Ted Kaczynski's Low-Tech Lifestyle

Ted Kaczynski

Contents

Average Days **3**

Animism **8**

Happy memories **9**

Daily Routine **13**

Gardening **19**

Foraging **20**

Wildlife Sightings **21**

Average Days

Joy Richards Interview with Ted Kaczynski

BVD: What was an average day like for you in Lincoln?

TJK: That's a very difficult question to answer because I don't know that there was an average day. My activities varied so much according to the season and according to the tasks I had before me on a given day. But I will describe a representative day...

TJK: ...Well, let's take a day in January, and let's suppose I wake up about 3:00 a.m. to find that snow is falling. I start a fire in my stove and put a pot of water on. When the water comes to a boil I dump a certain quantity of rolled oats into it and stir them for a few minutes until they are cooked. Then I take the pot off the stove, add a couple of spoonfuls of sugar and some milk—made from powdered milk. While the oats are cooling I eat a piece of cold boiled rabbit meat. Afterward I eat the oats. I sit for a few minutes before the open door of the stove watching the fire burn down, then I take my clothes off again, get back into bed, and go to sleep. When I wake up, the sky is just starting to get light. I get out of bed and dress myself quickly because it's cold in the cabin. By the time I'm dressed there's a little more light and I can see that it's no longer snowing and the sky is clear. Because of the fresh snow it should be a good day for rabbit hunting. So I take my old, beat-up, single-shot 22 down from the hooks on the wall. I put my little wooden cartridge-box, containing 16 cartridges, in my pocket, with a couple of books of matches wrapped in plastic bags and a sheath knife on my belt in case I have to build a fire in an emergency. Then I put on my snowshoes and take off. First there's a hard climb to get up on top of the ridge, and then a level walk of a mile or so to get to the open forest of lodgepole pines where I want to hunt. A little way into the pines I find the tracks of a snowshoe hare. I follow the trail around and around through its tangled meanderings for about an hour. Then suddenly I see the black eye and the black-tipped ears of an otherwise white snowshoe hare. It's usually the eye and the black-tipped ears you notice first. The bunny is watching me from behind the tangled branches and green needles of a recently-fallen pine tree. The rabbis is about 40 feet away, but it's alert and watching me, so I won't try to get closer. However, I have to maneuver for an angle to shoot from, so that I can have a clear shot through the tangle of branches—even a slender twig can deflect a .22 bullet enough to cause a miss. To get that clear shot I have to lie down in the snow in an odd position and use my knee as a rest for the rifle barrel. I line up the sights on the rabbit's head, at a point just behind the eye...hold steady...ping! The rabbit is clipped through the head. Such a shot ordinarily kills the rabbit instantly, but the animal's hind legs usually kick violently for a few seconds so that it bounces around in

the snow. When the rabbit stops kicking I walk up to it and see that it's quite dead. I say aloud "Thank you, Grandfather Rabbit"–Grandfather Rabbit is a kind of demigod I've invented who is the tutelary spirit of all the snowshoe rabbits. I stand for a few minutes looking around at the pure-white snow and the sunlight filtering through the pine trees. I take in the silence and the solitude. It's good to be here. Occasionally I've found snowmobile tracks along the crest of the main ridge, but in these woods where I am now, once the big-game hunting season is over, in all my years in this country I've never seen a human footprint other than my own. I take one of the noosed cords out of my pocket. For convenience in carrying I put the noose around the rabbit's neck and wrap the other end of the cord around my mittened hand. Then I go looking for the trail of another rabbit. When I have three rabbits I head home. On arriving there I've been out some six or seven hours. My first task is to peel off the skins of the rabbits and remove their guts. Their livers, hearts, kidneys, brains, and some assorted scraps I put in a tin can. I hang the carcasses up under the shelter, then run down to my root cellar to fetch some potatoes and a couple of parsnips. When these have been washed and other chores performed—splitting some wood maybe, or collecting snow to melt for drinking water—I put the pot on the boil, and at the appropriate time add some dried wild greens, the parsnips, the potatoes, and the livers and other internal organs of the rabbits. By the time it's all cooked, the sky is getting dark. I eat my stew by the light of my kerosene lamp. Or, if I want to economize, maybe I open the door of the stove and eat by the light of the fire. I finish off with a half a handful of raisins. I'm tired but at peace. I sit for a while in front of the open door of the stove gazing at the fire. I may read a little. More likely I'll just lie on my bed for a time watching the firelight flicker on the walls. When I get sleepy I take off my clothes, get under the blankets, and go to sleep.

BVD: I see... Well, back on your representative day—you mentioned some of what you might eat. What was our diet like in general? What would you eat on a typical day?

TJK: This varied so much with the season.... Between 1975 and 1983 I would buy flour, rice, rolled oats, sugar, cornmeal, cooking oil, and powdered milk, and a modest amount of canned fruit and/or tomatoes for the winter. I would eat maybe one can every other day through the cold season. I would eat a small amount of canned fish and dried fruit. Other than that almost everything I ate was wild or grown in my garden. I ate deer, elk, snowshoe hare, pine squirrel, three kinds of grouse, and porcupines, and occasionally ducks, rockchucks, muskrats, packrats, weasels, coyotes, an owl killed by accident—I would never kill an owl intentionally—deer mice, and grasshoppers, huckleberries, soapberries, red twinberries, black twinberries, gooseberries, two kinds of black currants, raspberries, strawberries, Oregon grapes, choke cherries, and rose hips. Starchy roots I ate were camas, yampa, bitterroot and Lomatium, also sprint beauty... I also ate a few minor kinds of roots and a couple of dozen kinds of wild greens. During May and June, before each meal I would eat a salad, often quite a large salad, by just strolling around my property, picking a bit of this and that, and popping

it into my mouth. In a few cases I ground up edible seeds and used them for bread. But grinding them was excessively time consuming. I had no hand-mill, and ground them on a rock. In my garden I grew potatoes, parsnips, beets, onions, two kinds of carrots, spinach, radishes, broccoli, and on occasion orach, Jerusalem artichoke, and turnips.

