

Book Proposal

Outlaw:

How Not To Hike the Pacific Crest Trail

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*Note that the manuscript is complete at 12 chapters, 455 pages (136,000 words)

Outlaw: How Not to Hike the Pacific Crest Trail
Brief Synopsis / Overview

On March 21, 1983 three college friends set one foot each through a barbed wire fence across the California border into Mexico. We took a photograph, then turned north and took a step towards Canada. Six months and 2600 miles later we arrived there.

Our achievement was unlikely. Even today, with superior equipment, a well-established trail, and a documented network for re-supply points, barely 1 in 25 hikers attempting the full 2600-mile route actually make it. The odds in 1983 were exponentially higher, and the odds against us in particular were astronomically higher.

Outlaw: How Not to Hike the Pacific Crest Trail will tell the story of that adventure, from our early plans to our final steps. It will tell the story of overcoming inexperience, ill-preparedness, and the mental and physical travails of half a year on the trail. It will talk about personality clashes, a critical crossroad, and a difficult decision that made the difference between success and failure. Most of all, the book will be about the spirit of adventure: what it is, how it came alive in me then, and how it sustains me today.

My two partners in crime were Finn and Ryan. We were three friends who had graduated college together two years earlier. Two years before that we started talking about the adventure. We had four years of talking before taking a single step, mostly planning without a purpose. We were just kids talking while we finished our studies and got our entry level jobs. It took a weekend, six months prior to leaving, in which we realized that if we didn't do the trip soon, we would never do it, and, if we didn't do the

trip at all, we would always wish we had. For me, always wishing I had tried something was a fate far worse than trying and failing. This became the foundation that our perseverance and determination were later built upon.

We were an ill-fitted crew in terms of equipment, psychological readiness, and physical conditioning. We probably shouldn't have been out there in the first place, and we broke almost every rule that then existed for long distance hikers. We were outlaws. When we left the border that late afternoon we each had a six-pack strapped to our packs. We all smoked cigarettes and we carried no crampons, no snowshoes, and only a small, two-man tent with us, figuring we would sleep under the stars in all but the worst weather. I carried the maps but couldn't read a compass. We were also a little short on humility and respect for what we were about to undertake, and our personalities began to clash before we ever started hiking.

The trail we were on, known then and today as the Pacific Crest Trail, was not a completed, through trail at the time of our trip. The trail today, in fact, starts from an entirely different town than it did then. The trail at that time was a patchwork of short, intersecting trails, some road walking, and no shortage of bushwhacking, particularly in Southern California. To compound matters, the entire west coast had just come through one of the wettest, most severe winters in history. This meant that in lower elevations the trails were often washed out or damaged or missing signage. At higher elevations it meant snow, and snow meant that there was no trail to follow, that footing was treacherous, and that conditions were cold and wet. We would, in fact, be slogging through snow until July.

All of these obstacles, along with our embarrassing lack of money and resources, made us outlaws. To experienced and capable long distance backpackers we were unfit and unrespectable. In towns local residents moved their kids away from us and shopkeepers eyed us with suspicion. Cops and rangers asked us lots of questions and, most interestingly, actual outlaws gravitated towards us. We unexpectedly transformed into hardened versions of our earlier selves.

Also hardening along the trail was our partnership. Like any outlaw gang we were dysfunctional and doomed. In addition to our adventures along the trail, the story also chronicles the dissolution of our friendship.

Early on in the planning for the adventure a friend introduced me to the phrase "Mo Chara Abu!" Literally translated from the Gaelic, the phrase means "victory to my friend!" In use though, it was a warrior's cry, shouted as one rushed into battle, or triumphantly after a great victory. It carried with it a joy for the battle, the challenge, and the adventure. It reveled in the present moment. I adopted it as the war cry for the adventure that lay before me. Learning it as a mantra, remembering it when our plans went awry, and learning to face tough times with humor and purpose, is also key theme throughout the book.

