

**Vonu: The Search for Personal
Freedom, Part 2
[Letters From Rayo]**

LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK PUBLICATIONS

Copyleft Notice

This book is covered by a BipCot NoGovernment License. Re-use and modification is permitted to anyone EXCEPT for governments and the bludgies thereof.

Further Use Permission: Please feel free to use, re-use, distribute, copy, re-print, take credit for, steal, broadcast, mock, hate, quote, misquote, or modify this book in any way you see fit. Sell it, make copies and hand it out at concerts, make t-shirts, print it on flying disks, or do anything else because intellectual property is a State based haven of the weak, the stupid, and those lacking confidence in their own ability.



LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK **PUBLICATIONS** *tell your story*

Looking for your next read or listen?

1. **Adventures in Illinois Law: Witnessing Tyranny Firsthand** by Shane Radliff (Audiobook/Anthology)
2. **Adventures in Illinois Higher Education: Communist Indoctrination** by Shane Radliff (Audiobook/Anthology)
3. **An Illusive Phantom of Hope: A Critique of Reformism** by Kyle Rearden (Audiobook/Anthology)
4. **The Production of Security** by Gustave de Molinari (Audiobook)
5. **Are Cops Constitutional?** by Roger Roots (Audiobook)
6. **Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom** by Rayo (Audiobook)
7. **Argumentation Ethics: An Anthology** by Hans-Herman Hoppe et al (Anthology)
8. **Just Below The Surface: A Guide to Security Culture** by Kyle Rearden (Audiobook/Anthology)
9. **Sedition, Subversion, and Sabotage, Field Manual No. 1: A Three Part Solution to the State** by Ben Stone (Audiobook)
10. **#agora** by anonymous (Paperback and Kindle)
11. **Vonu: A Strategy for Self-Liberation** by Shane Radliff (Paperback/Audiobook)
12. **Second Realm: Book on Strategy** by Smuggler and XYZ (Paperback)
13. **Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom** by Rayo (Special Paperback Reprint/Audiobook)
14. **Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom, Part 2 [Letters From Rayo]** (Paperback)
15. **Going Mobile** by Tom Marshall (Paperback/Audiobook)
16. **Anarchist to Abolitionist: A Bad Quaker's Journey** by Ben Stone
17. **Brushfire, A Thriller** by Matthew Wojtecki

*Looking for a publisher? Drop us a line:
WWW.LIBERTYUNDERATTACK.COM*

Foreword

When Kyle Rearden and I launched The Vonu Podcast in January of this year, we took up the tough task of trying to chronicle Rayo's ideas and direct action, as well as trying to re-ignite life back into this very unique strategy, with little to no original source material.

In the past few months, our luck has been changing. We acquired VONULIFE, March 1973, a monster of a publication, and just recently acquired a huge batch of publications from the 1960s-1990s, of course not all articles or publications are by Rayo, but still highly valuable in the pursuit of vonu.

The publication you are about to read is titled Vonu: Book 2, Letters from Rayo, and is edited by Jim Stumm, publisher of the now-defunct Living Free publication.

I must caution you, Stumm takes quite a bleak view of wilderness vonu in general, and levels some unfair and inaccurate attacks towards Rayo and the strategy he largely developed. That said, we are obviously extremely thankful for his work in acquiring and publishing this material.

Vonu, Book 2 is highly unique compared to other vonu issues we have digitized—reason being, this one contains private letters Rayo wrote to various correspondents—we can finally dive deeply into his mind, and let me tell you, it's quite fascinating. I would speculate that one of the recipients of these letters was Jon Fisher, the editor of his first book, Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom.

One quick note before I let you go: I have made the executive decision to move the article, Against Social Reformism, to follow the Programme Notes for Vonu Week (VW) and Vonu Week Results. Reason being, I thought it was best to keep all of the VW material in one place, without a radical shift to philosophy in the middle.

It is our goal and hope that you find this content as valuable as we do. We hope it provides you much inspiration to continue (or begin) learning how to live and let live, out of sight and mind of those unwilling to let live. *Laissez-faire*.

Shane Radliff
The Vonu Podcast
January 2018

Introduction

This is Vonu, Book 2, the follow-up to the first Vonu book which is the volume “Vonu, The Search for Personal Freedom,” published by Loompanics Unltd, POB 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Most of this present volume consists of letters written by Rayo (Tom Marshall) who has been called “the mystery man of the libertarian movement” by LIBERTY Magazine. Tom Marshall wrote under various pen names including Rayo, El Ray, and Tom of Preform. Similarly, his freemate, the woman he lived with, is referred to variously as Roberta, Dr. Naomi Gatherer, the Gatherer, or Haelan.

