

Headed for the Waterfall

As a professional traveler and adventurer, Arlene Burns has had some great jobs: photojournalist, television commentator, and co-host of a public television adventure program.



But, like other women who have succeeded in male-dominated fields, at the beginning of her career she faced her own version of the “glass ceiling.”

After college, Burns applied by mail for a river guide’s job in New Zealand and was accepted. When she arrived, however, she found out she had been hired because her employer thought her name was “Arlen,” a man’s name. Burns was forbidden by her male employers to do any more on raft trips than ride along and help bail.

Then, during one trip, the company owner fell out of his raft in some rapids, leaving eight people headed for a 150-foot waterfall. Burns dived into the river, swam the rapids, and pulled the raft to safety just before it would have gone over.

The next day, she was promoted to full-time guide, and she eventually became manager of the operation.

Oftentimes, a person just needs a chance to prove himself or herself.

And chances seem to come through preparation and a confidence in one’s abilities.

– Beecher Hunter