

“But I’m six-shooter armed!”

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“Summer Camping”

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What are your summer plans? What’s on your reading list? Traveling anywhere? Are you planning on camping? Several friends just can’t wait to pack up their camper and escape to campsite simplicity. A crackling fire. Smores, marshmallows lightly browned or flaming charcoal. Bacon sizzling on the griddle. Pack a fishing pole for the nearby stream. Trail hikes. The call of the wild. Good for you.

My wife and I are not the Green Acres sort. Give us Park Avenue. Our notion of nature is Central Park and the fountain in Washington Square. Soon, soon, we hope, we’ll be able to visit New York City again or tour Washington D.C.’s museums. Still, I’ve had my share of backwoods roughing it. I have fond memories of camping out. Back yard camping.

Me and my Roy Rogers tent. Backyard adventures in my worn Keds and broken laces -- The Sound of Summer Running (thank you, Ray Bradbury). Venturing forth from the civilized safety shield of home and parents. The independence of an eight year old boy armed and outfitted with penknife and canteen and candles and an older brother’s Boy Scout flashlight (that kind you’d hold upright so you could clip it on your official Cub Scout web belt with metal buckle right next to your Roy Rogers six shooters cap guns -- double holstered): *“By the light Of my Cub Scout flashlight Wish I could see What it was that just bit my knee.”*

Braving frontier wild beasts, scratchy tree limbs, the shadow sounds, with sleeping bag and buddy and vittles in my Roy Rogers lunch box (hot chocolate in thermos, ham sandwich wrapped in wax paper, plenty of Hydrox cookies). It’s all tenting tonight. *“Some trails are happy ones, Others are blue. It’s the way you ride the trail that counts, Here’s a happy one for you.”*

Who needs a bed and bathroom when you have a tent, your portable shelter? You’re on your eight year old own. Then at night crawling inside, listening to the wind, raindrops sometimes, a sniffing possum (or polecat), or the growl of a lurking bear. But I’m six-shooter armed!

Do you have a fond memory of camping out, of a tent? Which type of tent do you fancy? Dome, Wall, Frame/Ridge, Pyramid, A-frame, Pyramid, Pop-Up, Backpacking, Tunnel, TeePee, Inflatable, Conical, Pup. What variety! We recently bought a beach tent for our grandbabies. If you say a Cliff (portaledge) tent, you just nuts.

Even the first Hebrew temple was a tent, called ‘tabernacle.’ I prefer this notion of God’s presence as portable rather than fixed. The tabernacle testified to the people how the presence of God traveled with the people rather than making the people come to it. Whenever you build fixed temples, that’s when religion can lose its way.

In the early days of the Civil War each Union private would receive half of a pup tent, a dog tent. *“We’re tenting tonight on the old camp ground, Give us a song to cheer Our weary hearts, a song of home And friends we love so dear...Tenting tonight, tenting tonight.”* They had to buddy up and button together the two halves. Which reminds me of marriage. Or friendship. Or church. Country too. We

need to button up with each other. Yippie Yi Yo Ki Yay pardner.... Tents serve us well, whether collapsible, foldable, portable, temporary – like us.

When you think of it, we're just passing through. We might as well make the most of camping out. This tent called us is the only opportunity we have right now.

So very refreshing. Who needs so much stuff? Sure this fabric skin is temporary. Getting a little threadbare, slower for sure. The stitches coming loose. Instead of crushing me, this insight frees me. Like orange daylilies, we appreciate us for our brevity. A wake up call for us to make a splash instead of letting ourselves ebb away. Refreshing also to be reminded how the sun doesn't rise and fall on how we feel. Is it so strange that the less I rely on the flesh, the more I rely on the spirit? *"Some trails are happy ones, Others are blue. It's the way you ride the trail that counts, Here's a happy one for you: Happy trails to you, until we meet again. Happy trails to you, keep smilin' until then. Who cares about the clouds when we're together? Just sing a song and bring the sunny weather. Happy trails to you, 'till we meet again"*