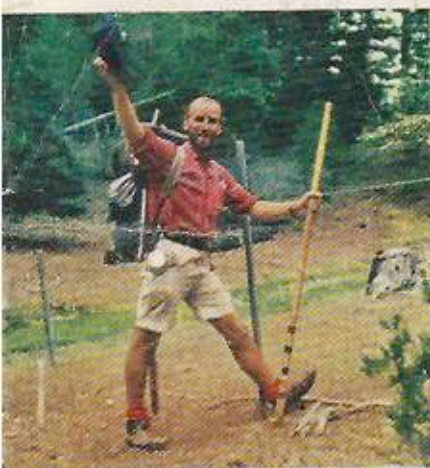


# Field & Stream

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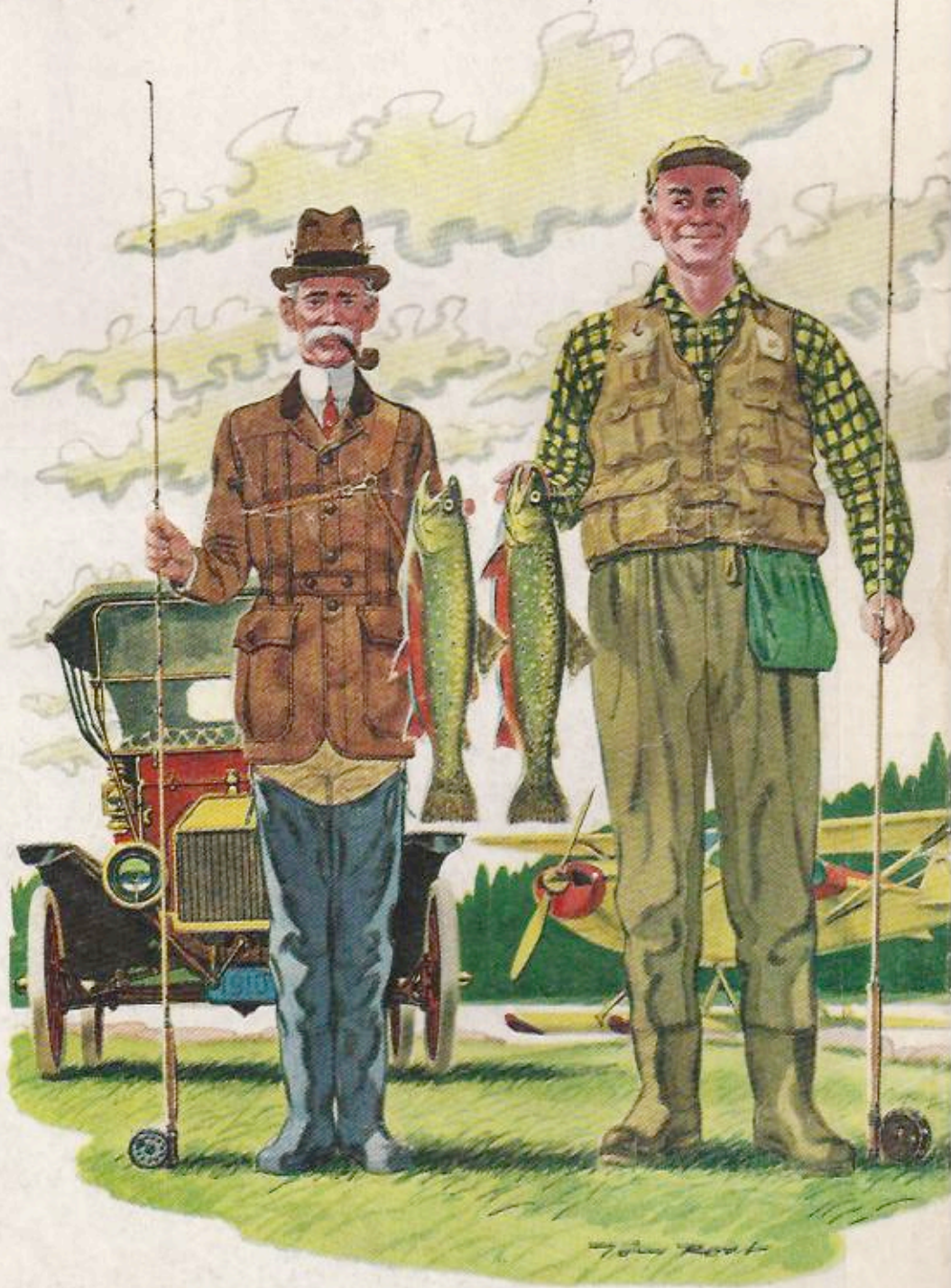
**New Record Fish Chart**



