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America's Number One Sportsman's Magazine

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ON THE COVER

Remember the first time you caught a big trout? I mean a really big one that lopped over when Old Man Perkins weighed him on the counter scale. Tom Rost remembers; and if you don't believe it, just study the detail he's put into his painting for this month's cover. His models are all genuine, too—the vice presidents of a bank and of an investment company, and the president of a construction company, all Milwaukee fishing pals of Tom's. The tow-head, he's a president too, of the local Bunsen Burner Society. He owns the Bunsen burner.

CONTENTS

FEATURE ARTICLES

The Great Turtle Mystery	George Laycock	39
Backpacking the Grand Canyon	Colin Fletcher	45
The Biggest Liar in Alaska	Frank Dufresne	51
That Night Before	Charley Dickey	58

WHERE TO GO

Choupique by the Sackful	Lee Ditt	62
What a Beautiful Morning	Warren Page	66
The Black Phantom	Woody Jarvis	70
Trail of the Tarpon	David M. Newell	76
Jamaican Holiday	A. J. McClane	120

PICTURE STORY

Fast Cars . . . Fancy Targets	Tom Rost and Warren Page	78
Delaware Shad	Clare Conley	86

HOW TO DO IT

Trout Superlative	Harry Botwin	88
Fly Fishing, Cheap and Easy	Bob Warner	92
The Sportsman's Notebook	H. G. Tappin	98

REGULAR FEATURES

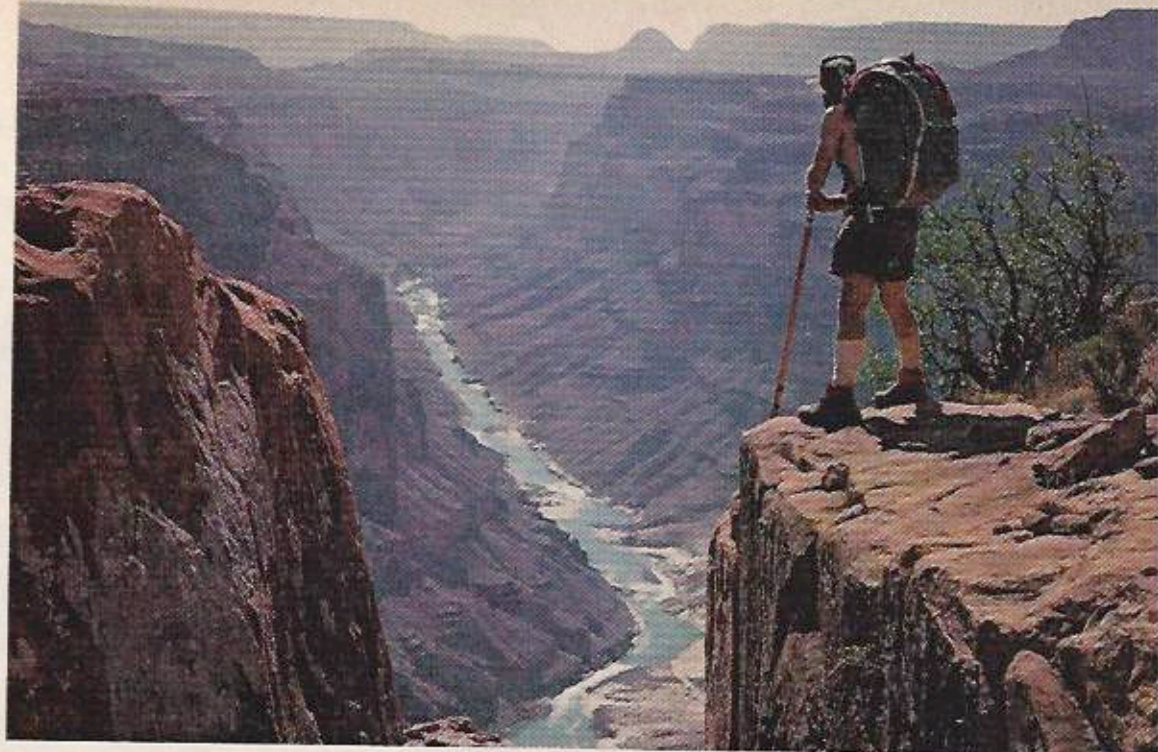
Cheers & Jeers		9
The Lower Forty	Corey Ford	14
1963 Winners Field & Stream Fishing Contest		24
How to Shoot Skeet and Stay Solvent	Richard Starvo	26
How to Choose a Fishing Rod	Ted Trueblood	28
Conservation	Harold Titus	30
Jack the Giant Killer	A. J. McClane	38
New Rifles for '64	Warren Page	110
The Prop Is the Thing	F. M. Paulson	129
Sportsman's Shopper		137
All-Weather Variety	Alastair MacLean	138
Springer Spaniel Championship	Joe Stetson	162
Exit, Laughing	Ed Zern	170

