

WILL STEGER

Polar Explorer, Educator, Environmental Ambassador, Writer, and Photographer

Will Steger is a formidable voice calling for understanding and the preservation of the Arctic and the Earth. Best known for his legendary polar exploration, Steger has traveled tens of thousands of miles by kayak and dogsled, leading teams on some of the most significant polar expeditions in history.

Exploration

Thanks to satellites we can now see the most remote corners of the planet. Yet we still depend upon explorers to be our eyewitness to document the changes and possibilities of our planet. Will Steger stands out as the pre-eminent explorer of our time. He has a record of unprecedented firsts to his name:

- First confirmed dogsled journey to the North Pole without re-supply (1986)
- 1,600-mile south-north traverse of Greenland (the longest unsupported dogsled expedition in history in 1988)
- First dogsled traverse of Antarctica (the historic seven month, 3,471-mile International Trans-Antarctica Expedition in 1989-90)
- First dogsled traverse of the Arctic Ocean in one season from Russia to Ellesmere Island in Canada (1995).

Educator

Education is central to everything Will Steger undertakes. He received his B.S. in Geology and M.A. in Education at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, and taught science for three years at the secondary level. In 1970, he moved from his birthplace in suburban Minneapolis to the wilderness north of Ely, Minnesota. There he founded a winter school and for ten years created outdoor programs using dog teams and skis as means of travel. But he knew he needed to move beyond the classroom to make the kind of educational impact that he wanted. His unique ability to blend extreme exploration with cutting-edge technology have allowed him to reach millions of people around the world, under some of the most hostile conditions on the planet and be a pioneer in online education. He may use primitive methods for his travel, but his expeditions take place at the frontier of the information age. Over 2 million students followed his 1995 International Arctic Project via journal entries and the first-ever transmission of a digital photograph from the North Pole.

Accolades

Will Steger has received worldwide recognition and numerous honors for his record-setting explorations and interactive educational initiatives. Steger joins Amelia Earhart, Robert Peary, Roald Amundsen and Jacques-Yves Cousteau in receiving the National Geographic Society's prestigious John Oliver La Gorce Medal for "accomplishments in geographic exploration, in the sciences, and for public service to advance international understanding" in 1995. He is the only recipient to be nominated in all three areas and this award has not been given since. In 1996 he became the National Geographic Society's first Explorer-in-Residence and received the Explorers Club's Finn Ronne Memorial Award in 1997. In 2006 Steger joined Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Dr. Thor Heyerdahl and Neil Armstrong in receiving the Lindbergh Award. He was given this award for "numerous polar expeditions, deep understanding of the environment and efforts to raise awareness of current environmental threats, especially climate change". The same year Steger was appointed by Governor Tim Pawlenty to serve on the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group, a group charged with recommending a Climate Action Plan to substantially reduce Minnesota's greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2007, Steger received the prestigious Lowell Thomas award from the Explorers Club and the National Geographic Adventure Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on climate change.

Photographer and Author

Steger's highly acclaimed articles and spectacular photographic images have been published and appreciated worldwide, including in *National Geographic* magazine. He is the author of four books: *Over the Top of the World*, *North to the Pole*, *Crossing Antarctica* and *Saving the Earth*.

Environmental Ambassador

Steger is a recognized authority on polar environmental issues, and ceaseless advocate for the Earth's well being. He has testified before the United States Congress on the Arctic regions, climate change and other environmental issues. He was also asked to testify before eight joint committees of the Minnesota Legislature in January 2006 on climate change and his eyewitness account. To help advance the understanding of humanity's role and impact on the environment, Steger founded the Global Center of Environmental Education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota and the World School for Adventure Learning at the University of St. Thomas in 1993.

Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy

Based on his unique eyewitness experience with climate change in the Polar Regions, Steger established Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy in 2006 (formerly the Will Steger Foundation), a Minneapolis, MN based nonprofit that educates and empowers people to engage in solutions to climate change. Building on Will Steger's experience as a polar explorer, science educator, and advocate, Climate Generation strategically engages and empowers emerging youth leaders, communities and educators across the Midwest and beyond for a sustainable and equitable future.

Steger Wilderness Center

Will Steger established a Trust in 2013 to preserve Will Steger's legacy. The Trust includes Will Steger's historical expedition archives and the Steger Wilderness Center, set in a pristine boreal forest wilderness ecosystem, to be a place for innovation in the fields of leadership, group dynamics and sustainability.

The son of parents that nurtured a sense of adventure in their children, Will Steger continues to inspire and motivate generations of people to make decisions based on their personal values and live their lives with the same sense of adventure.

