

***THE DECLINE AND FALL OF BACKPACKING***

by Harvey Manning

From an unpublished manuscript dated 1975, courtesy of Paul Manning

Harvey's original hand-written edits were applied by Phil Fenner (Foreword) and Robert Kendall (Ch. 1-13) 2021-22 (see "A Note on This Edition" on p. 55).

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THIS EDITION.....	3
FOREWORD .....	4
PART ONE: THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF BACKPACKING .....	6
Chapter 1: Origins of Backpacking .....	6
Chapter 2: The Birth of Sport Backpacking .....	9
Chapter 3: The Rise of a Mass Sport .....	13
Chapter 4: Clothing and the Coming of the Fad .....	16
Chapter 5: Equipment and the Easing of Pain .....	20
Chapter 6: Books Showing the Way.....	24
Chapter 7: Sex .....	28
PART TWO: THE AUTUMN AND WINTER OF BACKPACKING .....	32
Chapter 8: What Goes Up Must Come Down .....	32
Chapter 9: The Restless Natives.....	36
Chapter 10: The Great Disillusion .....	40
Chapter 11: Preservation Purism.....	45
Chapter 12: Darkening Autumn .....	47
Chapter 13: Deep Winter .....	51
A NOTE ON THIS EDITION .....	55

## INTRODUCTION TO THIS EDITION

Harvey Manning was the reason for my initial interest in North Cascades Conservation Council\*, years ago. His writings elucidated my own thoughts about conservation almost exactly, except that he was doing something about it. I was smitten with his obvious unwillingness to compromise. I felt less alone.

*Decline and Fall of Backpacking* is the craziest mix of profound and absurd I've ever seen in one place. Harvey sprinkles pure fiction into a framework of deep truth. Edgy satire was obvious but tall tales come without warning; I was hoodwinked into researching several vignettes. Particularly embarrassing was the notorious Lorette Sharpless, murdered guidebook author. Her fabrication is obvious in hindsight but fooled me for long enough.

This manuscript is an undiluted time capsule from 1975. It's forecast for the "bleak America of the year 2000" and beyond is captivatingly both nutty and brilliant. Energy issues are discussed at length, and climate change is mentioned once... in a strange way. A prediction about Mt. St. Helens is not to be missed.

*Decline* brings to light numerous seldom-mentioned elephants in the room of backpacking. It seemed borderline irresponsible to pull people's chains while making such serious points, using "questionable" humor, and irony about guidebook authors. However, upon reflection I think this piece is genius for the way it provokes tickling afterthought.

Robert Paul Kendall

Omak, 2022

\*Harvey Manning was a long-time board member of NCCC. See: <http://www.northcascades.org/wordpress/in-memoriam/harveymanning> which also includes many other of his unpublished manuscripts.

WARNING: Harvey was not the least bit "politically correct," in fact he prided himself in affronting if not insulting all equally. His satire here can be compared to that of George Carlin, just without all the dirty words. So please, if you are sensitive and "woke" by today's standards, keep in mind when this was written and by whom, or just read something else. In no case should you conflate Harvey's attitude with that of the North Cascades Conservation Council of today. Reader discretion is advised.

## FOREWORD

To declare that in the very flowering of backpacking, a sport of mounting popularity for half a century and since the 1960s taking on trappings of an organized religion, can be seen the decay, invites incredulity, scorn, and hatred.

Yet one is reminded (and thus the title of this book) that a world without a Roman Empire once was so unimaginable that its disappearance was not so much as suspected for centuries after the fact -- and in a sense remains to this day to be accepted by the Pope.

Also, few guessed at midcentury, as the cities and transportation system of America were being rebuilt, indeed the entire fabric of the economy and society rewoven around the automobile, that -- as we now recognize -- the family car would not outlast the century. Or for a parallel in recreation, rare was the voice in the 1950s predicting that the skiing "way of life," the Heroic Age of the "beautiful people," would prove to be a bubble bursting -- as it is in the process of doing -- in the 1970s.

The high priests of perfervid backpackers assuredly will attack my thesis as a damnable heresy and me personally as the desecrator of a temple. As consumed by the certainty of their revelation as any Pentecostal, and as determined to save the heathen from hellfire, those they cannot convert they will crucify. The greater will be their fury for viewing me, the author of a backpacking manual, as an apostate.

The punishment must be risked. First, because simple humanity demands that the angers of backpacking, hushed up by a Watergate-like conspiracy of vested interests, be warned against - - just as someone should have warned skiers in the 1950s that the price for exhilaration in youth would be, as they are now learning in middle age, the rainy-day aches, and hobbling pace of imperfectly-mended bones and the prematurely-wrinkled skin and dim eyesight of too much bright sun. And just as someone should have warned America in the 1920s that in exchange for the great automobile romp the nation ultimately would have to suffer plundering by the "energy companies," blackmail by Arabs, and economic and political collapse. And just as someone should have warned B.C. Italians that if they didn't stamp out the aggressive village on the Tiber the A.D. taxes would go out of sight.

A second reason I must speak is a not disloyal desire that through foreknowledge we backpackers better compose ourselves to embrace inevitable disaster with dignity and not be dragged whimpering and whining to the gibbet.

Let it not be supposed I chortle over the fall of backpacking, as Gibbon did over that of Rome,

or dry-wash hands in morbid anticipation as Spengler did over the Gotterdammerung of Faustian Man. I speak not in vindictive loathing but disappointed love, not glee but gloom. Backpacking is not totally iniquitous, no more than Rome or skiing, and certainly less noxious than most of what's going on in America. That it must, at least in its present form, die, does not give me joy.

But die it must. And will.

The decline will have a number of causes, some springing from internal contradictions of the sport (for example, though the refinement of equipment led to a surge in popularity, symptoms now are felt of a too-much-candy illness) and others from external socio-economic factors (for example, profligate expenditure of energy, represented by the automobile, will be the mortal blow).

In reality, all the causes are summarized in the immutable maxim of dialectic -- what goes up must come down, precisely because it went up. One recalls the opinion of many medievalists that monasticism might have survived the kings' envy of the monks' wealth had not the monasteries been so much more attractive residences than the outside, that they became overcrowded, and the sewers got plugged.

I await stoically the onset of the storm of contumely. The mountain shops which have prospered these past dozen years will detest me as deeply as saloon-keepers did Prohibition, and speakeasy-proprietors Repeal. The giant conglomerates which have muscled in on the manufacturing of backpacking equipment (as Disney enterprises did on skiing at Mineral King and Music Corporation of America on National Park tourism at Yosemite) may very well prosecute me as General Motors did Ralph Nader. And the writers now making a vultures' living from backpacking journalism and terrified at the prospect of returning to the offal neaps whence they came surely will pick at whatever bones of my reputation are left after the detectives finish.

History is written by the survivors and though certain of vindication in some distant future I know the retribution due me in the interim for being the first to bring skeletons from the backpacking closet and rattle them in public. I'm all too aware of the evil reputations saddled upon theologians who disagreed with the Fathers of the Church, and upon the Borgias by antagonists who were no less scoundrels but won the battle of political propaganda.

For my own sake and that of family and friends, I wish it were possible to be silent. Where I offend, may my even-handedness be granted; if I've failed to affront any group it's an oversight. I hope of a harsh posterity only that it may grudgingly concede amid its slanders, "He saw his duty and he done it."

Harvey Manning

Cougar Mountain, 1975

## PART ONE: THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF BACKPACKING

### Chapter 1: Origins of Backpacking

Most animals carry food and other materials primarily by mouth and only in small amounts for short distances. The ant aside, man is uniquely and characteristically the large-load, long-distance freighter. Omitting such motive powers and wind and engines, the principal methods may be broadly separated into (1) carrying on the human body, (2) pulling (or pushing) by the human body, (3) carrying or pulling by other animals, and (4) floating on water craft.

Floating, though yielding a sport contemporaneously with backpacking, will be touched upon in the next chapter and need not concern us here.

It is doubtful early man actually towed his mate around by the hair; still, the first form of pulling baggage surely was no more complicated than that. At some point in the remote past were refined the drag methods exemplified by the travois, which only peripherally, in mountain rescue, has played any part in sport, and the sled or sledge, employed in sport to some extent by snow travelers. Invention of the wheel led, of course, to transport devices ranging from the wheelbarrow to the wagon and notable in sport, the bicycle.

The enslavement of other animals, significant in the history of man for the effect on his diet, also revolutionized his transportation. It may be wondered why, once having coerced companion creatures into carrying or pulling his goods, man has continued to submit his own body to such labor; this is the question, echoing the jubilation of ancient domesticators, implicit in the contemptuous jeers accorded most backpackers by horse riders met on the trail.

The answer is, as backpackers reply to the horse riders, that exploitation of animals is not lacking in drawbacks, every species being more or less stupid or willful or both and generally aggravating.

The horse, least inefficient and undependable of the common beasts of burden, is expensive to purchase, dangerous to steal, and costly and time consuming to operate.

As much as military skill and religious fanaticism, the odor of the camel was responsible for the speedy conquest by the Arabs, who created panic wherever they went – with or without their camels, the stench being so persistent. Arabs restored order and consolidated their rule only

when they switched to the horse. Upon later reverting to the camel they were universally abhorred and shunned until the discovery of oil; had any commodity then valued by Europeans been found on their lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they certainly would have been exterminated more expeditiously and thoroughly than the Indians. It may be mentioned that the brief experiment with camel trains on the American frontier depopulated whole sections of the Southwest.

Few animals are as tractable – that is, dumb – as the horse and camel. The ox (and yak and water buffalo) are dumber, proverbially so, and slower as well and also eating more. None but princes can afford the elephant, nor would anyone else want it, what with the roguish habit of periodically tramping to death villages full of men, women, and children. The ass (donkey, burro), the Volkswagen of its day, is notoriously cranky; the offspring of ass and horse, the mule, has most of the vices of both parents and few of the virtues. The goat is foul as a camel and mean as a burro. When out of temper the moody llama spits or even vomits on its owner. Just one society, in Siam, ever has been the least successful in putting the cat to work, and this by breeding a variety in which the selfish solipsism of the feline has been partly overridden by a canine-like insecurity and craving for love; the inner tension, however, causes a congenital insanity that makes it untrustworthy. The dog, usually such a toady that kinship with the coyote and wolf seem incredible, has the major failing that in a group relying on dog transport, as did the Eskimos prior to the snowmobile, the effect of a bitch in heat is comparable to that in our nation of simultaneous strikes by railroad, maritime, and trucking unions, plus a wave of anti-bussing riots.

But our subject being backpacking, the above is merely prologue. It is time now to turn to the oldest of freighting methods, and in sport the newest: carrying loads on the human body.

In the very earliest era, and concurrently with dragging, came the hand-carry, which lingers today in the picnic basket. Though the Gauls wore trousers, to the hilarity/disgust of the toga-clad Romans, the pocket does not appear to have been common in the West until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when it was brought from China to the edge of Europe by the Mongol hordes of Tamerlane, who largely were successful because their foes carried purses. The latter long continued in favor among the backward Scotch and together with the kilt elicited the ribald jokes traditionally made by the English and such a mortification to Boswell.

Modern backpackers are amazed that the head-carry, in our view bizarre and unnatural, is so widespread. Many anthropologists believe the explanation of its tenacity lies in the phenomenon of the “dead-end culture,” defined as one which due to some crucial mistake (flunking Toynbee’s “challenge response” test) ceases to progress and becomes fossilized. By this theory, through random chance a people advances from the hand-carry to the more efficient head-carry (rather than some other technique) and then suffers such diminished mental capacity it persists even when neighbors are employing donkey, wheelbarrow, or Land Rover. It is thought that, with the carrying almost exclusively done by women, here is either the explanation or the consequence of their inferior status. That is, either men perpetuate the



head-carry to keep their women docile or simply feel it's beneath their dignity to point out to such dolts that other tribes have better ways.

The head-carry is not utterly unredeemed; anthropologists have found users little afflicted by backache. But as one would expect, they are plagued by headache. Interestingly, this made them the most readily Christianized of the primitives, and in 19<sup>th</sup>-century records of the Anglican Board of Missions we see the supply of medications given equal emphasis with translating the Bible. He didn't mention it in his books that the first words of the revered missionary long cut off from his base and thought lost, in response to the famous "Dr. Livingston, I presume" were, "For God's sake, man, do you have any aspirin?"

The shoulder-carry is nearly as old as the hand-carry and older than the head-carry, dating to the apeman slinging a large fish, bunch of bananas, or apewoman over his shoulder. This one-shoulder-carry evolved into various forms through employment of a stick or pole.

From Trajan's Column in Rome we learn that a legionary or campaign had a short sword (gladius) hanging at his right side from a belt, and in the right hand a javelin. On the march the battle helmet hung from the right shoulder. From the left shoulder hung a large, rectangular shield, leaving the left hand free to grasp the pole which rested on the left shoulder and supported at its end his foraging and cooking kit. This carrying method, familiar in modern times as that of the bindlestiff, was necessary in order to be ready for instant action with the right hand if a band of Gauls or Brigantes burst out from the bushes. However, the technique was fraught with dire consequences for the future of the Empire, for Tacitus tells us it caused the lopsided posture which made a veteran of the legions instantly recognizable; the deformity and the constant ragging it occasioned by civilians are considered by Herodian a contributing factor to the troops frequently erupting in rage and killing emperors.

Much better in peaceful situations was the two-shoulder-carry, which evolved separately in North America, where Indian women thus transported infants, absence of the wheel in the New World ruling out any kind of perambulator, and in mountainous regions of Europe and Asia.

The survival to the present of the two-shoulder-carry (via rucksack) in the Alps, amid examples all around of superior techniques, may seem a puzzle. However, here is another example of the "dead-end" phenomenon. The Romantics and their 18<sup>th</sup>-Century myth of the "noble savage" to the contrary, Hobbes' description of the condition of man better fits mountain peasants who are mountain peasants specifically because they have been driven out of the lowlands by competition of the smarter folk. As Harry Lime observed in *The Third Man*, the Swiss, despite having for centuries a democratic government and enjoying freedom from destructive wars, have contributed naught to European civilization but the cuckoo clock. (To be fair, he evidently was unaware of the Swiss Army knife.) For closer-to-home examples of the sort of people who make a living in the mountains, we need look no farther than the prospector, the gypo logger, and the ski instructor.