I would dry wild greens and garden vegetables, and sometimes berries, for use in the winter. But for my starchy foods I relied mainly on potatoes and on store-bought staples such as flour, rice, et cetera. Wild starchy roots are scanty up in the high country. Bitterroot and camas are abundant in places in the lower, flat areas, but these are mostly private land and presumably the ranchers wouldn't want me digging up their meadows to get these foods. In the winters I used to use a tea made from the needles of Douglas fir as a source of vitamin C.

My last winter in Montana, 1995-1996, I was hard up. But when you have to dispense with the things that the system provides, it's surprising how well you can do by improvising on your own. I had no commercial fruits or vegetables, whether fresh, dried, or canned, but I had plenty of my own dried vegetables. I had some dried black currants and rhubarb, and I had squirrels and rabbits for meat. The commercial stuff I had was just flour—whole wheat and white—cooking oil, sugar, and I think I had a scanty supply of rice. I don't recall whether I had any oats or cornmeal. I do know that the little powdered milk that I had soon run out and I was using plaster of Paris—dental—as a source of calcium. When that ran out I was planning to use either burnt, pulverized rabbit bones, or pulverized limestone. But I did alright, I enjoyed my meals, and it was a good winter.

BVD: What was your favorite wild food?

TJK: Probably the tastiest wild food in the Lincoln area is partridge berries, a tiny species of Vaccinium—the blueberry genus—that grows at high altitudes. The berries are so tiny that it may take an hour to pick a cupful, but the flavor is superb. Apart from those, my favorite foods are huckleberries, yampa, and the livers of deer, snowshoe rabbit, and porcupines.

BVD: Did you have any favorite meals that you prepared?

TJK: I didn't have any standard meals, since I just ate what was available at a given time. Generally speaking, my best meals were the stews that contained meat, vegetables, and some starchy food such as potatoes, rice, noodles, or roots such as yampa.

BVD: Would you eat your meals outdoors?

TJK: I seldom did that. I usually ate indoors, at my table in the cabin... When I was done eating, I would sometimes sit back in my chair with my feet up on the table and just gaze out the window for a while...

BVD: How did you learn which plants were edible, and their preparation, if any was needed?

TJK: For years before I left Berkeley I'd been interested in the outdoors, and I had been learning skills such as how to recognize edible wild plants and so forth. I learned

how to recognize them from books on the subject, such as Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America, by Fernald and Kinsey, and Wild Edible Plants of the Western United States, by Donald Kirk. The books give some information about preparation of these plants, but mostly I learned to prepare them by trial and error. I learned some edible plants by experiment. It would be dangerous to experiment with certain families of plants, such as the carrot family and the lily family, because they contain some species that are deadly poisonous. But it's safe to experiment with the mustard family; and the composite family and the beet family, as far as I know, contain no deadly species, though they do contain some that are more or less poisonous. There were a couple of members of the mustard family that I used as greens without ever learning the names of the plants. There was a member of the composite family that I ate for years before I learned that it was a species of false dandelion. And there was a member of the beet family that I often ate but never did identify.

BVD: Were you self-sufficient?

TJK: By no means wholly self-sufficient. I needed store-bought staples such as flour, rice, rolled oats, and cooking oil. I bought most of my clothing, though I also made some. Originally, complete self-sufficiency was a goal that I wanted to attain eventually, but with the shrinking of the wild country and the crowding-in of people around me, I got to feeling that there wasn't any point in it anymore, and my interests turned in other directions.

BVD: How did the way you chose to live fulfill your dreams, desires, or original motivations? That is, your dreams as a youth, and your plan and decision to leave Berkeley. And what was the most satisfying thing about your life in Lincoln?

TJK: In my life in the woods I found certain satisfactions that I had expected, such as personal freedom, independence, a certain element of adventure, a low-stress way of life.

I also achieved certain satisfactions that I hadn't fully understood or anticipated, or that even came as complete surprises to me.

The more intimate you become with nature, the more you appreciate its beauty. It's a beauty that consists not only in sights and sounds but in an appreciation of...the whole thing. I don't know how to express it. What is significant is that when you live in the woods, rather than just visiting them, the beauty becomes a part of your life rather than something you just look at from the outside.

Related to this, part of the intimacy with nature that you acquire, is the sharpening of your senses. Not that your hearing or eyesight become more acute, but you notice things more. In city life you tend to be turned inward, in a way. Your environment is crowded with irrelevant sights and sounds, and you get conditioned to block most of them out of your consciousness. In the woods you get so that your awareness is turned outward, toward your environment, hence you are much more conscious of what goes on around you. For example, you'll notice inconspicuous things on the ground, such as edible plants or animal tracks. If a human being has passed through and has left even just a small part of a footprint, you'll probably notice it. You know what the sounds

are that come to your ears: This is a birdcall, that is the buzzing of a horsefly, this is a startled deer running off, this is the thump of a pine cone that has been cut down by a squirrel and has landed on a log. If you hear a sound that you can't identify, it immediately catches your attention, even if it's so faint that it's barely audible. To me this alertness, or openness of one's senses, is one of the greatest luxuries of living close to nature. You can't understand this unless you've experienced it yourself.

