

A World of Opportunities

By Becky Kolosik



Photo courtesy of Molly Rogalla Photography

MEET BRENDA MCGUIRE

a.k.a. "The Global Gal"

Do you dream of being a world traveler?

As I was preparing for our interview with cover girl, Brenda McGuire, my mind began to flood with memories of my senior year trip to Germany, Switzerland and Austria. As an 18-year-old girl fresh

out of high school who had never even been on a plane, I was excited, yet nervous at the prospect of experiencing the sights, sounds and culture of the country I had studied about in my German class.

What I discovered over the course of our ten-day trip was not only how big and beautiful the world is, but also how intimidating it can be. While I had studied the German language, communication was often difficult when visiting a store or trying to order in a restaurant. However, every day was new and exciting as we visited different cities and landmarks. I will be forever grateful to Herr Pullen for planning and leading our class tour... had it not been for him, I don't know that I would have made such a trip. I was not brave enough at that time in my life to venture out in a foreign country – especially all on my own.

An Iowan at Home in the World

For McGuire, traveling is a joy and helping others is her passion. She's literally had the world at her fingertips since college. "Growing up, I often dreamed of exploring the world and meeting new people," she recalls. "But I was a girl from small-town Iowa with a limited budget, no passport of my own, and certainly no knowledge or resources to make it happen." Then in high school, she met a foreign exchange student from Norway. "Rita and I became best friends and the stories she shared about her home and culture ignited a spark in me," McGuire says. "My interests in traveling and connecting with different cultures continued to grow even more as I got into college."

You could say that her global adventures took off in 1992 when she signed up for a 102-day Semester at Sea program during her senior year at ISU. Twelve countries

later, she came home and picked up a second major in International Relations and since then she's traveled to six continents, explored over 80 countries and sailed around the world two more times.

She's gained global expertise through a decade of living, studying and working in places such as Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Switzerland. After returning to the United States, she oversaw a multi-million dollar business division for a Fortune 500 company in New York, and also led one of the world's largest cross-cultural training organizations. But then life (and a boy) brought her full-circle, back home to Iowa and today, she's founder and president of two international organizations – Global Gals and WorldWide Connect. Through both, she's continually expanding her global reach and sharing her knowledge as a #1 best-selling author, award-winning speaker, international trainer and cross-cultural business/travel expert.

Whether your dream is to live, work or travel abroad, her network and global team of experts can assist on nearly every level – from travel "newbies," or seasoned globetrotters to backpacking college students or businesses looking to expand internationally.

Discovering the World...Together

McGuire is the first to admit that living, working and traveling in a cross-cultural world isn't easy. "I made a lot of mistakes, cultural faux pas, and experienced lots of difficulties – often because I didn't know what I didn't know," she says. That was part of the inspiration behind both businesses – to help others avoid some of the same mistakes she made and help them to



Life is a Great Adventure: McGuire (pictured above in Africa with her mom) started Global Gals in memory of her Dad (at right), who passed away from cancer.

Wanderlust: McGuire (at right) trekking the Himalayas in Nepal.

achieve "success in this small world" both personally and professionally. And she certainly couldn't have done it without the support of family and friends.

"My dad was my biggest cheerleader and supporter in my life, business and travels," McGuire says. His dream was to go on safari to South Africa and when she had the opportunity to speak about global leadership there, she invited him to come along. "Even though the timing and finances really weren't ideal, I'm so grateful he ended up going because a few years after the trip, he was diagnosed with cancer and passed away thirteen days later."

She launched Global Gals as a legacy to her dad on the one-year anniversary of his passing. Her mission is to empower, educate and inspire women – of all ages and backgrounds – to live, work and travel in the world confidently. "I want to do for them what my dad did for me," she explains. "We recently did a Global Gals tour to Africa and we held a special tribute under the stars in honor of him and this time I was able to take my mom with me!"

Small World... Big Connections

In chapter six of her recent book, *The Soul of Success*, which she co-authored along with Jack Canfield (*Chicken Soup for the Soul*) and other experts, McGuire shares how the "small world effect" has a way of bringing people together in unexpected ways. She has made countless connections and friendships around the world – one in particular even led her to meet her future husband in 2000 (who ironically was a small-town Iowa boy living in Australia). "We both moved there at nearly the same time and met during the closing ceremony of the Olympics while watching a magical fireworks show from a balcony overlooking the twinkling Sydney Harbor," she recalls. Four years later, on the eve of the Athens Olympics that Iowa boy got down on one knee and proposed on the romantic Greek island of Santorini – at sunset on a cliff overlooking the Aegean Sea. In true "Global Gal" fashion, they married in Maui with friends from all over the world in attendance.

McGuire believes that travel is an investment you can make in yourself that will create memories for a lifetime. However, she also believes that connecting with people and being open to relationships is key to success. "You just have to figure out what your passion and purpose is," she says. "As women, we often need to get out of our comfort zone and take a leap of faith, even if things don't turn out exactly the way we planned. Don't be afraid to take the first step – whatever your dream or goal!" ✱

Interested in exploring the world with Global Gals? Meet the gals and check out the adventures that await you at globalgals.com.



Turning the Pages: McGuire accepts the Quilly Award with Jack Canfield for their book, *The Soul of Success*.

Connecting Your Business to the World

Have you thought about expanding your business in the global market? If it were easy, everyone would do it. But here's the thing... it's not easy and while there are exciting opportunities for growth and profit, there are also significant risks and challenges overlooked such as:

- Language issues
- Time-zone barriers
- Cultural differences

McGuire understands all these challenges and that's why she founded WorldWide Connect – a premier cross-cultural and global workforce development firm. While she's based right here in Des Moines, it's not unusual on a typical day to work with clients in over ten countries. With an extensive global network of over 150 consultants in thirty countries, WorldWide Connect delivers training and consulting solutions that increase culture competence, develop global mindsets, improve cultural fluency, and help global workforces to be more effective in conducting business. McGuire and her team provide training for companies of all sizes, including global Fortune 500 companies throughout the U.S., Central and South America, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Australia, Europe and Africa.

Whether you or your employees are moving to a new country, conducting business globally, or leading a multi-cultural team, McGuire is ready to help you connect to the world. Visit www.worldwideconnect.com for more information.

"THE WORLD IS A **BOOK** AND THOSE WHO DO NOT **TRAVEL** READ ONLY **ONE PAGE.**"

~St. Augustine