## Chapter 2: The Birth of Sport Backpacking

Very late in history, indeed not to any significant extent until the past century, emerged the practice of transporting loads of food and equipment hither and yon in the name of sport. The English started it on their compulsory Grand Tours of the Continent when, as an expression of the Romantic revolt against the Enlightenment, they made excursions into the forbidding Alps, formerly avoided by all civilized folk who possibly could. The diversion of mountain-climbing they commenced was ardently taken up by Victorians who for this reason or that - - gross violations of the rigidifying moral code, as in the case of the sinister diabolist, Aleister Crowley, or boredom, as with the clergy who constituted so large a proportion of the early climbers, or things going badly at Oxford-Cambridge, as they so often did for everyone - - found it necessary or desirable to get out of the country. Wealthy and cultivated Eastern-Seaboard Americans, for whom the Grand Tour was a trip to England, began emulating their trans-Atlantic idols by including the Alps on their itineraries and subsequently, upon finding themselves excluded as colonials from The Alpine Club, forming their own American Alpine Club.

If intrepid enough to dare dangers of cliffs and glaciers and discomforts of the reeking hovels and vile foods of Alpine peasants, these 19<sup>th</sup>-century English, virtual masters of the world, and their American cousins who hoped to be so someday, were much too dutiful about the responsibilities of their station to retrograde absolutely to barbarism, and to carry loads needed on ventures above the cow pastures, hired peasants. Thus, though superficially seeming related, the Alpine travels have nothing to do with sport backpacking; the English-Americans (and the rich and titled Germans and Italians who, as usual monkeylike, hopped on the bandwagon) carried nothing heavier than a pocket kerchief and to the peasants the hauling was simply a disagreeable if remunerative job.

To understand the course of events in America we must look elsewhere, namely to Turner's seminal essay, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, first read at a meeting of historians in 1893. In his electrifying opening paragraph, Turner drew attention to the statement made in 1890 by Superintendent of the Census announcing that during the preceding decade the frontier as a continuous line had ceased to exist and therefore no longer would be traced in the decennial reports. Turner went on to propound his famous thesis that Americans had become what they were by being a nation at "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" and that the American character was shaped by "a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line."

Turner, of course, was poignantly cognizant of the nostalgia for the vanishing frontier welling up all over the nation. (Actually, principally among wealthy urbanites; nostalgia was not felt by those who had lived on the frontier.) He perhaps was unaware that his thesis was gaining a sort of confirmation through the new phenomenon of expeditions being undertaken -- for other than economic reasons, by people who had never before been outside a city -- into the remaining pockets of wilderness.

In the East the "return to primitive conditions" followed rivers and lakes, where the canoe-centered sport was born, the wealthy recreationists hiring for their equivalent of Swiss peasants the trappers and Indians who managed to survive in the "North Woods" -- not because they were fond of the place but because (see previous chapter) they lacked the initiative or courage to move to the cities.

In the West the explorations took a rather different form, that section of the continent having been demonstrated by Lewis and Clark to be unsuited to canoeing. There the adventurous doctors and lawyers, professors and teachers and preachers, hired for their load-hauling the horsepackers serving the decaying mining settlements and the newly expanding herds of sheep and cattle. However, so wary of these rude horsemen (not without reason) were the city gentfolk, they felt it prudent to probe the "meeting point of savagery and civilization" only in large groups. Thus, in 1892, was founded in California the Sierra Club, soon followed by other clubs in other cities in the West.

East and West these wilderness travelers shared something with the Semitic prophets who in past age came out of the desert in an endless stream proclaiming new faiths. Smug in their Romantic certainty that they had been ennobled by a confrontation with the Deity, that they had been spiritually cleansed by getting soaked in storms and broiled in the sun, eaten alive by bugs while themselves subsisting on a diet that would have been disdained in the grimiest slum, they scorned as effete and decadent their friends who partook of no sport more flesh-punishing than lawn tennis and croquet and proclaimed themselves the only true Americans left. This attitude is familiar to us in the writings of Teddy Roosevelt.

In the East the cultist "return to primitive conditions" developed into the sport of woodcraft, settling down in a canoe-supplied camp and spending the summer building log cabins, whittling pothooks, and learning from the guides not only how to catch fish and shoot bear but such arcane tricks as snaring birds and rodents and stewing or barbequing them as appropriate.

In the West, however, the outing clubs had as a second purpose the preservation of natural beauty (the temples) and stricter members quickly saw this required eliminating horses from the scene. The substitution of an unsatisfactory half-measure, they took inspiration from John Muir, who when driven loony by tending bands of sheep often went roaming the High Sierra with no gear but a blanket, if that, and no food but a chunk of stale bread in his pocket. Such a spartan existence being too rigorous for any but an Old Testament Muir, his disciples modified the pure doctrine with lessons from the prospectors lingering in Western mountains. These poor souls, too dull witted to join the rush to the Yukon, in the main lacked even such amenities

as burros; instead they dumped supplies in gunnysacks, tied ropes to them, and slung them over shoulders.

Thus was born backpacking, uniquely American – or more specifically, Western American. Not instantly, nor even rapidly, did the innovation become popular. Rather, the packtrain recreationalists looked upon erstwhile friends with horror, feeling they had stepped over the line from civilization into savagery. For their part, the backpackers, with their monastic dedication to “going light,” formed a cult within a cult and treated the horsebound with the same contempt both groups accorded the citybound.

Enormous impetus was given the a-borning sport when Dan Beard imported the Boy Scout idea from England. Actually, what Lord Baden Powell had in mind was the utilitarian notion of training your auxiliary soldiers (“scouts”) to augment the military in campaigns against the Boers and Fuzzy-Wuzzies and eventually, the Hun. Beard’s genius lay in adapting the idea to the ever-growing American Nostalgia for the now long-dead frontier. (And a high compliment was paid by the Communists when, in the 1930s, they organized as competition the Young Pioneers, with a program identical except for the inclusion of Marxism.) Very soon gangs (“troops”) of children were canoeing or marching into the woods and blowing bugles. Because they did good deeds and were always prepared, and were trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent, and swore an oath to keep themselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight, they earned widespread admiration.

In the East the Scouts were woodcrafters, canoeing if possible or otherwise hiking as short a distance as necessary to get out of sight of suburbs, occupying themselves from dawn to dusk chopping down trees and making bough beds and kabobs and KYBOs, then sitting around the campfire singing until Taps.

In the West, however, though Scouts dutifully carried hatchets and hacked enthusiastically at the greenery, an increasing number of troops did so not in static camps but on the trail, emulating the heroic backpacking mavericks of the outing clubs. The sport being superbly suited to the very young, particularly those who were strong and have vowed to be obedient and cheerful, soon the Western wilderness rang with childish laughter and it grew steadily less common to be endangered by wild animals, which rarely were seen anymore.

Because of Scouting, the preponderance of backpackers were under 15; few males stayed with the sport past the normal age of discovering girls. (One might suppose the founding of the Campfire Girls and the Girl Scouts would encourage boys to continue hiking, but the former spent most of their time selling mints door to door and leaders of the latter, in an era when even the suspicion of impurity could doom a female to the streets, were very cautious never to take their charges into a forest known to contain Boy Scouts.)

That many mature, or at least fully-grown people go backpacking nowadays may be partly explained by a nostalgia not only for the frontier but for the lost innocence of blissfully-ignorant childhood.

## Chapter 3: The Rise of a Mass Sport

Environment-conscious backpackers of today customarily denounce the automobile as the devil incarnate. They are justified in doing so by not only the air and noise pollution of cities and the psyche-scarring trauma of freeways but the infuriating jams of traffic on recreation roads leading to the fringes of wilderness. Yet perhaps up to 99 percent of present backpackers wouldn't be backpackers were it not for the automobile, which has been the greatest single stimulus to the sport.

America lacked a genuine transportation system until the automobile. Railroads served excellently well in Europe, and still do, because there they were and are intended for transportation. In America, however, they were built in the East so Commodore Vanderbilt and compatriots could water the stock and in the West to swindle Congress out of land grants. That they were not abandoned immediately after construction is owing to the fact that when the first band of scoundrels made a pile and fled to escape prosecution a second gang of crooks took over the lines and commenced getting rich plundering the peasantry, as described by Norris in *The Octopus*. Farmers of the Northwest said of the president of the Great Northern Railway, "First we had the drought, then we had the flood, then we had the locusts, then we had James J. Hill." While conducting their pirate raids across the face of the nation, the tycoons spent the absolute minimum on maintenance; in the end, the system becoming so ramshackle as to imperil human life, they dumped the passenger end of the business on Amtrak, whose customers well know roadbeds generally are rougher than the fields beside them and coach walls carry such graffiti as "Grover Cleveland is a dirty old man."

The automobile dazzled Americans as the rising sun of freedom and gleefully they threw themselves into such novelties as suburban living, Sunday driving, and auto touring. As for backpacking, with cars bringing trailheads steadily closer to cities, it became in the 1920s a sport not just for occasional extended vacations but for every weekend. Even many horse recreationists were converted, their beasts being so cumbersome to use they previously hadn't taken short trips. Throughout the 1930s, despite the dampening effect of the Depression, growing numbers of outing-club members and Boy Scout (and a scattering of Girl Scout) troops hoisted packs and took to the trails.

Meanwhile the automobile was generating a brand-new sport, car camping. Formerly National Parks were seen more often at lantern-side lectures than in person, but from World War I on the ambition of millions of Americans newly on wheels was to collect a complete set of decals and souvenir pillows and to fill photo albums with pictures of bears being fed, voluntarily or otherwise, by fellow tourists.

It would be all too easy to patronize these city-bred car-campers, commenting wryly that going out to get cold and wet and be frightened by noises in the night was their reenactment of the Daniel Boone experience. But to render them justice, a fair amount of courage was required to navigate rough, ill-marked wagon roads in a vehicle that might or might not get to and from a destination without a breakdown that could leave travelers stranded for days.

Time passed. There came paved roads, dependable cars, the Sears Roebuck wall tent, and the Coleman stove. The quality of camping was transformed, and not in every opinion for the better. If those who had been young and daring adults in the 1920s were, in their creaky middle age of the 1940s, content with placid comfort, their children, now young adults, were bored. They were also overwhelmed. In their childhood the campgrounds had been nearly vacant but now a new crowd, postwar rich and mobile, discovered car-camping; amid Coleman lanterns hung above every picnic table and portable radios blaring, stars could not be seen at night nor rivers and birds heard any time.

Here we must express a debt to the Northwest Wildland Recreation Research Unit of the U.S. Forest Service. In landmark studies these scientists statistically established a causal correlation between car-camping as a child and backpacking as an adult. The process is inevitable in its self-evident simplicity: to recapture the excitement available to them in the 1920s and 1930s as children in car-campgrounds, as adults in the 1940s and 1950 they had to move on – away from the roads and onto the trails. Their mass migration was encouraged by the fact that the backcountry seemed not so spooky as it had to their parents; everywhere they saw troops of boys, even girls, setting out with packs on backs unafraid.

The ever-growing first wave of backpackers – outing-club members and Scouts – was augmented by this second wave of former car-campers to create in the 1940s and 1950s the First Great Backpacking Explosion. Traumatic as was the sudden invasion for oldtime backpackers nurtured by empty-trail days of the 1930s, it was the popping of a paper bag compared to the Hiroshima-loud noise that was to follow.

When the GI Joes came marching home from World War II, they plunged into two recreations. For one, virtually in a single night they impregnated every female of child-bearing age in America – and on issuance of the first offspring went at it again, and again. Thus the Baby Boom of the 1940s-50s. For the other, in the postwar prosperity with its high incomes and long weekends and vacations and fast cars and smooth roads and installment-plan foolproof camping kits complete with umbrella tents and beer coolers, they – and their swarms of infants – avidly took up car-camping. Nothing better ever having been known to them, the crowding didn't bother these new campers as it did the old, who were driven onto the trails.

Now let us count off the years, bring those children of the Baby Boom to adulthood, and see what happens. Yes. As with their predecessors, they became disenchanted by car-camping, now further degraded by arrival of the Airstream and Winnebago and minibike, turning the typical campground into a cross between a tacky-suburban housing tract and a shopping-center

parking lot; this third breed of car-camper apparently thronged the woods not for communion with nature but to escape the noise-control ordinances beginning to be enforced in cities.

Thus, in the mid-1960s, another flight to the trails, not by a handful but a horde. The first wave had been a ripple, the second a breaker; this third wave was a tsunami.

Traditionally the career of Park Ranger has attracted folk with interests in flowers and wildlife and rocks and a liking for a peaceful, nature-centered life. Since the Baby Boom of the 1940s resulted in the Backpacking Boom of the 1960s, a better qualification for the job has been a taste for law enforcement and, in Yosemite Valley, riot control.



## Chapter 4: Clothing and the Coming of the Fad

So far, we have been examining what may be called the spring and early summer of backpacking. Moving now into high summer, more and more often we must, while basking in the sun, glance uneasily forward to inevitable autumn.

Gather ye rose buds while ye may,  
Old time is still a-flying,  
And this same flower that blooms today  
Tomorrow will be dying.

The automobile lifted backpacking to a mass sport in the 1960s; other factors impelled the fourth or fad wave that struck in the 1970s, and none more powerfully than changes in clothing.

The early sports expeditionists, being city folk, had no notion how to dress for the wilds. Men adopted from prominent exemplars garments more or less suitable, such as the riding breeches of the U.S. Cavalry, wool mackinaws of lumberjacks, and ten-gallon hats of cowboys. The clothing of women, who suffered the extra impediment of modesty, was even more unwieldy. Indeed, only the sturdiest could venture in wilderness at all, encumbered as they were by veils to protect delicate feminine complexions, heavy ankle-length skirts, billowing wrist-length shirtwaists, and God knows what beneath; literature of the period is discreetly silent on the subject, though one can speculate (and be appalled) by scanning old Sears Roebuck catalogs.

A handful of females who refused to submit to iron propriety and thus be effectively excluded from the new adventure, backpacking, changed from skirts to bloomers, thus becoming, in the eyes of the multitude, fallen women, fair game for insulting propositions. Doughty and persevering rebels (in city lives, often suffragettes) they were, fit heroines for their militant modern sisters, and in the 1920s joined with men in the shift to more practical garb – men's work trousers and shirts, plus ordinary, undistinguished sweaters and jackets and hats.

In the Depression-straightened 1930s cheapness became a prime consideration and J.C. Penney and Goodwill Industries major suppliers, so that backpacking, once the recreation of refined if unconventional gentlefolk, gained a reputation as the sport of roughnecks little if any more civilized than gypo loggers. The bonanza of dirt-cheap surplus after World War II maintained the mood, a party of hikers then resembling a fleeing rabble of routed infantry.

Though increasingly free in city lives, the bulk of unmarried (and wishing to be) women rejected backpacking in this period, realizing it would drastically hamper enticement of males; the females on the trail were pre-adolescent, already had captured a mate, looked better in backpacking ponchos than city dresses, or didn't give a damn.