Cover painting by Tom Rost

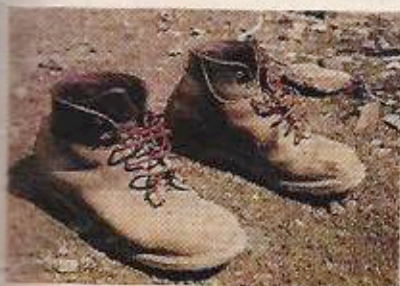
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Fletcher, his "house" on his back, looks down Conquistador Aisle from the Esplanade, 2,500 feet above the Colorado River and 1,000 feet lower than South Rim



The boots finished the 400 or so foot-mile journey in remarkably good shape. Here they are at the half-way point



Backpacking The Grand Canyon

By COLIN FLETCHER

No man had ever walked the length of this awesome National Park until the author met the challenge. Here's the story of what it took to do it

AS soon as I had made up my mind to traverse the Grand Canyon on foot I knew I had an equipment problem on my hands: before I could decide exactly what to carry I had to figure out the route I'd take and how I'd get supplies in to pickup points, for obviously I could not backpack enough for the entire trip. Actually, my route was never really fixed. Too much depended on imponderables—for instance, on what water I found, or the way a ledge or side canyon looked when I got there. But the broad outline quickly came into focus. To begin with, I knew I couldn't just follow the Colorado River; often I'd have to zig and zag along the canyon's deep-cut hanging terraces, two or three thousand feet above the river. Information about springs and rain pockets on these terraces was scarce and unreliable, but I was quite aware that Grand Canyon water was both scarce and unreliable as to quality. So I decided I'd need to carry a full two gallons, and that meant 19¾ pounds in water and canteens alone. Already I was fighting a tough planning battle to keep my pack weight halfway bearable.

Aside from water, the big consideration was temperature—governed partly by weather, partly by elevation. Sometimes I'd be traveling beside the river, 2,500 feet above sea level; sometimes up near the rim at 6,000 feet plus. Twenty-year records showed that my gear would have to cope with temperatures ranging from 20 to 120 degrees. The actual bracket turned out to be 30 to 109 degrees.

My journey would take two months. Pressing hard, I might make it in four or five weeks; but although I would be the first man through the canyon on foot, it wasn't just the physical challenge that fascinated me. I wanted to immerse myself in the



Three airdrops, each of a week's supplies, were set up. The first was nearly a problem because the pilot couldn't see the orange sleeping bag used as a marker

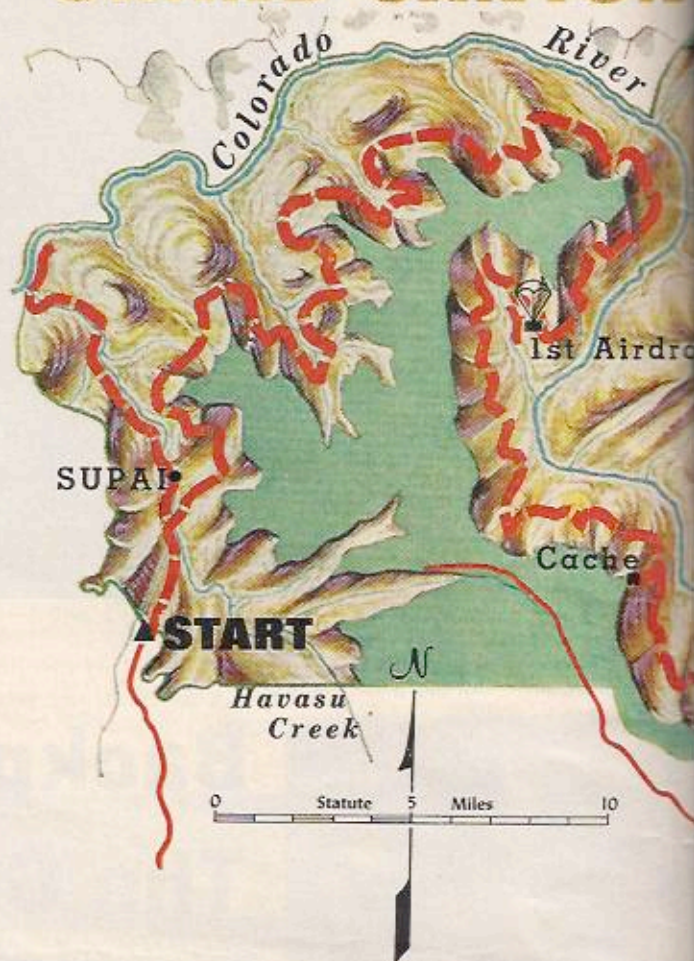


Fletcher's dried-food diet was occasionally varied with fish from the Colorado. His tackle was the bamboo walking staff, 6-pound nylon line, and salmon-egg bait



The luxury of breakfast in bed is easy to arrange in the Grand Canyon—all you do is sit up, cook, and eat

GRAND CANYON



huge natural museum that is the Grand Canyon. And that would take time.

