USA), 20,320 ft.

MARATHONS:

- Chicago Marathon: 2006
- Boston Marathon: 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2006
- New York Marathon: 2002 and 2003
- Marine Corps Marathon: 2004
- New York Marathon: 2010

ICE:

- North Pole: April 23, 2011



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FACT SHEET / October 2010

ABOUT THE POLAR TRILOGY

The Polar Trilogy is to arctic explorers what the Seven Summits are to mountaineers. The events consist of: **the North Pole, the South Pole and the Greenland Crossing.**

1. The North Pole



The North Pole, also known as the Geographic North Pole or Terrestrial North Pole, is defined as the point in the northern hemisphere where the Earth's axis of rotation meets the Earth's surface. It defines geodetic latitude 90° North, as well as the direction of True North. At the North Pole all directions point south; all lines of longitude converge there, so its longitude can be defined as any degree value. While the South Pole lies on a continental land mass, the North Pole is located in the middle of the Arctic Ocean amidst waters permanently covered with shifting sea ice. This makes it impractical to construct a permanent station at the North Pole. The sea depth has been measured at 4,261 meters (13,980 ft). The nearest land is Kaffeklubben Island, off the north coast of Greenland.

A dogsled & ski expedition to the North Pole brings to mind names like Peary, Henson and Cook. Imagine dog teams maneuvering over tall pressure ridges, or crossing freshly frozen leads accompanied by their human teammates on cross-country skis. Wendy completed her expedition to the North Pole successfully on April 23, 2011.

2. The South Pole



Antarctica is the coldest, highest and driest of the seven continents. The South Pole is the southernmost point on the surface of the Earth and is the site of the US Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, which was established in 1956. The South Polar region offers an incomparable experience. Unlike skiing the pack ice that surrounds the North Pole, a journey to the South Pole is on firm ground so-to-speak (it's actually 2 mile thick ice), with no pressure ridges or open water leads. Yet Antarctica has challenges of her own, namely relentless winds that blow in your face as you ski towards the South Pole. Still, this journey across the Polar plateau is worth every drop of sweat, and Wendy looks forward to strapping on her skis and heading for the South Pole in early 2012.

2. Greenland



Greenland is, by area, the world's largest island that is not a continent. It is also the least densely populated country in the world. The total area of Greenland is 836,330 square miles, of which the Greenland ice sheet covers 677,855 square miles. For true adventurers who love the Arctic this is THE classic expedition. Though a part of the Arctic, the interior of Greenland more closely resembles the interior of Antarctica with unbroken snow as far as the eye can see. Long days, unpredictable weather and altitude combine to make this expedition a serious challenge, but the scenery and spirit of Greenland make it all worth while.

A dogsled-supported ski expedition means that most equipment and food will be transported by Inuit dog teams, and the local Greenland mushers will bring a knowledge and understanding of the Greenland icecap that can't be found outside their culture. The famous Dye II station, the Greenland icecap and almost 24 hour sunshine will welcome Wendy in 2012.



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FACT SHEET / June 2010

ABOUT THE SEVEN SUMMITS

All Seven Summits have been climbed by only an elite few. They consist of:

Mt. McKinley
Mt. Kilimanjaro
Mt. Elbrus
Mt. Aconcagua
Mt. Koscuisko
Mt. Vinson Massif
Mt. Everest

1. Mt. McKinley (Denali, Alaska, USA)



- Elevation (feet): 20320
- Range: Alaska/Yukon Ranges
- State: Alaska
- Country: United States
- Continent: North America
- Difficulty: Major Mountain Expedition
- Year first climbed: 1913

Description: Mount McKinley is the highest peak in North America. It is a huge snowy mass, flanked by five giant glaciers and countless icefalls. It dominates the horizon from as far south as Cook Inlet, 200 miles away, and as far north as Fairbanks, 150 miles away. Its steep unbroken south slope rises 17,000 feet in twelve miles. Five major ridges extend from the summit, and many spurs and buttresses extend from these. The mountain is increasingly known by its native name, Denali, which means 'The Great One' in the Athabaskan language. Denali is not an especially difficult climb technically, but the weather is more severe here than anywhere else in the world, and many lives have been lost attempting the ascent.

2. Mt. Kilimanjaro (Africa)



- Elevation (feet): 19,563
- Range: East Africa Mountains
- Country: Tanzania
- Continent: Africa
- Difficulty: Walk up
- Year first climbed: 1889

Description: Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa, located in Northeast Tanzania, near the Kenya border. Kilimanjaro is an extinct volcano, and is one of the most massive in the world. It towers 15,000 feet above the surrounding arid plains, and 2.5 square miles of its surface are over 18,500 feet. Beneath its ice dome, snow extends down long gullies that have been eroded in the mountain sides. Kilimanjaro's summit crater, known as Kibo, measures an incredible 1.5 miles across. The highest point on Kibo's steep rim is Uhuru, the highest peak in Africa. The approach and climb provides spectacular diversity, from scrub-lands thick with African wildlife to lush forests to flowering alpine tundra. All this finally gives way to snow and rock above 15,000 feet.