In the 1950s and 1960s enterprising manufacturers succeeded in transforming another hangout of slobs, the ski slopes, into scenes fit for *Vogue* with the stretch pants, the bunny hat, and finally the whole added new wardrobe of apres-ski. Discerning a similar profit opportunity on the trails, in the late 1960s and early 1970s they evolved and promoted Backpacking Chic.

The hues of oldtime female hikers observed, as did those of males, the natural decency of background-blending forest-green and dead-leaf khaki. Now the wilderness suddenly shrieked with Day-Glo reds and oranges of parkas and sweaters, packs and tents; from miles away hikers intruded their presence on observers – and closer up unavoidably caught the eye. And figure-flattering knickers and gaudy socks, Malibu shorts and lederhosen, halters and T-shirts, were complemented by such smart accessories as the cuty-pie hat and sweetheart sunglasses. Previous qualms eliminated, the women took to the trails in large numbers. But the peacock, after all, is the male of that species; with pretty, unattached women in the wilderness to dress up for, men became no less garish.

If one imagines manufacturers were chagrined by the competing “rebel” style of the go-to-hell Blue Jean Look of ragged cutoffs and bib overalls affected by boys with long hair and girls with no bras, one imagines wrong; these jeans were not old and cheap but factory-processed at great expense to appear old.

Here we must step aside to call attention to another consequence of the Baby Boom of the 1940. Whereas in prior eras outnumbered, disciplined youth dutifully aped their elders, when the children of GI Joe flooded into schools the center of cultural gravity dropped downward in age to the campus. Moreover, this Dr. Spock generation was not one to seek elsewhere than inward for the Gleam.

And what was happening on campus? So alluring had backpackers (male as well as female) become in the wilderness, they began wearing trail clothing on campus too, to the envy of other students, a great many of whom adopted the costume and then, finding true authenticity subtly evasive, went actually backpacking to attain it.

Already the now-outnumbered and cowed over-30-and-40 generation had for security sought protective coloration of the Youth Culture, men growing beards and donning beads, women doffing bras (or if that was impractical, adopting the Poncho Look) and both trying to listen to rock and experimenting with pot bought from student dealers (perhaps their own children, in high school or junior high), the “dope” as often as not actually being mountain-shop dehydrated spinach, which nevertheless gave them a good giggling high. Now as ever keeping a

sharp eye on campus, they eagerly embraced the costume of the trail – and to “keep up with the kids,” occasionally wore it onto the trail.

So it was that the sport spread from wilderness to campus to the entire nation; status as a fad was honored in 1974 by a cartoon in *The New Yorker* and in 1975 by a lampoon in *Mad*.

The promise having been made in the opening of this chapter not to ignore the flowers of evil blossoming in the backpacking garden, it must be warned that females dressed a la mode may receive unwanted attention. It is dangerous to enter, in costume, a mountain village, where gypo loggers in caulked boots and tin pants will be at best sullen and suspicious, more likely boisterously insulting, and at worst are liable, as their grandfathers did the suffragette-hikers in bloomers, to accost female backpackers. Grimmer to report, the gypos have taken to skulking along trails during periods of unemployment, which for them fill most of the year, and thus the 1970s epidemic of backcountry rape.

The foundation of the backpacking costume, the boot, is also the central symbol of the fad.

Having in the 1920s abandoned the knee-high “rattlesnake” boot in favor of the logger’s boot only a short way up the calf, in the 1930s backpackers, following the lead of mountain climbers, largely moved from use of hobnails and “slivers” on soles to Swiss edge-nails or tricouni nails. After World War II the Mountain Troops brought from Italy the Bramani rubber-lug sole. Purely to shock conservative comrades with what seemed an outrageous heresy, a few climbers replaced their nails with these lugs. Not realizing it as a joke, neophyte climbers converted en masse and after them, the backpackers, who in this period began exhibiting the slavish adulation of climbers characteristic ever since. That the shift was due to a caprice of fashion rather than reason is abundantly clear to anyone who has worn both; though lugs (now mainly of the Vibram design) give better traction on rock and cushioning on trails, they are much inferior to nails on such slippery terrain as footlogs and steep heather, grass, dirt, and snow and doubtless have caused many hikers’ deaths that could have been avoided with nails.

Similarly, not one hiker in a hundred has any real use for the complexly padded and reinforced boots which were introduced from Europe in the 1950s and which in the 1960s displaced the simple old “shell” boot. Again, climbers favored the import and that was good enough for the sheep-like hikers. Manufacturers and retailers were pleased by the new boot because it was far more expensive and yielded a higher profit; they virtually gave up making and stocking the traditional American “shell.”

From Alps to American climbers and backpackers, from peaks to trails to campuses to Manhattan Island cocktail parties, spread the “European climbing boot look,” with all its connotations of “strength through joy,” the north walls of Eiger and Grandes Jorasses and Matterhorn, lebensraum, blitzkrieg, and Buchenwald.

Considered “sexy,” this brutal boot exuding cruelty from every seam is the concentrated essence of the costume and the fad. In contrast to the homely old shell and in parallel to the

caulked boot of the logger, it serves as a power symbol, which is why hikers invariably buy boots far heavier than they need. Visit a mountain shop. Watch the transformation of novices. Men enter the boot department head-ducking meek and women feminine-sweet; they exit as macho-swaggering storm troopers and scowling libbers. In the perverse extreme, see them purchase black leather jackets, like so many Hell's Angels of the 1950s, and black leather rucksacks, and black leather anything – including, at the shameless shops that cater to these disciples of the Marquis, even whips. One sinister shop in a New Jersey city which was a 1930s stronghold of the German-American Bund offers custom-made rubber lugs in a swastika pattern.

Yet the pendulum swings. In the early 1970s ecologists wept that heavy boots were tearing up meadows as viciously as bulldozers. In response, barefoot hiking became common among aging “flower children,” as did helicopter rescue of barefoot hikers. Less radical preservationists renounced boots for sneakers, a trend that dismayed manufacturers until their designers perfected “training shoes” (the new name for tennis shoes) which were as expensive as boots and just as sexy in their suaver way.

## Chapter 5: Equipment and the Easing of Pain

No matter how darling the costume, backpacking scarcely could have achieved popularity employing equipment of the 1930s and 1940s, endurable solely by those inured to pain by fanaticism or too young to know any better. As it happened, better gear was awaiting the 1960s Third Wave of pampered car-camper-turned-hikers, who doubtless would have lacked the mettle for wilderness had they been compelled to carry 1940s gear, and the 1970 Fad Wave of ignorant urbanites, who even with their marvelous modern outfits lead a precarious backcountry existence.

Through that internal contradiction ever perplexing and amusing to philosophers, always the “returners to a primitive civilization” no sooner get there than they go to work building a civilization; actually, perhaps they are drawn to a simpler world precisely because it provides free scope, limited in labyrinthine cities, to devise fresh complications. The woodcrafters’ childlike delight in exercise of ingenuity also was typical of early backpackers, perpetually tinkering with this item or that. However, not until the First Great Backpacking Explosion of the 1940s-50s was there a market sizable enough to permit basement Rube Goldbergs to set themselves up in viable businesses. From this period date the most famous of the backpacking manufacturers, usually men then getting along in years and sensitive to the need for less-punishing gear. Responding to their requirement for retail outlets were the first of the “mountain shops,” established by people unfit for any other gainful occupation – as they were called, “mountain bums.”

For obvious reasons, in no age have backpackers been happy with their packs. The Trapper Neslon, accepted with resignation in the 1920s and 1930s as the best of a bad lot, long had been known to be dangerous to health; as the Roman legionary in retirement walked lopsided, in middle age the old Boy Scout walked with a severe stoop and the grimace of an aching back, from cupping hands under verticals of the frame to take weight from sagging shoulders, was marked by abnormally long arms.

The aircraft industry of World War II, through revolutionizing the technology of aluminum manufacture and dramatically lowering the price, made possible the modern packframe. Everywhere in Western America during postwar years garage inventors were bending and twisting aluminum tubing – not without hazard. Fred Miller of Lone Pine, California, is considered by many scholars the most imaginative of the pioneers; sadly, in a workshop accident he died of strangulation and his unique spiral design has found no second proponent. Instead, the honor of creating today’s backpack fell to Dick Kelty. Unlike the “shoulder carry” Trapper Nelson which forces a pronounced forward lean, the Kelty and its numerous imitators

are “hip carry” packs which let the hiker stand upright. (Once again glancing ahead to autumn, this is far from an unmixed blessing, as will be discussed in a later chapter.)

Note must be taken here of a characteristic of backpacking manufacturers puzzling to outside observers who suppose the sport must, in compensation for its rigors, enhance in practitioners a spiritual serenity. The quarrelsomeness of the manufacturers, their incessant denunciations of each others’ products, their paranoid tantrums at any criticism, their frequent treatment in mental hospitals, only can be understood by reference to the strain of religiosity in the sport and its consequent nourishment of would-be prophets, each of whom sees competitors less as commercial threats than as wicked men, virtual agents of Satan. Fortunately (or not?) the uproar of combativeness surrounding manufacturing is quieting now that firms built to prosperity by the original innovators are being bought out by octopus-sprawling conglomerates which view backpacking purely and coldly as a business proposition, no different from making Sugar Pops and pocket calculators and overthrowing South American governments.

Yet if older companies are behaving with ruthless dignity, newer ones are frenetically aggressive. Not even Dick Kelty himself escapes their fury. He is scorned as a bungler and imposter by zealots of the “hiphugger” packframe, whose padded arms swing forward to grip the hips, making, it is claimed, the first true hip-carry pack. These worthies have been notably quiet, though, since recent publication of an article in the *Journal of Orthopedic Surgery* reported that at least two representatives of this design cause atrophy of the sciatic nerve and permanent crippling.

Newly out of home workshops and crying for attention are such novelties as the pack which carries a load in front of the body as well as the back, placing the hiker in a sort of giant birdcage, and another, appealing to woodcrafters, which can be disassembled to improvise camp chairs, tables, cots, and toilet seats. The wheel has been rediscovered and put to use in a “pack” towed behind the hiker, who wears a yoke; a variant supplements the muscle power with a small gasoline engine. The Balloon Pack, which removes all the weight from the hiker’s feet (including that of his own body) except enough for boots to maintain contact with the trail, could with certain ballasting precautions prove practical in areas lacking trees and wind; however, enthusiasm was dampened in 1974 when the most eager experimenter, David Clinch of Phoenix, was swept from the rim of the Grand Canyon and disappeared in a thunderhead.

Another serendipity of World War II was the sharp drop in price of nylon, providing the first genuinely rainproof shelter light enough to haul long distances. The nylon tarp was an instant hit and perfectly satisfied veteran backpackers. However, the new recruits of the 1950s, accustomed to the night-long car-campground glare of Coleman lanterns, tended to be afraid of the dark; they were not really comfortable in the wilds until, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, lightweight tents were developed that both kept out storms (and spooks) and did not, by being too waterproof, quickly become saunas.

After World War II the wool bag in which 97 percent of backpackers had previously slept (or tried, since nobody ever was really warm at high elevations – or at low except in summer heat

waves) yielded to the down bag, removing a principal component of the wilderness ordeal. But (again that uneasy glance forward) we now see coming the end of the Down Era. First, down clothing has become a sudden fad not only for climbers and hikers but skiers, hunters, fisherman, sailors, winter joggers and cyclists, and backyard gardeners, vastly swelling the demand. Second, the peasants who formerly ate big old geese and sold that down as a byproduct have, in these years of the “revolution of rising expectations,” developed a preference for tender young geese which provide inferior down. Thus the price of down is skyrocketing and the quality plunging. As publicized by the recent scandal which compelled one of America’s largest mountain-shop chains to close its doors, many of the “down” bags on the market in fact employ chicken feathers disguised by skillful artisans in factories of Formosa and Hong Kong. Though an important benefit of Détente is the protocol negotiated by Henry Kissinger under which the Soviet Union agrees to supply, in exchange for wheat, a guaranteed amount of Siberian goose down, the down bag, sorry to say, is on the way to being, as it was in the 1930s, a garment of the rich. Fortunately the synthetic fiber, polyester, has been so improved that decent bags of moderate price are, at the moment, still available. However, for reasons explained in a later chapter, the future there is also bleak.

Old-time backpackers were expert builders of fire, absolutely dependent on it to cook their food. In the late 1950s, however, the First Great Backpacking Explosion consumed all the combustible wood convenient to backcountry camps. From necessity backpackers adopted the mountain-climbers’ standby, the Primus (or as it is now called, Optimus) stove, an elegantly simple and – in practiced hands – dependable device.

Yet one is reminded it was invented by the Scandinavians, who also gave us dynamite. Apocryphal though the story surely is that a major outlet for the stove once was Russia, and that Tsarist-era anarchists employed it to blow up the Grand Dukes and World War II partisans to cripple Tiger tanks (it was then being called the Molotov Cocktail), certainly the potential destructive power of the white gas used as fuel is chilling. Luckily, in the 1960s, just as the Third Wave was rolling over the wilderness, appeared the much safer butane stove, which, though emitting barely enough heat to cook freeze-dried meals, has, as shown by the annual accident reports of the American Alpine Club, reduced by 87 percent the incidence of backpackers being evacuated with life-threatening third-degree burns.

Backpacker cuisine of the early decades was only slightly superior to that of Vicksburg during the siege – or perhaps in reality inferior, recalling that the inhabitants at least had fresh meat until the rats were all trapped. Saving only lunch, which offered appetizing pilot bread and peanut butter, old-timers dreaded mealtime, with its interminable drudgery of pot-stirring, and agony of smoke-swallowing, culminating in the gagging down of revolting glops either half-raw or charred or both.

Again World War II was the watershed, the following years bringing Kraft Dinner, Minute Rice, Instant Potatoes, Two-Minute Oatmeal, and dehydrated spinach, so that trail meals grew easy to prepare and, after several days of semi-starvation, quite tempting. Another war, in Korea, led

to another advance, as it was then judged, when the freeze-drying industry subsidized by the U.S. Army turned its excess capacity to serving the civilian market.

To be sure, initial enthusiasm for freeze-dried foods waned when clinical studies at John Hopkins confirmed, as some had suspected, that prolonged use causes hyperacidity, irritation of the large intestine, and chronic diarrhea and hemorrhoids. An even more serious blow was delivered in the Watergate aftermath by one of the lesser-noticed Congressional investigations of Nixon Administration machinations. At hearings of the Senate Agriculture Committee the president of a leading freeze-drying firm admitted he had received a large, secret grant from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to experiment with a new method of solid-waste disposal and that what his company had been labeling freeze-dried chop suey really was the processed swill of San Diego.