Since I couldn't carry enough food for two months, I planned seven pickups—one for each week. Two were easy. Soon after the start I'd call at the Indian village of Supai, and halfway I'd pass through Phantom, the canyon's only dude ranch. Supai and Phantom are regularly supplied by horse and mule, so I had a week's supplies packed down to each. And at two fairly accessible points I planted caches just below the canyon rim. That left three weeks' supplies. The rest of the canyon—the huge, carved-out bulk of it—is hard to get at and almost never visited. (Except at Supai and Phantom Ranch I met nobody.) So I arranged for three airdrops.

When I was able to get down to details of equipment, I leaned heavily on what I'd learned during a 6-month, 1,000-mile walk up California from Mexico to Oregon. ("House on my Back," March 1960.) Half that trip had been through deserts, including 200-odd miles along the lower Colorado.

Grand Canyon was an even tougher proposition; I certainly couldn't afford equipment failure. So I went in for quality and ignored cost. As before, I bought almost all my gear from the Ski Hut in Berkeley, California, makers of Trailwise equipment.

With long, waterless stretches of rough country to cross I had to win that battle against the ounces of the "house on my back," though this time you might call it my "Grand Canyon Suite." Nothing kills mobility like a load.

NATIONAL PARK



As a protective measure, the author twice carried water ahead in the 5-gallon cans he originally used to cache food



By partially inflating his air mattress, Fletcher had a raft for water crossings

So I weighed every item down to the nearest half ounce on a little postal scale that I took shopping with me. I knew that with a week's food it would be tough holding my pack down to 60 pounds. In fact, I didn't quite manage it. When I left Supai after my food pickup, the pack weighed 66½ pounds.

A vicious load hits you hardest in the feet—and because of a series of mischances I started with soft feet and almost-new boots. But they were good boots—ankle-length Italian Sella's with nonslip Vibram soles. My size 10's weighed 5 pounds 12 ounces. Interior padded sides

and a pair of old, already-worn-in leather insoles made them as comfortable as new boots can be. Before I started, the one man who knows much about off-trail hiking in the canyon maintained that they could not stand up to the 2-month journey. He was wrong. Talus-slope travel cut the uppers pretty badly, but at every cache I rubbed in a whole tin of Kiwi wax and the boots finished in fair shape. At the end the soles had worn thin enough to make rock climbing difficult, and had begun to separate amidships, though not badly enough to cause trouble.

My packframe was the one I'd used on the California marathon—a Trailwise model of welded aluminum alloy that held the load close to my back but let air circulate freely. The roomy waterproof packbag of Fiberthin was essentially the same as the California one, but with weatherflaps shielding its outside pockets and with an extra pocket on top. The rig's really big in-

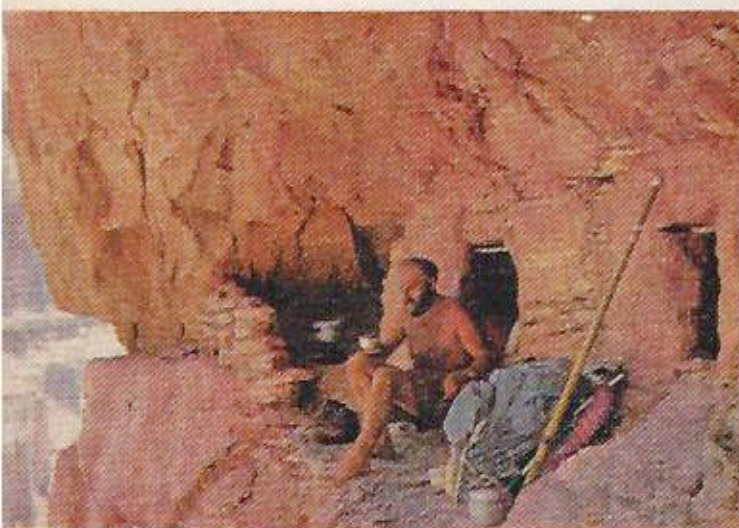


Fletcher's unique trip took two months of unhurried walking. He carried a week's supply of food, then restocked at cache or airdrop. Note socks drying on pack. He changed them hourly

provement was a waistbelt—a broad and easily adjusted webbing strap that took almost all the weight off my shoulders and put it where it belonged—around my waist. It's astonishing how this takes the sting out of a heavy load. There's one thing to remember, though: wear it tight. First, pull it firmly. Then hoist the pack higher on your back and tighten again. Now take a deep breath and pull hard. If the belt almost hurts, it's about right.

