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## A CONVERSATION WITH CNN'S ASHLEIGH BAN-

**We are constantly barraged with news, and the onslaught numbs us to most of the cookie-cutter reporting we receive through our usual channels.**

I try to follow the few who are bold enough in their convictions, opinions, and emotions to involve me in their story. Ashleigh Banfield is one such journalist who captures her audience with both brains and beauty on her daily CNN news program “Legal View with Ashleigh Banfield.”



She has traveled the world, lived among Taliban camps, reported on scene at Ground Zero, interviewed presidents, heads of state, Hezbollah and Hamas leaders, Saudi princes, and Sarah Jessica Parker. Her office is filled with books, curios, and photos ranging from her with her young sons to her with Yasser Arafat, Afghan tribal leaders, and on the red carpet looking as glamorous as any Oscar-winning actress. There is more than meets the eye to Ashleigh, and I'm thrilled to share her insights on being an independent, risk-taking, adventurous woman.



Banfield in Afghanistan [courtesy of Ashleigh Banfield]

**My first question: how did she get started on her journey?**

Ashleigh “knew early on — about ninth– grade, that I wanted to travel as part of my profession. I remember watching the civil war being fought in Lebanon on Canada’s national news where I lived and thinking a foreign correspondent would be the ultimate career. It would combine my love of foreign travel, foreign languages, communication, and current events.”

Ashleigh grew up as one of four children in Winnipeg, Canada with parents who “definitely encouraged independence and different experiences from an early age.” She biked through Europe as a teenager and traveled around the world with a backpack after university at 22. “My parents were drivers of those experiences and were fully supportive of all of my trips. I still can’t believe that they were so accepting of the dangers as they were. There were no cell phones back then, no laptops, no email. They truly did kiss me goodbye and cross their fingers and wait for that first letter from the middle of nowhere.”

Ashleigh believes that “independence and curiosity about our world — and adventures — are critical for women. They are for men, too. I think curiosity can be unique for everyone, but our curiosity can take on new boundaries if we have a larger perspective. I think travel and interaction with other cultures expands that perspective. And it’s never too early to be adventurous.”

### **Her biggest adventure?**

“It’s really too difficult to pick my greatest adventure. Covering the war in Afghanistan was remarkable. Cycling through Europe at age 17 was eye opening. Climbing in the Himalayas to the Annapurna Base Camp was thrilling and exhausting. Scaling volcanoes in Indonesia and mountains in Greece was breathtaking. It’s like picking a favorite among your kids...you just can’t!”



courtesy of Ashleigh Banfield

Ashleigh has sage advice for women who travel and explore on their own: “Women forging out on their own to places where they might be the only woman need to keep their wits about them at all times. You are not limited because you’re a woman. If you get in the headspace that your strength is somehow mitigated because you are a woman, then it will be. Fortitude comes from many sources.”

She acknowledges that “it’s difficult reaching outside of your comfort zone and frightening to push your boundaries. But you’re not going to discover your potential until you mess up several times.”





Banfield with Yasser Arafat [courtesy of Ashleigh Banfield]

Ashleigh believes that “respecting other countries cultures, traditions and religions is no small feat, it must be at the forefront of your thoughts at all times. You may not agree with the restrictions on women, but if you are a guest in that country...abide by their rules.”

### **I wonder what’s on her adventure wish list?**

“There are still some intriguing countries I have yet to visit, like Bhutan. It was such a secretive kingdom, but it is beginning to open up and it would be interesting to see if it’s like a time capsule.”

Ashleigh is quick to answer when I ask about role models and mentors. “There are so many women we can look to in our history, whether it’s Eleanor Roosevelt or Sally Ride, who broke a lot of molds and built so many new platforms. It will be great when you don’t have to do much research to find them!”





Courtesy CNN

**I know her to be very positive and wonder how she maintains her outlook. What inspires her?**

“I find inspiration in a lot of places. At some of the low-lows in my career, I found inspiration from my mother. She rose from being a mother of four to being a real estate tycoon in the city where I grew up back in the early ‘70s...when that just simply wasn’t done. She faced a lot of adversity, and a lot of ribbing from both men — and women — who felt it was inappropriate to be working with four children at home. I think life was a lot tougher for her than for me, so when the going gets tough I just put it all in perspective. If you believe you’ve arrived, you are probably only halfway there; a really healthy dose of humility goes a long way in fostering a good work ethic.”



With friends Tim and Garret Taylor on set [courtesy Christine Dennison]

She certainly has humility; she is insightful, honest, and extremely grounded despite her celebrity.