I Hiked All Summer With  
a 'House on My Back'



Warren Page Tangles With  
'The Tough Guys'



**'JAKE'S RANGERS' TAKE A FAST-WATER CANOE TRIP**



Fletcher hiked over California's deserts and mountains from Mexico to Oregon. (For map, see following spread)



He used his poncho as a sun shelter in low, hot areas, and traveled comfortably in shorts, socks, and shoes



It was different, though, in the high mountains, where he needed a warm mummy bag and clothing for chilly nights

# House On My Back

By COLIN FLETCHER

**My pack had to hold everything I'd need  
for a 6-month hike. Here's how I  
put it together—and how it worked out**

**L**AST summer I walked more than one thousand miles through the deserts and mountains of California, from Mexico in the south to Oregon in the north. For six months my pack was my house. The pack held, as a good house must, all the necessities of life, and a little comfort besides. It withstood, as a good house must, temperatures ranging from 25 to 106 degrees. It withstood, as no house is expected to do, elevations ranging from Death Valley's 282 feet below sea level (lowest point in the U.S.) to 14,246 feet above. Long before the end of the hike I had worked out exactly what was worth carrying and what was not.

Every backpacking problem, of course, turns on the question of weight. Safety, efficiency, and comfort must all be balanced against pounds on your back. In planning my trip I looked after the ounces, and the pounds looked after themselves. I weighed everything I bought as if it were gold dust.

I began with boots. As a compromise between weight and durability I chose Italian Civetta 6-inch ankle boots with nonslip Vibram lug soles. My size 10's weighed 3 pounds 13 ounces. They did yeoman service. After six hundred miles across rough deserts—more as the foot slogs—the original boots were still wearable. But they wouldn't have lasted out the trip, and I replaced them with an identical pair. I'm murder on heels, but the Vibram heels had to be renewed only once on each pair.

Welts and soles were handstitched. Unfortunately the stitching protruded upward very slightly, and I soon had to improvise insoles. Those cut from cereal boxes lasted about one day; the foam-rubber type is intolerably hot; cork may dry out and curl. The best stopgap is asbestos gasket sheeting, sold at any wayside garage.

Costs, incidentally, didn't enter too much into my planning. Quality was what mattered. By the time I'd finished kitting myself up I was almost broke, but I couldn't afford to run the risks that equipment failure might mean in remote country.



Fletcher's specially designed pack held up to 60 pounds of food and duffel, yet rode comfortably on his back

I bought almost all my gear at the Ski Hut in Berkeley, California, makers of Trailwise equipment. The experience of the staff proved invaluable. A good quartermaster can win battles.

I originally hoped to keep my "house" down to 40 or 45 pounds. But I found that it is not practicable to set a maximum; you must concentrate on getting minimum weight in the constituents. Of course, the total will vary. I occasionally got it down to 45 pounds, but the average was over 50. Only too often it ran closer to 60. Once it reached somewhere around the 70 mark.

Thus I needed a pack capable of carrying heavy loads. Packboards with good load distribution cover your back and may make the sweat pour off you in hot climates. Rucksacks let fresh air circulate around your spine, but they sit badly with loads of over 40 pounds. I found what I was looking for in a contoured pack frame of welded aluminum alloy that held the load close to my back, with only the shoulder yoke and two 4-inch nylon bands pressing against my body. Air circulated freely around it. The complete rig weighed just 4 pounds 3 ounces, yet handled loads of well over 80 pounds.

The well-padded yoke distributed the weight broadly across neck and shoulders. The lower nylon backband rested on the hips and took its full share of the load. The waist strap didn't seem necessary and I finally discarded it. With really heavy loads it might have been an advantage.

The large pack bag was made of waterproof coated nylon and fitted with a weather flap. I doubt if there's such a thing as a permanently waterproof pack bag, but this came close.

Choice of a sleeping bag required some thought too. I'd never tried a mummy bag before, but a friend of mine who sleeps indoors about once every election recommended the type. A mummy bag is designed for the human body—not a small upright piano. A man lying asleep in the roughly contoured bag does look like an

Egyptian mummy. When the tapes on the rounded head flap are pulled so tight that only his nose peeks through a tiny hole, he's a dead ringer for one. Zippers run either on top or down one side. Two side-zipped bags can be joined together, wifewise.