If freeze-dried foods now are consumed solely by unwary beginners, wiser backpackers having reverted to Kraft Dinner, and if the self-defensive ideal of all hikers is now as it was in the 1930s to eat the minimum necessary for survival, wilderness meals unquestionably are less nauseating than in the old days. Moreover, they are prepared with an ease that permits even artless novices of the Fad Era to avert starvation for as long as a week at a time.



## Chapter 6: Books Showing the Way

During the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> the passion for wilderness instigated a rash of books on woodcraft, a sport practiced relatively near the Manhattan Island center of the publishing industry and thus known by rumor to the editors. Backpacking, however, was a sport of the Far West, a region these New Yorkers suspected probably existed, being shown on all the maps, but about which they were certain no salable book could be done, unless on cowboys and Indians or events occurring in and near San Francisco, made widely interesting by Barbary Coast and the Earthquake. Backpackers didn't mind the neglect, newcomers to the sport easily learning all they needed to know from mentors in the outing clubs or Boy Scouts. Indeed, they were congenitally distrustful of books on wilderness, the woodcrafter manuals of the Boy Scouts and Kephart and his ilk seeming to them aimed less at hikers than gypo loggers.

In the 1950s the influx of new members with sketchy outdoor backgrounds led two outing clubs to publish instructional books, one by the Sierra Club devoted to burro management and the other by the Mountaineers to mountain-climbing. The short space given backpacking by these manuals mainly was focused on curing bad habits instilled by the *Boy Scout Handbook*; the editors felt any person who could not master the sport in a weekend on the trail had no business being there.

Had the preposterous suggestion been made to an experienced Western backpacker that an entire thick book could be filled with naught but a discussion of backpacking or, more incredible, that anyone would buy it, his reaction would have been hysterical laughter. Yet in 1968 appeared Colin Fletcher's *The Complete Walker* and it was snapped up by thousands upon thousands of beginners. Not until then did flabbergasted veterans fully comprehend the dimensions of the Third (Tsunami) Wave. Nor did they until then believe how stunningly ignorant were the mobs of invaders. Indeed, Fletcher's book, using big words and making literary allusions and passing lightly over matters he thought self-evident proved beyond the comprehension of many novices; they revered the Master as they would one who wrote in Sanskrit but needed other books to help them read his book – and also to tell them how to tie bootlaces and strike a match.

The woods (newly including those in the East, accounting for Fletcher's not having been rejected by the editors out of hand) literally being full of backpackers temperamentally or otherwise unsuited to regular occupations and envious of Fletcher's sudden wealth, a flock of manuscripts began flying over the transoms of New York publishing houses.

As it happened, these firms recently had been bought by Texas oil magnates, who in the years of the GI Joe babies moving into and through America's schools realized literacy was, despite inroads of TV, a growth industry. However, they were totally uninterested in the traditional role of books as disseminators of new ideas, preferring the financial sure thing of old ideas, or at least those free of risk. For example, in the late 1950s one house brought out an Italian cookbook that enjoyed enormous success; within the year every New York publisher issued its own Italian cookbook.

Backpacking is the pasta of the 1970s. Where a decade earlier the Library of Congress catalogued just three books even tangentially concerned with the subject, by the mid-1970s it listed close to 100. There are volumes written from the viewpoint of the equipment freak, the handyman make-it-yourselfer, the go-lighter, the kitchen-fusser, the organic-fooder, the wild-fooder, the reformed woodcrafter, the helpful-hinter, the new-ethic environmentalist, the lonesome poet-hero, the Zen-philosopher, and the Will Rogers bucolic wisecracker. There were volumes on how to backpack in the West, the Northwest, the Southwest, the Midwest, the South, the Southeast, the East, the Northeast, with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, young Christians, juvenile delinquents, wives, children, babies, parents, and dogs. There are volumes for fast hikers and slow, old and young, fat and skinny, short and tall, right-handed and left-handed and ambidextrous.

If many books are redundant, consisting of paraphrases skating the thin ice of plagiarism, this is only partly due to the rush of publishers to get in on a good thing and of mountain bums to avoid honest jobs. Another factor is the yearning of every mountain shop to have its own manual touting its distinctive gear and lauding its staff. Though most authors deny it and sanctimoniously point shaming fingers at the handful who brazenly don't, virtually all manuals are expanded versions of the catalogs of individual shops. The few authors not on a shop payroll subsist by blackmailing manufacturers into supplying them with free equipment which they peddle in cut-rate shops (which have another source of supply as well, as noted later).

Just as there are dozens of translation of the Scriptures, so that when a Bible-thumping bigot is encountered one cannot dispute theology with him before asking which Bible he thumps, the proliferation of manuals has bred intense sectarianism; strangers meeting on trail frequently, after friendly preliminary parley, proceed to quarrel bitterly over the merits of their preferred mountain shops and the comparative wisdom and saintliness of their chosen gurus.

Perhaps this is not to the bad. Ecologists urge preservation of wilderness to maintain a natural gene pool to avoid the "poverty of possibility" and attendant potential future and now-dominant farming and forestry; so too the diversity of picky little details of technique, absurd as it seems, may serve as a counterweight to the depressing sameness of today's backpacking gear and garb. In that sense we should be encouraged that there are described in print (at last count) 12 conflicting methods of cleaning a sleeping bag, 37 of tying bootlaces, and 489 recipes for gorp.

Whatever one may think of manuals in the particular or the general, unquestionably they have enabled Fad Wave backpackers to select equipment to match their already-purchased costumes and shown them how to put it to use on the trails. Guidebooks have told them where the trails are.

Oldtime wildland walkers (by common definition, anyone active before 1965, though in a stricter view "oldtime" is reserved for those who know what a Trapper Nelson and tricouni are) violently object to "cookbooks" which began pouring from the printing presses in the mid-1960s. Revisiting a valley forest or alpine meadow that was lonesome last year and finding it mobbed this year, they cry in consternation, "What happened" Is it a convention?" Discovering this torrent of humanity is the result of a new trail guide, they explode, they rant and rave, they ostracize if not physically assault former friends who write the guides.

Though in truth the attackers of guides are motivated by a selfish reluctance to share "their" wilderness with newcomers, and would do better to vent spleen on the Baby Boom, their official criticisms are superficially more respectable.

Attackers declare that when the sole sources of trail information were maps and word-of-mouth reports the wilderness posed a challenging mystery. Books, they say, rob the hiker of the opportunity to get lost.

Defenders respond that books are necessary to prevent mass slaughter: Mountain Rescue, originating in the 1950s to remove from cliffs and glaciers the remains of climbers, now is mainly occupied searching for hikers unable to follow a trail, no matter how broad and plainly marked.

Attackers object that books diminish the wildness of wilderness and destroy fragile ecosystems of the publicized spots.

Defenders point out, first that Third Wave and Fad Wave hikers absolutely never venture anywhere not written up and thus books confine the damage to limited areas by channeling the crowds who might otherwise by blind probing blunder and stomp everywhere; second, books serve as wilderness protectors by deluging forests with hikers who get in the way of bulldozers and prevent loggers from sawing down trees.

The fury of the debate is unlikely to subside soon, if ever. Even if the Puritan attackers were to convince erstwhile-friends-become-writers to cease and desist, to go forth and sin no more, the vacuum would be filled by those entrepreneurs who pretend no motive except to make a buck.

This new breed barely gives lip service to environmental concerns and takes minimal pains for accuracy, compiling volumes less by hiking than by "researching" existing guides or, confronted by a blank spot, faking data. For example, the late and notorious Lorette Sharpless, briefly famous as the trail expert of Nevada, was revealed to have been in the state just once, and then to gamble at Reno. (Her murder last year remains unsolved but it ought to be mentioned the

prime suspects are not oldtime Puritans but enraged Faddists. The police know only that the murder instrument was one of her guidebooks, the pages torn out and jammed down her throat.)

To conclude, for all their helpfulness books are not without peril. A typing error led to the disgrace of one prominent guru, who went into seclusion after causing 47 beginners to be blown up by incorrect use of the supposedly foolproof butane stove. And it was a typographical error, not caught in proof by either writer or editor that led, in 1974, to the worst tragedy in the history of the Cascade Range. Where the author, warning against a goat trail ending in a cliff brink camouflaged by brush, emphatically wrote "DO NOT TURN RIGHT!!!" The weekend after the book went on sale the rangers, in going to investigate persistent screaming, found 17 bodies, 8 dead, at the cliff bottom. Interestingly, though the rangers placed a warning sign at the danger point, subsequent hikers, made suspicious of any government official by the FBI and CIA revelations, trusted the guidebook instead. Another 12 went off the cliff before the rangers posted a guard.

## Chapter 7: Sex

Readers who have first opened the book to this page must be cautioned that backpacking is not so sexy as some swingers make out. What with the bumpy ground and cold winds, plus bugs attacking exposed portions of the anatomy, for satisfaction of concupiscence the backcountry is surpassed by any third-rate motel. Nevertheless, there is no denying that if sex is not the principal interest of the normal hiker it is rarely the least vital and since arrival of the Fourth or Fad Wave the trail opportunities have been considerably more than negligible. Indeed, feedback reinforcement has triggered what almost rates recognition as the Fifth or Sex Wave.

One hardly can refrain from exclaiming, "How times have changed!" Sport expeditions to the wilderness commenced in an era when the existence of sex was not publicly admitted, except as a justification for denying some citizens the vote. Granted, no code of behavior succeeded in fundamentally altering human nature nor did wildland severities invariably command celibacy. To chain if not tame the beast in man (and woman) elaborate precautions were taken by the large outing-club groups to preserve the chastity of maidens. The clothing described in previous chapter protected limbs from rapacious eyes and formed a barrier impenetrable in spur of the moment behind-the-bush dallying. To guard the virgins at night, camps were divided into Men's Quarters and Women's Quarters; surreptitious entry into the latter was prevented by the trusted enforcers stationed in the Married Quarters, situated between the other two, and cloak-of-darkness exits from it by the light-sleeping staff of old spinsters headed by a Dean of Women.

During the 1920s, when in cities young people of the Lost or Jazz Generation were, as the code-phrase euphemism had it, "making whoopee," backcountry behavior began evolving toward freer modes. "Flappers" were rare on the trail (for reasons of attire noted earlier, females of any kind that might tempt a male were few) yet many of the diamond-in-the-rough women who renounced packtrains for the rebel sport of backpacking were distinctly "liberated." As always, men accepted the morals imposed (or not) by women; they asked no questions and took whatever opportunities arose, and on the trail welcomed offers they would have rejected on the street.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the moral fiber of America atrophied or became loosely muscular, depending on the point of view, trail sex grew increasingly flagrant – principally through the medium of outing clubs. Organized for quite other purposes, in this period the clubs were most famed as dating bureaus for the underprivileged, a function they served so well that they experienced very rapid growth.

Women were attracted to backpacking specifically because the clothing covered a multitude of sins. (Indeed, it frequently caused embarrassing/titillating incidents during the “party separations” when a hiker mistakenly went with the wrong group.) An extremely favorable male-female ratio and the total absence of the beauties who dominated proms and beaches also made chances of securing a “boy friend” vastly better than in the city.

For men the key appeal of the wilderness traditionally has been the freedom from women, the opportunity to wear crummy clothes and indulge foul habits uninhibited by the Great Civilizers. Yet in the postwar period an increasing number of males, too clumsy to learn to dance and too homely to please the eye of discriminating females (which is to say, those not absolutely desperate) took up backpacking to find romance. As one veteran of the clubs unkindly reminisces, “The gals were pigs – but so were the guys.”

If less comely than the city average, the club backpackers were not more moral. In their camps, where separate quarters had been eliminated a decade earlier, “tent camping” grew popular; those too timid or revolting for such enterprises at least could savor vicarious satisfaction, staying awake to see by the dawn’s early light the flurry of shadows tip-toeing back to their proper sleeping bags.

The groundwork thus was already done when the Third Wave arrived. But now, with a much denser wilderness population, attending club outings became -- except for the very ugly -- unnecessary, the freelancer finding the requisite crowds and resulting wealth of targets at many a favored campsite. Among the major innovations of the early and middle 1960s was the Hospitality Gambit, which accounted for more tent sales (tarps having obvious disadvantages) than weather or bugs.

The technique is nowadays so ubiquitous as scarcely to merit description. The unaccompanied male selects a prominent spot by a well-traveled trail and sets up his two-person tent, the flap opened wide to show the interior holds a single sleeping bag. Displayed on the tent may be a roguish sign, saying “Full-Length Zipper” and identifying it as right-opening or left-opening, or even “Double Bag.” In the background may be a bottle of wine cooling in a snowbank and an array of such hor dourves as frapes and pomegranates. Whether or not he can strum he displays a guitar, in contemporary male superstition a potent aphrodisiac and pretended by role-playing females to be such. He then leers at each unaccompanied female of admired attributes (or, if that is his preference, each male) who passes until one leers back. For the females the technique is simpler; she merely lies by her tent in brief-brief shorts and skimpy halter (or for faster action, a bikini) “getting a tan.”

In the late 1960s sex emerged from furtive rent into the honest open, gaining the added stimulation of mingled exhibitionism/voyeurism. The most spectacular of the new rites is initiated by someone cavorting around a lakeshore camp in the buff crying, “Who’s for skinnydipping?” An excellent way for strangers to get acquainted, and to avoid the later disappointments that plagues the covered-up past, the playful splashing and ducking and

games of tag quickly lead out of icy-tingling water into sunny meadows and an orgy very much resembling those joint ecstasies of spirit and flesh enjoyed at prayer meetings of the Holy Rollers.

What, one asks, about people for whom full daylight exposure is a disaster? They just shun lakes. In fact, the rule has developed that much is revealed about a person by the very fact he or she dares camp by a skinnydippable body of water.

Other approaches are taken in lake-lacking areas. After Colin Fletcher casually mentioned he sometimes hikes stark naked, such frankness and forthrightness, described as “letting it all hang out,” became common among men – though not, for reasons discussed below, among unaccompanied women. Still, women as well as men throng the floating communes of sun-worshippers that form spontaneously in the wilderness every summer – to the monumental shock of straitlaced hikers. The U.S. Forest Service turns aside complaints by explaining the tolerant “multiple use” policy of National Forests. The National Park Service, a much less powerful and self-assured agency, is studying the Southern California experiment in posting certain beaches for legal nudism. On the drafting board is a classification plan to protect the prudes; seeing a sign announcing a trail as rated X, they may avoid offense by instead choosing G.