Fighting the ounces, I chose a Slimline sleeping bag, a form-fitting mummy type filled with 18 ounces of Grade AA white goose down; it weighed just 2 pounds. Anticipating some warm nights, I had a 72-inch side zipper with baffle flap installed, and that upped the weight to 2 pounds 11 ounces. The bag was a winner. Frankly, I didn't like the feel of the nylon shell and lining, but that was a small price to pay for such ultralight weight and warmth. Naked, I slept comfortably at a windless 32 degrees. And the zipper paid off. When night temperatures held up in the 60's I slept with the open bag loosely over me as I lay on my air mattress.

I carried an air mattress because I often had to sleep on solid rock and, importantly, because I'd need flotation in crossing the Colorado with my heavy pack, also on water-borne detours around cliffs that dropped sheer into the river. Experience had made me leery of short mattresses, but I had to have one that would stand rough



Ancient cliff dwellings, high above the river, are part of the canyon's human history. The Indians had abandoned these sites long before the first Europeans came to the area in the 1600's

SUPPLY LIST

ITEM	lb.	oz.
1. STEEL SIERRA CLUB CUP		3
2. NESTING COOKING POTS	1	4
3. SALT-PEPPER CONTAINER		2
4. SUGAR CONTAINER		2
5. CAMERA TRIPOD		14
6. LENS BRUSH		1
7. CAMERA	2	7
8. COLOR FILM		12
9. EXPOSURE METER		6
10. TELEPHOTO ATTACHMENT		3
11. "OFFICE"	1	5
12. FIRST-AID KIT		5
13. CELLOTAPE		1
14. RUBBER BANDS		—
15. TOILET ARTICLES		15
16. DOWN JACKET	1	1
17. SCARF		1
18. BELT		4
19. MOCCASINS		9
20. LONG PANTS	1	10
21. KNEE BANDAGES		4
22. WHITE GAS CONTAINER	1	3
23. STOVE COVER		—
24. STOVE COVER HANDLE	1	7
25. STOVE		—
26. STOVE NOZZLE CLEANER		—
27. FUNNEL FOR GAS		—
28. SPARE BATTERIES		4
29. FLASHLIGHT & BATTERIES		7
30. FRUIT DRINK MIX		4
31. RUM FUDGE		8
32. SEMI-SWEET CHOCOLATE		9
33. MINTCAKE (3½ BARS)	1	6
(MEAT FOOD (5 BARS)	1	—
(BACON (2 BARS)		7
35. DRIED SOUP (6 PKG.)	1	7
36. DRIED FRUIT (7 PKG.)	1	12
37. WALKING STAFF	1	—
38. PONCHO		18
39. SHEATH KNIFE		8
40. SPOON		2
41. DRIED POTATOES	1	9
42. DRIED BEANS		8
43. DRIED VEGETABLES		4
44. PLASTIC MILK CONTAINER		1
45. DETERGENT		5
46. MIXED DRY CEREAL	1	—
47. POWDERED NONFAT MILK	1	—
48. GRANULATED SUGAR	1	8
49. TEA BAGS (30)		2
50. BOOK MATCHES (7)		1
51. BRAIDED-NYLON HANKS		4
52. WATERPROOF MATCHSAFE		1
53. DRY RAISINS	1	—
54. SHIRT		12
55. MATTRESS PATCH KIT		4
56. AIR MATTRESS	1	14
57. TOILET PAPER		7
58. SPARE SUNGLASSES		1
59. SOCKS (2 PAIR)		10
60. CARBORUNDUM STONE		1
61. SPARE PACK BUCKLES		1
62. PAPERBACK BOOK		5
63. FLY DOPE		1
64. MAGNIFYING GLASS		2
65. BINOCULARS		14
66. COMPASS		5
67. MIRROR		1
68. PACK PATCHING SHEET		2
69. SALT TABLETS		2
70. SPARE PACK FITTINGS		1
71. SALMON EGGS		1
72. COCONUT OIL		1
73. HALAZONE TABLETS		1
74. FISHING TACKLE		—
75. SNAKEBITE KIT		1
76. CAN OPENER		—
77. BELT CLIP		1
78. PLASTIC SHEET	1	—
79. ¼ IN. NYLON ROPE	1	14
80. SLEEPING BAG	2	11
81. PLASTIC CANTEENS	8	8
82. ALUMINUM CANTEENS	10	2
83. 1 PT. PLASTIC CANTEEN	1	2
NOT SHOWN:		
PACK, BAG, & BELT	4	13
THERMOMETER		1
NOTEBOOK		2

TOTAL 70 10



The key to Fletcher's success was his carefully chosen pack. All equipment and a week's food supply are shown (see list, left)

handling and still shave ounces, I chose a stout mattress 48 x 25 inches and weighing 1 pound 14 ounces. With its pillow section inflated hard and its main section soft, it turned large stones into featherbeds. With soft pillow cushioning my butt and hard main section behind my back, it converted the propped-up pack into a luxurious easy chair. And with both sections not too firmly inflated it became a raft.