Outlaw: How Not to Hike the Pacific Crest Trail
Brief Bio

Gary Campanella started backpacking on that first day on the Pacific Crest Trail in 1983 and has been walking ever since. He has hiked most of the Appalachian Trail - in much smaller chunks - and has also hiked through Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey. He completed his Pacific Crest Trail gap in 2008, with a climb of Mt. Whitney. More importantly he has "adventured" his way through the last thirty-five years. He has opened and closed businesses, worked the last eighteen years for a large financial services firm, and has travelled extensively. He has slept at least one night in 49 of the U.S. states. His current and favorite adventure is raising two children in the wilderness of suburban Los Angeles.

Outlaw: How Not to Hike the Pacific Crest Trail
Chapter Outline

On-Ward

Even Hitchhikers Get the Blues

Chapter One:

Sane or Insane

Book starts with the first two stumbling and bumbling days on the trail and flashes back through the six months of preparation that got me there. Throughout, I was scared, anxious, nervous and excited – SANE.

Chapter Two:

Warrior Attitude

Our going is slow and our first mountain range is cold and challenging. I make it through many challenges and unfamiliar obstacles to our first re-supply point by adopting a tougher mental attitude.

Chapter Three:

Cutting Our Teeth on Red Tahquitz

This chapter is about sinking into our own version of life on the trail. We meet our first trail friends. Everything then falls apart between us after a harrowing experience in the San Bernardino Mountains. I consider quitting.

Chapter Four:

A Trail of Decisions

We press onwards through the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains. We are almost always in snow. We meet more friends. We realize that our food boxes and our money are under-supplied and we begin getting an outlaw reputation. We are told that the Sierra Nevada are impassible and essentially closed, and so we have to make a decision.

Chapter Five:

Well Done in Weldon

We leave the snow and mountains behind for a long hot walk across the Mojave Desert. Nearing the Sierra, the heat and struggle take their toll and Ryan falls ill. We temporarily leave him behind as Finn and I trek into the southern Sierra to retrieve our next food box. We are not sure he'll be able to continue.

Chapter Six:

Buffalo Bill

Finn and I learn that the Sierra are indeed impassible at the moment (it is May) and so we meet back up with Ryan in the Owens Valley and hitchhike to Oregon to resume hiking there.

The trip is long and transformative. We are outlaws on the on the road.

Chapter Seven:

Long Gone in Oregon

We hike the entire state of Oregon, along the Cascade Mountains, also enveloped in the deepest snow ever recorded there. We rely almost solely on each other and our compasses, despite our growing personality differences. Our lack of money and supplies drive us to stay in a hobo camp and to work at a Christian camp in exchange for supplies. We meet Mr. Wilderness and the two-person Glory Expedition, who hike on and off with us for several hundred miles.

Chapter Eight:

Swimming Upstream

We reach the Columbia River and rest, taking stock of how far we have come and how much it has changed us. We are tough and weathered. Friends from Washington State meet us and one joins our trip. Native Americans staying at our riverside camp teach me a lesson about living on the fringes between the wilderness and civilization, a place I now inhabit, both in society, and within our group.

Chapter Nine:

No Rain in Washington

We begin our trek through the Cascades in Washington. It is August and the winter snow from the previous year has finally, mostly melted and the early snow from the next winter has not yet begun. The hiking is glorious. Two additional hikers join our crew, bringing our band to seven, for the final 500 mile push to Canada, but I increasingly isolate myself.

Chapter Eleven:

Last Stop in Stehekin

We reach the North Cascades and though the weather and our partnership deteriorate, my own strength is buoyed. We all savor the final trail sections, which cut through some of the most remote and spectacular wilderness in the United States. I begin to think more seriously about what comes next for me, and I am increasingly impatient with Finn and Ryan. We reach Canada.

Chapter Twelve:

What Happened?

Upon reaching Canada, our partnership is irrevocably severed. I hitchhike alone back to my car in Las Vegas, then pick up hitchhikers to pay for gas to get back to Boston. Changed forever by the trip, I begin a new life. During the following two summers, I complete the trail sections we hitchhiked around.