To momentarily step aside, another consequence of the Baby Boom of the 1940s is crucial to examine here. The Youth Culture that matured in the 1960s, coinciding with the pubescence and adolescence of the GI Joe babies, had a core element of “new freedom.” The causal relationship is clear: submerged in mobs of horny boys and hot girls, elders of the nation realized there was no way to perform their time-hollowed task of keeping the lid on; in fact, they decided to relax and get some action for themselves. Initially the centers of bacchanal were the beaches, as portrayed in bowdlerized form by the series of Franki Avalon-Annette Funicello movies, and the ski schools. However, with the one subject to police raids and the other chilly, attention turned to the backcountry.

The foundation had been laid by advances of the 1960s and early 1970s, and in the Fad Era the news swiftly getting around about “where it’s happening,” in the mid 1970s the Fifth or Sex Wave drowned the wilderness, which became one great big bedroom for the Beautiful People.

If we seem to be describing the New Jerusalem, a corrective to over-rejoicing is provided by still another somber glance ahead to fast-nearing autumn. For both men and women there are serpents in the garden.

The menace of the gypo loggers, mentioned earlier, increasingly is placing stringent restrictions on female freedom. While not offering an apologia for gypos, those most blighted of mankind’s losers, understanding their depravity is gained by inspecting the dreadful villages in which they live. One hardly could believe it possible, but these dwellings are a step down from the squalid hamlets of the Appalachia from which most of today’s gypos come, refugees from stripmining and the Alcohol Tax Unit. Their occupation, such as it, requires the men to stay in the

mountains. However, every girl deserving a man's second look flees to the city, normally by the age of 15, to improve her lot by becoming a prostitute. For sweethearts and wives the gyp must choose among the very dregs of femalehood, and television, endlessly parading before their eyes maddeningly-gorgeous women, makes the contrast too awful to bear. Small wonder these tormented would lurk in ambush along trails swarming with lovely girls in provocative costumes.

Scattered outrages of the 1960s drove many female hikers to buy ice axes, the power symbols of mountain-climbers and already adopted by some male hikers for the (embarrassingly) open proclamation of virility, but now discerned by women as useful for self-defense. In the steadily more troubles 1970s, some have gone further; there now are met on trails voluptuous females naked to the waist – but lest the advertisement draw the wrong customer, having strapped to that waist the ultimate power symbol, a pistol.

Female freedom also has changed wilderness life for male companions. On first inspection the change might seem for the unmixed better, what with women newly carrying their fair share of the party load, abdicating divine rights to a helping hand on footlogs, and even studying use of map and compass so that nowadays they are not invariably lost once out of sight of men.

However, with the dominance-subservience relationship replaced by equality, it is revealed that women are as agile and brave as men – meaning that in roughly 50 percent of matchings they are more so. No longer can a man, supposedly in consideration for a weak and fearful woman, turn back when confronted by a cliff or torrent. Indeed, we now see women cajoling men into attempting footlogs – and offering helping hands. And because women's lib has not been complemented by new attitudes of a men's lib, many males are feeling castrated.



## PART TWO: THE AUTUMN AND WINTER OF BACKPACKING

### Chapter 8: What Goes Up Must Come Down

These are the best of times. These are the worst of times.

“In the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest patch of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. The peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury.”

Yet within the lifetime of Romans born in the happy Age of the Antonines, described above by Gibbon, came the general irruption of the barbarians, the chaos of the Thirty Tyrants, and to those with open eyes, the vision of the coming fall of the Roman Empire.

For backpacking the Age of the Antonines is already in the past. It is possible to argue precisely which year saw the high-water mark but not to dispute that the ebbing was underway by the mid-1970s.

Lilliputs must alternate with Brobdingnags lest the overloaded planet collapse inward on its core. For every up there must be a down else the very stars would chafe the human spirit. Yes, backpacking has crested. No matter that there may be a Diocletian and a Constantine, the toboggan slide of 476 has begun.

As stated in the Foreword, the forces that will prove fatal to the sport are partly external, partly internal. In this chapter may be examined the most widely aggravating if not actually more lethal of the internal problems, the mobs.

Were the present rate of growth of backpacking to be maintained, by the year 2000 the cities of America would be totally evacuated and the populace entirely residing in the wildlands. This, of course, will not happen. Hiking has the virtue of being cheaper than a psychiatrist and more fun than church and better for you than booze. It permits urbanites half-crazy from city occupations and suburban living and daily freeway shuttle between to “get away” and “find themselves,”

returning to the weekday ordeal with strengthened fortitude to withstand buffeting by man and God. But if everyone in the whole bloody nation is out hiking, why not better stay home? Western cities, at least, never are so peaceful as on a summer weekend; to exchange, for example, a July Sunday in Berkeley for one in Yosemite is an act of madness.

We are reminded that not until the 12<sup>th</sup> century did the wilderness of Britain finally succumb to man. The instruments of conquest were the Cistercian monks who, to escape the noisome towns in which were situated the existing Benedictine abbeys, sought as retreats the quietest forest corners of the island. Thereupon many of the free woodland peasants moved to London.

Still, backpacking might survive, if radically modified in essence, were the problem solely numbers. The bad reputation wilderness is gaining is largely due not to how many people there are but to how obnoxious they are.

Hardly requiring mention, and surely beneath contempt, are those New Pioneers racketing about higgledy-piggledy on machines – the Hondas and Yamahas and Kamikazes, snowmobiles and swamp buggies and dune buggies and motorboats and Jeeps and Scouts and Rovers and ATVs – the entire rowdy stinking vermin swarm of ORVs – plus airplanes and helicopters fouling the sky. Nor need we dwell on the fishermen crowding lakeshores to snag handfed hatchery trout freshly dumped in the water by state game departments, or the thugs of autumn staggering though the woods in an alcoholic haze putting the blast on everything that moves and many things that don't.

Establishing more Wilderness Areas is the solution to machines on the trail, and more National Parks to both machines and gunners. But such new enclaves do nothing to get rid of backpackers.

Tastes varying as they do, no group is distasteful to everyone – except to the surviving oldtime backpackers who themselves are among the most distasteful. Readily identified by their decrepit condition and childish clinging to anachronisms (some defiantly carrying Trapper Neslons and wearing tricounis), they also are marked by perpetual scowls, only smiling when out of sight and sound of other hikers, which never happens. They no longer enjoy the “wilderness” but are stubbornly determined not to yield the ravaged remains to the invaders. Sitting by campfires (which they still insist on struggling to build) and swilling 151-proof Backpacker' Rum, they have visions similar to those of the Plains Indians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who in ceremonies of the Shaker and Peyote Cults heard the Great Spirit promise them the white men soon would ride back East in their wagons, get in the ships and sail away, and everything on the prairies would be as it was before, dandy. But in sober moments the old backpackers don't believe it and are best shunned, being at best surly and at worst given to unprovoked assault and battery. If by mischance one is related to them and cannot avoid their company, the peril lies in being bored to insanity by endless mewling about “the good old days.”

Also a survival from the past are the bands of children dispatched into the woods to get them from underfoot and in the forlorn hope nature's tune will curb savage instincts. It may be better to send them out to dissipate vandals' energy wielding hatchets than to loose them on the city, where they would form street gangs and mug old ladies. However, one of the most dreaded traumas of the modern wilderness is to feel a shuddering of the earth and hear the despairing wail go up all around, "BOY SCOUTS!" Bad enough afoot, latterly entire troops have been equipped with machines; if any greater horror exists in the cosmos that a panzer pack of 40 pubescent boys astride dildo Hondas, surely it can only be found in the deepest pit of Hell.

Newer to the trails but equally unsavory are the male and female adolescents (remaining such well into their 20s) enrolled in "schools" or "wilderness survival courses" by wealthy parents desperate for some miracle of reformation; often they are acting at the direction of a judge offering this as an alternative to prison. Originating in the World War II inspiration of an English army officer who adapted the Hitler Youth program to his formidable task of making the scum of Liverpool slums fit to wear His Majesty's uniform, the pseudo-religious recipe was imported to America (and spiced with dashed of Daniel Booneism, Indian lore, Oriental mysticism, and American "know how" technology) by mountain bums seeking some sort of non-criminal livelihood in the off-season for ski schools. At the end of their "terms" these "patrols" break up, each individual going off alone to find his or her totem. Coming mainly from cities and having no prior outdoor experience, many "students" are never seen again, and that's a mercy.

Breakup of the Haight-Ashbury scene and its carbon copies across the nation displaced herds of aging hippies; harassed by the police, they fled to the backcountry to comb long hair and smoke dope. The vicinities of their assemblies are so thick in blue haze that nearby campers, bears, skunks, and birds are stones. A later chapter notes another reason to be wary.

For all they are "clean cut" more dangerous are the Dog Lovers. A favorite fad of the Fad Era is taking along for trail companionship from one to several enormous fierce canines which pee on or bite the legs and crap in or raid the camps of strangers, to the merriment of the dog owners. Outside the pet-free national Parks, the trail country of California, home of the fad, is one great kennel, to the discomfiture of the Sex Wavists who use it as one great bedroom.

While on the subject of animals, it may be mentioned the horse remains in the wilderness, dumping as frequently and fragrantly as ever. Experiments by the Environmental Protection Agency in toilet training having failed, the National Park Service is phasing in a nation-wide requirement for diapers; the U.S. Forest Service strives manfully to keep trails open with shoveling crews.

Not to be omitted from the rolls of infamy are the outing-club groups, as ugly as ever, nor the church groups, more so and obstructing trails by kneeling in prayer. One sect, wearing saffron robes and having shaved heads and banging tambourines, blocks traffic by thrusting pamphlets in the hands of passersby. Representing the hard-hat mentality are the mountain-climbers, gaudy kernmantle ropes atop packs and ironmongery clanking at waists and on faces smirks of haughty superiority deriving from the smug knowledge that in their sport they ultimately are

going to get killed. Universally judged the worst of the climbers, because to the vainglory of the alpine hero they add evangelical sanctimony and voracious publicity hunger and necrophilia, are the units of Mountain Rescue.

No less distressing than groups of backpackers are the “solitaries” – an inept term, for though they hike without companions they never stray from crowded trails.

The equipment freaks, garrulous and convivial, stop strangers and insist on minutely examining their outfits, then showing off their own gear item by item and explaining the excellence of each at great length.

The Zen philosophers squat cross-legged on trailside boulders gazing poetically at Japanese-y scenery; if engaged in conversation they make it plain that no one unfamiliar with a certain arcane vocabulary can possibly “dig all this.” The TMers, also sitting by trails but staring glassy-eyed into space, apparently choose such spots because transcendental meditation only succeeds when one is witnessed by others in the act of transcendency.

The disciples of the various gurus dress and trim beards to resemble as exactly as possible their heroes, for whom they dream of being mistaken. They are unaware that book-jacket photos are exceedingly carefully posed and lighted and cropped to hide the fact that all authors of backpacking manuals are repulsive grotesques, which is why they write.

As a consequence of having names, the Appalachian Trail, Continental Divide Trail, and Pacific Crest Trail are a steady parade of adorers of a precocious guru who before puberty hiked them all with prodigious speed. These cultists, in the Spenglerian’s view a decadent post-history mutation from the mountain-climber, whose satisfaction comes from “bagging” peaks, count the day lost they log fewer than 26 miles and the trail worthless which is anonymous.

We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That hath in it no profit but the name.

A gleam of cheer is cast on a black scene by plans of the National Park Service. Soon to be erected adjacent to population centers all over America, and given enchanting names, are giant squirrel wheels. A certain number of revolutions will entitle the “hiker” to a document certifying the “trail” has been “done” and noting the time of the doing and the weight of the pack carried – which, if new records, will be honored by a presentation ceremony and listing in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Building and operating the wheel will be costly but will keep the Rybackers out of the wilderness.

## Chapter 9: The Restless Natives

Backpackers are odious to themselves; to the populations of natives through which they pass on the way to trails they are loathsome. As the “Kelty crowd” (a typical term of opprobrium) has multiplied, so too has the antagonism, and the zone of hostility ringing every wilderness is a principal external cause of the evil days upon which the sport is falling.

Mountain people always, of course, have despised city people, but in their early decades of sport expeditioning concealed their feelings because serving flatlanders as packers and guides and trail-builders, selling them gasoline and hamburgers and souvenirs, yielded cash money that raised many from their former destitution. However, the symbiosis of tourists from cities and tourist-servants in mountains, never a happy one, became miserable as the mass of recreationists grew steadily larger, richer, better dressed, and more beautiful. Resentful of their own wretched lot – which, as stated earlier, they lacked the initiative and courage to escape by emigrating to the lowlands – even while being lifted from poverty the mountaineers griped the louder, in summer hating the visitors for making them work, in winter hating them for staying in the city and letting the mountain economy languish.

Perhaps the best way to trace the deterioration of city-mountain relations across the nation is to focus on a single representative area, the Cascade Range of Washington State. While the situation there differs in small respects from others elsewhere, it typifies the general pattern of recent American History.

Until the late 1950s backpackers, though increasing in numbers, suffered no worse treatment than sullen suspicion in Cascade valleys, with their stable and largely “respectable” populations of decaying stumpranchers (on the west side of the range) and hayranchers (east side), loggers and U.S. Forest Service rangers (connected by marriage to form a single group), and a scattering of starveling merchants. A destabilizing influence – the implications not immediately foreseen – was that timber companies, having scalped the lowlands and foothills, were clearcutting deeper into the mountains. The indigenous gypo loggers, lowest class of the natives, were taking jobs with the companies or the Forest Service. Replacing them on the bottom rung of society were the Appalachians, on the run from the police for crimes committed during their cross-country migration and taking naturally to the traditional gypo occupation of “midnight logging” – i.e., stealing timber from National Forests.

In 1960 the mountaineers, both old settlers and new refugees, were dealt a stunning blow – establishment by the Forest Service of the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area. To be sure, it was a “wilderness on the rocks,” virtually all merchantable timber excluded and thus still available for “multiple use,” as logging had come to be called. However, that the flatlanders (who had hounded the Forest Service into the action) should thus interfere in their home affairs

profoundly shocked the natives. Tension mounted with the 1964 passage of the Wilderness Act and exploded in fury with the 1968 creation of the North Cascades National Park, which removed a sizeable portion of the range from the friendly jurisdiction of Forest Service neighbors and relatives and placed it under management of citified strangers of the National Park Service.

Outrageous it was that city people should make the preposterous claim that they shared ownership of the mountains. Insufferable it was that they should begin buying mountain land, offering the propertied "upper class" natives sums they could not refuse, and building colonies of summer homes, even retirement homes. Land sales brought a burst of prosperity --- very briefly. Quickly frittered away wealth on liquor and powerful cars which they smashed up during the regular Saturday-night drunken revels, the formerly landed and gentile (comparatively) mountaineers now were moneyless and proprietors of greasy-spoon cafes bankrupted by intrusion of the McDonald and Jack in the Box chains.

