

THE BACKPACKER PROFILE:

COLIN FLETCHER

Colin Fletcher has been called the high priest of backpacking and the author of the backpacker's bible (his how-to-do-it *The Complete Walker* series). His tales of walking from one end of California to the other (*The Thousand-Mile Summer*) and through the Grand Canyon (*The Man Who Walked Through Time*) made him probably the most famous solitary hiker out there. To say he's a bit extreme is putting it mildly; to say he's cantankerous is an understatement, as witnessed by his threat to set his collectively afire if we altered one single word in the following. So here, for your edification and entertainment, is as close a personal look at Colin Fletcher as you'll ever get.

FULL NAME: Colin Fletcher.

DATE OF BIRTH: 3/14/22.

PLACE OF BIRTH: Cardiff, Wales.

CURRENT ADDRESS: U.S.A.

OCCUPATION: Writer.

MARITAL STATUS: Happily divorced.

HEIGHT: 5'10 1/2" at last measuring, which was about 35 years ago.

WEIGHT: 197, this morning.

SHOE SIZE: 10 1/2 or 11.

HAT SIZE: 7 and something.

TYPE OF HAT TYPICALLY WORN: What is practical and pleases me at the time.

BRAND OF BOOT TYPICALLY WORN: The kind that comes in pairs, one for each foot.

YEARS BACKPACKING: Pure, recreational form: 30+. Including utilitarian forms: 50.

TYPICAL BACKPACKING TRIP IN DAYS: No such thing.

LONGEST DAY OF BACKPACKING AND WHERE: Death Valley, 1958: 33 miles, 24+ hours. (At least that is the longest for which I can produce figures.)

WORST PHYSICAL PAIN ENDURED DURING BACKPACKING AND WHERE: God knows. It *too* has probably been forgotten. *with*

LONGEST BACKPACKING TRIP AND WHERE: Mexico to Oregon (1,300+ miles).

WORST NIGHT OUT, WHERE AND WHY: Many. World War II.

BEST NIGHT OUT, WHERE AND WHY: Perhaps on the summit of Mount Shasta. The view.

FAVORITE PLACE TO BACKPACK: Planet Earth.

FAVORITE TRAIL FOOD: Ambrosia—the original.

STRANGEST FOOD EVER EATEN AND WHERE: Hamburger, McDonalds.

FAVORITE DRINKS: Water, wine, nectar.

FAVORITE DREAM: Gliding on outstretched arms over wild country.

MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND DOING AT 10:00 ON A FRIDAY NIGHT: I take the Fifth Amendment.

FAVORITE FANTASY: A politician-free universe.

GREATEST FEAR: Oddly enough, I think it is being bitten by a rattler when I'm miles from water, and solo.

SMALLEST FEAR: Daytime TV, resulting in cancer of the brain.

FAVORITE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT: Prince Graphite 110.

MOST HATED PIECE OF EQUIPMENT: Condom.

FAVORITE CAMPFIRE SONG: Silence.

QUOTE TO LIVE BY: "Organisms themselves are relatively transient entities through which materials and energy flow and eventually return to the environment."

QUOTE TO DIE BY: "Life can little else supply, but a few good f— — — s and then we die." —*John Wilkes*

FAVORITE AUTHOR: E.M. Forster? Lewis Thomas?

FAVORITE MOVIE: Fellini's *8 1/2*.

FAVORITE MADNESS: Walking.

FAVORITE COMEDIAN: Dan Quayle, or maybe Ronald Reagan.

PETS: No.

PET PEEVES: Questionnaires.

PERSONAL WEAKNESS: Talking too much.


PERSONAL STRENGTH: Drop shots from the baseline.

BRAND OF BACKPACK: Currently, Gregory.

SHORT-TERM GOAL: Writing a book on recent backpacking/rafting trip from source to mouth of Green/Colorado River.

LONG-TERM GOAL: Outliving my shadow.

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT: Having lived through the apogee of the currently dominant species.

PERSONAL HERO: Julian Huxley. 

—with Mark Jenkins

Colin Fletcher's latest book, The Secret Worlds of Colin Fletcher, has just been released in paperback (Vintage Books, \$8.95).