I'm a poor swimmer, but each cliff detour sharpened my technique, and I finally air-mattressed across the Colorado quite confidently. I lay with my chest across the raft and dog-paddled with my arms and legs, making steady though not very rapid progress. Anyone who wears eyeglasses could easily keep them dry. The pack, slung over my left shoulder and half floating, at first tended to keel over, but I found I could hold it steady by light pressure on the lower and upper ends of the pack-frame with buttocks and bald patch. It sounds awkward but worked fine.

My bamboo staff floated along behind at the end of three feet of nylon cord tied to the packframe. Everything else, boots and all, went into the pack. I had waterproofed the seams of the Fiberthin packbag, but water still seeped through. So into the bottom of the bag went bulky and buoyant articles that water couldn't damage: canteens, cooking pots, and white-gas container. Things better kept dry went in next, wrapped in a 9 x 5-foot white plastic sheet carried specially for the purpose but also doubling as camp awning and airdrop marker. Items that just had to stay dry went on top: camera and accessories, flashlight and spare heavy-drain batteries, binoculars, watch, writing materials, and toilet paper.

I tied each item into a freezer sack, rolled them all inside the mummy bag, and stuffed the latter into the big, tough plastic bag that usually held the cooking pots. Then I wrapped the lot in my poncho. Before strapping the packbag shut over this bundle, I tied the ends of the poncho outside the white plastic sheet with nylon cord. On a trial run, the pack had keeled over and let water run down inside the plastic sheet, but in actual crossings nothing got even damp.

The air mattress stood up to all kinds of other misuse. It rebelled just once. Near the end of the trip I spent a day and night in a centuries-old Indian cliff dwelling, just to find out how it felt to be a cliffdweller. Easy-chairing against a jagged wall, I at last cut a slit in the mattress' long-suffering fabric. My lightweight repair outfit, which had already fixed a few inevitable thorn punctures, repaired the gash, and I rolled the patch firmly down with a flashlight battery.

The kitchen can make or mar any journey. Broadly speaking, I stayed with the diet I evolved on the California walk, plus 50 percent more sugar and protein. A list of the food items needed for seven days is given at the end of this article.

The extra pack of soup made gravy for the highly nutritious but rather tasteless Meat Food Product. Switching soup flavors added variety, and the bacon bar provided a twice-a-week change. Unfortunately, my favorite Trailwise mixed-vegetable packet was not available.

The mintcake and the raisins, munched at almost every hourly halt, gave me quick energy. Dry cereal and chocolate filled odd corners. The (Continued on page 126)

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Backpacking the Grand Canyon

(Continued from page 37)

dry cereal was particularly useful as a quick snack when, as sometimes happened, I felt myself running out of energy toward the end of a hard day.

I carried enough salt tablets for a 4-a-day dosage, and on one leg of the journey fruit-drink mix to hide the taste of limestone water. I wish I'd carried mix all the way! Finally, as morale boosters, I included in each cache one small bottle of claret and a can of goodies—oysters, lobster, cocktail meatballs, fish appetizers or frogs' legs.

The weekly ration was entirely adequate. Twice I stretched it out, with minor assists from catfish and carp, into an eighth day. Although I came out of Grand Canyon twenty pounds lighter, the loss was all fat and I felt five years fitter.

Here is my basic daily menu:

Breakfast (immediately after waking, and often in darkness): 4 ounces dehydrated fruit, sometimes with raisins and/or chocolate. Copious tea.

Lunch (around 12:30): One pack-age soup. Sometimes dry cereal.

Dinner (late, often after dark): One bar Meat Food Product or bacon; gravy; 4 ounces potatoes or beans; about ½ ounce vegetable.

Like a true Britisher, I rarely let 4 o'clock pass without brewing a pot of tea.

Away from the river, water was more vital than food. And though I sometimes had to go thirty slogging hours with no water except what I carried, I never got thirsty. I carried two ½-gallon-plus aluminum canteens, two tough plastic containers holding just under ½ gallon each, and a plastic 1-pint bottle.

Plastic canteens had proved themselves in four months' continuous use, but I still rated them less safe than aluminum, so at the start I drank their water first, fearing that if the pack fell and they burst I would be in a perilous condition. Actually, plastic did better than aluminum. The worn felt covers of both metal canteens developed gaping holes, and when they were slung from my belt on side trips the bare aluminum banged against rocks and developed seep holes. Mattress patches fixed them temporarily. I had two new canteens sent to Phantom Ranch, halfway, but had to make do with the old felt covers, heavily patched with adhesive tape.

The 1-pint bottle completed a full 2-gallon supply, and with it I was

able to scoop water out of the shallow rain pockets that I often had to depend on. It was tough, too; once, when it held my last precious half pint of water, I dropped it on a boulder. It bounced beautifully.

Twice I cut the hazards of long, dry treks by packing water ahead in the 5-gallon cans I'd used for caches. I just checked the cans for leaks, then lashed them to the bare packframe with nylon cord.

