



BETH M. HOWARD

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WOMEN'S SPORTS & FITNESS

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SPECIAL ISSUE

20 Great Summer Adventures

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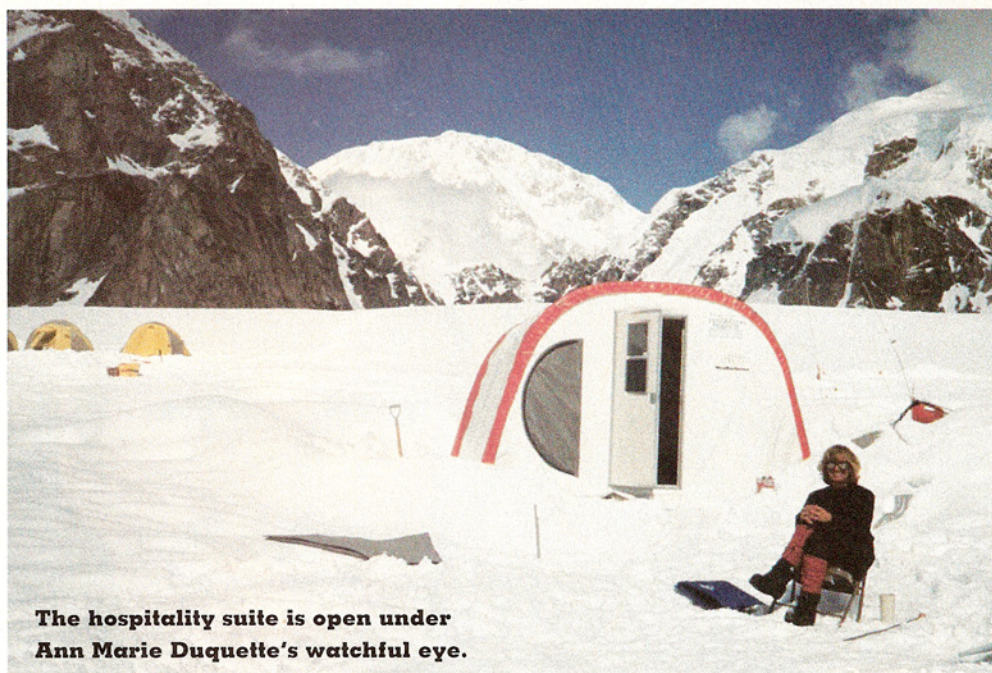
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The hospitality suite is open under Ann Marie Duquette's watchful eye.

The Mother of All Climbers

Who would guess that the comforts of home—chicken soup and home-made pasta dinners among them—can be found on Alaska's formidable Denali (Mount McKinley)? The unlikely provider of this sustenance is Ann Marie Duquette, affectionately known as Base Camp Annie. Living on the Kahiltna Glacier in a tent with no electricity or running water, Duquette plays mother hen to hundreds of mountaineers each year during the climbing season, which runs from April through July. She records the presence of everyone who arrives, documenting nationalities, in and out dates, and other details. Climbers then check in with her by radio at various points on the mountain to keep her abreast of their progress and to give accounts of the weather up on the mountain, which Duquette relays to air taxis that are hoping to land. "She's key to the mountaineering scene," says mountaineering ranger Daryl Miller. "She's saved many lives." Duquette, who's 44, had never camped or even slept in a sleeping bag when she first visited the base camp five years ago with her father and boyfriend. When the air-taxi company invited her to stay, she returned the following season to run the "hospitality" tent—then came back every year since. "On the second day of my first season, my tent collapsed during a snowstorm," she remembers. "I didn't know about putting on a hat in my sleeping bag to keep warm." But by the next season the tent was better equipped and Base Camp Annie had learned a thing or two about preserving body heat.

When she's not cooking meals and saving lives, Duquette runs marathons, climbs and works as a dental receptionist in New Hampshire. So far, she hasn't made the ascent up Denali herself. "I see so much that it makes me a little timid," she says. "And if I climb, who's going to watch the base camp?" —Beth M. Howard

