

# Good Manners in the Outdoors

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WE GOT UP early and checked out of our motel. My wife Pat, the boys Mac and Jeff, and I were on the last leg of our drive from Washington, D.C., to Wolf Springs Forest, our summer home at Minong, Wis.

As we ate our breakfasts, we noticed a waitress delivering a neatly wrapped picnic lunch. The idea hit Pat and me about the same time: "Let's have the waitress fix a picnic lunch for us. Then we can save time on the road and reach Wolf Springs Forest that much sooner."

Soon we were rolling along; minutes and miles were ticking. By noontime the picnic lunch became the prime topic of conversation. It wasn't long before we saw a road sign, "Picnic area 2 miles ahead."

The boys were first to spot the turnoff sign, and we headed toward a wooded area which, from our distance, seemed cool, clean, and inviting. But that was before we got up close and surveyed the grounds. You never saw such a mess in your life—picnic tables standing in a sea of beer cans, garbage, empty cartons, and old newspapers. We couldn't stand the place. Even the boys lost their appetites.

It made us wonder, as we drove on looking for a clean picnic spot, just how many other Americans had experienced this sort of thing, and why good manners aren't always practiced in the woods the same as at home. We wondered, too, just how the people who had made the mess, and left it, would feel if they had found it in that condition when they arrived for a picnic of their own.

When you multiply this experience of one American family by thousands, even

millions, you have a major problem—that of bad manners in the outdoors.

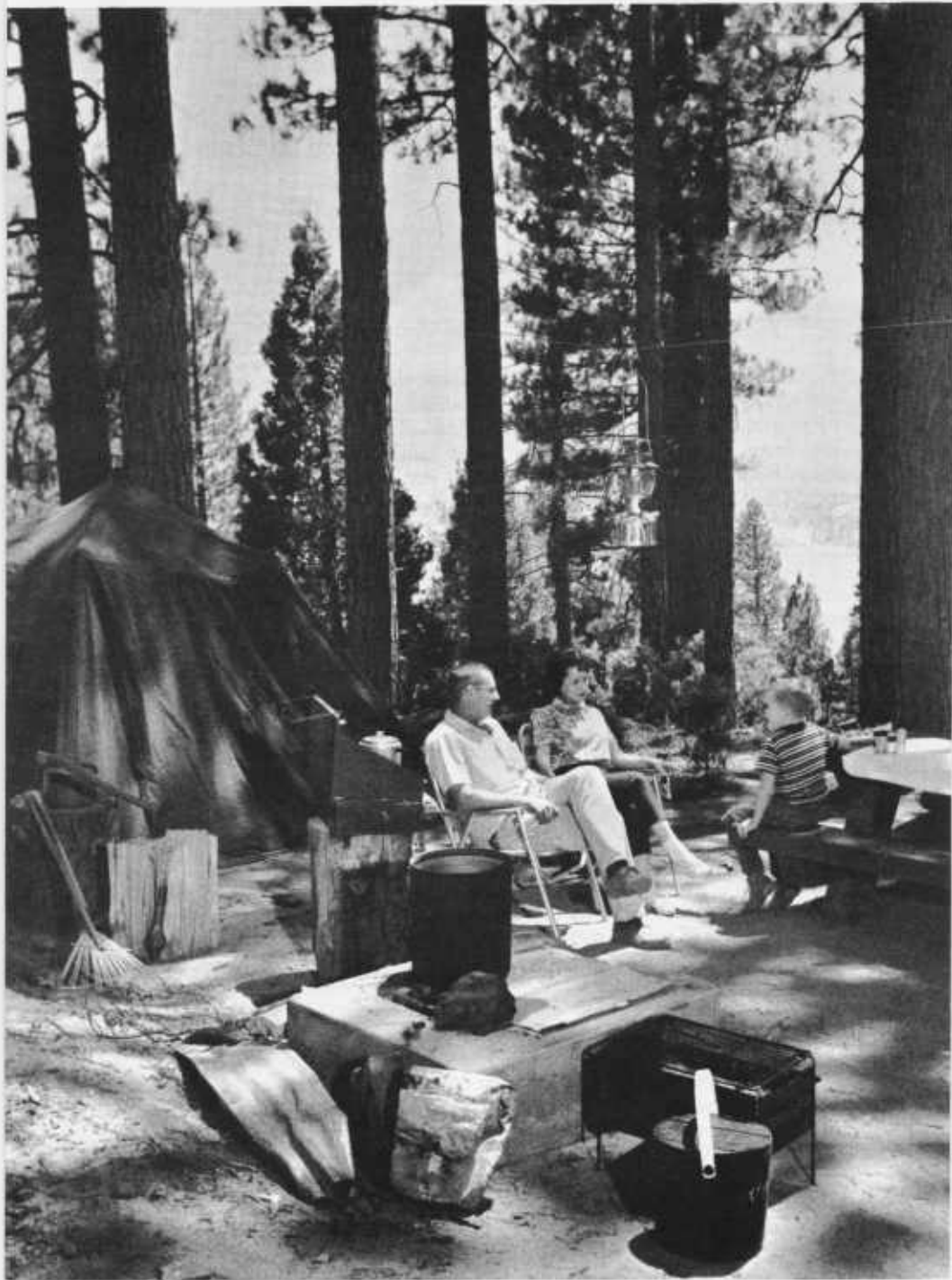
I should add that it wasn't very many miles—and about as many minutes—when the boys spotted another wooded area off to the right of the highway. We pulled in to give it a look. It was delightful—spotless, attractive, inviting, and charming. Previous users had picked up every piece of litter, every tin can and bottle, and placed them carefully in the trash cans provided for that purpose. Even the picnic tables and benches had been wiped clean. This was the place. We ate our sandwiches, cleaned up our litter, and rolled out for Minong.