Weight for warmth, there's nothing to touch old-fashioned down. I finally selected a bag holding 2½ pounds of gray duck down—5 pounds 10 ounces over-all. It was recommended for temperatures down to 17 degrees when used on an air mattress, in still air, with the sleeper warmly clothed. Remember that such figures are only guides; individual metabolisms vary as widely as individual tempers.

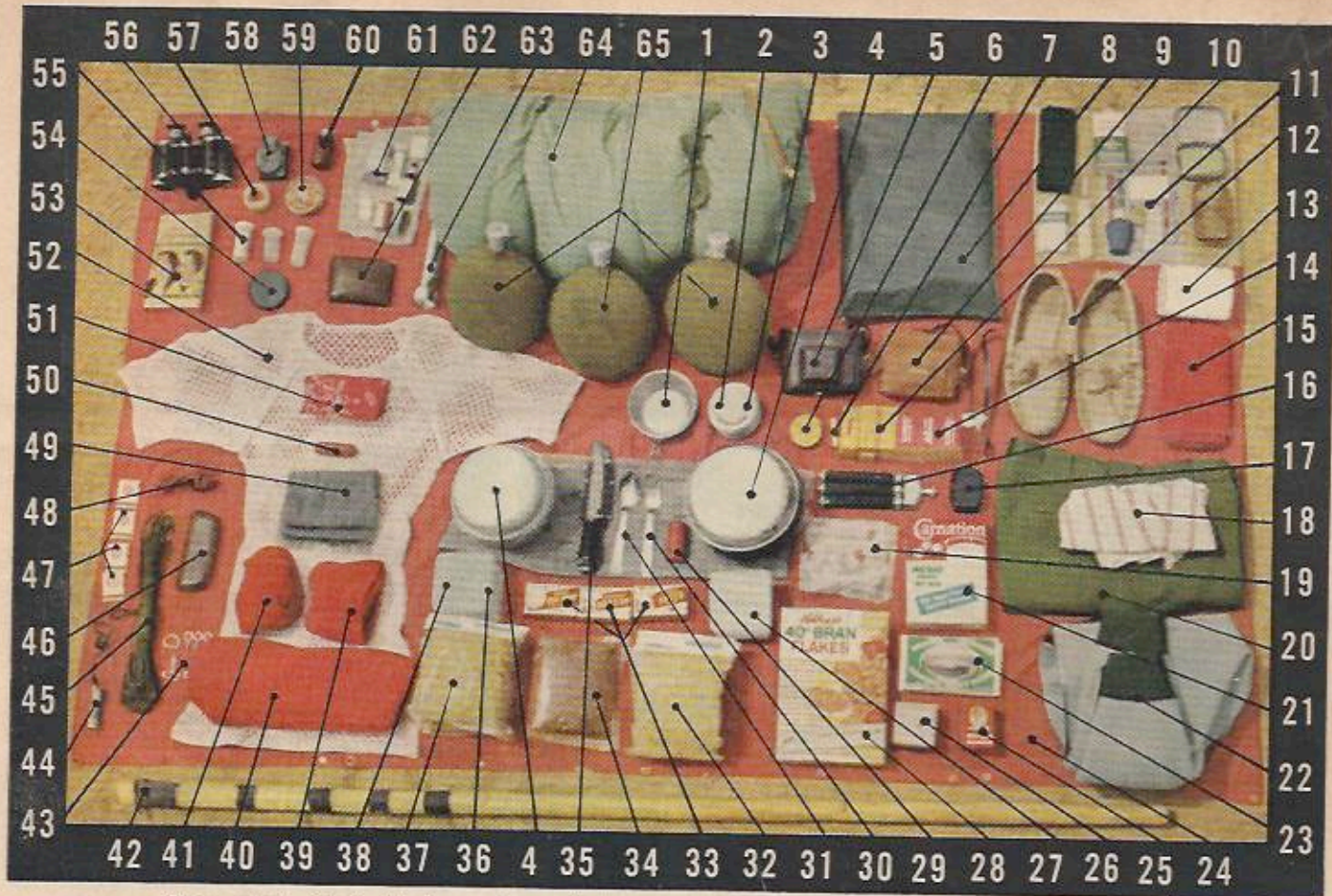
The first week of the trip, because I was city-soft, I carried a 2-pound plastic air mattress. I didn't expect it to last long, and it didn't. For a while I spread foliage beneath the bag for softness and insulation. But soon, except in really cold weather, I just selected soft, sandy beds. Sleeping naked, with only a thick woolen sweater beneath me as insulation, I'd wake up warm and snug to find the bag white with frost. In the mountains I sometimes spread a parka under the sweater.

