

News Release: Woman Explorers of the Final Frontier and the last Frontier to Partner on Opening Day of Iditarod 2005

Madison, WI – February, 2005 – Astronaut Mary Ellen Weber, explorer of the Final Frontier as the veteran of two Space Shuttle flights, is teaming with Deb “Danny” Glenn, explorer of the Last Frontier as musher-in-training for the 2006 Iditarod, for opening day event in this year’s Iditarod, March 5, 2005. Weber shares the inspiration of this partnership:

“Deb’s an amazing person, undaunted by what most would consider insurmountable barriers, and always coming out on top. Now she’s taking on the incredible challenge of the Iditarod, training all this past year and throughout the next, in blizzards! Her passion and dedication is incredible. We’re kindred spirits; only with my colleagues and crewmates at NASA have I seen this same commitment and pioneering spirit. I’m coming to this year’s Iditarod with Deb to honor and cheer on her and all the incredible explorers of the Iditarod. That I’ll get to ride in the first leg of the race as an Idita-rider is just incredible.”

Weber, like Glenn, is a dedicated adventurer. A NASA Astronaut for ten years, she is among the youngest ever to venture into space, having traveled 297 earth orbits and 7.8 million miles. Exploring the skies has been a passion since she started skydiving in 1983, and since then, she has logged 3,500 skydives and 800 hours of flying time, including 600 in jet aircraft. She is a nine-time medallist at the U.S. National Skydiving Championships, and was a world record holder for the largest freefall formation with 300 skydivers. She has also long enjoyed exploring the undersea world as an avid scuba diver, and now getting a glimpse of this year’s Iditarod is opening up for her entirely new aspects of exploration. Weber describes her interest in the Iditarod and its parallels with space exploration:

“I’m an avid supporter of exploration and the pioneering spirit, whether on land, sea, air or beyond. This is what has drawn me to Deb Glenn – a stalwart fighter and explorer – and the Iditarod, the ‘Last Great Race.’ Both the Iditarod and space exploration require tremendous diligence, commitment, teamwork – although admittedly NASA’s team members are usually not as furry as those of the mushers. There are other parallels as well. While there is much fanfare at the start of the Iditarod – with crowds and Idita-riders like me on hand – racing in the Iditarod is a long and tedious undertaking, with little along the way to spur the mushers on, other than their own commitment. Analogously, despite the great fanfare surrounding our first forays into space, becoming a space-faring civilization is a long and arduous undertaking. The Space Shuttle and Space Station programs have been all about the more tedious, more difficult, and more long-term mission of mastering continuous space operations, of overcoming the challenge of making space travel seem routine, when it is anything but routine.

As a sought-after professional speaker, Weber (astronautweber.com) has a passion for bringing the majesty of space down to earth, for sharing her strategies for risk and success, and for promoting exploration:

“I’ve long believed that the pioneering spirit of our nation’s space program will be one of the hallmarks of our generation, what we will long be noted for. People will

look back with reverence at the ingenuity, courage and commitment that propelled us in these very first steps off the planet, in this first step to becoming a space-faring civilization. And this is exactly what the Iditarod is all about – honoring the pioneers that propelled Alaskans to develop their land and thrive. It's a tribute to the brave and committed souls that, armed only with the barest of provisions, manage to traverse and conquer a most unforgiving land.”

Glenn has been training for the 2006 Iditarod since mid-2004, spending much time away from home mushing “on the mountain.” Her love of the sport is unparalleled, as according to her:

“I'm the happiest in a blizzard at 40 degrees below when I'm with my dogs, a solitary team battling the mountain and the elements. The dangers and challenges are unlike anywhere else. You rely on your own instincts and your training. John Barron, my trainer for these past many months, has shared with me his love of the sport and his dogs, and has imparted to me an amazing dedication to the Alaskan wilderness and ‘The Last Great Race’. In this year's Iditarod, I'll be there to support John Barron and his wife Kathy.

I got to know Mary Ellen as a keynote speaker. She's remarkable – not only was everyone enthralled, but I completely resonated with her perspectives on the theme, “The Pioneering Spirit.” Having her ride along with John as Idita-rider on opening day is the perfect complement.

Glenn plans to use her participation in the 2006 Iditarod to benefit others, offering opportunities for donations to seven different charities. She will base her journey on the seven pillars of knowledge and wonders of the world, separating the race into seven equal segments, each with a different charity, sponsor, and person to whom she will pay tribute, all to be detailed in her website, dannyclennjourney.com.

Glenn is also likely to be a formidable contender when she races in 2006, as she has already proven herself to be a cutthroat competitor against overwhelming challenges. She and her horse finished second in the nation and she competed in the World Championship equestrian event, Hunter Under Saddle. Most recently, she represented herself as her own attorney and successfully proved the fraud that was perpetrated against her and others by an international corporation. In her newly released novel, “To Die For Justice” (available in bookstores or through dannyclennbooks.com), she develops a fictional mystery based on this true saga of her own life experience.

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