3. Mt. Elbrus (Russia)



- Elevation(feet): 18,510
- Range: Caucasus Mountains
- Country: Russia
- Continent: Europe
- Difficulty: Basic Snow/Ice Climb
- Year first climbed: 1874

Description: Mount Elbrus is the highest peak in Europe. It is part of the Central Caucasus, but is located several miles north of the main crest. Its origin is volcanic, and though it has long been extinct, it still retains its gently sloping, conical shape. Of the twin cones rising on its summit, the highest is located west of another cone that is only slightly smaller (18,442 ft.). The summit is capped in ice year round, and countless glaciers sprawl from its slopes. All told, the mountain and its vast glaciers cover 56 square miles. The summit provides incredible views of the entire Caucasus.

4. Mt. Aconcagua (Argentina)



- Elevation (feet): 22,841
- Range: Andes
- Country: Argentina
- Continent: South America
- Difficulty: Major Mountain Expedition
- Year first climbed: 1897

Description: Aconcagua is the highest mountain in the Western hemisphere, located in western Argentina, near the Chile border. It dominates the sky west of Santiago, Chile's capital city, and is visible from the Pacific coast, 100 miles away. Though the mountain's summit crest and radiating ridges are largely windswept free of snow, large glaciers fill the valleys on all but the southern and western flanks. Some climbing routes are relatively straightforward hikes to the top, but this is the very reason that Aconcagua has one of the highest mountain death tolls in the world: many of its climbers tend to move too swiftly up the mountain, with little respect for the elevation or the weather.

5. Mt. Kosciusko (Australia)



- Elevation (feet): 7,310
- Range: Snowy Mountains
- Country: Australia
- Continent: Australia/Oceania
- Difficulty: Scramble
- Year first climbed: 1840

Description: Mt. Kosciusko is the highest peak in Australia, and though not large by mountaineering standards, it is one of the oldest in the world. Some 30,000 people make the trek to the summit of Kosciusko each year – either hiking in the summer or skiing in the winter. There is some dispute over whether Puncak Jaya (the Carstensz Pyramid in Papua New Guinea) is the highest peak on the seventh continent due to its title as the highest mountain in the Pacific Basin, but Mt. Kosciusko is generally considered to be the 'seventh summit' at this time.

6. Mt. Vinson Massif (Antarctica)



- Elevation (feet): 16,066
- Range: West Antarctica Ranges
- Country: Antarctica
- Continent: Antarctica
- Difficulty: Major Mountain Expedition
- Year first climbed: 1966

Description: Vinson Massif is the highest mountain of Antarctica. It is a massive mountain, stretching thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. Its location, the Sentinel Range of the Ellsworth Mountains, is home to most of Antarctica's highest peaks. Climbing Vinson is not considered technically difficult, but Antarctica's extreme climate makes ascending Vinson a serious undertaking.

7. Mt. Everest (Asia)



- Elevation (feet): 29,035
- Range: Himalaya
- Country: Nepal
- Continent: Asia
- Difficulty: Major Mountain Expedition
- Year first climbed: 1953

Description: Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. Its elevation is 29,035 feet (8,850 meters). The first seven attempts on Everest, starting with a reconnaissance in 1921, approached the mountain from Tibet, where a route to the summit via the North Col and North Ridge seemed possible. All were unsuccessful. George Mallory, who spearheaded the first three expeditions, lost his life with Andrew Irvine during a failed ascent in 1924. Unsuccessful attempts continued through 1938, then halted during World War II. By the war's end, Tibet had closed its borders, and Nepal, previously inaccessible, had done the opposite.

Starting in 1951, expeditions from Nepal grew closer and closer to the summit, via the Khumbu Icefall, the Western Cwm, over the Geneva Spur to the South Col, and up the Southeast Ridge. In 1953 Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit. Since the first successful ascent, many other individuals have sought to be the first at various other accomplishments on Everest, including many alternative routes on both the north and south sides.

Overall, more than 700 climbers from 20 countries have climbed to the summit by various routes from both north and south. Climbers' ages have ranged from nineteen years to sixty. At least 100 people have perished, most commonly by avalanches, falls in crevasses, cold, or the effects of thin air.

Climbing on Everest is strictly regulated by both the Nepalese and Chinese governments. Permits cost thousands of U.S. dollars (\$50,000 for a seven member party in 1996), and are difficult to obtain. Waiting lists extend for years. Treks to Everest base camp, minus the summit attempt, are becoming increasingly popular on both the north and south sides of the mountain. On the north side, a Buddhist monastery stands at the foot of the Rongbuk Glacier, beneath Everest's spectacular north face. The monastery is one of two whose locations were selected specifically to allow religious contemplation of the great peak. The other is the Thyangboche Monastery in Nepal. The once-active Rongbuk monastery in Tibet has required much rejuvenation from the destruction it experienced following China's invasion of Tibet.

Mount Everest is also known by the Tibetan name Chomolangma (Goddess Mother of the Snows), and by the Nepali name Sagarmatha (Mother of the Universe).

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

What is Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

Doctors and scientists believe that multiple sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease affecting the central nervous system: the brain, spinal cord and the optic nerves. A fatty tissue called myelin, which helps nerve fibers conduct electrical impulses, surrounds and protects our nerve fibers. MS occurs when myelin is missing in several areas, leaving scar tissue called sclerosis. Sometimes the nerve fiber itself is damaged or broken. Myelin not only protects nerve fibers, but also makes their job possible. When myelin is destroyed or damaged, our nerves cannot do their job; this is what causes MS symptoms.

