

× FIRSTS AFTER 40

"My husband was an extreme athlete and tried to get me to climb Mount Rainier with him throughout our marriage. We finally reached the 14,410-foot peak in 1993. I didn't climb again until 2004, two years after his death from cancer. I scattered his ashes from the summit with a couple of our close friends. At that point, my grief was transformed into a desire to live full throttle. I quit my job of 16 years as a store manager and signed up to climb Mount Everest. I wanted to see if I could do it on my own.

"In 2006, at 50, I made it to Mount Everest Advanced Base Camp, an elevation of 21,300 feet. It took me 11 days to get there. With altitude sickness and blisters on my feet, I climbed an average of 900 to 2,000 feet a day, experiencing snowstorms and 90-mile-per-hour winds. Although I was hiking with Sherpas, I had to get through almost everything alone because we didn't speak the same language.

"Reaching that elevation felt like heaven. I was surrounded by what looked like an ice amphitheater, with aqua-blue lakes and white rocks like sails against the sky. I was freed from fear. Now I want to climb Mount Vinson, the highest summit in Antarctica.

"Mountaineering has taught me to focus on the moment. I've learned how to be self-reliant, to concentrate on each breath and not to be afraid that I won't make it."

—AS TOLD TO DARA PETTINELLI

"MY WILL ALLOWS ME TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP."



× MY FIRST Solo Climb

CAROL OVERDAHL | 51
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