

How urban campers of all tastes get away

By YVONNE DEVLIN

If the thought of parking next to a \$30,000 camper and hearing a blaring TV set makes you cringe in horror everytime you go camping, perhaps backpacking is

the alternative which you've been looking for. "Backpacking doesn't take that much at all, maybe a blanket and tennis shoes are all the equipment one needs," says Chuck Spriggs, owner of the Benchmark, a Farm-



Adjusting a backpack looks simple as Mike Young helps June Spriggs. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Mike Young shows June Spriggs how to operate a compact camp stove as various types of camping and outdoor equipment surrounds them. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Summer of '75

Try to remember when

How time flies. Did you ever try to remember what was going on last year at this time? The Farmington Observer & Eccentric staff got to wondering, so we sat down, rummaged through our files and came up with some interesting anecdotes which we thought would interest our readers. So sit back, read on and judge for yourself whether the Farmington community is better off after gaining another year of wisdom. We think you'll find many of these stories have a familiar ring.

LOU GORDON, local television celebrity, stormed into town this week last year at the Orchard Ridge campus, Farmington Hills, to make his attack on Ma Bell. Fourteen hundred Gordon followers packed the campus to cheer him on as he lashed out at Bell's executives who have free telephone and long distance service, the money which the company takes out of the state and gives to AT&T, an executive investment plan in which Bell pays half of every dollar invested, and what Gordon labeled the "willful squandering of taxpayers' dollars."

Gordon's ire was inflamed by the company's proposed rate hike and charges of 20 cents for the fourth directory call per month.

The discussion centered around girls athletics, hiring of additional teachers, expanded athletics and outdoor education. Trustee Anne Struble lamented the possibility that girls' basketball might be excluded from the curriculum. Then Supr. Marvyn Van Akenye defended the district's athletic program, saying the district had more activities for girls than most any other high school in the state.

FORMATION OF AN arts commission was on the minds of the councils of Farmington and Farmington Hills. They're still arguing over that one.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE was the concern of Farmington physician Murray Deighton, who said the shortage of family doctors could lead patients to become sick, or if more doctors weren't made readily available. Frustration with the system might lead sufferers to evaluate their own needs, he said.

BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS were rewarded by the Farmington Hills Beautification Commission to three local schools: Middlebelt and Forest elementary schools in the Farmington district and Edgewood Elementary in the Clarencville district.

REAL ESTATE personnel in the gate of

ington Hills based store which specializes in backpacking equipment. To be able to walk away from civilization and escape into the woods seems to be the reason why so many persons are taking it up, he says. Spriggs warns that this, of course, doesn't mean that one can just hike half way across the world without preparation.

"BACKPACKING IS a recreation that is taken by degrees. One can start out at Kensington and move up to climb Mt. Everest," says Emil Hutton, Spriggs' partner. The sophistication of the equipment increases in design and expense as one needs, but there are essentially four basic things a person will need before attempting an overnight trip, according to both men.

First of all, a backpack is a must. "The most important thing is that the pack is sized. The job of the pack is to share the load between the shoulders and the hips," says Hutton. "We say that one size fits none." There is a lot of shoddiness in the industry because manufacturers are producing for the mass market, says Hutton. The material is thinner and the pack cannot withstand the rigors of use. Making sure the pack is sized to fit your body frame is something that both men stressed. The higher priced the pack is the better the sewing and material used in its production. In choosing the second item, thickness appears to be the contributing factor. The sleeping bag is designed to protect the body from the cold and the choice is determined by the season and the climate, says Spriggs.

Staff photos by Harry Mauthe

The bags are either down or polyester filled, he says. The polyester are somewhat less expensive and if the same thickness are as warm as the down-filled bags. Down bags would be more sensible for the backpacker because they are lighter and compress more than the polyester, he says. Something that every hiker needs are boots. Sure feet can only run an otherwise enjoyable trip. Like the packs, boots are chosen for each individual's needs. "Basically we're attempting to put a supportive platform between the person's foot and the ground. The rigidity of the sole is dependent on the weight of the individual and the load of the pack," says Spriggs.

AFTER THE SUN goes down, the trail gets deserted and it's time to bed down for the night. A tent is an alternative to provide shelter from the weather and "creepy-crawly" things, according to Hutton. Nylon tents are the most modern and range in weight from five pounds for a two-person, to 11 pounds for a four-person, he said. Each tent has double-wall construction to prevent the bathroom mirror effect with moisture condensing on the wall, says Spriggs. Each wall "breathes."

The bulk of the people buy equipment to use fairly locally and to just have a good time," says Hutton.

Hunger is another malady which must be settled while on the trail. Added weight of canned foods is a problem, so modern technology has come to the rescue with processed freeze-dried delicacies.

The most difficult gourmet can now be satisfied with the wide range available. For an appetizer, the hiker can imitate

in the luxury of a shrimp cocktail. Just add water. Or if this seems a little too much, what about some cottage cheese? After the main course of chicken stew all thoughts of dieting can be tossed aside as lemon-flavored pie or strawberry ice cream tempt the taste buds. The ice cream may not be as cold as the usual, but the sensation of creaminess is still there.

"The average backpacker can be an one," Hutton says. "We've outfitted people from ages 12 to 70."

Such exotic trips as Nepal, the Andes in South America and the Galapagos Islands have been taken by their customers, says Spriggs.

"Customers send us post cards from their trips and try to keep in touch," he says.

Both men are avid backpackers and Hutton has recently climbed Mt. McKinley in Washington.



Cindy Kousouski takes careful aim with the bow during the nature camp activities.



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FEA SCHOLARSHIPS were awarded to three students. Mary Williamson of Harrison, Robert Watson of North Farmington and Ken McLeellan of Farmington High School.

FIRE PREVENTION education was being meted out by the City of Farmington Public Safety Department which warned that smoke inhalation is even a bigger killer than the fire, itself.

ON THE SPORT SCENE women's bb struck a blow as girls, for the first time, participated in the North Farmington-West Bloomfield Baseball for Youth T-Ball.

FARMINGTON'S 15TH DISTRICT American Legion team was defeated in a doubleheader by Birmingham's Troy Farmington's Dan Perry had to be removed from the first game after he collided with the opposition's catcher.

CHUCK MUEY was talking about building a restaurant in the Farmington area. As we know, it turned out to be the Camdigger on Grand River.