**Outlaw:
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On-ward: Even Hitchhikers Get the Blues

The morning began with a vintage, double-winged airplane flying 100 feet over our heads. We were still in our sleeping bags, still asleep, camped with a gathering of small pine trees in the grassy area of the interchange between I-5 and Route 99. These two roads parallel each other north through the San Joaquin Valley, joining together briefly through Sacramento. We were on the north side of Sacramento, near the airport, where the two roads – one interstate freeway and one a more local road at the time – split apart again. The bright red bi-plane, heading for a landing at the airport, or just circling near it, was low enough that the pilot waved to us. It was a bit of a wondrous sight after arriving in the San Joaquin Valley in the dark, getting dropped there by an unlucky gambler late the night before, and simply scrambling down an embankment and crashing hard to sleep. Sleeping in Sacramento meant that we had been in two state capitals that day, Sacramento and Carson City, which wasn't bad for three dirty backpackers with nothing but their boots and thumbs for transportation.

We started moving slowly. We stayed in our bags and were able to make coffee on one of our backpacking stoves because we were still carrying full water bottles with us, the lesson we earlier learned in the desert still clinging tightly. Soon we learned another lesson when a California Highway Patrolman roused us from our campsite. He told us pretty firmly, but not unfairly, to pack up and get out immediately. He said someone had reported us. I tried to explain what we were doing, but he told me to do a better job of hiding ourselves next time. Getting out was pretty easy because nothing

was really unpacked but a stove and a cook kit and our sleeping bags. We were slogging up the embankment toward the onramp within minutes. The CHiP softened his tone a bit when we reached his cruiser, reminding us that we could only hitchhike on the onramp, and that it was against the law to hitchhike directly on the interstate. We thanked him for the reminder, which was actually news to us, and he drove off. We were alone again on a rural interchange north of Sacramento. We set up our hitchhiking shop on the northbound onramp from state highway 99 to the northbound I-5. There we sat for the rest of the morning rush hour and saw maybe three cars. We pretty quickly knew that if we didn't get our butts out onto the interstate there was a good chance that we would be spending another night on the interchange, but we also now knew that the cop said we couldn't. Finn was the first to suggest we go for it and, while Ryan and I were in favor of giving the onramp more time, we pretty quickly fell in line. We marched up the onramp, passed the "No pedestrians" sign, and stepped out into the breakdown lane of the two-lane Golden State Freeway.

There were plenty of cars now, but still no ride. It was much warmer in the valley than in the mountains near Donner Pass, both hotter and more humid, and even though it was morning we were sweating in shorts and t-shirts, with our packs along the apron behind us. The landscape was flat and agricultural and different than anything we had seen to that point. It smelled like manure, especially whenever a faint breeze kicked up. Our feet were soon sore, but our attitudes were still positive. We quickly learned that hitchhiking on an interstate is an extremely active and aggressive activity. The cars and trucks zip passed at locomotive speeds, and so we had to get out into the

right lane of traffic to be seen in time. Whether the cars were coming up the slow lane or the fast lane (there were only two lanes along this stretch then) we had to get our thumbs out and high, almost like a wave, to get the attention of a car in time for it to stop. When the car was about to pass, we had to hop backwards pretty quickly to be out of its way. We took turns every few minutes to keep from bumping into each other and to keep from giving the impression that we were attempting a carjacking – even though carjacking didn't exist yet. Hitchhiking out there felt a little like being a matador, with the bull running at 70 mph. It honestly didn't feel like a good way to get a ride, but after an hour on the interstate we still hadn't seen a car come up our onramp, and so we really didn't see another choice.

We talked a little about foot-hiking along the freeway, but the idea of illegally walking a freeway with full packs in the sweltering heat seemed pretty unappealing. We decided to keep that option in our back pocket.