The letters that make up the greatest part of this volume were previously unpublished until I edited them and published them in my newsletter, LIVING FREE, but we find many ideas in them that were developed in articles Rayo wrote for publication in various newsletters. These letters were not written to me, but rather to a correspondent of Rayo’s who lived on the West Coast. When copies of these letters came into my possession, I decided to share them with Rayo’s admirers after editing out most of the proper names for security.

Also included here are Rayo’s notes concerning Vonu Week which provide deeper insight into his thinking about vonu than any articles he published elsewhere. And we have included material from PACSCRIPT #1, a one-issue newsletter that Rayo wrote and apparently distributed only to a few friends. Rounding out this volume are comments on some of these letters and on vonu topics, written by me and by 4 others, including a memoir of my visit to Oregon in the Fall of 1971 at which time I met Rayo in person for the first and only time.

Jim Stumm
June 1988

CONTENTS

Entire contents written by Rayo except where another author is indicated.

Contents:	page
Introduction, by Jim Stumm	1
1. the story of VONU LIFE, by Jim Stumm, from LIVING FREE 14, p4, Aug 81	3
2. what does "vonu" mean, from LF4p4, Aug 81, reprinted from VONULIFE #1, May 71, p1	3
3. letter from Tom in PREFORM #1 - describes himself & his personal philosophy - from LF3p1, June 86; reprinted from PREFORM #1 June 68, p4	3
4. letter from Rayo (Feb 1970) - motorized nomadism, pedestrian nomadism, troglodysm - from LF19p6, Oct 82	4
5. letter from Rayo (March 1970) - retreatism, status games - from LF20p4, Jan 83	4
6. notes from Rayo (Nov 70; Jan, Mar, Oct 71) - his travels & activities, desire to contact people - from LF22p4, July 83	5
7. my visit to Vonu-land in Fall 1971, by Jim Stumm - from RANDOM WRITINGS 10, p1, Jan 1987	5
8. letter from Rayo (Nov 1971) - excursion to Grants Pass to get mail, visit from "would-be immigrant," visit procedure using signal flags - from LF23p2, Oct 83	7
9. comments on previous letter, by Jim Stumm - "would-be immigrant" replies, private land, problems with vonu - from LF23p2, Oct 83	8
10. letter from Rayo (Nov 1971) - tape recording correspondence - LF25p2, May 84	9
11. comments on Rayo's letter, by Jim Stumm - shortcomings of tape correspondence, audio & video documentaries, Rayo's social isolation - LF25p2, May 84	9
12. vonu week-1972 - ad in VONU LIFE - from LF27p2, Oct 84, reprinted from VL 6, p1, March 72	10
13. letter from Rayo (16 April 1972) - preliminary description of vonu week campsite & activities - from LF27p2, Oct 84	10
14. later letter from Rayo about vonu week - from LF27p2, Oct 84	11
15. vonu week preliminary description (April 72) - Rayo's prospectus & day-by-day programme for vonu week - from LF28p2, Dec 84	11
16. against social reformism - for self-liberation, against collective-movements, educationism, utopianism - from LF5p4, Dec 79; reprinted from PREFORM 9, p18, May 70	12
17. programme notes for vonu week, day 1 - sketchy lecture notes concerning vonu shelter - from LF29p4, March 85	13
18. programme notes for vonu week, day 4 - trails, shelters, storage, with diagrams - from LF30p1, June 85	14
19. vonu week results - 2 parties, 4 people, came during 1972 - from LF31p6, Aug 85; reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1, 25 March 1973	16
20. letter from Rayo (June 1972) - newsletter writing vs. private correspondence, about new VONU LIFE editor Ian, emerging club of vonuans - from LF32p2, Nov 85	17
21. letter from James H. (Dec 84) - Rayo shd use pole & leaf hut rather than plastic; comment by Jim Stumm against primitivism - from LF31p1, Aug 85	17

