

By Lara Vander Ploeg

Each issue, we are privileged to interview inspiring people who are advocates, change-agents, authors, artists, entertainers, and so many others. Every once in a while we meet someone whose words and experiences touch and stir something unique and deep within our consciousness. Carla Perrotti is such a woman. In fact, her words were so profound and her person so approachable, we simply chose to let her words speak to you as answered.

How ironic it is that her life-affirming words come from this woman's time in the deserts. Indeed, 'Lady of the Deserts' is how she is known in many places. She has crossed these vast expanses all over the world, accomplished what some have never done, and dared to create opportunities for others to see the rich beauty and cleansing solitude of the desert. As you read, imagine the pictures she paints with her words. Imagine the good that a bit of desert therapy could do for you.

**ADS: Carla, what drew you to crossing deserts?**

**Carla:** Years ago, on a trip with my family in the desert, I fell in love with this magical place. One day when we arrived at camp in the evening, my young son realized that he had lost his shoe while riding on a camel. I decided to go back and look for it on my own. At a certain point I found myself in the middle of the desert, alone in the peaceful silence. A silence so complete it creates sound, a humming almost. Sitting for a moment in this magical land, I saw a caravan of camels carrying salt in the distance. I watched, mesmerized by

## LADY OF THE DESERTS



their steady rhythmic pace. If I have to name one moment when I fell in love with the desert, this would be it. Peace, inspiration, internal wholeness and well being captured in one moment. This is when my dream of crossing deserts was born, and from here, with each crossing, my dreams grew.

**ADS: You have quite an impressive record of crossings behind you. Is that what inspired you to move from one continent to another? The accomplishment itself?**

**Carla:** I did not start crossing deserts looking to achieve new records, conquer feats that no other person had, or do 'extreme' sports. I started, and kept crossing deserts because it brought me internal well-being and balance, I learned about my personal limits, and discovered a strength inside myself I couldn't have imagined existed.

**ADS: Many think the desert is a barren place, void of life and beauty. What would surprise those who adhere to that stereotype?**

# Carla Perrotti

**Carla:** Inside the desert there are many surprises—the untouched beauty of nature, of the sunrise and set, of the stars, of the silence, of the peace, and of the need for so little.

**ADS: So it isn't just sand, sand, and more sand?**

**Carla:** The beauty of this place is its emptiness and its enormity. Many people think of sand when they think of the desert. Yes, there is sand, lots of it, mountains of it. There is white sand, black sand, fire-colored orange/red sand, cool cream-colored sand, thick grainy sand, fine powdery sand. It changes from desert to desert. Every day presents a new and unique atmosphere, each with its own challenges. Be it the giant white chalky pinnacles of the White Egypt-

ian desert, the red mountain of sand in the Australia, or the endless flat white plane of salt in Bolivia, everyday of every trip was different and picturesque.

**ADS: You have now crossed a desert on every continent – a goal that became a dream for you once you started making these treks. Beyond simply “checking off the continents,” what did the preparation, execution, and accomplishment mean to you?**

**Carla:** It did not start off as a dream or an objective to do 'One Desert per Continent:' however, as I was drawn to different deserts in different parts of the world, I decided I would like to see the vast variety of "desert." Each trip took years





of preparation: physically, mentally, logistically, financially and personally.

The physical training is what most people ask me about, however this is just the tip of the iceberg. Before each trip there is the organization of the support team, permits, travel arrangements, sponsors, interviews, etc. Each time I arrive in the desert it is like a reward for all the work I did to get there. The crossings are physically demanding, but a mental get-away. These crossings not only showed me what I am physically capable of, they showed me the strength of my mind and that if I set out to conquer a challenge the limit is only inside of me.

**ADS: With the exception of your most recent crossing of the White Desert in Egypt with blind marathon runner, Fabio Pasinetti your journeys are usually solo ones. However, this is changing. Tell us more.**

**Carla:** Now my focus has shifted to sharing my experience with others. On my trip with Fabio, I had the privilege of seeing the desert for two people. One night, when Fabio and I were sitting outside of the tents before going to sleep, he thanked me. He thanked me for bringing him to this special place and for showing him the stars again. I was stunned. From this experience I learned that sometimes you don't need eyes to see beauty. Fabio could not see the magnificent chalky white pinnacles or the intricate coloring of the sunrise

and sun set on the sand dunes. He could not see the wonderful site of palm trees waving in the distance at the oasis. But the desert was none the less beautiful for him.

I want to share this magic of the desert with others. Take others to the desert and let them live what I lived and find in themselves a peace and strength they may not have known existed. There are four trips coming up this year for Desert Therapy, which will be February 6-14, February 20-28, March 5-13 and March 13-28, 2010.

**ADS: Any final thoughts, words of wisdom for those who may feel they are experiencing a desert right now in their lives?**

**Carla:** Never say you can't. As I always say, "the limit exists only inside of us." We believe that there are insurmountable challenges in our lives, and we block ourselves from achieving our dreams. If you tell yourself you can, and you believe in yourself, you can do so much more than you once thought. Step back, look at your resources, figure out a plan and then do it. Don't let fear or uncertainty stand in your way.

For more details about Carla's past and future adventures including her Desert Therapy trips, visit [www.carlaperrotti.com](http://www.carlaperrotti.com).