After about two hours of dancing with traffic, a car finally did come up our onramp and stop. It was the same CHP officer who had rousted us that morning. He slapped on his lights and siren and slowly approached us while we gathered up our gear. He said, "I told you boys about this. Now get your asses back down the ramp."

All things considered we felt lucky that he wasn't arresting us, and so we lugged our backpacks over one shoulder and filed passed him single file down to the bottom of the off ramp. He drove off without another word, and again we were alone out there. The air was so hot and still by this time that we could hear flies buzzing around us. We

sort of slumped down to the ground, defeated for the moment, and sat and waited for a ride.

A couple of more hours and we were still waiting. A few cars had passed but none did more than glance our way. All momentum from the previous day was lost and we were in the doldrums again. The weather, really hot and humid and breeze-less again, was also in the doldrums. I was sweating through my filthy clothes just sitting or standing. The three of us had been pretty much outdoors for two months by then, washing our clothes a couple of times in Laundromats and a couple of times in streams, and washing ourselves about as much. We must have smelled awful. Finn finally jumped up, cursed, and walked back up the freeway on-ramp wearing his backpack. Ryan, torch bearer of our indomitable team spirit, followed. After a couple of days on pavement again, my ankle, that I had twisted and bruised in the Sierra, was black and blue and swollen again. I hopped up the ramp after them. The heat was also hitting Ryan hard, and he looked near collapsed again as he struggled to his feet. Neither of us wanted to move, but we knew Finn was right. With little to do but sit and eat, we were beginning to nibble a little too frequently at our hiking supplies and we were pretty nearly out of money. Our agreed upon destination, the post office at a place called Hyatt Lake, would hopefully hold more money for replenishing our food, but there would be no more food boxes until Crater Lake, which was more than a hundred trail miles into Oregon. We got out to the freeway and started our mad dance with the traffic again, but again, not more than twenty minutes later, the exact same CHP officer

pulled up. We saw him coming from a quarter mile down the freeway, but there was nowhere to go. This time he flipped on his lights, pulled over passed us and backed up.

"You just can't be doing this, boys." He looked in no mood for argument and we just threw up our hands in surrender. He asked for ID, which we produced after some rummaging, and he walked back to his cruiser. We were pretty sure we were going to jail. Ryan wondered, "What do we do if we need bail money?"

"I don't know. Can't we just stay in jail until we see a judge or something?" I wondered.

Finn said, "Fuck it."

I said, "I wonder where they'll take us. I'd rather be in some small town than a city like Sacramento."

Ryan said, "I bet the food is better in a small town. I heard they just go get you McDonalds. Can they still arrest you for vagrancy?"

Finn, still in no mood, said, "Fuck it."

"I don't know," I said, but I instinctively started reviewing a mental list of friends and family members who I might be able to borrow some "assets" from. The list was pretty short. There was Mike, my friend and adviser, and our trip coordinator, who was the only person who for sure knew that we had veered from the trail. We called Mike "the man with The Mission" because we mailed old maps and journals and other bits of information and memorabilia back to him wrapped inside old Mission Spaghetti plastic bags to keep them dry on their long pony express back to him across the country. Mike also had taken over shipping our supply boxes to us after the first few were pre-routed

by us through Ryan's parents. I already knew that Mike's support and encouragement had gone beyond simply advice and logistics – that he was already incurring expense in making things happen for us – and so I had no intention of asking him for bail money too, but the rest of my list was pretty short. I had an aunt and a grandmother who tucked a few small postal money orders into Mike's supply boxes along the way, but neither of them would have money to help, and I was pretty out of touch with the rest of my "people" by then. Ryan and Finn, I knew, had their parents, but for both reaching out to them would have to be a last resort.

As our now familiar cop sat in his cruiser with his radio and our licenses, we stood along the freeway apron waiting to see if he had indeed reached our last resort. He walked back to us a few minutes later carrying a bright white ticket for each of us. It was June, 1983. The fine was \$20 each. He said that because we were from out of state and essentially vagrants, we would have to pay immediately or be taken to jail. The \$60 total was nearly all we had left, and so we asked him where he would take us. "Yuba City," he said.