What are the characteristics of MS?

Doctors and researchers have identified several different variations of the disease, each of which might be mild, moderate or severe. The most common form is **Relapsing-Remitting MS**, where there are clearly defined flare-ups of the disease and episodes of acute worsening of neurological functioning. Partial or complete recovery periods, (remissions) free of disease, follow the episodes. This is by far the most common form of MS and approximately 85% of MS sufferers have this.

It used to be that half of MS sufferers with Relapsing-Remitting MS developed **Secondary-Progressive MS**, with an initial period of relapsing-remitting disease followed by a steady worsening of symptoms. New and powerful disease-fighting drugs have been developed; but there is currently not enough information to tell how effective they are long term.

What causes MS?

The exact cause of MS is unknown. The disease is a malfunction of the immune system. Researchers have identified various possible factors, including genetics, gender and environmental toxins.

Who is most likely to get it?

- Most people are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50
- Two to three times as many women suffer from MS as men
- There is no evidence that MS is directly inherited
- MS occurs more commonly among people with Northern European ancestry
- Approximately 400,000 Americans have been diagnosed with MS, 200 new cases per week

What are the symptoms of MS?

Symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary with individuals. Fatigue, severe vision problems, loss of balance and muscle coordination, slurred speech, tremors, stiffness and bladder problems are just some of the symptoms.

How is it diagnosed?

There is no single test to diagnose MS, so doctors use several tests and procedures including:

- Complete medical history
- Testing reflexes, balance, coordination, vision and checking for areas of numbness
- Diagnostic tests including MRI scan and spinal tap

How can I find out more about MS?

There are a number of websites about MS. The information above has been obtained from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society website (www.nationalmssociety.org).



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F.A.Q. / January 2011

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Do you carry and take your MS medication while you're climbing?

Answer: Yes, I do. Part of my mission in running marathons, climbing the Seven Summits and completing the Polar Trilogy is to encourage the newly diagnosed and those not currently on a prescribed therapy to get on therapy and stay compliant once on therapy. If I can inject at 20,000 feet on a glacier, it is no big deal to inject down here.

2. What are your symptoms?

Answer: My toes on my left foot are completely numb. I am also numb from my toes to the top of my rib cage on my left side. Three toes of my right foot are numb, and I get muscle spasms in the toes of both feet. In addition, I suffer from dizzy spells and occasionally have vision trouble.

3. How do I get to do the things that you are doing?

Answer: You are only limited by your imagination! It's a huge, wonderful world out there and you can do anything you put your mind to. And, remember, not only did you do it – you did it with MS!

4. How many flare ups have you had?

Answer: I have had 'bumps' along the way that included vertigo as well as increased numbness, but I have been able to continue with my life and do the things I have always wanted to do by continuing to be proactive and seeking medical help as soon as I feel it is necessary.

5. I can't run a marathon or ski to the North Pole or climb a mountain. Therefore, what can I do with the obstacles in my life?

Answer: The possibilities are endless. Don't let your MS or your problems decide for you. Go out and try something you never imagined doing or take on a new challenge. During my U.S. travels, I have met so many people with major hurdles to overcome doing so many incredible things

6. I have MS and my family and friends tell me I should move back home, live with my parents and not pursue a career because I have MS. They say that I may not be bad now, but I am going to be in the future. Is this true?

Answer: A lot has changed and this "ain't your mama's MS." I know that your family and friends only want the very best for you and believe that they are doing the right thing, but you can assure them that you are OK and will live your life fully despite your diagnosis. Once they see you being proactive in your disease management, working closely with a good neurologist, and taking care of yourself, they will see and understand that you aren't going to break. Again, get on a good therapy and manage yourself by living a healthy lifestyle, eating a good diet and exercising. Remember, your brain is still strong and you will be surprised that when you put your mind to it there isn't much you can't try or achieve.

More...

7. How do you cope with getting overheated? (This is a big problem with MS sufferers)

Answer: Just like MS itself, overheating may or may not be an issue for many people with MS. My symptoms are more pronounced when I get too hot, therefore, I need to know when to say when. You need to recognize when you are getting too tired, overheated or more symptomatic. When I get too hot I immediately drink something really cold. Remember, it is your core body temperature that you want to bring down, so you need to get something cold in you quickly. There are also tricks and devices that people use to keep from getting overheated. The MS Foundation out of Ft. Lauderdale has cooling vests and collars available. You can also try putting ice in your shirt and on the back of your neck. Just remember not to get discouraged. Listen to your body and know that tomorrow is another day and you can try whatever you were doing again.

8. My doctor doesn't think my MS is bad enough and so he hasn't put me on any of the MS therapies. Should I ask to be on therapy or find another doctor?

Answer: The research is compelling and the long term data indicates that the sooner you get on therapy the better off you will be. The National MS Society has made this part of their mission to encourage people with MS to get on therapy. If your neurologist says you are 'not bad enough,' I would seek a second opinion or try to get an appointment at an MS Center to advocate for yourself and your MS. We are now so fortunate to have 4 different therapies from which to choose. If you are not doing well with the one you are on or have side effects, switch! I truly believe in therapy. In my opinion, not being on a therapy is not an option!