No sleeping bag can be waterproof, of course; in cold weather you'd freeze in your own moisture. But rarely did I bother about overhead cover. The Egyptian-cotton cover of my sleeping bag was labeled "water-repellent"—a term that fills me with distrust. But the bag actually repelled water.

Through the wettest and highest leg of the trip I carried a nylon tent 40 inches high and 40 inches wide at the head; the foot tapered to 16x16 inches. Lightweight coated nylon formed the floor. When the zipper was closed, a front "alcove" for stowing pack and gear extended 22 inches from the head. The whole rig—tent, alloy poles, guys, pegs, and carrying bag—weighed just 3 pounds 1 ounce.

*Text continued on page 95*

**For a closeup view of Fletcher's pack, turn page**



These articles, itemized below, made up the "house" on Colin Fletcher's back during his 6-month hike



### Camp Gear For A Long, Long Hike

1. Steel cup .....	3 oz.
2. Margarine container .....	2 oz.
3. Margarine for cooking .....	4 oz.
4. Two nesting cooking pots .....	1 lb. 4 oz.
5. Camera (2 1/4 x 2 1/4) .....	2 lb.
6. K-2 filter in case .....	2 oz.
7. Camera lens brush .....	1 oz.
8. Writing materials .....	12 oz.
9. Camera, 35 mm. ....	1 lb. 10 oz.
10. Six rolls 120 film, b & w .....	7 oz.
11. Toilet articles .....	14 oz.
12. Moccasins .....	1 lb. 2 oz.
13. Toilet paper .....	7 oz.
14. Six rolls 135 film, color .....	9 oz.
15. Towel .....	2 oz.
16. Camera tripod .....	14 oz.
17. Exposure meter .....	6 oz.
18. Shorts .....	3 oz.
19. Tea bags (about 20) .....	2 oz.
20. Whipcord pants .....	1 lb. 15 oz.
21. One carton dry milk .....	11 oz.
22. Woolen sweater .....	2 lb. 2 oz.



Fletcher breaks camp and starts up a grade. His route from Mexico to Oregon is shown on map



## House On My Back

(Continued from page 51)

When you buy food for a pack trip, stay basic. You're not interested in the "zesty richness," "tangy flavor," or other hoopla on the package. What you want to know is how much better the food will make you feel when you're tired and hungry, and how long it will make you feel better. Find out how easy it is to prepare. Decide for yourself the purely personal matters of palatability and variety. (If you're lucky enough to be as uncivilized as I am, it'll be weeks before you notice that the menu is much the same day after day.) Finally, resolve the eternal weight problem.

Probably the correct way to plan your food is to calculate how many calories you use in an average day and then eat enough to replace them. I, however, just worked out by trial and error what I seemed to need. In general, I loaded up with starches and went easy on proteins.

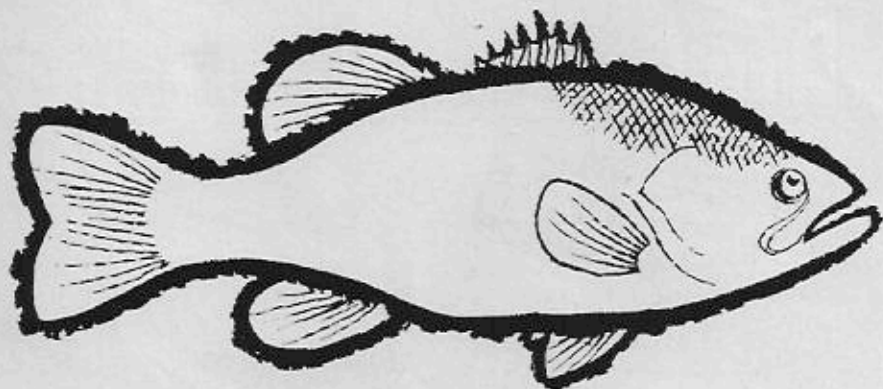
I planned my route so that I'd call in at wayside post offices every week or two. At them I picked up stocks of dehydrated food, extra equipment for certain sections of the trip, and replacements as needed. Before I started, I sent ahead batches of maps for each leg of the trip. A friend sent me supplies of film and oddments. At the post offices I mailed notes of a series of articles.

These calls at civilization gave me a change of diet, too. Although there might be little else, there was always a store near the post office. But basically I lived on dehydrated food. Trout from mountain streams were the only regular addition.

