

Meg Noble Peterson '50 »

Reaching New Heights



NOT QUITE A TYPICAL GRANDMOTHER, Meg Noble Peterson spent May and June trekking across northern India. In July, she's climbing in New Hampshire's White Mountains. Come August she heads west to Washington to backpack with friends in the Olympic Mountains, and in September, she's going with a "Himalayan climbing buddy" to Mount Assiniboine in British Columbia for two weeks. "If I'm not dead by then, I'll be plenty

fit for Kilimanjaro," says Peterson, who plans to climb Africa's highest peak with her two daughters in December. Such adventures fill the pages of her calendar and diary. She has completed two around-the-world solo backpacking trips, hiked across England, traversed the Inca Trail in Peru, and climbed in Austria, Tibet, and Nepal. "Here I am, approaching 80, and what am I going to do?" she asks. "Am I going to sit here and sort through my stuff and make picture albums? Or am I going to go out and live and climb these mountains while I am still able to?"

In her book, *Madam, Have You Ever Really Been Happy? An Intimate Journey Through Africa and Asia* (iUniverse, 2005), Peterson chronicles her 1986 journey through four continents and 12 countries as a 58-year-old divorced mother of five adult children. "After 33 years of marriage, I wanted to get away from my dependence on men and face the world as a whole person, not half a couple," she says. "What appealed to me then and still motivates me is learning about other cultures." Peterson offers two guidelines for hitting the road: travel light, and stay off the beaten path. "There is a little edge to risking the unknown and that prompts you to go further, which is what makes life interesting," she says. "I always wonder what is around the next corner. Doesn't everybody?"

A political science and music major at Syracuse, Peterson wrote 38 books in the field of music education and, at age 65, collaborated on a play. The daughter of the late Hendricks Chapel Dean Charles Noble, she credits her father with instilling in her the lifelong love of learning and passion for people that fuel her many journeys. "He was a really vibrant, fabulous guy," she says. "And he gave the most marvelous 'fight talk' of a sermon every Sunday. You left there feeling, my God, I've got to go out there and do something. I've got to make my life count. That's what I grew up with, and it's what I still believe."

—Amy Speech