Another thing I learned was the importance of having purposeful work to do. I mean really purposeful work—life-and-death stuff. I didn't truly realize what life in the woods was all about until my economic situation was such that I had to hunt, gather plants, and cultivate a garden in order to eat. During part of my time in Lincoln, especially 1975 through 1978, if I didn't have success in hunting, then I didn't get any meat to eat. I didn't get any vegetables unless I gathered or grew them myself. There is nothing more satisfying than the fulfillment and self-confidence that this kind of self-reliance brings. In connection with this, one loses most of one's fear of death.

In living close to nature, one discovers that happiness does not consist in maximizing pleasure. It consists in tranquility. Once you have enjoyed tranquility long enough, you acquire actually an aversion to the thought of any very strong pleasure—excessive pleasure would disrupt your tranquility.

Finally, one learns that boredom is a disease of civilization. It seems to me that what boredom mostly is is that people have to keep themselves entertained or occupied, because if they aren't, then certain anxieties, frustrations, discontents, and so forth, start coming to the surface, and it makes them uncomfortable. Boredom is almost nonexistent once you've become adapted to life in the woods. If you don't have any work that needs to be done, you can sit for hours at a time just doing nothing, just listening to the birds or the wind or the silence, watching the shadows move as the sun travels, or simply looking at familiar objects. And you don't get bored. You're just at peace.

BVD: What are some of your fondest memories of your life in the woods?

TJK: ...Early in the springtime, when the winter's snow was melted off enough to make it possible, I would take long rambles over the hills, enjoying the new physical freedom made possible by the fact that I no longer had to wear snowshoes, and coming home with a load of fresh, young wild vegetables such as wild onions, dandelions, bitterroot, and Lomatium, with a grouse or two—killed illegally, I'll admit. Working on my garden early in the morning. Hunting snowshoe rabbits in the winter. Times spent at my hidden shack during the winter. Certain places where I camped out during spring, summer, or autumn. Autumn stews of deer meat with potatoes and other vegetables from my garden. Any number of occasions when I just sat or lay still doing nothing, not even thinking much, just soaking in the peace.

Animism

Theresa Kintzs' Interview with Ted Kaczynski

Ted: While I was living in the woods I sort of invented some gods for myself. Not that I believed in these things intellectually, but they were ideas that sort of corresponded with some of the feelings I had. I think the first one I invented was Grandfather Rabbit. You know the snowshoe rabbits were my main source of meat during the winters. I had spent a lot of time learning what they do and following their tracks all around before I could get close enough to shoot them. Sometimes you would track a rabbit around and around and then the tracks disappear. You can't figure out where that rabbit went and lose the trail. I invented a myth for myself, that this was the Grandfather Rabbit, the grandfather who was responsible for the existence of all other rabbits. He was able to disappear, that is why you couldn't catch him and why you would never see him... Every time I shot a snowshoe rabbit, I would always say 'thank you Grandfather Rabbit.' After a while I acquired an urge to draw snowshoe rabbits. I sort of got involved with them to the extent that they would occupy a great deal of my thought. I actually did have a wooden object that, among other things, I carved a snowshoe rabbit in. I planned to do a better one, just for the snowshoe rabbits, but I never did get it done. There was another one that I sometimes called the Will 'o the Wisp, or the wings of the morning. That's when you go out in to the hills in the morning and you just feel drawn to go on and on and on and on, then you are following the wisp. That was another god that I invented for myself.

Happy memories

Ted's Journal

TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 1979

I started out before dawn this morning and am now at an old campsite of mine overlooking McClellan Creek. It feels very good to be in the wild country again.

I especially value the *silence* here. (It is now so noisy around my cabin.) The only disruptive sounds this morning have been caused by the 9 evil jet planes that have passed within my hearing.

WED. JUNE 27, 1979

Am now camped at another of my old campsites in the McClellan Creek drainage, high up.

TUESDAY, JULY 10, 1979

This morning moved to my camp on the other fork of McClellan. Took a walk up on hillside, then climbed up through beautiful parks of old Douglas firs. Shot a big blue grouse rooster. On the ridgetop enjoyed the magnificent views. The one good thing about this campsite is that it is especially well hidden from the eyes of man. It is also comparatively good picking for wild herbs, for this altitude.

SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1979

Today I had the most wonderful morning I've had for a long time. At this beautiful dark, densely wooded spot, the Wisp began calling me, so I followed it to an oxen meadow. I slowly climbed to the top of the mountain through this strip of magic meadow. I gathered some mint along the way and felt as if it would bring me luck to drink tea from mint gathered in this enchanted landscape. (I didn't believe it, of course; it was just a feeling.) At the top of the mountain I looked down on the ridges below and contemplated the sight for some time. Then I climbed down through the Douglas Fir parks, over to the meadow strip again, and sat for awhile looking at the blue lupine and yellow flowers of some plant of the composite family, both of which dotted the meadow. Then I climbed back down to camp, looking at the plants. Only 2 jets passed, and those when my walk was nearly over, so that I was able to forget civilization and the threat it poses to these wonderful solitudes. Thus I was able to drink in the things that I saw with full appreciation. This gulch is a glorious place. It has special magic. I never get tired of seeing these fine old parks of Douglas firs around here.

Theresa Kintzs' Interview with Ted Kaczynski

THERESA (PS): Kaczynski says he began an intensive study of how to identify wild edible plants, track animals and replicate primitive technologies, approaching the task like the scholar he was.