I expected to need 2½ pounds of dehydrated food per day. In practice I lived comfortably on under 2 pounds. Weeks of experiment produced this inventory for a 6-day period:

3 pkg. fruit (8 oz.)	1 lb. 8 oz.
3 pkg. soup (3 oz.)	9 oz.
3 pkg. diced potatoes (8 oz.)	1 lb. 8 oz.
1 pkg. vegetables (8 oz.)	8 oz.
3 blocks pemmican (4 oz.)	12 oz.
1 carton dried milk	11 oz.
Sugar	1 lb.
1 pkg. dry cereal	1 lb.
20 tea bags	2 oz.
3 bars mint cake	1 lb. 2 oz.
Raisins, dry type	1 lb.
Chocolate, candy, etc.	8 oz.
<b>Total for 6 days</b>	<b>10 lb. 4 oz.</b>

The total often crept close to the  
FIELD & STREAM MARCH 1960



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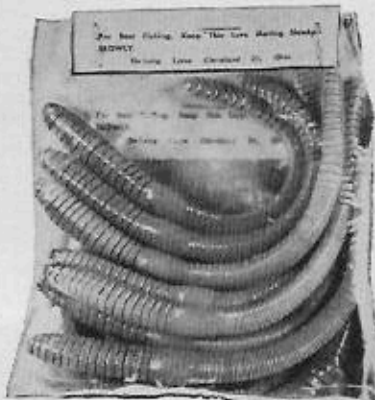


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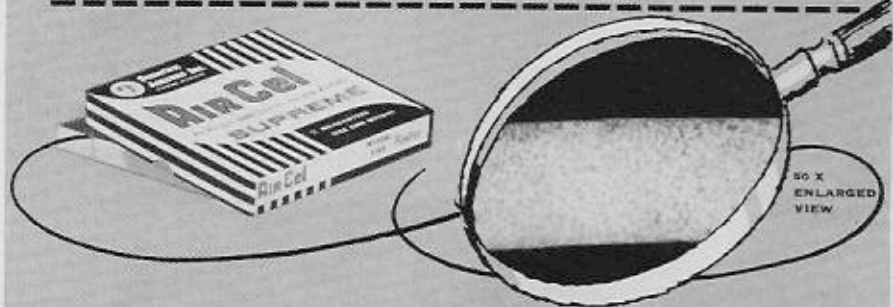
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2-pounds-a-day average because, when possible, I liked a carton of milk and a pound of sugar to last four days. I bought them, the tea, raisins, candy, etc., at wayside stores. In trout country I added 4 ounces of margarine for cooking.

My basic menu was as follows:

**Breakfast:** 4 ounces dehydrated fruit.

**Lunch:** 1½ ounce dried soup; tea.

**Dinner:** 4 ounces potatoes; 2 ounces vegetables; 2 ounces pemmican.

At breakfast I often had chocolate or dry cereal with fruit. (I was a little surprised to find myself carrying cereal; it proved useful not only at breakfast but also as a dessert and as a midafternoon snack needing no preparation.) Four ounces of fruit sounds precious little. But soaked overnight, it swelled so much that some days I had difficulty in finishing it. Sometimes I added milk to the fruit. In cool weather, when it wasn't vital to be walking by sunrise, I often brewed tea for breakfast. Many people would prefer coffee, but unfortunately I'm allergic to it. For lunch I settled for dehydrated soups packed in twin 1½-ounce packages. Unless I was very hungry, one package was plenty.

For dinner I varied the diced potatoes with occasional packages of the dried potatoes you can buy in any market. They're quicker to prepare, but not so satisfying. The pemmican—a concentrated beef extract by Bovril, similar to that used on the successful ascent of Mount Everest, could if necessary be eaten straight. When crumbled over spuds and vegetables and stirred into them for the last minute of cooking, it made a savory stew.

I used sugar generously, particularly in tea. At hourly halts on the march I nibbled raisins and an English mint cake used on many large-scale expeditions. Its calorie content is high, it releases energy rapidly, and it doesn't produce thirst. One bar lasted two days.

There's one vital food item I've not mentioned. When you sweat, you lose salt. If you don't replace it, you may suffer from heat exhaustion. From the start I carried salt tablets. All through the desert I fed myself liberal doses. Even in the mountains I took an occasional tablet. However, each man must find out for himself how much salt he needs, or can tolerate. It may be one tablet a day—or twenty.