We had no idea where that was and whether there would be additional costs if we were taken there, and so we huddled up and decided to pay. We had no idea about a lot of things then, including how our backpacking trip had landed us in the San Joaquin Valley, broke and hitchhiking, but I can tell you that I argued for the arrest. It would at least have gotten us moving again. Our negotiation was short though, and the Yuba City jail was never given real consideration. Both Finn and I could see that Ryan really didn't want to go to jail, and Finn was still so furious at our fate that neither Ryan nor I could

be sure he wouldn't incur additional charges along the way. With the somewhat tolerant but increasingly impatient CHP Officer Robinson waiting about six feet away, I whispered, "Maybe we should just let him take us to jail to get the Hell out of here."

Ryan, who was already digging into his wallet, looked up suddenly and waited for Finn to answer. Finn said, "Let's just pay him and get him the fuck out of here."

"Fine," I said.

We paid and he warned us about doing it again. I stuffed the ticket into my backpack and joined the others in a walk of shame back down to our lonesome intersection.

This time we crossed the street and began hitching on route 99 north, knowing that the likelihood of getting a ride all the way to Oregon dropped to about zero. We were pretty dejected.

A pick-up truck finally stopped for us at about 4:00 and took us 25 miles to Marysville, a quiet California town on the Feather River. Marysville is actually on highway 70, which also parallels the I-5, but never actually crosses it again, and then meanders eastward. There was nothing really around where he dropped us off, just a McDonalds where we spent a few of our remaining dollars on cheeseburgers, and so after an hour we decided to walk and limp through the town and over the river to a bigger-looking town. It was Yuba City.

Impossibly tall Sycamore trees shaded the river bank and the town was quiet and beautiful in the sweltering afternoon. Our moods had slightly improved, but only slightly, and we found highway 99 pretty easily and walked to the north end of town.

My ankle was completely compromised at this point, and every step was painful. Finn and Ryan were wearing their sneakers, much more comfortable and better suited to road walking, but I kept my boots on for the extra support from the crush of my pack and body weight slamming my bruised ankle into the pavement with each and every step. We passed the police station, which was where we guessed the jail was, on our walk. We also saw a lot of people. They were clean and groomed and dressed in summer attire. We must have stuck out like sore thumbs, which we had, and we were pretty sure we were not imagining the hard stares we saw. Looking like we were raised by wolves was fine up in the mountains, where people easily surmised that we were on the trail, but there was no context down in the valley. We looked dangerous and deranged.

We found a wide spot in the road where a major boulevard joined the undivided highway – plenty of room for cars to stop for us – and again set up shop. Feeling hopeful after getting away from our last spot, I tried visualizing a ride and sending out positive vibrations to the passing cars. This didn't work, and time passed with no rides and no relief from the heat. Around sunset things got pretty desperate and we got pretty giddy. Where we stood offered no options for camping, and so we took to charging and yelling and begging with cars. Everyone seemed to be laughing at our antics, but no one stopped.

Darkness fell and we were done. We walked up the highway a few hundred yards and found some hedges on the other side of a culvert near another intersection, devoid of all buildings and other signs of life, and camped like outlaws. It was like we

were spending the night in the actual jail we probably should have accepted. At least we would have had more than the \$4 that we now collectively shared.

We all slept restlessly and were up at dawn to try to catch an early morning trucker. We dipped into our trail granola for extra fuel and again set up our storefront by a light pole near the intersection with Highway 99. We saw no traffic for the first hour, but we did find graffiti scratched into the light pole we were leaning against. It read:

“Hitchhikers don’t have luck, only karma” Buffalo Bill, 1974

It seemed to hit the nail on the head, and we immediately felt a kinship with this long gone cowboy who must have spent a little time in this spot himself, nearly ten years earlier. It kicked off another day of rollercoaster karma in the sun-filled San Joaquin.