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REFERENCES

Nicole Rom, Executive Director, Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy, nicole@climategen.org, 612-278-7147

Don Shelby, former WCCO Reporter (CBS affiliate), dgshelby@gmail.com, 612-308-3187

Jerry Stenger, Expedition Videographer, Owner, In-Tandem, Inc. jerry@in-tandeminc.com, 651-341-3040

Jennifer Gasperini, Project Director, Trans-Antarctica Expedition, jgasperini@iphouse.com, 651-270-7067

Michael Noble, Executive Director, Fresh Energy, noble@fresh-energy.org, 651-726-7563

EXPEDITIONS:

- 1960 At age 15, traveled the Mississippi River by motorboat from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to New Orleans, Louisiana
- 1963-1970 Traveled 10,000 miles by kayak in northern Canadian and Alaskan rivers including MacKenzie, Peace and Yukon Rivers
- 1982-1983 18 month, 6,000-mile dogsled expedition throughout Canada's Northwest Territories and Alaska
- 1985 5,000-mile dogsled expedition from Ely Minnesota to Pt. Barrow, Alaska
- 1986 Led the first confirmed journey to the North Pole by dogsled without resupply
- 1988 Led the 1,600-mile south-north traverse of Greenland, the longest unsupported dogsled expedition in history
- 1989-1990 Led the historic 3,471-mile, seven-month long International Trans-Antarctica Expedition, the first dogsled traverse of Antarctica
- 1992-1994 Led three training expeditions in northern Canada in preparation for the Arctic Ocean crossing of the International Arctic Project
- 1995 Led the International Arctic Project, the 1,200-mile first-ever crossing of the Arctic Ocean from Russia to Ellesmere Island, Canada
- 1997 Solo from the Pole expedition, terminated on day seven due to illness
- 2004 Led a six-member team on the Arctic Transect, the 3,000 miles, seven-month educational expedition of Nunavut, Canada.
- 2007 Led a cultural dogsled expedition across Baffin Island, Nunavut, crossing 1200 miles with three Inuit hunters to document the impact global warming has and is having on the people and landscape
- 2008 Led a youth/emerging leader dogsled expedition across Ellesmere Island, Canada crossing 1000 miles with six emerging explorers to document the impacts of climate change
- 2008 Led a youth/emerging leader kite ski expedition across Greenland to document the rising thaw levels from climate change
- 2009 Led a youth delegation to the United Nations climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2014/15 Led a solo canoe haul expedition across the Quetico and Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

PUBLICATIONS:

Crossing Antarctica, by Will Steger and Jon Bowermaster (Alfred Knopf, 1992), republished by Menasha Ridge Press in 2010 in paperback

Saving the Earth : A Citizen's Guide to Environmental Action , by Will Steger with Jon Bowermaster (Alfred Knopf, 1990)

North to the Pole, by Will Steger with Paul Schurke (Times Books, 1987)

National Geographic Magazine

“125 Years of Great Explorations” Special Edition, July 2013

“50 Greatest Pictures” Special Edition, November 2011

"Dispatches from the Pole" January 1996

"Crossing Antarctica" November 1990

"North to the Pole" September 1986

Outside Magazine April 2007

PUBLICATIONS (cont.):

Steger's articles and photographs have appeared in numerous other international and national publications

HONORS AND RECOGNITION:

- 1986 Merit Award, The Explorers Club
- 1986 Outsider of the Year Award; Outside Magazine
- 1990 Invited to testify before the Congressional House Subcommittee for National Parks and Public Lands
- 1990 ABC Sports “Athlete of the Week” award and segment
- 1990 Speaker at the National Press Club
- 1990 Award for International Policy; Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
- 1990 Most Distinguished Alumni Award; University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota
- 1991 Honorary Doctorate of Letters; University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota
- 1991 Honorary Doctorate of Science; Westminster College, Salt Lake City, Utah
- 1991 Invited to testify before the Congressional Senate Subcommittee for Science, Technology and Space
- 1995 Awarded the National Geographic Society's John Oliver La Gorce Medal for accomplishments in geographic exploration, in the sciences, and for public service to advance international understanding. The medal has been awarded 19 times since the founding of the National Geographic Society in 1888 and has not been given since. Other recipients of this prestigious award include Amelia Earhart, Robert Peary and Jacques Cousteau.
- 1996 National Geographic Society’s first Explorer in Residence
- 1997 Finn Ronne Memorial Award for accomplishments in polar field research, The Explorer’s Club
- 2005 Honored by the Boy Scouts of America with the naming of the Will Steger sub-camp at the 2005 National Scout Jamboree
- 2006 Receives Lindbergh Award from the Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh Foundation for significant contributions toward the Lindbergh's vision of a balance between technological advancement and environmental preservation.
- 2006 Appointed by Governor Tim Pawlenty to serve on the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group, a group charged with recommending a Climate Change Action Plan to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- 2007 Received Lowell Thomas Award from the Explorers Club as a leading individual who is “Exploring Climate Change” and National Geographic Adventure’s Lifetime Achievement Award for his climate change efforts.
- 2009 Honorary Doctorate of Science; Northland College, Ashland, Wisconsin
Received a Conservation Leadership Award from the Conservation Minnesota Voter Center.
- 2010 Honorary Doctorate of Science; Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota
- 2011 Honorary Doctorate of Science; Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, New Hampshire
- 2014 Receives Minnesota Senate Resolution honoring his incredible leadership and accomplishments for raising awareness of the urgency of climate change and the opportunity for solutions.
- 2015 Receives the Canadian Governor General medallion in recognition of his expedition in the Canadian Arctic (2004, 2007, 2008) and educational efforts to raise awareness of the Canada-Minnesota relationship.