Most Grand Canyon water is unsafe for drinking, whether from the Colorado or from game-visited springs and rain pockets. But I had plenty of halazone water-purifying tablets. Some traveled in the pepper end of my corrosionproof salt-and-pepper container, the bulk in a 35 mm. film can. First day out I had a momentary surge of panic when I realized I'd forgotten the correct halazone dosage. Then I found a scrap of paper I'd put in with the tablets. It said, "One per pint."

My kitchen utensils were simple. I carried the two nesting aluminum cooking pots I had on the California trip. These solid-cast pots, with lids doubling as plates or pans, hold 2½ and 3½ pints, but together weigh only 1½ pounds. They're tough, too, though the larger one is beginning to wilt after five years' brutal use.

Inside the inner pot traveled my spoon and the simple but efficient stainless-steel Sierra Club cup. My sheath knife had little work to do aside from cleaning fish, and a small carborundum stone lay idle all the way. But you just can't travel without a knife and something to sharpen it with.

A useful kitchen addition was a soft-plastic honey container that squirted powdered milk neatly into tea or cereal even in high winds. Other kitchenware included plastic sugar box, plastic bottle holding 3 ounces of detergent powder, seven bookmatches per week, a waterproof matchsafe crammed with big wooden matches, and a tiny army-type can opener. If I had tied a bright-colored rag to the can opener I might not have lost it in soft sand. A belt clip for the Sierra Club cup actually saw most duty carrying the camera tripod on side trips.

My Svea stove stands 5 inches high, weighs only 1 pound 2 ounces, yet boils 1½ pints of cold water in five to six minutes. Starting with it full of white gas (½ pint) and with another pint in an aluminum container, I

(Continued on page 147)

Backpacking the Grand Canyon

(Continued from page 126)

could, with care, cook all meals for a week. On packless side trips, the aluminum stove cover with its detachable handle occasionally served as a pot for brewing tea over a fire.

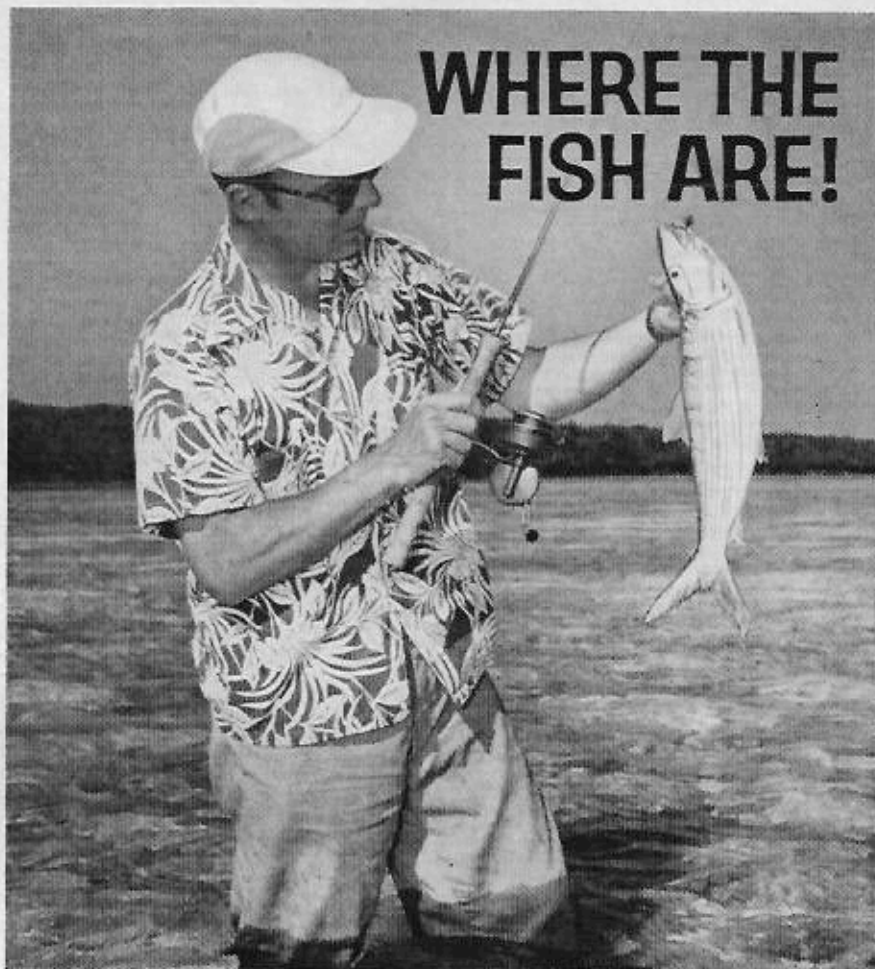
My wardrobe was small. A stout pair of long whipcord pants saw me through the early cold weather, but I discarded them halfway. A 17-ounce down jacket came all the way, though. Astonishingly warm, it proved ideal for Grand Canyon conditions. Most-used garment by far was a pair of tough tailormade corduroy shorts (1 pound 7 ounces). After the first two weeks, my shirt's main duty was as padding between waistbelt and bare waist, for once the mercury began topping 90 degrees every day I rarely wore anything except hat, socks, and boots.