TED: Many years ago I used to read books like, for example, Ernest Thompson Seton's "Lives of Game Animals" to learn about animal behavior. But after a certain point, after living in the woods for a while, I developed an aversion to reading any scientific accounts. In some sense reading what the professional biologists said about wildlife ruined or contaminated it for me. What began to matter to me was the knowledge I acquired about wildlife through personal experience.

I have quite a bit of experience identifying wild edible plants, ... it's certainly one of the most fulfilling activities that I know of, going out in the woods and looking for things that are good to eat. But the trouble with a place like Montana, how it differs from the Eastern forests, is that starchy plant foods are much less available. There are edible roots but they are generally very small ones and the distribution is limited. The best ones usually grow down in the lower areas which are agricultural areas, actually ranches, and the ranchers presumably don't want you digging up their meadows, so starchy foods were civilized foods. I bought flour, rice, corn meal, rolled oats, powdered milk and cooking oil.

THERESA (PS): Kaczynski lamented never being able to accomplish three things to his satisfaction: building a crossbow that he could use for hunting, making a good pair of deerhide moccasins that would withstand the daily hikes he took on the rocky hillsides, and learning how to make fire consistently without using matches. He says he kept very busy and was happy with his solitary life.

TED: One thing I found when living in the woods was that you get so that you don't worry about the future, you don't worry about dying, if things are good right now you think, 'well, if I die next week, so what, things are good right now.' I think it was Jane Austen who wrote in one of her novels that happiness is always something that you are anticipating in the future, not something that you have right now. This isn't always true. Perhaps it is true in civilization, but when you get out of the system and become re-adapted to a different way of life, happiness is often something that you have right now.

Living in the woods, once you get adapted to that way of life, there's almost no such thing as boredom. You can sit for a while, and just for hours, you can just sit and do nothing and be at peace.

Ted's Journal

SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1979 IN MCCLELLAN GULCH

Today I had the most wonderful morning I've had for a long time. At this beautiful dark, densely wooded spot, the Wisp began calling me, so I followed it to an oxen meadow. I slowly climbed to the top of the mountain through this strip of magic meadow. I gathered some mint along the way and felt as if it would bring me luck to drink tea from mint gathered in this enchanted landscape. (I didn't believe it, of

course; it was just a feeling.) At the top of the mountain I looked down on the ridges below and contemplated the sight for some time. Then I climbed down through the Douglas Fir parks, over to the meadow strip again, and sat for awhile looking at the blue lupine and yellow flowers of some plant of the composite family, both of which dotted the meadow. Then I climbed back down to camp, looking at the plants. Only 2 jets passed, and those when my walk was nearly over, so that I was able to forget civilization and the threat it poses to these wonderful solitudes. Thus I was able to drink in the things that I saw with full appreciation. This gulch is a glorious place. It has special magic. I never get tired of seeing these fine old parks of Douglas firs around here.

JAN. 31, 1982

This winter, hunting in the long hill which extends towards the south from the first peak to the east of Baldy, I have seen many colored stripes on trees. I think that this means that they will cut wood there, which will ruin the area. That one is my favorite area which can be reached easily from my ranch without staying in the woods overnight. Besides it is also the best area to hunt for rabbits on this side of Stemple Pass Road. The ruin of this area will make it more difficult for me to get enough meat during the winter.

JULY 25, 1982

I first went to my camp in the dry and open slope that faces McClellan's stream. Since the weather appeared to be good when I was going to bed, I did not unwrap my coat cloth. It rained during the night; I had to get up, make fire, and unwrap my cloth; and I was wet nevertheless.

JULY, 1982

Another following day, the day appearing much better, and having found that it was possible to bring my bundles with less difficulty than before, encouraged myself and went to my high camp over McClellan.

OCTOBER 1982

In the first half of October, feeling nervous and tired due to difficulties and anxiety that had to do with my cellar to store roots, and other anxieties too, I picked up only the more essential things and I took off for my favorite place: the stream that flows into the McClellan Stream...

NOVEMBER 15, 1982

I headed south walking...across the slope of the mountain, on top of McClellan, very high. The morning was very beautiful and I was very happy...Afterwards, I walked a little bit down to the stream, so as to enjoy the wonderful and dark beauty of the place...I wish I could express the wonderful mystery of that stream.

AUGUST 1982

The weather still looked bad in the morning; I was discouraged because of this and because of the difficulty of bringing my bundles and as a consequence I went to my most secret camp...McClellan; when it makes rain this camp is much better than the other one....

Another following day I took a stroll uphill on the opposite side of the camp. By good fortune I was able to kill a blue partridge. I picked up a few wild onions too. For me that place is somewhat sacred, because it had not been touched too much by the hands of men.

JULY 29-30, 1982

Another following day I went to my high camp over McClellan; it turned out to be hotter than the day before and even though I had with me approximately half a canteen (or a "quart") of water, I still suffered from more thirst and tiredness than the day before.

NOVEMBER 1982

Upon arriving to my old camp in that place near the stream that flows in the McClellan Stream, I began to feel the tranquillity of the forest. I did not care that the forest was cold or wet, with an inch of snow that covered the ground. As always, I enjoyed the wild beauty of that area.

NOVEMBER 29, 1981

In my earlier notes I mentioned that I built a very small cabin in an isolated site several years ago. Near my cabin was a favorite place of mine where I would usually camp out. Here an owl would usually sing for me at night...It is tranquil here; there is peace here. The soft sound of the wind in the pines increases the feeling of peace.