Even without the influx of new recruits the existence of the gypo was becoming more tenuous. No longer did he enjoy absolute freedom to steal, but was hampered by a Forest Service thoroughly frightened by loss of part of its dominion to the National Park Service and determined to take better care in stewardship to avoid further raids. No longer when he did legally purchase cutting rights to a stand of trees was he permitted to log "cheap and dirty" wallowing in rivers with bulldozer and truck, but was nagged by state officials of the Department of Fisheries and the new Department of Ecology.

Angry and poor, the swollen gypo community of Appalachian criminals and old settlers brought low turned in the 1970s to stealing not as an occasional diversion but as a way of life. Backpackers, the most ardent advocates of Wilderness and Park and thus most hated, found it chancy to leave cars unwatched at trailheads; returning from hikes they were lucky to see merely smashed windows and looted interiors, the thieves often stripping cars of wheels and other valuable parts and vandalizing the hulks, as parting gestures spray painting them with messages as, "Obscenity you, birdwatchers!"

But worse was at hand. In the past several years it has become risky to leave a wilderness camp unattended, hikers frequently returning from a day walk to discover all articles of value gone and everything else, including food, slashed, burned, fouled with excrement, or otherwise ruined.

(In fairness, not all backcountry thieves are gypos. Some are counter-culturists, often called hippies who in "living off the land" are part-time amateur camp burglars. Others are the same fulltime professional thieves who learned their trade in the 1960s on college campuses and at ski resorts. In fact, the evidence is compelling that these professionals have organized gypos and hippies into a wilderness Mafia; a 1974 investigation by Seattle police established that key outlets for the stolen gear are the aforementioned "mountain shops" operated by manufacturer-blackmailing authors of manuals. Fairness further demands mention that not all trail rape is by gypos; campus degenerates are now backpacking.)

Most chilling, in 1974 and 1975 there emerged in the Northwest, presumably partly in vengeance and partly as an extension of the hunting season, a new gypo "sport": liquoring up, piling into a pickup truck, razzing through a car-campground, and opening up on the campers at random with rifles, shotguns, and pistols. During just 2 summers there were, in the four Northwest states, five fatalities, with another 18 victims seriously wounded enough to require hospitalization. Fearful Northwest backpackers momentarily expect the "sport" to appear on the trails; in consequence, not merely the ugly but also the cautious are enrolling in outdoor clubs or joining churches to join their hiking parties of 30-50 persons. Many observers predict that in the 1980s backpacking will be exclusively done en regiment, groups hiring armed guards to protect cars at the trailhead and camps on the trail and to discourage frontal assaults by what logically can be expected as the next development – gypos raiding not alone or with one or two confederates but in large semi-military gangs.

If the example is from the Northwest, the peril exists to a greater or lesser degree everywhere in America – and is everywhere growing yearly. In Alaska it was abruptly magnified by the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which brought a stamped of criminals from Texas, Oklahoma, and other oil regions; now "owning" the state, they greet backpackers with jeers, threats, and crudely lettered signs saying "Sierra Club Go Home." In Canada, once friendly and hospitable, the citizens are so infuriated by continuing American economic imperialism, which their government seems powerless or unwilling to combat, they are newly impolite and – in areas where the "Canadians" actually are mainly recent arrivals from the U.S., as dangerous as south-of-the-border mountaineers.

If America (and Canada) are bad, how is the rest of the world? Worse.

There was a Golden Age of travel abroad, a time when American backpackers were warmly welcomed. Where did we go wrong? First, as other peoples sank deeper into poverty we grew wealthier and, on the principle of "if you've got it, flaunt it," went gypsy touring from continent to continent showing off. Second, our foreign policy was revealed as twofold: on occasion, as in Vietnam, proving our resolution to the Soviet Union by napalming the gooks; constantly, even when walking softly, brandishing the big stick. All backpackers now are resented for being rich (if they weren't they'd be out there working in the fields like everybody else in the world) and suspected of being CIA agents, despite the fact more than half aren't and are themselves under surveillance.

In Latin America the old expletive, "Yanqui!", is yielding to the equally condemnatory "Kelti!" Paraguay will not permit a person with a backpack to cross its border, and Venezuela only if the offending symbol is hidden in a crate to avoid goading the citizenry to riot. In the cities of every nation from Mexico south the customs officials, post offices, banks, and American Express agencies conspire to make the travels of backpackers as difficult and miserable as possible. In the backcountry the peons steal from camps, stampede cattle and sheep and llamas to trample tents, and pinch the females. The wilder and most scenically attractive areas are infested with

bandits whose terrorization of backpackers amuses the police – because most of the police moonlight as bandits.

In Turkey even a backpacker totally innocent, as few are, may be thrown in prison for 20 years on charges of smuggling dope. In Afghanistan he may simply vanish without a trace. In the Himalaya, where trekking would be unpleasant enough were dysentery and leeches the only annoyances, a vacation now may be interrupted by the coolies going on strike, making such novel demands as that when spending more than 3 consecutive days on snow they be equipped with shoes. In Africa there is the risk of being mistaken for a South African and torn limb from limb or, if correctly identified as an American, of being kidnapped and held for a huge ransom. In Indonesia cannibalism is rife. In every underdeveloped nation there is the constant threat of being caught in the middle of an eruption of peasants armed by Russian or Chinese or Arabs and their ruthless suppression by troops armed by Americans. Finally, a 1975 Harvard-M.I.T. arms-control seminar concluded nuclear war presently is unlikely between the United States and the Soviet Union but predicted that within the next few years atom bomb will be fired in anger in backward nations of Asia and Africa.

It is a sorry certainty that during the coming decade most of Earth will be off-limits to sport backpackers. So what will an American be able to do, virtually barred as he will be from his own trails? Growing numbers are flying to the Alps to go “hut-hopping,” despite the impossibility of getting a night’s sleep and the ever-present hazard of typhoid fever.



## Chapter 10: The Great Disillusion

The cabal of manufacturers and the magazines they sponsor, the mountain shops and the manual writers they subsidize, the “in service to youth” entrepreneurs commercially exploiting the wilderness and the conservation organizations crusading for its preservation, the entire Establishment with a vested interest in promoting backpacking, has succeeded in deluding millions of Americans into believing that (1) equipment has been and/or is being perfected; (2) with proper equipment properly used anyone can be comfortable anywhere anytime; (3) wilderness is safer than city or freeway; and (4) backpacking is good for you.

The majority of citizens remained convinced, long after the evidence was clear to objective observers, that Nixon was getting a Raw Deal. So too the bulk of backpackers continue to swallow the Establishment flimflam hook line and singer; in the words of P.T. Barnum, “There’s one born every minute.”

Ignorance is, of course, perpetuated by the monopoly of communications media enjoyed by the Establishment, which is engaged in a massive, desperate cover-up, assisted by the fact the individual backpacker suffers this bad experience and that, but has difficulty relating them to a patter. In the next few years, however, the word-of-mouth “backpacking telegraph” will frustrate the Establishment plot: more widely the pieces of the jigsaw will be fitted together and the complete picture seen. Then, as inevitably as Gerald Ford, will come the Great Disillusion.

In this chapter will be shown how each of the four “axioms” is undergoing a Watergate of eroding credibility. First let us examine the ballyhooed “miracle equipment” of the 1970s.

Disenchantment with the pack is spreading as hikers discover that every ingenious feature is a potential point of failure and that the intricacy of design forbids repairs in the field, as was possible with the Trapper Nelson, and indeed anyplace but a machine shop. So far rancor has been chiefly directed at the cheap and fragile imitations, the “\$20 Kelty” from Japan and Formosa and Hong Kong. But as the conglomerates send “efficiency experts” from corporate headquarters to meddle in operations of newly-acquired manufacturing firms, and they delete “minor” reinforcements and speed up assembly lines, not even the famous brands can be trusted. Increasingly is encountered on a trail the grim hiker carrying broken pack in arms or towing it behind on an improvised travois.

That the European boots worn because they are “heavy” are too heavy is demonstrated by the incident in the summer of 1973 when five Californians accustomed to dry Sierra trails, making their first trip to the Northwest, became stuck fast in black Cascades much. Fortunately other hikers came by before they sank completely from sight and Mountain Rescue was able to lift in a derrick by helicopter and extricate them.

As discussed earlier, the Primus (Optimus) is the only stove that boils water and the butane the only one not suicidal for a novice. Yet despite the problem being recognized as a scandal for years, at present the best solution manufacturers have been able to offer is a stove with the fuel tank (white gas) separated from the burner by a 10-foot pipeline and requiring, to maintain pressure, constant operation of a small tire pump.

Flashlights never work more than sporadically except in daylight and quit absolutely during night hikes in storms. First-aid kits are more dangerous to the average hiker than injuries; physicians say more people are killed by snakebite kits than snakes. Compasses fail because they notoriously are not idiotproof. A 1974 National Park Service survey found 38 percent of hikers interviewed didn't know the magnetic declination of the area they were in, 13 percent were correct for declination in the wrong direction, 23 percent didn't know what declination was, and 17 percent couldn't tell the north end of the compass needle from the south. The so-called “essentials” urged on gullible beginners by mountain shops in collusion with Mountain Rescue are the equivalent of Mothers Day – a means to sell when there is no valid reason to buy.

As they did with the equipment of downhill skiing and then of cross-country skiing, manufacturers striving for the highest possible unit profit have systematically elaborated equipment in order to justify raising its price. Their efforts to drive the poor man out of backpacking have been reinforced by those of the Arabs and Japanese.

In gouging the American automobilist, the Arabs also gouge the backpacker, driving up the price of articles made from petroleum – neoprene rubber lugs, foam sleeping pads, nylon tents and tarps and parkas, and the host of items using polyethylene and polyester. Polyester-filled sleeping bags, the poor man's last hope short of reverting to the wool bags of the 1930s, already are as expensive as down bags were in 1970 and are going up, up, up.

Everybody wonders (and nobody wants to know) what the hell is happening in Japan. Whatever depravity it is involved buying all the shrimp West Coast fishermen can catch and all the cedar Northwest loggers can cut, and at prices Americans cannot afford. It further involves an insatiable demand for leather that has in a mere 6 years doubled the price of the boot. (The poor hiker trying the new plastic boots finds that on the average they cut his pace and the distance he can walk in a day by 40 percent.)

Finally, as gear grows more expensive it becomes more worth stealing – and more frequently is.

The second “axiom,” that true comfort is possible in the wilderness, is being exposed as a myth as more and more hikers travel to unfamiliar areas and encounter miseries to which they are not so habituated that discomfort has been accepted. Californians visiting the Northwest are dismayed by the annual summer-long rainstorm; having a horror of getting wet except in swimming pools, on Cascade trails they so encumber themselves with ponchos as to appear to be walking tents and in camp never stir from their tents— except to don packs and ponchos again. Northwesterners visiting the High Sierra (often on the advice of physicians, to clear up persistent sinus infections and fungus growth between toes and fingers and in ears) are appalled by the ball of fire blazing in the sky day after endless day and droop like flies from heat prostration and sunstroke. Westerners visiting the East to witness the legendary rites of woodcrafters have difficulty breathing in the 98 percent humidity. Easterners going West to escape the woodcrafters see grizzly bears and Indians behind every bush. Everyone visiting the Tetons is terrified by daily colossal thunderstorms. Hikers from the Lower 48 can’t leave their tents in Alaska because of the mosquitoes and can’t sleep because there’s no proper night and return south saying, “Give it back to the Eskimos!”

The third “axiom,” that hiking is not more or even less hazardous than driving to and from the trailhead, collapses under close scrutiny. Over and above hypothermia and gravity and other “beginner-killers” well-advertised by Mountain Rescue, and the gypos discussed earlier, there is a multitude of dangers the Establishment (including Mountain Rescue) not only fails to warn against but – taking a leaf from the book of the atomic energy industry – denies exist.

In true wilderness, animals and other creatures (except the dog) rarely menace man; in the crowded Wilderness of modern America they are a mounting threat. As shown by recent tragedies in Glacier National Park, the increase in number of female hikers has made the bears misogynists. Further, after years of living off backpackers’ food, they are developing, as demonstrated by the two ghastly affairs in the Chugach and the Selkirks, a taste for backpackers’ flesh. Once only venomous snakes needed to be dreaded but even the meek garter snake will bite, and may infect with tetanus, if it feels molested; nowadays most wildland snakes feel molested. Once mosquitoes were considered a peril solely in the Far North and in the South, but as Southerners took up backpacking in the 1960s they travelled to other regions, carrying with them germs to which they themselves were immunized but which were imbibed by local mosquitoes; in 1975 Yellowstone National Park and the Three Sisters Wilderness Area reported cases of hikers emerging from the backcountry with malaria.

Squirrels, chipmunks, rats, mice, skunks, and other small creatures so greedy for man’s treasure troves that they are emboldened to run across sleeping bags and faces sometimes carry rabies, as do foxes, coyotes, weasels, and bats. Transmitted by the fleas infesting small wildland animals, there have been in the Southwest frequent outbreaks, hushed up by state tourist officials, of bubonic plague. The fire ants that entered the nation two decades ago and now infest the South are expected to reach Canada in the 1980s, by which time the African killer bees foolishly introduced into Brazil should be crossing the border from Mexico.

The “noble earthquake!” in the High Sierra that so delighted John Muir a century ago would, occurring in a summer of the 1970s, slaughter hundreds of hikers, maybe thousands – and such a temblor is expected any year now. The Hebgen Quake of the 1950s that wiped out campgrounds and campers on the Madison River fortunately occurred before the high-country hiking season, as did the Easter Earthquake that devastated Anchorage in the 1960s. The latter shaking, however, loosed the tsunami that drowned a family on the Oregon Coast; few fans of the backpack along the Wilderness Ocean Strip of Olympic National Park realize that small tsunamis frequently hit that beach, nor that a large one, arriving on a fine night in June, could deluge in their sleeping bags up to a thousand hikers.

Unlike the scientists who earn their livelihood building nuclear power plants, those who study volcanoes don't claim they are trustworthy. Outburst floods triggered by beneath-glacier steam explosions have swept through campgrounds and over trails of Mt. Rainier. A major eruption of Mt. St. Helens is predicted by century's end. In 1975 Mt. Baker began spouting black clouds, causing the Forest Service to close one whole side of the mountain to travel. The entire Cascade Range is considered potentially a string of firecrackers.