My socks were medium-weight wool with 10 percent nylon reinforcement, and so shocking-red that I couldn't walk away from camp and leave them lying around. I carried three pairs at a time. Usually I changed them every hour and tied the sweat-drenched pair on top of my pack to dry out as I walked. I used nine pairs in all, but none were much worn.

My felt "Half Stetson" worked fine, though it would hardly have done for church. "Was it ever new?" asked one Phantom Ranch guest. When I wasn't wearing it, it hung on the packframe by its nylon cord chinband. A thin woolen scarf proved useful early, and later, when I first began to walk bareback, it protected chafed shoulderblades from the pack's upper nylon band. Nine-ounce moccasins for camp wear just about lasted the trip, which was all I asked. I padded the toes with toilet paper when my feet were tender at the start.

A tough, lightweight horcolite poncho also served as a ground sheet, day in and day out. Extra grommets along each side made it efficient as foul-weather tent, sun awning, and sleeping-bag cover in rain or cold. Besides protecting valuables when I air-mattressed, it also wrapped the few necessities I needed on side trips. Nylon cord tied the bundle to the back of my belt.

Personal items included a facecloth that doubled as towel, collapsible toothbrush, comb, and plastic soap container with a nailbrush lid. There was a half bar of soap (1¾ ounces) and a roll of toilet paper in each cache. Salt was my dentifrice. I car-



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FIELD & STREAM MARCH 1964

ried a small mirror, too, for signaling to aircraft; two or three times I looked at myself in it—and hurriedly stuffed it away.

From Phantom on, I carried a tube of lotion for hands made raw by alkaline Colorado water. Really vital items were foot powder, used liberally, and foot-toughening rubbing alcohol in small plastic bottles. Each cache held replenishments.

For first aid I had one roll of 1-inch adhesive tape, with outer cover discarded; one roll of 3-inch gauze; nail scissors; antiseptic powder in a 35 mm. film can; ½-ounce tube of antibiotic ointment; six headache tablets; two segments of chocolate laxative; two Ace bandages for chronic knee trouble, mainly used as puttees to protect bare legs from blood-drawing scrub; a rubber snakebite kit that never left my pocket; and a needle that slid conveniently down among the matches in the matchsafe and proved valuable for thorn removal and blister pricking as well as stitching repairs. Halfway, I added two more needles as reserves.

Immense valuable in the early stages, when my feet were still soft and the boots new, was a package of those priceless little felt pads called moleskins. Without the 40-cent moleskins—and another package at my first airdrop—I might not have got through the first three weeks. After the halfway mark the only time I used them was to shim up a loose fit between my lightweight tripod and a new camera.

I had started out with the trusty little Ansco Super Regent 35 mm. camera that I'd roughhoused around for ten years. Then, just before halfway, a wind blew it off the tripod and the fall jammed its shutter fast. At Phantom Ranch I had a new camera rushed in, a Contaflex III with 2.8 Tessar lens. It weighed 13 ounces more than the Super Regent, but reflex viewing alone was worth it. The simple flash bracket that I used for bino-photography with my 6 x 30 binoculars fitted both cameras. This trip, the combination captured deer, wild burros and horses, beaver, and one bighorn. Exposure meter, camel's-hair lens brush, and lens tissue rounded out the photographic equipment. Of the 1,000-plus shots I took, almost all were Kodachrome X.

I carried quite a few accessories—the kind whose lack can make the difference between comfort and misery, even between life and death. One hundred feet of ¼-inch nylon rope, for instance. By getting me down one of those sheer cliffs between the canyon's terraces, it could have saved my life if I'd run into

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water trouble high above the river.

Two hanks of nylon parachute cord made tent ropes and washing lines and did a hundred tying jobs. Wrapped around the circular camera-case fitting, a cord unjammed it for film-changing. A short length replaced the broken neck-strap on my binoculars. Another could have made spare bootlaces.

My Sportsman flashlight used two normal 1½-volt batteries. Each cache held replacements. Two spare alkaline heavy-drain batteries never saw action. They weigh one-third more than the normal type but their long continuous-use life—reputedly "up to ten times longer"—might have saved me in an emergency, and I'd certainly carry them again. I used one of two spare bulbs.