Contents:	page
22. letter from Roger Kenmore (Sept 85) - opposes view that one who owns land is freer on it than Rayo sneaking around - from LF32p6, Nov 85	18
23. comments for Roger Kenmore, by Jim Stumm - ways in which landowner is freer than vonuans - from LF32p6, Nov 85	18
24. comments on camping, by Bert in Oregon (Dec 85) - using public vs. private land, based on 8 years experience - from LF33p1, Feb 86	19
25. comments for Bert, by Jim Stumm - why vonuans want to remain out of sight/invisible, needed especially when you build something permanent - from LF33p2, Feb 86	20
26. letter from Rayo (19 Sept 1972) - various short comments, his Autumn lifestyle, thoughts on vonu week experience - from LF33p3, Feb 86	20
27. letters from Tom of Preform (Nov & Dec 72) - Cave Junction po box broken into, ATCOPS, attracting people to vonu, libertarians can be trusted more than non-libertarians - from LF35p1, Aug 86	21
28. introduction to PACSCRIPT #1 (25 March 73) from LF36p1, Dec 86	22
29. letter to ASE Magazine, from Tom? - unsigned letter to ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY Magazine asks for hydroelectric power information - from LF36p2, Dec 86; reprinted from ASE #11, page 37, July 1973	22
30. what are we doing? (25 March 73) - annual shopping trip to California cities, wilderness vonu not ascetic way of life - from LF37p5, March 87; reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1	23
31. comments by Rayo - on Villa Via, a vehicle-nomad community proposed for southern California, & on ATCOPS - from LF39p3, July 87; reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1	23
32. note from Rogue about vonu (March 87) - vonu not plausible, what about medical care, wd still have to pay tax on income - from LF39p4, July 87	24
33. comments for Rogue, by Jim Stumm - medical care, vonu income, people differ - from LF39p4, July 87	24
34. letter from Rayo (June 73) - careful about hazards becuz of no medical aid, about articles in VONU LIFE 1973, Amerika is not Ye Olde Tribe, & more - from LF40p4, Sept 87	25
35. last letters from Rayo (Sept 73 & Feb 74) - major changes in thinking, deep discussions only with Roberta, ATCOPS & savings, leaving the "libertarian club" - from LF41p4, Oct 87	25
36. liberated lifestyles, by Jim Stumm - ways to live free: camper, sea mobile, internationally mobile, wilderness vonu, urban anonymity, self-sufficient homestead, your own way - revised version, original in LF24p3, Feb 84	26

JUST SAY NO

The Story Of Vonu Life

By: Jim Stumm

From LIVING FREE 14, p. 4, Aug. 1981

VONU LIFE was a newsletter somewhat similar to LIVING FREE, that was published from 1971 to 1974. There were 17 newsletter issues published, usually 8 pages per issue, & one special handbook issue known as VL 1973. "Vonu" is a made-up word that means, roughly, "free." I like to think that LF is, to some extent, a successor to VL, although I have made a number of changes in LF, & I don't try to imitate VL exactly. For one thing, I use larger, more readable type in LF, & I think my graphics & layout are often better. As to topics covered, LF doesn't focus on living in the wilderness as much as VL did. Instead, in LF I try to cover a variety of strategies for increasing personal freedom.

VL was strongly ideological & a passionate advocate of personal freedom. It was written by and for hard core freedom-seekers who want to live & let live, & who want to live out of sight & mind of coercers most of the time. It was filled with discussion about "going mobile" & living in the wilderness as a means of hiding out from Govt authorities & other coercers. VL regularly printed lifestyle descriptions from various kinds of nomads, some of them people who lived in the mountains or forests more or less permanently.

The moving spirit behind vonu was a unique man who called himself RAYO. In the 1960s, Rayo was an engineer living in Los Angeles. In order to gain more freedom, he dropped out of a conventional lifestyle & moved into a camper (chassis-mount on a $\frac{3}{4}$ ton pickup). For the next couple years, he stayed around L.A., parking at what he called "squat spots," places in nat'l forests, abandoned homesites, on private land sometimes, & occasionally on city streets or parking lots. He worked infrequently as a consultant, but needed little money because he spent very little. Once he published an article in VL showing that he & his wife together had spent less than \$1000 in the previous year.

During this time Rayo published a mimeo newsletter called PREFORM, in which he printed letters from people who lived nomadic lives of one kind or another. His intention at that time was to find some other compatible nomadic people & form some kind of

loose community. During the PREFORM years, he met the woman who became his wife (they called it a “freemate” relationship – no civil or religious marriage). She moved into the camper with him. Later they moved up the coast and headquartered around the Cal/Ore state line. They received mail at a p.o. box in Grants Pass, OR for many years.