I also used ordinary salt for cooking. At one end of my salt container was a section for pepper. As I never use pepper, I filled it with water-purifying tablets. Water, of course, was even more vital than food, and

canteens were one item of equipment I didn't scrimp in weight. In the desert, precious water means more than extra ounces. I bought three canteens, aluminum throughout, with screw tops. Each held half a gallon and weighed 13 ounces. I carried all three only when water was really critical. When I did, the filled canteens totaled 14½ pounds. More often my pack held only two—rarely full.

On my trip south to the Mexican border to start my walk I buried water caches at several points in Death Valley. Fifty waterless miles formed a barrier that might prove fatal in a hot spell. The water remained buried almost two months—some in large bottles, some in new 5-gallon cans. I found the bottled water as clear and sweet as the day I cached it; but a greenness had formed inside the cans, and I boiled or purified all that water before use.

**I**n the desert I had no trouble lighting fires. Sagebrush always lay within a few feet of camp. But for the second half of the trip I carried a tiny brass stove. It burned white gasoline, weighed 1 pound 2 ounces, and stood only 5 inches high. Its ½ pint of white gas burned for about 45 minutes. The cover was also a cup, or a small pot. I refilled my ultra-light container with white gas at each wayside stop. With care, one filling lasted almost a week.

As long as the stove was fairly sheltered from wind, it heated very efficiently. Enough water for three cups of tea—about 1½ pints—boiled in five to six minutes. I bought the stove for use above timber, in very wet weather, or in high-fire-hazard areas. But it proved so convenient and reliable that after a while I rarely cooked over an open fire. The stove was quicker, less trouble, and utterly safe—and cooking pots weren't blackened by wood smoke.

I carried two nesting aluminum-alloy cooking pots whose lids doubled as plates or pans. The solid-cast pots held 2½ and 3½ pints respectively. Together they weighed only 1½ pounds, but they were tough. One of them once bounced 150 feet down a steep talus slope—and suffered only a couple of minor dents.

My eating irons were a spoon—short enough to fit inside the inner cooking pot—and a sheath knife that did all the cutting jobs, from gutting trout to splitting kindling. I started out with a fork but later discarded it as unnecessary, even for trout. To sharpen the knife, I carried a circular carborundum stone. A small stone or a tungsten-carbide steel sharpener would have been lighter and almost as effective.



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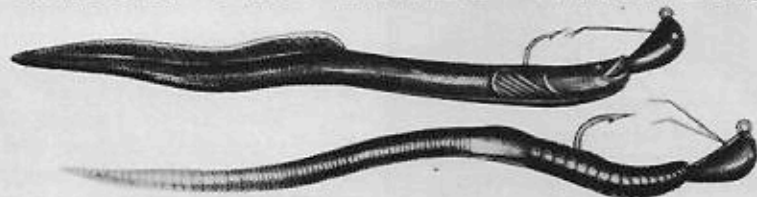
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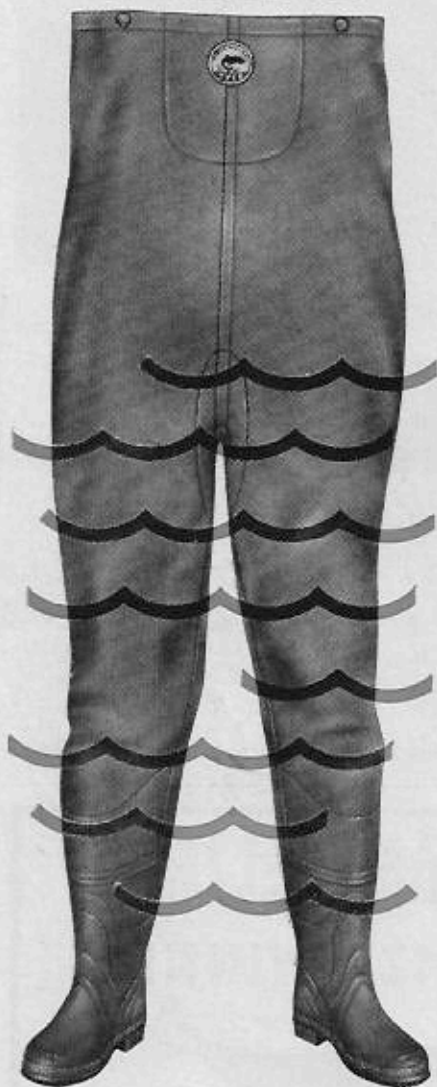


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Stainless-steel cups are much more comfortable to drink from than aluminum ones, which conduct heat too rapidly. I didn't fully appreciate the difference until I lost my original Sierra Club cup and for several weeks had to use the aluminum stove cover.