APRIL 29, 1983

The twenty ninth of April the sky was clear and the weather was pleasant, and I transferred my [secret cabin] camp out to the next cliff [direction] from where the [cabin] is. After raising my coat and making a layer of branches to protect myself from the wet floor, I ate and went to sleep on the slope that was up higher from the camp. (This slope provided me with an abundance of herbs), The view seen from this slope is extremely beautiful. I enjoyed being there very much. After resting for a while, I walked barefoot from one side to the other of the hill and forest that borders with it, in a very silent way. I like very much to walk slowly and silently through the wild. The following day I went up the mountain at daybreak. I felt very happy and energetic. I walked on top of the mountain...It was a magical morning; I was very sensitive to the silence, to the beauty, and to the mystery of the wild. I was very happy.

MAY 1983

When the sun was setting towards the west, I went down to the slanting cliff and then climbed up to the spring to get water to drink. On the way, I stopped to dig some Lomatium roots. I got some big ones. I was tired when I arrived at camp. By the way, this camp is on a beautiful cliff, with a beautiful clear water stream. Up higher, the cliff is narrow and the slope is strong; further below,...the cliff is narrow there too and not too easy to access, so that it does not invite whoever passes through the slanting cliff to go up there.

Daily Routine

Ted's Journal

I explored to the east along a high Ridge, reached a High Peak and then turned back. Very fine views, though somewhat obscured by trees.

Many of the trees are very old with thick trunks, but not very tall, apparently stunted, which is probably why they were never logged off near the High Peak at which I turned back. I saw grouse, but couldn't get a shot at it.

Shot 2 squirrels on the way back.

Expenditure, 322 cartridges for a quantity of meat which I estimate to be equivalent to a can of fish.

Went almost back to the cabin. I wasted one cartridge trying to shoot a rabbit which I missed. I should have gotten it but was tense and over anxious because I hadn't shot a rabbit before and because it would have been a pretty big chunk of meat compared to these little squirrels.

Went up on the Ridge to work on a lean tool for a cab which I hope to use as a base for further exploration. Saw no game, probably because it was windy and snowing heavily and squirrels don't seem to like bad weather.

Went down a minor exploring walk to the relatively low peak northeast of the cabin. Shot nothing today but need no meat since my ration plan includes a can of fish for today. One can per week.

The rest of the day I spent as follows, made candles and made a candle holder to catch the wax. Worked on putting trim around the door to keep the weather out. Made hooks from a coat hanger and attached them to the wall to hang my rifles on.

One more step towards solving the problem of where to put things in this tiny place.

Relatively warm again. Today was out for four or five hours.

Just above the springs which are the source of the stream which runs by the cabin, there's a beautiful ravine closed in by tall trees. Here I saw a group of three deer later on a Ridge I saw a substantial herd of deer more than I could well count.

The window in the high Ridge was very fierce on the way back I had the misfortune to meet the Jagoff who has been staying in the cabin which I passed on the way up here. Just after turning off the gravel Rd.

The cocksucker said he is going to be up here all the time now because he is laid off for the winter.

It seems like there's no place in the world where one can be alone. It wouldn't be so bad if I found the fellow's personality congenial. But in fact, I disliked the jerk.

Snowshoeing good yesterday and today because the snow has become crusted as a result of recent warm spell.

Found a fine new little area of forest today. The slopes not very steep.

Under bridge where the wind had blown some of the ground clear of snow, I found some wild onions growing in soil loose enough so they could be dug up digging them with rough work because the wind was very bitter and I had to dig with a pointed stick.

My little hand speed I had left at home because I hadn't expected to find diggable onions.

On the way back I spotted a porcupine in a pine tree and shot it expending 222 cartridges.

At first it seemed to be dead, but then I noticed that it was still breathing.

Because of the thick hair and quills, I couldn't see where the brain area of its head was, so I just put my gun against what I guess should be about right and fired.

It was very difficult to butcher because the skin didn't pull away from the flesh very cleanly. And of course one had to watch out for the quills.

It had many tapeworms inside the ad domain so after cleaning it I washed my hands and my knife thoroughly in a strong solution of Lysol and I burned all the refuge. Naturally, I will cook the meat very well.

This morning went wading through the snow for a couple of hours.

When I got back I boiled for 30 minutes. The rest of the Porcupine heart liver, kidneys a few lumps of fat and a large clot of blood taken from the chest.

Directly after boiling, I ate the kidneys and part of the liver which were rich and delicious. I also ate part of the blood clot, which tasted good enough but had a dry texture which I didn't care for. I then sliced up the heart and the rest of the liver and put them into the frying pan, with lumps of fat to fry. They tasted very good this way too, but not any better than they had tasted, just boiled.

The part in which I had boiled the stuff contained a dark rich broth. I crumbled the cloud of blood into small pieces and put it into the broth with a handful of noodles and boiled it some more. The result was a very tasty soup.

A few days ago, I noticed the sided soreness around the roots of my teeth from chewing the rather tough porcupine meat.

Most of my food here has been soft and I suppose I'm out of shape for chewing tough things on the left side, the soreness soon subsided, but on the upper right it persisted and even worsened.

Today I finally have an infection in the gum. I suspect that this may have resulted from fragments of meat having been jammed in between the gum and the teeth during the process of chewing. I ran a piece of thread between the gum and teeth to remove any bits of meat that might still be there, and the thread came up with a little puss on it. So, the thing is draining, and perhaps will begin to subside.

Of the few animals around here whose personalities I have some acquaintance, the squirrels are the most interesting. Chipmunks come second.