9. When I was first diagnosed with MS, I attended a local support group. I was uncomfortable and many of the participants made me feel badly because I wasn't in a wheelchair. I was depressed when I left and afraid for my future. How can I find a better support group?

Answer: I am a firm believer in the power of positive thinking. I try to live that way myself. If you are not feeling positive or uplifted by your support group, they really aren't supporting you, are they? If you can't find a positive group in your area, start your own! Surrounding yourself with upbeat and positive role models will only benefit you and bring you up. Need help starting a group? Contact the MS Foundation in Ft. Lauderdale or the MSAA in Cherry Hill, NJ. Both organizations have wonderful information and people that are very eager to help.

10. My MS isn't that bad and I don't tell many people I have it. I don't want to take one of the prescribed therapies because then I will have to remind myself I have MS. Is this smart, or should I get on a therapy?

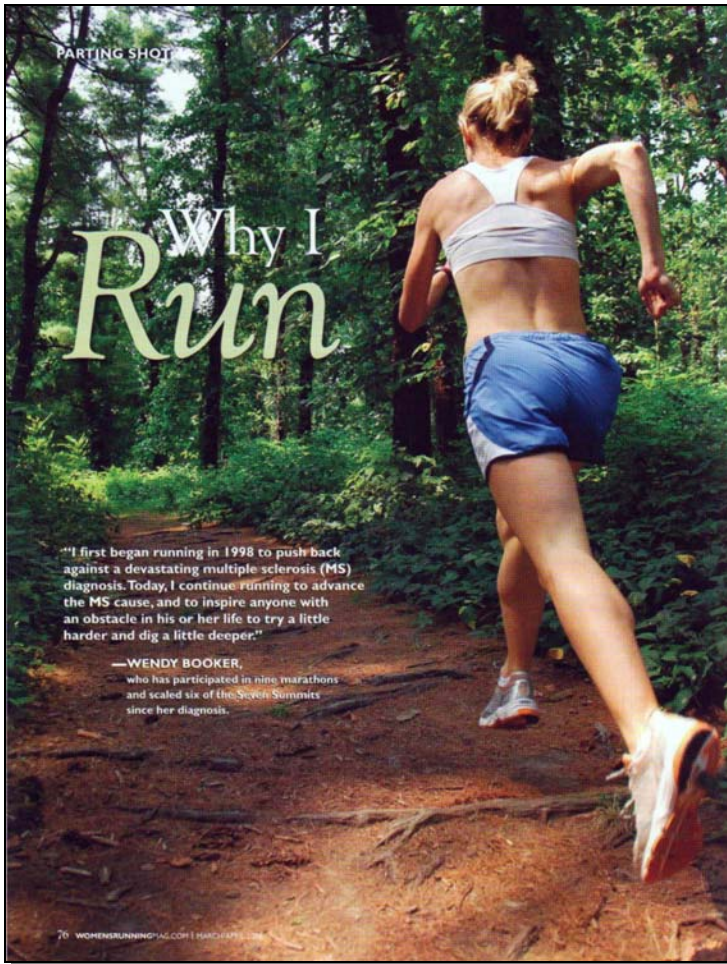
Answer: This question is similar to one I answered earlier. The research and evidence is extremely compelling that you should get on one of the disease modifying therapies in order to manage your MS. MS isn't always evident by your symptoms. Often the MRI shows a completely different story, so you are doing yourself a huge disservice by not meeting with your neurologist and getting on one of the prescribed drug therapies. Remember that prior to 1993 there were no therapies for MS. We were pretty much told to go home and prepare for a wheelchair. Today, in 2010, this is no longer the case! As I always like to say, "This ain't your mama's MS!" You do not need to tell anyone about your MS, but you owe it to yourself to get on a therapy and be committed to taking the best care of yourself that you can.

11. These mountains you climb are very cold. Does the cold bother your MS?

Answer: My MS and I do far better in the cold. I feel stronger and better when exercising in a cold environment.

12. The mountains and arctic expeditions are very dangerous. Are you sure you are prepared and equipped to be going on these adventures?

Answer: I would not put myself, and more importantly the other people on my team, in any sort of jeopardy. So, yes... I'm sure that I am prepared and equipped to pursue my mission!



Women's Running

Boston Globe



Appearance on the Late, Late Show with Craig Ferguson

NDAY GLOBE APRIL 19, 2009

Wendy Booker prepares to ascend ice falls on Nepal's Mt. Baruntse while training last year. "A mountain," she says, "takes you to somewhere you didn't know you could get to."

PHOTO BY BROOKE BARNES

She climbs every mountain, or at least the 'seven summits'

► CLIMBER
Continued from Page 1

altitude — sleeping in fields and adapting her palate to the local cuisine — she'll finally be ready to start the grueling ascent from Everest's base camp.

Fittingly, her training was no less extreme. To prepare, she scaled other peaks in the Himalayas and in Mexico, did exhausting intervals on ladders, and performed literally hundreds of pant-inducing lunges, squats, and jumps. Balance work, too: two-legged and one-legged jumps and vertical hops onto 12-inch and 18-inch steps, according to her trainer, Rob Gagnon, fitness director of the Manchester Athletic Club.