In trout country I added a light fry pan to the kitchen. The fry pan, up-turned on the reversed lid of a cooking pot, also formed the top half of a rough-and-ready steamer. And steamed trout take my money over fried any day. They're less trouble, too. Just let water boil beneath them for twenty minutes while you do other chores, and dinner is ready.

Margarine traveled at first in an aluminum screw-top jar with plastic liner. But the threads tended to slip, and finally I replaced it with a square plastic container of the kind sold in most general stores. I chose one of a different size and color from the similar container I used for sugar. I also had an easily identifiable plastic bottle for detergent.

Though I very rarely ate canned food, I had tucked into my wallet a tiny folding can opener that weighed just 1/8 ounce. The aluminum salt-and-pepper container I've already mentioned (it was anticorrosive-coated inside and out) completed the kitchenware. The kitchen, especially the pots, formed some of the bulkier items. And so did spare clothing.

No two people will ever choose the same clothes. Not too many, for example, like short pants. I began the trip with a weathered pair of corduroy shorts. Halfway, they gave up the heroic struggle. In the second half of the trip I wore to shreds two stout pairs of khaki-drill shorts. Whatever you wear on your behind, the material must be tough—you'll be using unpadded chairs. And choose a color that hides the dirt.

My other clothes were brightly colored. Shirts and socks were bright red, so that I wouldn't walk away from camp and leave such garments hanging out to dry. In case of accident they'll attract rescuers' attention. During the hunting season they're essential. And anyone who takes color photographs knows how a splash of red can make a picture.

I took two thin but tough cotton shirts. From the start I rarely walked with my shirt buttoned. As soon as I'd acclimated myself I took it off. I judged that even in low humidity the vitalizing effect of air on the body balanced any extra moisture loss.

The socks—medium-weight wool with 10 percent nylon reinforcement—were entirely satisfactory. Dye never came off on my feet. I carried



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three pairs at a time, and wore out nine pairs on the trip.

My thick woolen sweater zipped down the front and could be adjusted to any temperature. It came through six months' mishandling almost like new. I rate it one of the great successes of the trip.

Except at over 12,000 feet, I rarely wore long pants for walking. But I couldn't have done without my stout whipcord pair—forest-ranger style—for "evening wear" or any time in camp when the temperature fell. Folded, they made a good pillow.

For camp footwear I chose moccasins. The soles of the first pair wore through about halfway of the trip, and replacements with 1/4-inch composite rubber soles finished it out.

My hat was a brown-felt Spanish type with adjustable chinband. The chinband was a must; high winds blow up in the desert and can easily snatch a hat.

For next-to-the-skin warmth I had a string shirt, or vest. With your clothes buttoned up, the fish-net pattern traps warm air. A scarf around the neck seals best. Take off the scarf and unbutton your shirt, and cool air circulates freely around your skin.

For the mountains I added clothing: parka, woolen shirt to replace the cotton one, extra-thick scarf, a woolen head protector, long-johns, and woolen gloves. Also one pair of wool socks—though I wore them only once—during a cold night on 14,246-foot White Mountain. Changing the thickness of socks plays havoc with the fit of boots.

In the mountains I also carried fishing tackle. The 4-piece, 7 1/2-foot glass fly rod broke down to 23 1/2 inches and weighed only 4 ounces. Besides my 3 1/2-inch light-alloy fly reel with multiplying action, I had a little closed-face spinning reel, of the kind that doesn't require a large butt ring. As it happened, I caught all the trout I needed on flies. Into the reel bags went six spools of nylon, a small tin of flies, line grease, split shot, a few lures and baited hooks, and a bobber.

I had two cameras. For color I used a neat little 35 mm. with f3.5 lens—Agfa's Super Regent. I shot black-and-white with a folding 2 1/4" x 2 1/4" Super Baldax, no bulkier than a 35 mm. camera. The f2.9 lens was beyond criticism.

Film: Anscochrome—shot at ASA 64—and Panatomic X. Filters: Kodak Skylight for color, K2 for black-and-white. A lightweight telescopic tripod, an exposure meter, a lens brush, and a few sheets of paper lens cleaner completed the equipment. No light tripod lasts forever, and I had to replace mine before the end of the trip.