I have no compunction about killing rabbits and porcupines, but I'd rather regret shooting squirrels. I like them too much. 17 degrees below 0 this morning. Looks like we are in for a cold spell clear sky. The first thing I did this morning after building a fire was to make a pot of cocoa. The only reason I mentioned such a trivial item is that under the circumstances, it tasted most extraordinary.

Had a fairly lazy day today, forgot to mention the soreness in my gum has finally disappeared.

I shot a coyote. I wish I could say there was some skill involved, but it was all luck. There was a light layer of fresh snow. Just as I was coming to the Crest of a little Ridge, the coyote came over from the other side. We stopped and stared at each other for a few seconds. Then I aimed and fired. I was a little afraid that the bullet would not be enough to immediately disable him, since it was only a 22 and a standard velocity cartridge yet.

But he went right down. However, when I approached, he heaved himself up on his front legs and dragged himself down the hill with his hind legs trailing behind. Apparently paralyzed. Probably the bullet hit his spine, and now I now load it with a high speed hollow point long rifle cartridge and found him lying by the Creek.

As he showed some disposition to get up on his front legs again, I shot him in the back. The bullet passing out through his chest and making a pretty good hole. Actually, I almost regret shooting him because he was such a beautiful alert animal and he was the first coyote I'd ever seen except from a moving car which doesn't count. It was quite a job carrying him back to the cabin. He must have weighed 30 pounds or more.

I have all the meat stashed away, some just hung in the cool attic, some packed and snow and some hung up behind the stove to make Turkey.

I put the hide on a stretcher made of spruce poles, but I still have to clean off the fat bits of meat which still cling to it.

Today on my walk, a bull elk moved out of my path and made the mistake of trying to go through a shallow ravine, noticing that the elk was having great difficulty with the deep snow and the ravine I thought I would pursue him and see how close I could get.

The elk floundered so badly that his progress was extremely slow and his difficulties were compounded by the fact that in the neighborhood of the ravine or many small trees which grew too close together for him to get his antlers through.

As a matter of fact, I was able to snowshoe right up to him. By the time I reached him, he was so exhausted that he just laid panting in the snow, I approached him from the side, put out my hand, and stroked his ribs for several minutes.

The guy who has the cabin below mine came up here and gave me a can of chili. Two cans of Peaches, a package of six Hershey bars, a large package of frankfurters, and $2.00, all of which he insisted that I accept this payment for helping him get wood last week.

He said he sold the wood for $15. Was he trying to be especially generous because he had some idea that I am impoverished? One of the main satisfactions of being up here is doing everything for myself.

He is a decent enough guy and all that, but how can I explain to him that I would rather catch my own wild meat than eat frankfurters?

Today I finished my squirrel trap. It seems to work pretty well. It is powered by 12 fat rubber bands and snap shut very strongly. If I can find the right bait to attract squirrels, I should be OK with it.

Since it was made mostly from scraps, it only costs say $0.35 to make it a package of rubber bands and a few nails and screws. Whether has been just fine lately, I found some yellow violets and picked some of their leaves for salad. They were good having none of the acid taste that the leaves of some kinds of violets have and are supposed to be especially rich in vitamins.

My evening walk was uneventful, but as usual I was strongly aware of the beauty of the place. It must be understood that this beauty does not consist only in what is seen with the eye and heard with the ear it is involved with a sense of freedom.

The last two days or so had beautiful summary weather.

Took a long ramble up the ridges, so many blue grouse and shot 2 males while the weather was bad, the grouse didn't seem to be conducting their mating rituals, but in today's fine weather the males were strutting around again and calling. They seemed to have a variety of signals. There is a melodious note that sounds like the noise made blowing across the top of the bottle, and then there's a kind of deep gutteral. Note that the males make when they puff up their necks.

And there is a variety of clucking sounds.

I noticed if I went after a male a few times I got close enough to make it fly, but it didn't fly far because it didn't want to lose contact with the female that was courting.

When a grouse lands, it usually makes a pretty loud fluttering with its wings to break itself.

Every time, every time the male lands, the female answers with a flutter of its wings.

Define Warm day was out seven hours. I went about northeast and found myself not very far from the abandoned dog house on South Fork Humbug Creek.

And I followed the stream that flows into Humbug Creek upstream. It is paralleled by a small Rd. I shot a squirrel here extending 1 cartridge.

Along the stream I also took some dandelions and some particularly fine onions on the way back I gathered leaves that I believed to be of the mustard family and the mustardy taste confirmed this, so I wasn't afraid to eat it.

I found it to be one of the finest salad plants I have ever eaten.

It was slightly succulent and very tender, with enough radish flavor to make it spicy, but not so much to make it unpleasantly sharp.

The squirrel I shot turned out to be a pregnant female with four fetuses, each about 3/4 of an inch long, which I tossed into my Stew.

This morning I returned from a 16 day hike after I got home, I took a much needed bath down by the stream.

Later I watered my garden, thinned it and pulled some weeds.

In the evening I took a little stroll, no matter how often I look at those wooded heels and walk over them. I still find something exciting in mysterious about them.

A little after dark I happened to roll out of my blanket to readjust my clothing, and I saw a most spectacular meteor.

Unless it was an artificial satellite or something like that reentering the atmosphere, it was a large fireball that left the long and brilliant trail and throughout sparks at times it streaked across the sky from north to South.