No doubt she's determined, he said. And her achievements are all the more impressive given her MS, which she treats with the drug Copaxone, and which causes some numbness and balance issues, as well as an ever-so-slight limp. "She's committed and she'll keep going," Gagnon said. "As long as she can keep doing it, she will."

But just as she's doggedly driven her climbing ax into 20,000-foot peaks, she's strived to spread the message, "find your own mountain," at frequent public speaking events across the country and regular visits to East Boston's Donald McKay Elementary School. Her message at frequent public speaking appearances: "Find your own mountain."

Booker talks with fourth- and fifth-graders in 2006 during one of her regular visits to East Boston's Donald McKay Elementary School. Her message at frequent public speaking appearances: "Find your own mountain."

PHOTOS BY MARK WILSON/GLOBE STAFF

Similarly, her experiences mastering mountains that tumble into the clouds have led her to establish The Other Side of Everest Educational Foundation to raise money for the children of sherpas killed on the world's toughest summits.

Now, she says, "There's so much past Everest for me to do." But first, there's the climb. All told, if she makes it on the first try, it should take about 2½ months.

"The hard part is: It's Everest," she noted. "Less than 20 percent [of climbers who attempt it] summit."

Considering that, she knows it may take several attempts; possibly many months.

"And that's OK," she said. "The mountain will always be there."

real life

4
THE NUMBER OF THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PEAKS THAT BOOKER HAS CLIMBED

Health hero: Wendy Booker

She aims to be the first person with MS to climb the Seven Summits

When this mother of three was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, her youngest asked, "Mommy, are you going to die?" That was all the motivation Booker, now 53, needed. Though doctors discouraged it, she began climbing, easing symptoms such as numbness with daily medication. The Massachusetts native challenges stereotypes about MS sufferers—she recently ascended Argentina's Mt. Aconcagua. Next on her "big 7" list: Mt. Everest. "I want others with a chronic illness to go find their own mountain."

OCTOBER 2007 PREVENTION.COM

Prevention Magazine



Feature Story on CBS Sunday Morning

MORE Magazine

Climbers Put Everest's Peak in Perspective

The New York Times
ON THE WEB

Wendy Booker, who has multiple sclerosis, on the Khumbu Icefall on Mount Everest.
By CHRIS HINE
Published: July 4, 2009

At the Teahouse just below Mount Everest's base camp, Wendy Booker and Johnny Strange took respite from the cold and their boredom to play a game of hearts.

SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND
 TWITTER
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New York Times

*FIRSTS AFTER 40

"I'M ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE ADVENTURE AROUND THE CORNER."

MY FIRST SUMMIT
WENDY BOOKER | 52
Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

"When I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at 44, my doctors told me to take it easy. I was a runner and a busy mom to three boys, so I ignored the doctors, ran a marathon and began speaking about MS. I heard about a team of people with MS who were going to climb Mount McKinley, in Alaska, one of the most difficult summits in the world. With no experience, I quit my job as an interior designer to join the team. We headed to McKinley in 2002, but couldn't summit because of the weather. I decided to try again at 50, as part of an otherwise all-male team. When you reach base camp, it's a blue and white world of snow, ice, crevasses and avalanches. We climbed through a three-day blizzard, a lightning storm and a rockslide. Each day I would inject my medication while still inside my sleeping bag. Word got around on the mountain that the first woman with MS was about to summit. I was balancing on an 18-inch ridge when a team of four passed by and congratulated me. I started to cry. I was still crying at 20,320 feet, when I planted my flag for MS after 17 days of climbing. I've since reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Elbrus. I plan to conquer Everest by 2009. Yes, I have a chronic illness, but it's been more like an epiphany."

—AS TOLD TO REBECCA ADLER

192 / More / February 2007

Reading Strategy: As you read, think of what you know about mountains. Connect it to new information in the story.

Wendy Booker

and the Seven Summits

Join a real-life action hero as she climbs some of the world's tallest mountains.

By Greta Gilbert

Picture a hero in an adventure story. She is strong and brave, and she is on a quest. She is climbing one of the tallest mountains on Earth.

Wind roars through her five layers of clothing. Her bones ache. Her fingers are numb. She whistles just to keep her lips from freezing. It is the middle of the day, but the temperature is minus 40°. "Not too bad," she thinks, and climbs on.

Meet climber Wendy Booker. She is the real-life hero of an adventure story. Her quest? To climb the tallest mountain on each continent. Together, these mountains are called the Seven Summits.

In 2009, Wendy Booker plans to climb Mount Everest. It is Earth's tallest mountain.



The Seven Summits

Booker's quest started in Alaska. She wanted to climb Mount McKinley, the tallest peak in North America. It took two tries before she sweated and trudged her way to the top in 2004. When she finally made it, she wondered, "Now what do I do with myself?"

She made a bold choice: To climb all Seven Summits. Booker headed to Africa to tackle Kilimanjaro in 2005. It is one of the most famous mountains on Earth.