FIELD & STREAM MARCH 1960



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Don't jump at conclusions. I'm not a manufacturer of any fancy new lure. I have no reels or lines to sell. I'm a professional man and make a good living in my profession. But my all-absorbing hobby is fishing. And, quite by accident, I've discovered how to go to waters that most fishermen say are fished out and come in with a good catch of the biggest bass that you ever saw. The savage old bass that got so big, because they were "wise" to every ordinary way of fishing.

This METHOD is NOT spinning, trolling, casting, fly fishing, trot line fishing, set line fishing, hand line fishing, live bait fishing, jugging, netting, trapping, or seining. No live bait or prepared bait is used. You can carry all of the equipment you need in one hand.

The whole method can be learned in twenty minutes—twenty minutes of fascinating reading. All the extra equipment you need, you can buy locally at a cost of less than a dollar. Yet with it, you can come in after an hour or two of the greatest excitement of your life, with a stringer full. Not one or two miserable 12 or 14 inch over-sized keepers—but five or six real beauties with real poundage behind them. The kind that don't need a word of explanation of the professional skill of the man who caught them. Absolutely legal, too—in every state.

This amazing method was developed by a little group of professional fishermen. Though they were public guides, they rarely divulged their method to their patrons. They used it only when fishing for their own tables. It is possible that no man on your waters has ever seen it, ever heard of it, or ever used it. And when you have given it the first trial, you will be as closed-mouthed as a man who has suddenly discovered a gold mine. Because with this method you can fish within a hundred feet of the best fishermen in the county

and pull in ferocious big ones while they come home empty handed. No special skill is required. The method is just as deadly in the hands of a novice as in the hands of an old timer. My method will be disclosed only to those men in each area who will give me their word of honor not to give the method to anyone else.

Send me your name. Let me tell you how you can try out this deadly method of bringing in big bass from your local waters. Let me tell you why I let you try out my unusual method for the whole fishing season without risking a penny of your money. Send your name for details of my money-back trial offer. There is no charge for this information, now or at any other time. Just your name is all I need. But I guarantee that the information I send you will make you a complet skeptic—until you decide to try my method! And then, your own catches will fill you with disbelief. Send your name, today. This will be fun.

**ERIC O. FARE, Highland Park 15, III.**

**Eric O. Fare, Highland Park 15, III.**

Dear Mr. Fare: Send me complete information without any charge and without the slightest obligation. Tell me how I can learn your method of catching big bass from waters many say are "fished out," even when the old timers are reporting "No Luck."

Name.....  
Address.....  
City..... Zone..... State.....

Finally, the miscellaneous items. One paperback book, replaced as necessary at wayside stores. Fly dope. Boot wax. Polaroid glasses—four were used on the trip, each discarded when the plastic lenses became badly scratched. A few rubberbands, for securing containers, serving as weak garters around my turned-down socks to keep out stones and sand, and for many small jobs. A roll of Scotch tape for wrapping exposed film and for minor repairs.

I should have had a container for such small items as salt tablets, medical supplies, and fishing lures; plastic vials tend to crack. Aluminum holders for 35 mm. film would probably last much longer. Spares included spectacles, pack fittings, and boot laces.

Every man likes to organize things inside his pack in his own way. Much depends on what you think you'll want first—and that varies from day to day, from morning to evening. But I offer a few suggestions. Flat objects packed close against the frame will keep the bag clear of your back. Toilet paper should be in an outside pocket, quickly available. Tentpoles, if too long to fit inside the pack, can be lashed to the frame. A bulky sleeping bag sometimes has to go outside the pack, especially on damp mornings, but it then centers the pack weight uncomfortably far back. Cameras should be at immediate call. I slung mine from atop the frame.

**P**lastic food bags are a boon. I used them to wrap all my food items, and for toilet gear, first-aid kit, and moccasins. The outsides of cooking pots were always dirty and often wet. A large plastic bag isolated them.

My walking staff was a vital part of my equipment. I started out at the Mexican border with a yucca cactus pole. A week later I broke it killing a rattlesnake. Later a man gave me a stout bamboo staff. "Hope you get some rattlers with it," he said. "One of them killed my brother." That staff, bound with tape against splitting, lasted clear up to the Oregon line. I didn't risk it against rattlers, but it helped me over some really rough country, formed the upright of many a poncho shelter, and propped up my pack no matter where I halted.

When people stumbled on me at halts, with gear spread all around the pack, they invariably wanted to take a closer look. And usually there were timid ones who said, "You must be crazy, going off like that and leaving all the home comforts behind." I was always able to answer with sincerity, "But I haven't left them behind. I've got my house on my back."

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