Ted's Journal

Part of the intimacy with nature that you acquire is the sharpening of the senses. Not that your hearing and eyesight become more acute, but you notice things more. In city life you tend to be turned inward. Your environment is crowded with irrelevant sights and sounds, and you get conditioned to block most of them out of your conscious mind. In the woods you get so that your awareness is turned outward, toward your environment. You are much more conscious of what goes on around you. You know what the sounds are, that come to your ears: this is a birdcall, that is the buzzing of a horse fly, this is a startled deer running off, this is the thump of a pine cone that has been cut down by a squirrel. If you hear a sound that you can't identify, it immediately catches your attention, even if it is so faint as to be barely audible. You notice inconspicuous things on the ground, such as edible plants or animal tracks. If a human being has passed through and has left even just a small part of a footprint, you'll probably notice it.

Ted's Journal

JULY 14, 1975

One morning I went down from my camp to the lower areas to look for deer. While sitting on a stump to rest, I heard some noise in the woods, and then a large cow elk broke out into a logged over area—followed by 3 coyotes! The elk was clearly upset—but the coyotes left off the chase probably having concluded that that big old elk was too tough for them, and stood around as if trying to decide what to do next. I tried a shot at one from a long way off—didn't want to try to sneak up too much since coyotes are so sharp. I thought I ought to hit it, but I missed, probably because the rifle went off before I was ready for it. The trouble is that the .30-06 has a lighter trigger pull than my .22. Unconsciously following my practice with the .22, I put a certain amount of pressure on the trigger before I was quite ready to fire. Anyway, I got all depressed again, over wasting a 30¢ cartridge like that.

SEPT. 8, 1975

Today I went up in the meadows west of here to get yampa. Digging was tough, but I got perhaps 3 cups anyway.

MAY 6, 1981

From now on I think I'll write my confessions on illegal hunting in Spanish because it'll be safer in case someone sees these notebooks by accident.

JUNE 23. 1981

It was maybe 4 weeks ago that I shot a ground-hog; i.e., yellow-bellied marmot, near my cabin.

I shot it in the head; knocked it out and got blood at the site; but before I could get it, he recovered enough to go to the burrow. Although I spent a lot of time digging the burrow, I could not get it... Shit! This puts my average under 90%; I mean, my average since last August. So, without a doubt, I will raise my average again ...

JAN. 14[1982]

My gloves are fingers made from marmot skin they have suited me well last year and they have suited me well this winter until now. The skins are strong and handle friction better than I thought; although they have been repaired a few times, generally at the seams. But I have observed that by tanning with smoke it does not turn out well that survives forever the wetting and drying. In the beginning, when the gloves were wetted, upon drying they would be almost as flexible as before they were wetted. But I would wet them almost every time that I used them, and little by little they would begin to turn stiff upon drying ...

Gardening

The Secret Life of Ted Kaczynski

Chris: Knowing he had no power, plumbing or pump, and that his garden was uphill from his spring-fed stream, I asked him, "Ted, how do you water your potatoes?"

"I carry water up to my garden in buckets," was his reply.

"Doesn't that take a long time, and isn't it a lot of work?" I asked.

"I have plenty of time, and the work doesn't bother me," he said. By then he had grown a beard, which was full but didn't extend much above his mouth line or too far down his neck.

Ted raised an amazing garden, especially considering the climate the Lincoln area offers at almost 5,000 feet above sea level. Heavily timbered mountain gulches are not noted as garden spots. But Florence Gulch had a reputation among the old-timers as a place where they could grow things that wouldn't make it anywhere else in the Lincoln Valley. During the 1950s a man named Jack Parks lived in a cabin built in the late 1930s just above Ted's place. Parks was able to grow huge pumpkins in his garden. My wife, Betty, still remembers seeing them as a young girl when her family went to visit Mr. Parks.

There seems to be a natural inversion created in Florence Gulch, one of those mountain idiosyncrasies no one can really explain. My theory is the warm air that rises from the valley floor becomes trapped in the gulch by cool air above, at the foot of Baldy Mountain. The result is far fewer killer frosts than elsewhere and thus, a longer growing season.

But growing anything, anywhere around Lincoln, even in Florence Gulch, is still a challenge. The high mountain valleys can be nipped by frost any month of the year, plus there are plenty of animals to contend with. Ted had a tough time keeping rodents, rabbits, and other small animals away from his crops. Deer were a problem, too, but he had much better success in fencing them out. It required nearly a constant vigil to keep the small animals at bay. At night he often sat atop a pyramid-shaped stile that crossed his eight-foot-high fence, spotlighting and shooting small garden invaders with his .22 at his lower garden.

After Ted expanded his garden and started a second plot to the southwest of his cabin, he had enough extra vegetables to start drying them to keep and eat during the long Montana winter. Then he needed a place to store his dried food where it would keep, and wouldn't be eaten by animals.

Foraging

Dandelion Greens by Ted Kaczynski

Most people know that dandelion greens are edible, but many who have tried this vegetable have been badly disappointed because they have gathered it too late in the season, when the leaves are tough and bitter.

To be worth eating, dandelion greens must be gathered very young. Some people may find all the dandelions they want in their lawns; other than that, a good place to get them is along the edge of logging roads soon after the snow is off. You'll have to go on foot and look sharp, because at that time the leaves are small and often rather dark-colored, so that it's easy to miss them.

Bring with you a hand weeder, garden trowel, sharpened bar of iron, or some similar cosh. It the toy of the dandelion root, which is generally an inch or two below the surface of the ground, there grows a head, or cluster of loaves. The tastiest part of the dandelion is the white base of this head.

Push your tool into the soil a couple of inches from the plant and lever up, so as to break of the top of the root and bring the whole head in one piece.