Each day on Kilimanjaro was different, Booker says. One day, she saw vines that Tarzan might swing on. Another day, she saw trees that Dr. Seuss could have drawn. "I called them poodles on sticks," she says. She loved seeing something new each day.

peak: mountaintop

In 2006, Booker climbed Mount Elbrus. It towers over Europe. A year later, she climbed Aconcagua in South America.

This year, she scaled Vinson in Antarctica. Vinson was tough. Booker had to crunch her way through thick snow. She used a special kind of ax to climb on ice.

Then there was the snowstorm. Snow was falling fast and thick. Booker couldn't see anything at all. She and her guide groped their way back to camp to wait for better weather. Then they tried again.

Yet Vinson has been her favorite climb so far. "I found my joy," she says. Battling the ice and snow, she realized, "There was nowhere else I wanted to be."

groped: used their hands to find

The Invisible Enemy

A hero in an adventure story usually has some sort of enemy. Booker does, too. It is multiple sclerosis (MS), a serious disease.

MS attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. These cells send messages throughout the body. Damage from MS means that nerves cannot do their jobs correctly.

MS can make people dizzy. It can make muscles hard to control. Or, as in Booker's case, it can make parts of the body totally numb. Yet Booker doesn't let that stop her. With her disease, she climbs on.

Help From Friends

Every hero gets discouraged. When that happens to Booker, she thinks of Jim Cleere's students and former students in Massachusetts. The kids at Donald McKay K-8 School in East Boston have been cheering her on for several years.

Before each climb, the students give Booker a bag of gummy bears. While climbing, she carries a picture of her young fans on her backpack, along with a pink flag that they all signed. At the summit, Booker eats the gummy bears and calls the kids on a satellite phone.

Booker visits the children whenever she can. She talks about her adventures and lets kids check out her gear. Each year, she leads a class up a mountain so kids can learn about the adventure of climbing. They practice holding onto rocks and trying to find the right places for their feet.

Climb On!

Soon, Booker will need more gummy bears. She'll climb Kosciuszko in Australia. Next year, she'll face the tallest summit of all—Asia's Mount Everest. If she succeeds, she will be one of few women who have climbed all Seven Summits. She will be the first woman with MS to do so.

No matter what happens, Booker will climb on. "I want to inspire others," she says. "Especially young people. They should not see obstacles as mountains in their way."

You may never climb a mountain. Yet you can still be the hero in your own adventure story. Think about your Seven Summits and how you can climb them!



Wendy Booker climbs a wall of ice on Mount Rainier, Washington.

thought of not completing a mission that I had wept and shivered and prayed for was not acceptable to me. After all the preparation, after all the training, after leaving my family and launching into the unknown, was I now going to simply give up?

So I went back to Teva Neuroscience, the company that manufactures my MS drug Copaxone and had sponsored the original team. I asked them to sponsor me—to let me face the mountain again on my own. At first they gave an emphatic no, but I put together a proposal and wouldn't let the idea drop until they finally agreed to fund the climb. My training began again in earnest, and in 2004 I went back to face "The Great One." (*Denali* means "The Great One" in Athabaskan.)

Denali is not the most technically difficult climb, but it's a long trek because the mountain is immense, and the

weather is as extreme as anywhere on earth. Many lives have been lost attempting the summit. When you reach base camp, it's a blue-and-white world of snow, ice, crevasses and avalanches. We climbed through a three-day blizzard, a lightning storm and a rock slide. Wind got around on the mountain that the first woman with MS was about to summit, and I found myself balancing on an 18-inch ridge when a team of four passed by and congratulated me. I started to cry. I was still crying at 20,320 feet when I planted my flag for MS after 17 days of climbing—the first woman suffering with multiple sclerosis to do so.

A New Challenge

Standing on that summit changed me. The euphoria and accomplishment I felt propelled my next aspiration: to climb the highest mountain on each continent. I went back

Our lives are not so much determined by circumstance as by how we respond.



WENDY BOOKER was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1998 and has since run nine marathons and launched a quest to climb the highest peak on each continent. This "accidental athlete" has reached the top of six of the Seven Summits, with only Mount Everest yet to climb. Wendy's mission is to build awareness about MS, raise money to find a cure and inspire anyone facing an obstacle or challenge in life to climb on!

In 1998, at 44, I was a typical suburban wife and mother in Massachusetts. A few friends and I operated a small interior decorating shop, and I taught aerobics at the local athletic club. There was no hint of the upheaval and transformation that was to come.

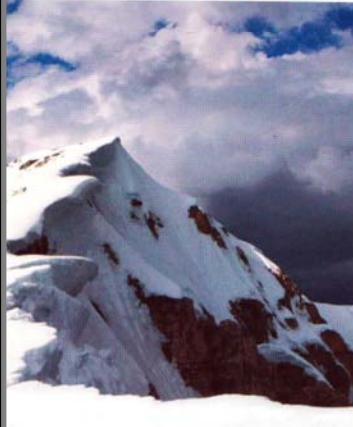
For a few months I had been actively ignoring some numbness in my lower body and vision problems—"old age" was my nonprofessional diagnosis. But one day while working in a display window at the design

store I completely collapsed. I couldn't attribute that incident to old age, so I visited my doctor to find out what was going on with my body. After many tests, analyses, CAT scans and a spinal tap, I was given the devastating diagnosis of multiple sclerosis—and all I saw was a wheelchair.