According to the new theory, some Ice Ages do not require thousands of years to mature but start with a single cold storm and are full-fledged in a year. Evidence from ocean currents suggests an Instant Ice Age is impending; when it strikes, woe to the backpackers trapped in the high wilderness of the West.

Last must be demolished the “axiom” that backpacking is good for you. Infants know better; that's why, in instinctual revolt, against parental torture, they awake screaming with alarming fevers when miles from the road in the middle of a stormy night. Children know better; that's why, expressing a death wish, they run about trying to fall off cliffs and into rivers. Only when trained out of innate sense do people dumbly accept and numbly endure backpacking.

Again, the fact that backpackers never sleep, at most doze fitfully, usually attributed to the wilderness being too noisy, what with wind, rain, bugs, things that go bump in the night, and other hikers, really results from the wise subconscious rebelling against the stupid conscious, telling it, “Let's go home!” Complaints of the subconscious should not be ignored; a person suffering dream-deprivation becomes psychotic in a very short time, which is why a week is the practical limit to the length of a backcountry trip without risking the permanent brain damage exhibited by members of expeditions to the Himalaya.

Ever since man got up off all fours he has been suffering chronic back trouble. How much worse, once upright, to walk, at every step the body weight colliding with earth the shock reverberating up the spine to the skull!

Implications of the *Helsinki Study* completed in 1975 will not sink into the American mind until a better translation is made from a difficult language. The impact then will be staggering. Two groups of Finns were compared: those who incessantly chop firewood, pitchfork hay, run marathons, ice skate, dash around on skis chasing reindeer, and steam in saunas and afterward

dive in snowbanks; and those who never leave the house all winter and in summer only to go to the library. Scientists found the latter live on average 19 years longer than the former and never suffer from the senility which cripples the former by the age of 42 or after 200 sauna baths, whichever comes first. This confirmation of the superiority of a sedentary life should be the death blow to health spas, isometrics, and jogging; surely it also will spur a thorough re-evaluation of the prevailing philosophy of American high-school education.

If walking is harmful, it is disastrous done with a load perched high on the precariously-erect body. Common sense tells us this. Smart alects that we are, common sense is not heeded. But we must heed the book, soon to be published, reporting findings of a 25-year study (sponsored by the Club of Rome and jointly conducted by the UCLA Medical Center and the Mayo Clinic) of 5000 Kelty-carrying backpackers. As is well-known, the average stature of Americans has been rising throughout this century; by the late 1990s the National Basketball Association doubtless will have its first 9-foot center. However, the investigators found that Kelty carriers have been decreasing in average stature.

The “bindle” of the Roman legionary caused a lopsided posture and the shoulder-carrying Trapper Nelson a forward lean; the hip carry Kelty results in an equally distinctive physique. The effect is most striking in those who began backpacking at the age of 3-5, a practice begun in the early 1950s when the Baby Boom caused a severe shortage of babysitters. Reaching maturity in the 1960s and early 1970s, these people have abnormally large, flat feet, exceedingly short, thick legs, ludicrously broad hips, and – apparently because if thwarted in one area the body compensates by growing in another – exceptionally long, slender necks.

If the *Kelty Report* is alarming, its news is happy alongside that now coming from the obstetricians in California and Washington, respectively first and second in the nation in the number of longtime backpackers. Geneticists, having sneered at Lysenko as a charlatan, are in a paroxysm of consternation and may be expected to deny for years the evidence of their own eyes. But the plain fact is that babies being born to the “Kelty kids,” who are now reaching child-bearing age in great numbers, have the above -described physical characteristics of their parents at birth. What this bodes for the future will be considered in the concluding chapter.

## Chapter 11: Preservation Purism

A curious figure in the history of backpacking, legendary in a sport of eccentrics for his eccentricity, is David Dyer. In the 1930s and 1940s he made solo first ascents of many peaks in the High Sierra, but left no cairns or registers on summits, nor wrote up his exploits for the journals, nor revealed to friends which peaks he climbed or how. When asked to explain he said, “Why should I diminish a mountain? I leave it so the next guy can have the experience of a first ascent. If he wants to inflate his ego at the expense of others, that’s his business, his conscience.” Moving to the Northwest in the 1950s, he explored a new range, the Cascades, unaided by written or oral advice of previous climbers-hikers, or even by maps. He said, “This way I do it all by myself, just like I was one of the pioneers. And if they’d kept their mouths shut everyone would have as much fun as I do.” When in 1970 he announced he was quitting hiking, his friends’ jaws dropped. Explained Dyer “The wilderness is taking too much of a pounding nowadays. I love it too much to go there anymore.”

Few have followed the lead – any of the leads – of “Crazy Dave.” Yet. But more are reviewing their estimation of his sanity in the light of personal observations of the backcountry scene and especially in the wake of the landmark paper presented by John Brower to the United Nations Conference on a Wild Earth held at Nairobi in 1974.

Brower recalled how America, a half century ago, giddily began the great joy ride of the Automobile Revolution hailing the new freedom of broadened horizons and the new neighborliness of a closer-knit nation. He wondered if the much-praised Backpacking Revolution might now, down the trail a piece, turn as sour as that of the automobile, with its noise-and-poison-polluted megalopolises, its rotting city cores and landscape-devouring suburbs and freeways, its suicidal gorging on resources and energy.

He pointed out that far from being an expression of a sane and reflective “counterculture,” backpacking as now practiced is the very frenzied symbol of reckless consumption and willful destruction. In order to take his hike of 5 or 15 or 50 miles, the backpacker drives 150 or 500 or 5000 miles – or climbs in a jet and flies 20,000 miles. In order to savor the simple life, he rigs himself out in sophisticated gear involving the most complex and energy-consumptive of technologies. In order to lovingly embrace nature, he – even when carefully minimizing impact by refraining from building fires and contaminating water and otherwise fouling ecosystems – inevitably tramples the flowers and disturbs the wildlife. In order to preserve the wild world, he—even when supporting land-protective regulations and restrictions on backcountry travel and campaigning to save wilderness from exploiters – is himself an exploiter, is himself destroying the wild world.

In conclusion Brower estimated that the average American backpacker, in an average year of average wilderness travel, consumes sufficient scarce resources such as petroleum (in travel and in petrochemical-derived equipment) and other forms of energy (in the manufacture of his equipment and the production and processing and packaging of his food) to meet the needs for a year of ten of his friends who do not backpack, fifty Norwegian schoolteachers, 300 Brazilian taxi-drivers, 2000 Chinese fortune-cookie bakers, or 200,000 Indian swamis. His outfit represents enough electricity to supply the home of a typical American family for 40 winter days and nights of the homes of 100 Nigerian families for 30 lifetimes. The backpacker, Brower said, is an accomplice in the damming of wild rivers and the clearcutting of virgin forests and the strip-mining of coal and metal ores and the exhaustion of soils and poisoning of birds and bees and the general rendering of the Earth unfit for human life, perhaps for any life.

Reeling from Brower's speech, the Sierra Club Council entertained at a 1975 meeting a proposal that the club which helped originate the wilderness sport outing and shared leadership in wilderness preservation should immediately cancel all trips to the wilderness and seek Congressional action to close it to entry. The motion was referred to a committee for study.

Also in 1975 there appeared at widely-scattered Western trailheads bands of "Dyerites" urging backpackers to give up their trips and reform their ways. "Leaflets" (sermons scratched on sheets of slate in order not to destroy trees in the act of trying to save them) declared that on a crowded planet consumption of land and resources must be reduced by not flying to far places and not driving freeways and not backpacking, by living not in suburban tract houses but in city apartments or on rural farms and staying there, that those who really care about wildland henceforth will leave it alone.

None of the backpackers so harangue responded to the Dyerites by going directly home. But observers say the temporarily lost their customary air of holiness and slunk off on the trails looking guilty.

## Chapter 12: Darkening Autumn

The moment has arrived in our history to turn from the high summer of backpacking presently so bright on the land and gaze grimly into the autumn even now touching the first wilderness leaves with the sere and yellow.

In the mid-1970s only the sensitive feel the significance of the portents: the proliferation of notices tacked to college-campus bulletin boards offering for sale packs and boots and tents (“like new,” “need money for surfboard,” “got married”); the surge in popularity of kayaking and scuba-diving and the sudden craze for hang-gliding; the youngsters cutting their hair short and taking baths and “witnessing for Jesus”; the equipment catalogs (not supplied free, these) featuring full frontal nudity of female and male models, sale of catalogs obviously resorted to by manufacturers to stave off bankruptcy; and the plethora of other seemingly-unrelated phenomena.

In the 1980s the drifting away by scattered ones and twos will swell to a stampede of entire groups. The Fifth or Sex Wavists will realize that what with dogs and rapists and the high price of tents they can more cheaply and pleasantly “score” in the manner of their parents – making the pick-up at a drive-in restaurant and proceeding to a drive-in movie. Especially with the legalization of marijuana removing a reason for going to the backcountry, the Fourth of Fad Wavists will migrate to new “scenes” and “it will happen” golly knows where – perhaps in the snow as in the 1950s or city parks as in the 1920s, conceivably even at Sunday School picnics as in the 1910s. Many Third or Tsunami Wavists and Second or Postwar Explosion Wavists, driven out by mobs and gypos and high prices and pain and fear and the Sierra Club, will retire to patio barbeque pits. The surviving First or Prewar Wavists will get feeble.

But though inflicting serious wounds, not preservation purism, not disillusion, not menacing natives, not intolerable crowds will thrust the mortal dagger into the vitals of the sport. Very simply, we will run out of gas.

It will be the 1990s that bring the failing light, the falling of the curtain, the fading of the song, the long withdrawing roar of all the waves abruptly retreating from wilderness, and it will be the sputtering of the Big Machine and the emptying of the Great Granary that force the convulsive contraction of the tentacles of the American octopus.

By then there will be a real, not contrived, oil shortage – doubtless acutely aggravated by a flurry of atomic wars in the Mideast. By then it will long since have been conceded that even



did not nuclear power plants occasional “blowdown,” killing whole cities, they are prohibitively expensive to build and so rickety in their intricacy as to have a half-life of barely ten year. By then hopes placed in Western coal and oil shale will have proven false, the scarcity of water and the great distances to centers of power consumption creating a minus net benefit. Too late will come recriminations for the nation’s not having adopted in time programs of stringent conservation and emergency experimentation in utilizing energy of sun and wind.

The exhaustion of cheap energy will bring the economy crashing down. Every price of every manufactured commodity will soar, partly because of energy costs and partly because the frantic attempt to continue “business as usual” by plowing capital into atomic power plants, huge hydroelectric projects with payouts of 200 years, and spendthrift exploration for oil and gas on the continental shelf and in the Arctic will drain off the capital required to replace worn-out “high technology” factories. No cake will there be in the American diet, and scant bread, for the energy-intensive “factory farms” that in the 1970s are the envy of the world will share the general collapse.

The Depression of the 1990s will make that of the 1930s seem a New Year’s party in Fun City --- that is, the Fun City, the Big Apple, that was prior to its worm-riddled one-hoss-shay 1970s disintegration which so overjoyed Middle Americans who supposed the bell certainly was not tolling for them. Having squandered their rich inheritance of easy-come easy-go resources and energy on the binge of the 1950s-80s, hungover Americans will soberly and hungrily knuckle down to longer hours of harder labor than they have known in this century.

Let us pause to examine wilderness and near-wilderness recreation in this bleak America of the year 2000.

For all but a very few, only a memory will be the family car (and/or camper-truck or Airstream or Winnebago) and the carefree burning of 20 or 40 gallons of gas on a weekend jaunt – or 200 or 400 gallons on a 2-week vacation. Car-camping will disappear, and the ORVs and motorboats and sport airplanes, and the vacation homes on the wilderness fringe.

For all but a very few, only a memory will be the long holiday weekend, the summer vacation, and early retirement – or any retirement or any pension.

For all but a very few, only a memory will be the “extended childhood” lasting into middle age, children living off the accumulated surplus of parents while spending the whole summer – or the whole year, year after year – “seeking their identities” and “developing alternative values.” Gone, long gone, will be the counterculture communes of youths lazing around in the wilderness cooking pinto beans and making yoghurt from powdered milk and harvesting miner’s lettuce and stealing from camps of “squares” and strumming guitars and reading *Survival in the Woods* and *Whole Earth Catalog*, now and then hiking out to the road to pick up checks from home and the latest issues of *Not Man Apart* and *Mother Earth News*. Together with all the energy-intensive recreations, backpacking will shrivel. For most people the wilderness will be too expensive to reach. For most people there will be too little leisure for

far travels. For most people the notion of doing hard labor in sport will be absurd. Not hikers, jogger, cyclists will there be. They will get all the exercise they want, and more, in the labor-intensive occupations that will replace the energy-intensive. Children will do chores and run errands, and help parents dig in the gardens to grow the vegetable they cannot afford to buy from the farmers, blundering about trying to relearn the lost arts of horse-plowing and horse-maneuring. When the day's work and week's work is done by pick-and-shovel-wielding men and washboard-scrubbing women of the cities, their idea of fun will be to sit on the front porch and swat flies.

They are the many. Yet there will be the Fortunate Few for whom the Leisure Age will linger on. Democracy discredited by the Crash of the 1990s, the powerful and crafty will seize the reins of government, which nobody else wants, and establish a fascism which makes glittering promises to the bewildered, credulous masses while concentrating the remaining wealth in the hands of the elite.

And thus there will be backpacking in the year 2000, typically as the sport of the Golden Doomed Youth hysterically partying away the last afterglow of the Age of Extended Childhood. However, scarred by the misery and hatred they see in eyes of the city proletariat, stung by conscience, they will go to the wilderness for self-flagellation, stressing Spartan simplicity of equipment and diet. And with roads and trails falling into disrepair, guidebooks and maps out of date, the sport will be as torturing as in the 1930s and gain few new recruits.

In the first decade or two of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will come the deluge, the communist Revolution. It will not, of course, eliminate poverty but merely distribute it more evenly. There will continue to be a comparatively-wealthy managerial class, though now consisting not of capitalists but bureaucrats. These Savanarolas, however, will not be devoted to the pursuit of personal pleasure, as were their fin de siècle predecessors, but to the pursuit and extinguishing of other peoples' pleasure. Two aspects of the revolutionary ethos of the 2010s are of particular interest in our context.

