

Beth Rypins

motivational speaker
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It is hard to believe that adventure kayaker Beth Rypins was once paralyzed from head to toe.

But it's true.

Beth suffered a stroke when she was seven years old that left her unable to speak or walk. Through hard work, will, and luck, she eventually recovered, but the repercussions were devastating. The illness precipitated a downfall that eventually led to troubled teenage years, full of drugs and anger.

Then she found whitewater kayaking, a sport that would change her life.

After barely graduating from high school in 1980 Beth began to paddle wild and dangerous rivers. Traveling to places like the jungles of Borneo, the remote plateaus of China and Tibet, the high peaks of South America, and the outback of Siberia, Beth ran rivers that had never before been explored. Ten years later, with a reputation as a foremost adventurer and a fearless boater, she went back to school, graduating from UC Berkeley with a degree in Soviet politics and with a command of the Russian language.

But a fancy degree could not keep Beth from the water, and throughout the 1990's Beth led whitewater expeditions on the world's most challenging rivers. Working with a tight group of guides, she learned the meaning of teamwork, the importance of support, and how to manage and minimize risk in adverse situations. She became the captain of the US Women's whitewater team, earning five National and two World Championship titles. She was also the subject of a National Geographic book, as well as the focus of many documentaries. By the late 1990's Beth decided to produce her own outdoor films, and formed Horizon Line Productions. She went on to write, direct, and produce numerous cable shows and retail videos.

In 2001 Beth was asked to do her first motivational speech. Since then she has entertained and informed diverse audiences from the National Geographic Society to Eagle Creek and the eWomen Network. As an "Old Lady" of kayaking, and one of the first female pioneers of whitewater, Beth has a unique perspective on both life and adventure. Her talks are peppered with stories of risk and daring, but her diverse background and ease with people make her talks accessible to every one. She now lives in Napa in the California wine country. When she is not on a speech tour, she is at home with her young daughter, Alessia, and her husband, Marco, or chatting on the phone with her identical twin sister, Christa. And of course, there's always a river nearby, so that she can still get in and paddle her favorite kayak when she finds the time!