For those of you who don't know, Boston Marathon numbers aren't easy to get without qualifying. So Carol and I had to wrangle numbers by raising a few thousand dollars each for charity. The process of fundraising got me in front of the media, and thus I found myself one evening at a dinner listening to a story about a team of mountain climbers with MS who were going to attempt to summit Denali. Now let me ask you, doesn't Denali sound hot and tropical?

I was a big athlete now (ha!), so when asked if I had climbed before, I sagely replied, "Of course, I've climbed!" I said this thinking of the mountains in New Hampshire I had occasionally trudged up



as a child, at foothills. I was on a phone call that perhaps the commitment asked, "Who shocked to be comment deness of my d heard of one

Mount McKinley." "Same mountain,"

Oh my! Then the truth began speaking when I said climbing I meant little hills, is technical, and we're not talking about willing to train me and put me on the tea of men. After a few days of contemplation nity would not likely come again and I o and spent a great deal of 2001 and 2002 Mountain Climbing School in North C on a rope team, glacier travel, crevasse r survive in the snow. I climbed several l and spent 10 frigid days in the Cascade y all to prepare for the attempt on Denali.

Facing the Mountain

I won't go into all the details of my t the team did not summit and we were b being a climber anyway, this shouldn't h as my friends and family will share, I te

I hope that by climbing the Seven Summits I can encourage other people to never give up and always climb on.

With every traumatic diagnosis or event, you have to move through a process of grieving to reach acceptance, so I had my pity party, and then began to think about what my life could look like in spite of the disease. Out with the old and in with the new! It just so happened

to Teva and worked out a sponsorship agreement, turning climbing and public speaking into my career. At this point my marriage was over and, at 50, my life barely resembled what it had been a few years before. But the mountains were calling and for the next several years I climbed.

The Denali climb was in June 2004, and exactly one year later, in June 2005, I found myself at the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. The following summer, in July 2006, I completed summit No. 3, Mount Elbrus in Russia. In January 2007, I finally conquered Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, which at 22,834 feet had given me the most trouble and took a second attempt. I climbed two more summits in 2008. In January I summited Mount Vinson Massif in Antarctica, and in November I summited Mount Kosciuszko (just a little bump!) in Australia.

The Seven Summits are the holy grail for climbers. All Seven Summits have been climbed by an elite few—only about 200 people have successfully ascended them all. It has been my honor to have seen the top of six of these massive peaks. Mount Everest lies ahead in March 2009, so by the time you read this article I will have either successfully summited, or will be in training for my second attempt to ascend the highest mountain on earth.



The Power of Girlfriends

At this point I want to share with you another amazing aspect of my journey—girlfriends. Powerful and inspiring women have played such a huge role in making this mission come to life. My dear friend Carol (who, by the way, has fully recovered from breast cancer) was the catalyst that launched me into my new quest. My climbing partner, Brooke Barnes of Mountain Link, has been with me to the top of four

What more can you want from life than to live your dreams and, in doing so, give other people permission to do the same?

of the six summits thus far, and she will be with me on Everest for the challenge of my life. My personal trainer, Jen Lesca-Ames, prepares my body for the punishment it has to bear on these difficult climbs. My running buddies back in Gloucester, Mass., (the "Fish Chicks") and my fabulous new girlfriends in Boulder, Colo., cheer me on every step of the way. And my publicist, Trish Thomas, keeps me running around like a crazy woman, speaking and making media appearances





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Mar 11, 2008 5:51 pm US/Mountain

Multiple Sclerosis Doesn't Slow Climber

Reporting by Jennifer Zeppelin

DENVER (CBS4) — An athlete with multiple sclerosis who has scaled many of the world's highest mountains is training in [Colorado](#).

Wendy Booker's goal is to scale the highest peaks on all seven continents, and she's well on her way. She is training at Lakeshore Athletic Club in [Denver](#) for climbs on the last two of these peaks: Australia's Mount Kosciuszko and Asia's Mount Everest.

Booker, who takes the drug Copaxone for her condition, says her motivation is simple: to not let multiple sclerosis get in the way of her dreams.

"I said I really would like to do this to show people with

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An image of Wendy Booker on the Team Copaxone Web site

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Climbing every mountain

Most weekends when Wendy Booker's not breaking records as the first woman with multiple sclerosis (MS) to attempt to scale the highest summits on each of the seven continents, she can be found training in New Hampshire's White Mountains or on the trails in Boulder, Colo.

For this adventure, Booker and a friend packed up a 2007 Sport Red Metallic HHR for a trip to a 50-foot frozen waterfall along New Hampshire's picturesque Kancamagus Highway.

"I'll never forget when I found out I had MS nine years ago," says Booker, as she drops the vehicle's 60/40-split flat-folding rear seats. With its rear seats folded flat, HHR can handle up to 57.7 cu. ft. of cargo¹ — perfect for their backpacks, climbing tools, boots, ice axes, ropes and trekking poles.

"The doctor told me I should slow down and take things easy," she says. "I was a runner, an interior designer and a busy mom to three boys. That was the last thing I wanted to hear."

