

NOTES FROM CHARLIE JR.

Changes are a fundamental part of life. I'm not the biggest fan of them. My parents, who started the Backwoodsman, absolutely loathed changes, especially when it came to changes to the magazine. It's something that all businesses eventually are forced to do in order to keep evolving and growing or you're left behind.

This is our first issue transitioning from a bi-monthly to a quarterly produced publication. It's a major change that I addressed in my last editorial that was very difficult to make, but absolutely necessary for our survival. We also made another change; our issues will now be glue-stitched instead of staple-stitched. In another example of our topsy-turvy economy, going glue-stitched doesn't cost much more now than staple-stitch. In the past, that was not the case. This is a move that my father always wanted to make; mainly for durability reasons to counter the less-than-gentle hands of some employees of the U.S. Post Office and for the mag to stand-up better on shelves.

Back when I was a young lad and helping my parents out with the magazine, one of my jobs was to staple the magazines at the end of putting all of the pages together. We would use our ping pong table to process each issue. Yes, we were very raw back then folks. If I made one mistake, I was pulled from that position until I got it down right. My parents could tell in the next room if I didn't staple them correctly. They always said it made a perfect sound when it was done properly. Once I got it down, I could hear that damn perfect staple-sound in my sleep. Some of our readers back then who received my off-stapled magazines probably thought that our "stapler" person had been drinking when it was actually me at 11 years old. I was not sad at all when we decided to relinquish those duties to someone else that did a much better job than we did.

For this issue, we went from 88 to 100 pages. Our plan is to keep increasing the number of pages in future issues. Changes are hard to adapt to but can end up being a good thing. Having the greatest readers in the magazine industry who are so passionate about this publication eases the transition. We're so grateful to all of you as we keep charging into the future together sharing knowledge and preserving the old skills, which has become even greater of an importance due to the unstable world that we're all experiencing together. The Backwoodsman Magazine will always be a calm, stable place to go to during crazy times.

Speaking of crazy & weird times, the long-time famous sports publication, Sports Illustrated, was recently in the news with accusations that they've been using AI (artificial intelligence) generated articles. These articles included a picture & bio of the author. It was discovered by on-line sleuths that these people never existed, and the pictures of the authors were for sale on an AI stock photo site where apparently you can buy headshots of fake people. Once the news broke, the articles and author bios were deleted from SI's website, who have denied all of the allegations.


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I was a huge sports fan growing up and I subscribed to Sports Illustrated, which began back in 1954. It's definitely not the publication that it was back then, but a lot of current mainstream businesses were way different than they are today. For example, the popular clothing brand Abercrombie & Fitch Co. whose stores are located in every mall (that is still open) in the U.S. was originally a sportsman outfitter.

Some of our readers know the next story because it's been featured and talked about a lot in several past issues of BWM. On October 3rd, 1966, SI published an article by one of their outdoor sports editors, Harold Peterson, titled "The Last Of The Mountain Men," the story of Idaho frontiersman, Sylvan Hart (also known as "Buckskin Bill). Hart was considered one of the real "Mountain Men" left in the U.S. He attended McPherson college in Kansas in 1926 studying to be a petroleum engineer, then abruptly quit school and purchased 50 acres of land in Idaho along the Salmon River for only one dollar. He lived there from 1932 until his death. Sylvan built his own homestead/compound that included a 2-story house, blacksmith shop, garden, etc. He was fully self-sustainable, a master at buckskinning, hunting, knifemaking and used the barter system to survive never venturing down the monetary path of life. Sylvan lived a life of solitude and had to defend his land repeatedly from the U.S. Government throughout the stewardship of his land.

Peterson was in the area on an outdoor writing assignment and heard stories from locals about Sylvan & his compound along the river. Long story short, Peterson was determined to meet Sylvan but at first Hart showed no interest. After a few attempts, he was able to develop a friendship with Sylvan that resulted in the book that Peterson authored in 1969 titled "The Last Of The Mountain Men: The True Story Of An Idaho Solitary." A great book that is still in circulation and a highly-recommended read if you haven't read it yet. Our on-line store use to sell this book years ago.

This story caused me to think about what an AI-written version of the Backwoodsman would look like. Before I go any further, I feel compelled to say that I would never, ever use AI-generated articles for the Backwoodsman Magazine. Our mission is to preserve the old ways & skills, promote principles such as makeshifting, using what you have available to fix a problem or build, etc. A lot of our content is reader-supported, and that makes BWM a very unique, honest & real publication that I think AI would have a difficult time trying to replicate. Their major miscalculation would be attempting to imitate someone who actually lives the life, hunting for subsistence, lives off of less, has primitive living and real-everyday survival skills. It would be a difficult task, if not impossible. There are probably some AI engineers out there that disagree with me.

Until there are AI robots who have chosen to live off the land, build a log cabin in the woods, hunt & fish for their family of robots' comfort and survival, grow their own food, can construct a bow drill and start a fire, there's no way they can emulate the Backwoodsman. We're real Backwoods men & Backwoods women with real stories, real experiences and real skills. Our style is raw, rugged and authentic, so until what I just wrote above becomes a reality with AI robots buckskinning, trapping, fishing and camping, the Backwoodsman Magazine will be AI free. Not to say that it won't happen someday (a frightening visual), but if it does, then the AI robots have figured out what our "real world" is really all about; the sky, mountains, land, trees, plants, animals and the people that experience all of these realities. If that happens and the Backwoodsman is still around, then maybe they can contribute an article about an actual experience, and not a virtual one.

We hope you enjoy our first Winter Edition. The outstanding cover painting titled "Frosty Morning" by Western Frontier Artist, Clark Kelley Price, sets the tone for another great issue with a slightly different look. Like I mentioned in the beginning, some changes can become great changes. That is how we're approaching it because we have to keep on truckin'! Happy New Year! Have a great winter!

Charlie Richie Jr.