

## Pass It On®...

### The Last American Explorer.

*Norman Vaughan trekked Antarctica with Admiral Byrd, completed the Iditarod 13 times and climbed the 10,000-foot, icy mountain named after him at age 89.*

Some people are just made for adventure. The early explorers, who subjected themselves to privation, unknown elements and territories unheard of, left volumes of tales that inspired the next generation. But as the world became smaller, the wild ones who lived by their instincts began to thin out.

Norman Vaughan was fascinated with the lives of polar explorers and became one of the last to push himself into terra incognita. He was a member of Admiral Byrd's expedition to Antarctica in 1928, a Search and Rescue dogsled driver in Greenland during WWII, and the founder of the annual Norman Vaughn Serum Run that commemorated the relay mushers of 1925 who delivered diphtheria serum from central Alaska to Nome.

Vaughan grew up in relative comfort on the East Coast. He attended Harvard and became fascinated with books about dog sledding. He dropped out and left for a humanitarian stint helping indigenous people in Newfoundland, where he became a dog sled leader. Three years later, he read an announcement about Admiral Byrd's expedition and a call for seasoned sledders. Vaughan's experience and bravado got him the job, and he was put in charge of training the animals and sledding hundreds of tons of supplies from the icebreaker to the camp along with the other team members. What he had learned from the indigenous people in Newfoundland set him up as a natural leader. Understanding terrain, weather patterns and dogs was key to the survival of the expedition. Admiral Byrd appreciated the man so much he named a mountain after him.

During Vaughan's military career in Greenland, he was tasked with rescuing the 25 members of a squadron lost somewhere on the ice. With a team of dog sledders, Vaughan set off to find them before they froze or starved to death. It was 1942, and the squadron had gotten lost on its way to Reykjavik when a German submarine jammed their radio signals. All members were rescued, but the

mission would not be complete until 46 years later when Vaughn organized a team to go back for the planes. The harebrained idea soon got funding, and Vaughn was again on the ice, mushing into the wilderness of uncertainty.

After his success in Greenland, Vaughan continued to compete in dog mushing competitions well into his 80s. He climbed Mount Vaughan in Antarctica at 88 and had plans to return for his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday but died just six months before the scheduled date.

Not all the mountains we climb will be named after us, and not all of our adventures will end in celebrations. But if we keep moving forward, our stories will live within those we rescue along the way.

Adventure...[PassItOn.com](http://PassItOn.com)

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