Rather than letting the diagnosis get her down, Booker joined a team of other people with MS who were training to climb Mount McKinley in Alaska. It took five years of training and two tries for Booker to conquer Mount McKinley at age 50. During the past two years, she has climbed to three other summits.

On the day of the frozen waterfall climb, Booker encountered a challenge she hadn't anticipated: A snowstorm that started brewing as she and her friend unhooked their climbing gear and headed back to the HHR. The snow became practically blinding about a half-hour down the mountain, forcing Booker to switch the optional XM Satellite Radio² to a local news station.

"It took us seven hours to drive home — more than three times as long as usual," Booker says. "At first I was scared, since the Kancamagus is a two-lane highway packed with curves. But the HHR's antilock brakes³ and Electronic Traction Control⁴ gave me added peace of mind."

"The doctor told me I should slow down and take things easy. I was a runner, an interior designer and a busy mom to three boys. That was the last thing I wanted to hear."

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Wendy Booker

Wendy Booker was an interior designer who worked up a sweat doing Jazzercise before she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis nine years ago.

Then "a switch really went off," Booker said. "I remember hearing that I have MS, and I kept thinking there's more to the story, and asking myself, 'What are you going to do with it?'"

She has since run nine marathons and has set out to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each continent. She's bagged five of the peaks and is on course in the next year to summit the remaining two, the Carstensz Pyramid in Indonesia and Everest.

Booker, now 54, has made it her mission to raise awareness of MS and climb physical mountains to inspire others to climb their own metaphorical mountains. Modern drug therapies, available in the last 15 years, have made it possible for Booker to successfully manage her MS with a daily injection.

Booker, who lives in Boulder and Massachusetts, travels about 200 days a year speaking about her journey with MS, climbing mountains and teaching fourth-graders in inner city Boston about how obstacles in life are often opportunities for greatness.

"It's one of my biggest joys," Booker said of her work with the children. "They've taught me a lot. They're not jaded like adults. They're absolutely enthusiastic and have a wide-eyed optimistic outlook on life."

Someday, she hopes her own children — Christopher, 30, Jeffrey, 25, and Alexander, 19 — will climb Africa's Kilimanjaro with her.

"I love the joy of the travel and experiences," she said.

Which is why, even after she's accomplished her mission to climb the Seven Summits, Booker is looking even higher in setting her next goal.

"I laughingly say the space shuttle is next. I've got to keep going higher," Booker said. "I used to joke about Everest, and I don't joke anymore."

She also hopes to establish a foundation to provide medical training and climbing education to the Sherpas of the Khumbu Valley in the Himalayas.

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Wendy : "APRÈS MON DIVORCE, JE SUIS DEVENUE UNE EXPLORATRICE"

SPÉCIAL SAINT-VALENTIN

Oubliée, la « Desperate housewife »... Quand sa vie confortable - et son mariage - se sont lézardés, Wendy a plaqué sa vie d'avant pour explorer d'autres horizons. Une rupture... sportive !

Malgré la sclérose en plaques, Wendy continue de conquérir les plus hauts sommets.

L'amour peut déplacer des montagnes, paraît-il. Il faut croire que certaines séparations aussi. « Si vous m'aviez vue il y a dix ans, sourit Wendy, 53 ans. J'étais décoratrice d'intérieur, mariée pour la vie à un homme, trois enfants et un certain style de vie... » Mais certaines certitudes sont provisoires. Dix ans plus tard, Wendy a tout envoyé valser. « Un jour, j'ai eu une révélation. J'ai compris que la vie était trop courte... » Cette jeune quinquagénaire fraîchement célibataire a fait le deuil de son existence outatée pour devenir... exploratrice. « Je gravis des montagnes pour dépasser, au sens propre et au figuré, les difficultés de mon existence », résume-t-elle. Mission accomplie

"De vieux rêves ont refait surface"

Sa vie a basculé en deux temps. « Je pourrais être encore mariée, mais dans un fauteuil roulant... » En 1998, Wendy voit sa vie (d'avant) s'effondrer quand elle apprend qu'elle est atteinte d'une sclérose en plaques. « Je savais que je n'allais pas mourir, mais la perspective de me retrouver en fauteuil roulant m'était insupportable. » Cette parfaite épouse, mère de trois grands garçons, voit sa vie se craquelier. « Rapidement, j'ai aussi compris que mon mariage ne tiendrait pas, dit-elle pudiquement. Certains hommes s'accommodent mal de la

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Everest Climber: Wendy Booker Interview Free Climb MS Climber Goes for 7 Summits Enter and Discuss

By Stewart Green, About.com Guide

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In early May, 2009 I reported on Wendy Booker's attempt to finish climbing the Seven Summits with an ascent of Mount Everest. Wendy, if successful, would be the first person with multiple sclerosis (MS) to climb both Mount Everest and the Seven Summits, the highest points on the seven continents. Wendy, a 55-year-old mountaineer and runner, was diagnosed with MS in 1998 after experiencing numbness on her left side, problems with balance, and blurred vision—all classic symptoms of MS.

Wendy Booker on top of Denali, the first peak on her Seven Summits quest. Photograph courtesy Wendy Booker

Wendy's attempt on Everest, however, was aborted in late May. After a good weather window in early May, a

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