When you get home with your dandelions wash them thoroughly, pull off [text unreadable]

[text unreadable] than any home garden vegetable. Still, few people today will gather dandelions for purely [text unreadable] reasons. If you measure the monetary value of the vegetable against the time you spend gathering and preparing it, you'll find that you are working for very [text unreadable].

But in spring most of us like to be out in the sun and air. Gathering dandelion greens is a form of outdoor recreation that costs nothing – and if it knocks a dollar or two off your grocery bill, so much the better.

Wildlife Sightings

Time Magazine's Interview with Ted Kaczynski

Ted: I'll tell you a good story, I was camping in my favorite spot. It was the best place there was in that country. While I was picking huckleberry's I could hear ravens kicking up a big fuss and I was wondering what these ravens were making such a big fuss about. And all of a sudden, I heard this tremendous whooshing sound. I thought, my god, am I being buzzed by an airplane? And I looked up and there's a golden eagle that goes diving past me, within like ten feet or so of my head with the four ravens chasing it. And the golden eagle, it landed next to some bushes further up the gulch, and it sort of put it's back to the bushes, so it could face off the ravens that were harassing it. And I kept walking up the gulch, closer to the eagle, and finally it took off and it flew past me, it must've been within six feet of my head, it flew so close and these four ravens are still after it.

Ravens Make Interesting Neighbors by Ted Kaczynski

In ancient times ravens were regarded as birds of evil omen. It is hard to understand this today, for they are among the most playful of all birds. In windy weather they may often be seen performing aerial acrobatics, apparently just for their own amusement.

Once when I was sitting at the edge of a cliff overlooking Copper Creek, a few miles from my home, three ravens came to investigate me. One after another, as if playing follow-the-leader, they would swoop down at me, veer off up into the sky, then down again for another swoop. At the low point of each dive they would glide by surprisingly slowly, so that I was able to get a good look at them. They kept coming closer and closer until they were passing within six feet above my head. One doesn't often get an opportunity to view ravens at such close quarters, since they are intelligent enough to be shy of man.

Ravens are big birds, with a wing-span of up to three feet and a length of twenty-six inches. They are entirely black and look much like their cousins the crows, but they are larger and are found in mountain country, whereas crows inhabit lower areas. Also, the raven's calls are more varied. One peculiar call resembles the sound made by running a stick along a picket fence.

The ravens' playful nature may take a malicious turn, for they will sometimes attack other birds, seemingly just for sport. One day when I was out after huckleberries I saw two ravens checking a red-tailed hawk. The hawk dove through a dense stand of trees, and the ravens veered off rather than passing through the thicket. This gave the hawk

time to catch an updraft and he began circling skyward; but the ravens caught the same updraft and came circling up after him.

After a while one of the ravens lost interest and flew away, kit the other kept after the hawk. The birds circled up and up until they locked so small that they could be distinguished from one another only with difficulty, by the different shapes of their wings.

Finally the hawk reached the end of the updraft and the raven caught up with him. Then there began a thrilling aerial dogfight. First the raven would dart at the hawk and try to strike it with his beak; then the hawk in its turn would dart at the raven. Once or twice the birds seemed to succeed in striking one another. Whether they did any damage I don't know, but at last the raven gave up, flew away, and left the hawk soaring in lonely triumph at an immense altitude.

Cabin fever? Try snowshoes for a change by Ted Kaczynski

Some people think Montana's mountains are dull in winter. But if you try on a pair of snowshoes, get off the beaten path, and pay some attention to animal tracks, some interesting experiences with wildlife may be waiting for you.

If you follow the trail of a coyote you may find, as I did one day, the place where he has killed and eaten a snowshoe rabbit. There were a few drops of blood on the snow and the rabbit's two hind feet –nothing else.

Apparently the coyote ate bones, guts, skin, and all– but those two big hind feet with their thick pads of hair were too much for him to stomach.

On another occasion I followed the trail of a snowshoe rabbit. I was only a few minutes behind him, for he had circled around and left fresh tracks on top of my own snowshoe trail. Finally I came to a place where the rabbit's tracks ended abruptly, as if the animal had disappeared into thin air.

On investigation it turned out that he really HAD disappeared into the air. There were a few tufts of rabbit fur on the snow, and the wing-marks of a large bird. Clearly a hawk had killed the rabbit and flown away with it when he heard me coming.

He must have had some trouble getting airborne with his burden, as there was an intermittent drag-mark in the snow extending for fifty feet or more.

One winter a few years ago there was a bunch of five big bull elk hanging around the ridge above my cabin.

The snow was deep that year, and they would come out in the open meadows where they would paw through the snow to get at the grass.

Snowshoeing over a rise one day I saw this bunch some distance ahead of me; they took off running and scattered in different directions. One of them made the mistake of trying to cross a draw where the snow had accumulated to a considerable depth, and he was soon floundering shoulder-deep.

In the old days the Indians of the North Woods used to run down big game on snowshoes. Taking a hint from this, I set off after the elk as fast as I could go, just to see how close to him I could get. I had no trouble catching up with him, because after

pushing across the draw he got into a thick stand of little lodgepoles, where his horns got badly tangled in the trees.

Half buried in the snow, he became so exhausted by his struggles that by the time I reached him he seemed to have just given up and just lay there panting.

Riding up on the surface of my snowshoes I towered over the elk, but I squatted down next to him and began stroking his side. This seemed to calm him –or maybe he just got his wind back–in any case his breathing became quieter. After a while he heaved himself up out of the snow and shook his antlers loose from the trees. At this point I decided it was prudent to get well out of his way, so I did.

The Ted K Archive

Ted Kaczynski
Ted Kaczynski's Low-Tech Lifestyle

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