Of course, the Stoddards have not been waging a major antilitter campaign, but we have become very alert to the responsibility of all individuals to exercise good manners in the outdoors. If the minority sees a good example from the majority, then the majority will get bigger and gradually phase out the minority or reduce its ranks to a minimum. Good manners are contagious.

Bad manners, of course, sometimes take the form of criminal acts, such as desecrating private property. I recall that on one occasion we returned for a visit to Wolf Springs Forest and found our whole clearing littered with trash and beer cans. The culprits had even cleaned out the trout from our spring ponds. Because of this, I have had to display a sign at our



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*A spotless campground in the Sierra National Forest, Calif.*

gate which reads, "Access by Permission Only. See Caretaker." I hope it works.

There is a better deterrent to bad manners than signs and gates—the Golden Rule. This we too often forget.

Our outdoors is growing smaller because more people are using the outdoor facilities. We find ourselves elbowing each other on the highways, in the parks, picnic areas, mountain retreats, and resorts.

Bad manners outdoors are expensive. It costs no less than \$1.5 million a year to pick up litter in the national parks alone. Add dollars expended by other agencies of government—Federal, State, and local—and you can see that hooliganism, or bad manners, means that taxes go up—your taxes. One national organization has estimated collecting litter adds \$1.5 billion to Federal, State, and local tax bills.

### Teaching Youngsters

We all need to instill good manners in our children, not so much to please us, but to teach them the immense satisfaction of having proper consideration for the other fellow. One simple way to do it is to show your youngsters how to clean up litter and put out the campfire when you leave your campground for the next fellow. Teaching by setting the example yourself is easily the best method.

There are many ways to show good manners in the outdoors, and sometimes we need to be reminded of some of the things that we should and should not do. Maybe these tips will be helpful:

Always be careful with a fire in the woods or on the range. The thoughtful citizen will do everything he can to prevent wildfire. Fire destroys timber and grass, kills wildlife, and leaves the soil open to erosion, which results in muddy streams that kill fish. Make sure your campfire is dead out when you leave.

Extreme care and good manners are vital to the safe use of guns. Bad manners with a gun can cost someone his life, even yours. Shooting up signs, gates, locks, insulators, rural mailboxes, and other property is a wanton disregard for the rights and property of others.

As you leave your camp, why not leave a supply of firewood for the next camper?



*Litterbugging at its worst is seen (top) in a roadside collection of tin cans and refuse. (Below) Boy Scouts prepared the sign and its surroundings to spur people to practice good manners while enjoying the outdoors.*





*Lassie, enlisted in the war on litter, drops trash in a receptacle on the Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol.*

This little act of courtesy will be good for your soul; it will make the next camper happy, too. Above all, see that your campsite is left clean—all refuse burned or buried, cans and bottles removed.

A littered campsite is a campsite which is eliminated from further use—at least until it has been cleaned up. Or to put it in another way, try to leave your camp in the same condition in which you would like to find it.

Then there's the matter of using private lands and some public lands without permission. Good manners require that you first obtain permission from the landowner before going on private land. And, once the permission is granted, good manners dictate that you close gates, prevent litter, use care with fire, and practice rules of safety with firearms. Good manners mean privileges for the next fellow, while bad manners will keep gates shut tight.

Litterbugging is extremely bad manners, on the road or off. There are laws against it. When you travel—anywhere—take a litterbag in your car. Scatter no debris along the highways or from your boat on waterways; put it in your litterbag and carry it home for disposal.

Today we have sound pollution, as well as air and water pollution. Unless you keep your radio and TV volumes low, people who seek peace and quiet in the outdoors may not find it.

Acts of friendliness on the open road, in the parks, and elsewhere all add up to more good manners, more courtesy for the other fellow. The man in trouble needs a friend. He may be out of gas or have a flat tire or a dead battery. Or he may be just plain lonesome.

Always there's need for good manners in water sports, such as boating, fishing, swimming. Boatmen who race their outboards up and down a lake, disturbing fishermen and others, are showing bad manners—lack of consideration for the other fellow. Human relationships are strained to the breaking point by this kind of conduct.

The result is strong conflicts between boating enthusiasts and the fishermen that could easily have been avoided by thoughtful outdoor manners.

If good manners are born of habits we acquire through self-discipline and by training, and bad manners spring from ignorance and thoughtlessness, then we need a national program to educate our urban citizenry in outdoor manners. Couldn't this be done in the same way that Smokey Bear has brought public awareness of forest fire danger? I think it could. Some of the antilitter campaigns we now have are helping to accomplish this in part. But the time has come to unite all civic-minded groups into a national campaign against litter before we drown our civilization in our own waste. The Citizens' Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty stands ready to give substantial impetus to such an effort.