First, sexual freedom will yield to a New Puritanism. As usual, the moral transformation will be symbolized by treatment of the female breast. More visible in the 1970s than since the Enlightenment, it will gradually be covered up by the working classes during the pendulum swing of the 1980s-90s and by 2000 only will be out in the open amid the degenerate fascist oligarchy. During the Revolution it will completely disappear from public view, and indeed will be so compressed and camouflaged that men generally discover its existence only after marriage, which by then will be back in style. Tales of the flagrant wildland sex of the 1970s will be, in the 2010s, as scandalizing as are mirth-provoking in the 1970s tales of the wildland prudery of the 1910s. (To be noted in the next chapter is a consequence of this association in the revolutionary mind of wilderness and sex.)

Second, the Work Ethic will be reinstated in its full 19<sup>th</sup>-century glory. From childhood chores to old-age euthanasia, Americans will be devoted to work-as-religion, and no atheist drones will be tolerated. "Vacations" will be spent on road gangs or helping farmers get in the harvest. In

spare time from studying to be technocrats or bureaucrats, college students will go about in Red Guard bands harassing the populace into working harder.

A universal social condemnation of frivolity will be enforced by laws which forbid any “waste” activity. The bus service that will replace autos in the 1980s and up to the time of the Revolution will still permit some visits to National parks, will be halted. Grudgingly-given travel permits will make it as difficult for a Californian to visit Oregon as in the 1970s it is for an Israeli to visit Mecca. Lengthy journeys will be virtually impossible. In the United States, the growing provincialism and distrust of strangers will render uneasy if not perilous the passage of a person with an Arizona accent through Nebraska. Of course, the energy-intensive North (all of Alaska and most of Canada) will already have been abandoned to any natives able to remember enough of the ways of their ancestors to survive. For all their hardships being still better off than most peoples of the world, ravaged by famine and plague and continuous “little” genocidal wars fought with spears and atom bombs, Americans will not dare risk the savage revenge of foreigners, who will blame the United States for the sorry state of the planet; most Americans-Canadians (the two now one) never will see citizens of other nations except while on military duty along the Mexican border, machine-gunning “human seas” of peons trying to enter the Promised Land.

Thus the future. Perhaps the cry is raised, “It can’t happen here!”

One recalls that at the opening of the 8<sup>th</sup> century the kingdom of Northumbria was among the brightest stars in the small galaxy of a dark Europe. Few worried about its lying surrounded by the Picts of the north, the Scots of Dalrinda to the northwest, the British of Strathclyde to the west, the English of Mercia to the south, and offshore to the northeast and growing year by year more melancholic, the Danes. However, in 731 the Venerable Bede wrote, “What the outcome of this will be, the next age will see.” And monks who supped and prayed with the Bede lived to see the longboats grate on the beach and the Danes pour out and sack Lindisfarne.

What has Northumbria to do with backpacking? Guessing the impending catastrophe, Bede complained that excessively large numbers of young people were, to avoid social obligations, betaking themselves to the monasteries. So, in the 1970s, are Americans betaking themselves to the wilderness.

The longboats are at sea, the Danes will come. Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, almost in the centennial of its birth, sport backpacking will finally die.

## Chapter 13: Deep Winter

Or will it?

Possibly not. Incredibly, the sport perhaps will survive. If the conceit may be excused, let us vault forward to the 22<sup>nd</sup> century and tell the tale from that perspective.

To begin at the beginning, the Golden Doomed Youth are not alone in the wilderness of the year 2000. Other backpackers are there. Who might they be? Let us inspect them closely.

Male and female in equal numbers, family groups, they are of three generations, one in their late 40s and early 50s, another in their 20s, and last composed of small children and toddlers. By American standards of facial beauty they are ugly people. Compared to the American norm they are short people, the second generation shorter than the first and the third, though still children, promising to be shorter than the second. In each case the deformity more pronounced in the second generation and most of all in the third, they have abnormally large, flat feet, exceedingly short, thick legs, ludicrously broad hips, and exceptionally long, slender necks.

Yes! The oldest of the generations is the “Kelty kids” born in the 1950s to ugly parents who met on club outings. The second generation, the first perforce having chosen mates of their own kind, is those babies who in the mid-1970s confounded orthodox geneticists. The third generation is the offspring of the inbred second. Poor grotesques! Why are they backpacking?

What else is there for them? One might suppose that in the wretched cities racked by famine and plague they would share in the camaraderie of common misery. But as mangey curs relieve torments by treeing scrawny cats, as poor whites elevate self-esteem by kicking around poor blacks, the populace persecutes the “dwarfs.” They, for brief surcease, scrimp and save for rare bus rides to the wilderness and hike the trails – dodging into brush to avoid encounters with the infrequent parties of Golden Doomed Youth. More often they gather in little groups called “chapters” of the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth, though both organizations were outlawed in the 1990s for protesting the logging of virgin forests in Wilderness Areas and National Parks and the removal of every pollution control. (Yet in death they won, for skies and waters were growing cleaner with the demise of the automobile and the decay of heavy industry and industrial farming.) On free Sunday the chapters shoulder packs and rove moldering, depopulated suburbs observing weeds and trees cracking pavement and listening to coyotes howl.

Their home-made outfits are starkly simple; the elaborate old equipment is too precious to use and is kept in special corners of the family hovels. These “shrines” centered on relics cause neighbors to contemptuously call the dwarves “Kelties” – a name they proudly accept. Also in

every home is a collection of the old backpacking manuals, from which by campfires they elders read aloud, explaining to rapt youngsters what freeze-dried foods were and how peanut butter tasted, describing with excitement when a Primus flared, recounting the inspiring speeches at the long-ago Wilderness Conferences, and telling of the time they saw Colin Fletcher on the trail – or somebody who looked a lot like him.

So live the Kelties, for all their outcast status less dejected than their neighbors, just as were the Roman slaves who assembled in the catacombs to practice a new religion.

But comes the Revolution. To solidify its control over the anarchic mobs the government must turn their fury on scapegoats, and among the most convenient are these grotesques who speak never of Marx or Lenin or Mao but instead of Muir and Marshall and Leopold and Zahniser, and who moreover are suspected of going backpacking to engage in the sex orgies of the bad old past. Most Kelties are caught in the dragnets and hauled off to concentration camps to die. A few, warned in time, hurriedly throw relics and essentials in packs and on foot flee from the cities, through the ruined suburbs, past outlying farms, to the wilderness. And there they are safe.

Yes, safe! For after the Revolution no one from the shrunken circles of what passes for civilization venture into mountains and deserts and marshland and other wild places.

As example, let us trace the progress of the Kelties who run from Puget Sound lowlands to the Cascades. The logging industry is no longer there, having retreated from difficult backcountry to near-city forests of second growth which suffice for a society in which even toilet paper is a rare luxury. The mining industry is no longer there, having retreated from remote, low-grade ores to the high-grade garbage dumps of the throwaway-consumerist decades. The electric and water utilities and irrigation districts are no longer there; the dams remain but transmission lines and pipelines and irrigation canals cannot be maintained by a dilapidated technology. Indeed, no exploiters at all are there – looting the wilderness demands too much high-priced energy. And no recreationists are there, the last of them, the Golden Doomed Youth, dead in concentration camps, save for those who after re-education are bureaucrats of the Revolution. No highway departments are there, hard-pressed as they are to keep open essential wagon roads between cities and farms. In the 1990s the logging-recreation roads slumped in and washed out, followed in the next decade by most of the highways, the remainder closed in the Revolution. One railroad still crosses the Cascades at Snoqualmie Pass; the infrequent trains, which of course do not operate in winter, are pulled by coal burning steam engines salvaged from museums.

When the Kelties arrive the mountain valleys are empty. Empty? Not quite. The Gypos are there!

Horrors! Surely these ancient foes of backpackers will fall upon the refugees and steal their property and rape the women and kill them all. But what do we see? Not savage brutality. Warm hospitality! What miracle is this?

The miracle of brotherhood. Well do the leaders of the Revolution know the Gypos are the most intractable of peasants, resistant on ingrained principle to any law except that of personal survival, hostile to any authority seeking to limit their freedom. Among the first actions of the Revolution was the dispatch of the Red Army into the mountains to exterminate the symbols of resistance and independence. But though decimated, Gypo guerillas firing from ambush, stealing explosives and blowing up encampments and supply trains, exhausted the city-folk will to conquer precisely as the Viet Cong did that of America in the 1960s-70s, and far more quickly. The troops retreating in disorder, leaving their dead behind, the Gypos resuming their normal existence.

What sort of existence is it? How do Gypos survive in a harsh climate amid unruly Nature unassisted by a high-technology civilization? No mystery. The very definition of the Gypo is the ability to scrape by with whatever means are at hand. Once he stole from National Forests, then from backpackers. Now he has adapted, as he always will. Come Armageddon and the Gypo will be the last man on Earth.

Gypos have vegetable patches and grain fields on such scattered plots as receive enough sun. In yards they keep chickens and geese, in wild-grass pastures cows and sheep, even a few horses, and in the brush and woods, goats and pigs. Fish are plentiful in rivers, game in forests and meadows, and everywhere is an abundance of wild berries and roots and greens, plus fruits of the gone-wild orchards. Nor are they utterly unaided by civilization; scavenging in deserted towns and vacation cabins meets needs for metal and lumber and glass and a varied miscellany. Such items as only can be supplied by city workshops are obtained by trading on the lowland fringes, at the frontier meeting point of savagery and civilization, with stumpranchers who overcome fear of Gypos on the one hand and police regulation on the other for the sake of middleman profits. As trade goods the Gypo offers furs from traplines, whiskey from the stills which are their Appalachian inheritance, sacks of high-grade ore hand-picked from narrow veins never economical to mine – except by a preceding generation of mountain folk in the Depression of the 1930s. Even, laboriously panning it from stream gravels, the Gypos bring to the stumpranchers small quantities of gold dust.

Not an easy life is that of the Gypo, but compared to the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world, not bad.

Kelty dwarfs seem not so repulsive to Gypos, also proverbial for ugliness, and so the two people mingle and intermarry, well before the end of the century becoming a single race, small and misshapen as the city refugees, tough and clever as the mountain survivalists. Their occupation they call Gypo. But because of their religion, themselves they call Kelties.

Every weekend without fail and for two weeks each summer they perform their ritual, hoisting home-made wooden packs and plunging into the brush on such traces of trails as they and the animals keep passable. They wear homespun clothing of wool from their sheep and goats and carry sleeping bags of down from their geese. On feet are rough-crafter boots, more nearly sandals, of leather from their cows and pigs, the soles studded with bits of junk iron. For shelter

they rely on the trogs formed by overhanging rocks and the lean-tos they have built of logs and cedar shakes at favored campsites. Their trail diet centers on bacon and eggs and oatmeal for breakfast, bannock and butter and honey or jam for lunch, dried beans and jerky, home-dehydrated potatoes and fresh-caught trout for supper. In valley forest or alpine meadow, beside waterfall or tarn of glacier, atop moraine of peak, they arrange the holy relics, old Kelty packs and primus stoves, and worship in silence, their Word not in words by all around.

And so they are gone from America, the civilized America, which in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century is slowly recovering from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though not as a nation but rather as discrete town-cities and surrounding farms, nominally communist but in practice feudal, small principalities separated by vast wastes of forest, prairie and desert. Gone they are. Forgotten? No.

It is told in the towns that long long ago, in the time of the Empire Kelties lived all over the land and were great and wise princes. During the tyranny of the Robber Barons, seeing the future more clearly than ordinary folk, they prepared for the Dark Ages by delving into ancient books and there discovered certain secrets – the secret of infinite riches, the secret of perfect happiness, and, some day, the secret of eternal youth. Ordinary folk too late realizing they had sinned and would be destroyed for it, envied the Kelties, but they refused to share their magic, and one night they all disappeared from the towns, running away to those terrible mountains where civilized persons have not dared venture in more than a hundred years, lest they be eaten by the Gypos, monsters so fierce they defeated the heroic Red Army.

Handed down from the Golden Doomed Youth are stories of shy backpackers half-glimpsed on trails, quickly ducking out of sight but their eyes felt watching. From engineers of the cross-Cascades trains come stories of spotting, high on ridges above Snoqualmie Pass, bands of creatures that may be mountain goats, only the engineers could swear they walk on their hind legs. It is said that if a stumprancher leaves on his doorstep at night certain articles from towns, and if he is careful not to peep, in the morning he may find the articles replaced by gifts from the mountains. Sometimes the gifts include an elixir that gives the drinker perfect, if temporary, happiness – a taste of permanent bliss reserved for the wilderness people. Once in a while, if the stumprancher has left out a particularly pleasing article, he may even find in the morning a tiny bag of gold – which it is said comes from a golden river.

Children delight in stories of the little people who live with the animals, with whom, it is said, they can converse, and also the trees and rocks and rivers, the little people who are, some of them, kind and gently, and others, cruel and violent. No more joyous occasion is there in a cottage when, after supper of a winter evening, the youngsters sit on the floor around their mother and with bright eyes and open mouths, with hand-clapping glee and not a few shrieks of terror, listen as she tells again, for the hundredth time, the beloved old Kelty tales.

## A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

Here's the story of how this edition came to be. Phil Fenner and Robert Kendall are NCCC board members. Neither ever met Harvey, but Phil got to know Betty after Harvey's passing.



1. A file box (photo, left) of Harvey's manuscripts was seen by Phil Fenner in the attic of the "200 Meter Hut", the Manning cabin home on Cougar Mountain (now lost to the bulldozers and suburbs), after Harvey passed while Betty was living. Betty gave verbal permission to NCCC to publish anything Harvey wrote.
2. Paul Manning (son of Harvey and Betty) obtained the box after Betty passed, and scanned its contents.
3. Phil asked Paul about the box and Paul said all contents had been scanned, and provided the PDF files.

4. Phil discovered they were mostly typewritten with extensive hand-written edits, not suitable for publication as-is. He placed them online on the NCCC website, with a short description of each: <http://www.northcascades.org/wordpress/in-memorial/harveymanning>

5. Robert Kendall expressed his admiration for Harvey's writing and Phil referred him to the unpublished works. They agreed that "Decline and Fall" deserved to be restored first, but Phil only got as far as the Foreword. OCR (Optical Character Recognition) was used to convert to editable text, but of course all the handwritten edits had to be manually entered and the OCR errors had to be corrected. It was almost as much work as retyping it.

6. Robert took on the rest, laboriously re-typing it with Harvey's edits included, and wrote an introduction to this edition. Robert and Phil tried to proofread it, and they apologize for any remaining typos of which there are probably many uncorrected that they and Word didn't find.

7. Phil and Robert had the idea of publishing it serially in *The Wild Cascades* in honor of Harvey. That will begin with the Winter 2021-22 issue. Paul Manning was asked to confirm his permission to circulate his father's work, and replied, "You may do with it as you wish. My father wanted readers. I think his work should be shared freely." So, here it is, 15 years after Harvey passed. Enjoy!