My office was a folded rectangle, stitched and zipper-topped, of Fiberthin packbag material. Into it went onionskin paper for field notes, two spare pencils and ballpoints, and one ballpoint refill. Also things that had to lie flat—moleskins, spare leather insoles, paperback geology book, and folding stove-nozzle cleaner. Also cellophane tape and a package of rubberbands that did many jobs: resealed opened food packages; held my notes to a rectangle of stiffening cardboard; strapped the bino-photography attachment to my belt on side trips; and kept my notebook open at the right place. Above all, a pair always acted as weak and nonconstricting garters, just above my boot tops. With socks turned down outside the boots, I kept out dirt and gravel. I know at least one man who gave up wearing shorts because of just this nuisance. Three or four rubberbands always traveled, ready for quick use, around the protruding tops of the packframe.

My office also held maps. Grand Canyon is no place to travel without them. It's a windy place, too, where a map can whirl all too easily over an impassable cliff. So I carried two copies of each of the two superb U.S. Geological Survey topographic sheets that cover the National Park. I cut one set of maps into easily handled sections that folded into my shirt pocket. Later, when I traveled pocketless, they went with notebook and sunglasses into a "pocket" that the lady manager of Phantom Ranch kindly stitched onto the front of my pack yoke. On the yoke's other strap she stitched two pieces of spare webbing to hold ballpoint pen, pencil with clip, and thermometer. The thermometer taught me a lot. I hadn't quite realized before how loosely connected with temperature is the body's sensation of heat and cold. I



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found that just about as important are wind, humidity, and acclimatization. And I discovered one reason your feet get so murderously hot in the desert: with the air almost 90 degrees, bare sand may be a searing 130 plus.

My only foraging was a little fishing. Tackle weight was practically nil: a spool of 6-pound nylon, 12 salmon-egg hooks, and six BB split shot. For bait I crammed a 35 mm. film can full of preserved salmon eggs. Small catfish were easy prey, and I landed one 2-pound carp, too—quite a delicate business with a thick bamboo walking staff as rod. The staff gave me a third leg over rough country, formed an upright in poncho shelters, and propped my pack up as a backrest at every halt.

Finally, the odds and ends: two pairs of Polaroid sunglasses; tiny funnel for white gas; lightweight Marine Corps compass that might have been vital if I'd had to escape over the canyon's rim and trek across the flat and featureless plain; a prospector's magnifying glass for rock-hounding, emergency fire-starting, and looking dragonflies in the eye; fly dope that only twice had to dope flies but often soothed skin grown tender from alkaline water, sun, and/or wind; thread for repairs; and spare pack fittings—two yoke buckles and three screws for holding packbag to frame.

These three screws traveled in a 35 mm. film can together with two flashlight bulbs and twelve 3/8-inch screws for halting sole separation in my boots (which they didn't do very effectively). This was the first time I'd used so many film cans. Different colors distinguished the ones holding salmon eggs, antiseptic powder, halazone tablets, and salt tablets. And in each cache there was another can full of coconut oil—for a lube job on hair and beard, for cooking, and for additional greasing of boots.

Freezer bags separated each food item and segregated moccasins, film, toilet paper, first-aid kit, camera accessories, and personal items. Each cache included spare bags. Larger plastic bags held the current day's food and the balance of the week's ration. Another wrapped the cooking pots.

One item I discarded at the last moment was a pedometer. I hadn't had time to calibrate it properly, and anyway I doubted its accuracy over such rough country. Accurate mileages don't mean much in Grand Canyon; time is what counts. Two airline miles may take you forty minutes on foot—or two days. My whole journey covered only 43 straight-line



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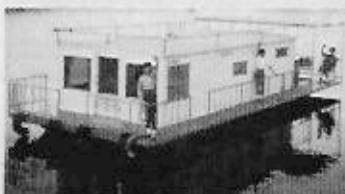


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miles. But the river mileage is 104. And a map-measurer run over my direct route registered almost 200. The way I had to zig and zag, I doubted if my feet slogged less than 400 miles.

The airdrops worked out well, though on the first there was an hour's frustration before the little Cessna from Wright Airflyte Service in Flagstaff, Arizona, waggled its wings in recognition. Frantic flashing with my mirror had failed to catch the pilot's eye, and my bright-orange sleeping bag blended with the red rock on which I'd spread it out as a marker. It was only when I emptied two canteens on a fire and created a smoke column that the park ranger aboard spotted me. But on the last two airdrops we cooperated better. The pilot saw my white plastic sheet right away. And both times Tex Wright floated the parachute down less than fifty feet from my marker.

A week after the final drop I climbed up out of the canyon. And when I stood at last on the North Rim, back in the outside world for the first time in two months, I knew that my journey had succeeded in every way. I was the first man to traverse Grand Canyon on foot. More important, I had overcome the physical problems so completely that I'd been able to immerse myself in the wonders of that vast natural museum and to grasp its echoing implications. When I stopped to think about it, I knew that the journey could never have succeeded so fully unless the details had been right. There was nothing in my equipment I'd have changed, nothing important I wished I'd carried or left behind. You can't ask much more than that.

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