



Alumna in Action, April 2011: Roberta Fishbein Fisher '73



Growing up, Roberta (Bobbi) Fishbein Fisher '73 planned to be the first woman to walk on the moon. But, after two decades in Hollywood, a bicycle tour around the world, and a move to China where she directs the nonprofit Giving Hand, she hasn't had a chance to make it there—yet.

It was the height of the Vietnam War protests when Fisher enrolled at the University of Wisconsin to study astrophysics. "The university was fighting with the police every day," she says. "So I transferred to Barnard, to really get an education. My professors were all wonderful and I learned to be independent and adventurous, with positive spirit."

At Barnard, Fisher found that she was "too social" for the hard sciences, and ended up majoring in history. With an astronaut career off the table, she went on to get an MBA/MIA at Columbia, thinking of pursuing international law. Instead, a chance job offer found her writing, directing, producing, and selling TV shows at the first female-owned production company in New York City. Eventually, she moved to L.A. where for 16 years she worked for Universal Television as a senior vice president of sales.

In 1996 Fisher signed up for a seven-day bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles to benefit AIDS research and fell in love with long-distance bicycling. "The ride was incredible," she remembers. "On day six, I called Universal and quit my job." She started her own production company, Tailwind Entertainment, which would go on to produce two Lifetime films for the network, and she pursued international ultra-distance bicycling more intensively. In 2000, she undertook the adventure of a lifetime: riding her bike around the world. With a group of 250, she rode more than 20,000 miles through 46 countries and six continents. "It was an adventure beyond belief," she says.



Of all the places she visited on the tour, China was one of the most intriguing. So, in 2008, when a friend in Hong Kong approached Fisher with an idea to start a new charity, she jumped at the opportunity. Now, she makes her home in Chengdu and directs Giving Hand, a nonprofit that funnels donations from corporations to charity organizations. "We are growing quickly and are switching our role to develop innovative corporate giving programs," she says. Giving Hand plans to expand in the next year to cover other impoverished nations

in Asia; Fisher recently found herself busy orchestrating donations for victims of the Japanese earthquake and tsunamis.

In her spare time Fisher maintains a lifelong devotion to horseback riding and is training local Chengdu bicyclists in distance riding, with the goal of bringing the first Chinese group to the renowned ultra-distance Paris-Brest-Paris ride. And as for what's next, only time will tell. "I've just taken whatever opportunities popped up," Fisher says. "Adventure is my life." —*J. Collins*