In May 1971 they changed the PREFORM newsletter into VONU LIFE. VL was printed by photo offset with 50% reduction (very small type, two small, in my opinion. I use 33% reduction in LF.) VL also had letters from nomads & dropouts & seekers & contained more writing by Rayo.

After a while, they made their headquarters in Siskiyou Nat’l Forest. They started phasing out the camper, living sometimes in a tent made from a large plastic sheet. Then they started digging an underground home on “public” land somewhere in the Siskiyou’s.

After 1973 they apparently decided that publishing VL was more a hindrance than a help to them. So they turned it over to someone known as Lan & they dropped out of sight .I don’t know of anyone who’s heard a word from them since early ’74, at least no is talking. The last word I’ve heard from Rayo was a letter he wrote to someone else dated Feb. 14, 1974 in which he said:

“My thinking has undergone major changes in the last several months on interfacing, “alternate economics,” interrelations in general...I, too, am becoming very dubious as to the value of all “libertarian club” involvements...We do not intend to use the “libertarian club” in the future as an avenue for gaining non-anonymous friends or associates.”

Lan put out the last few issues of VL, but his interest quickly faded, he dropped it & it died.

I personally met Rayo once in Oregon in 1971. He struck me as a 40-ish, Gandhi-esque looking person (skinny, but physically tough & strong willed), a very private person, almost paranoid. He also reminds me of Scott Nearing, tho of the opposite political persuasion. He’s the sort of person who thinks problems through, makes detailed plans, then follows through with great determination. I have long admired Rayo an awful lot, & he is a major role model in my life.

What Does “Vonu” Mean?

By: Rayo

Reprinted from VONU LIFE #1, May 1971, p. 1

“Vonu” (rhymes with SO-new) is a coined word meaning invulnerability to coercion – coercion being physical attack by a volitional being against another volitional being or his non-coercively-acquired property. I distinguish “vonu” from “liberty” – exemption from coercion. Liberty depends on other people; it exists only to the extent that those capable of coercion abstain from it.

Coercion, especially the institutionalized forms – war & regimentation, is one of the major problems of mankind. Practically all past efforts at solution have been directed toward LIBERTY – trying to change the behavior of large numbers of OTHER people. There have been countless attempts to reform govts, take over govts, destroy govts, & manipulate “public opinion.” You know the results.

I believe that enduring peace & freedom can be realized only through vonu – by reducing vulnerability to coercion. Vonu will most likely come gradually, primarily through lifestyle changes by individuals & small groups. But vonu is not necessarily only for a few. Vonu will expand as far as there are people willing to do.

Letter From Tom In Preform #1 June 1968

"I am a consulting engineer, 36 years old, no family. For about 8 months I have been living full time in a large caper. Utilities include cooking stove, floor furnace, hot-water heater, shower, DC-to-AC converter; all 'self contained.' I use a trail motorcycle, which can be mounted on the back, for auxiliary transportation both in wilderness areas & cities. My job assignments are temporary, lasting a few weeks to a few months; recent work has been in southern California. Between jobs I usually stay at a 'squat-spot' about 80 miles from Los Angeles.

"For me a nomadic association would probably be a 'bedroom' and vacation community at first. I intend to continue 'exporting' my labor for a while; topping off my savings so as to achieve a degree of financial independence. (Living as a nomad, expenses are low & saving is easy.) Eventually I hope to develop a line of products which can be designed and fabricated with little or no dependence on a fixed base & marketed by mail-order.

"Philosophically I tend to be 'center-libertarian' – neither 'left' nor 'right' in a class sense but a consistent advocate of freedom. I oppose military conscription, warfare against innocent people, taxes, bans on psychedelics, & all other interference with peaceful behavior. However I am not a pacifist I will defend myself & even counter-attack in a situation where this is tactically feasible & where damage will be inflicted only upon those who initiated force. I do not believe freedom is something that can be provided by 'society' – certainly not by government. Each individual must accept responsibility for liberating himself; thus my interest in nomadic living & intentional community.

"So far I have avoided family involvement because until now I could not provide what I judged to be a satisfactory environment for the growth of a child. I do not regard the existing society, with its compulsory mis-education, military conscription & other forms of slavery directed against the young, plus the prevailing mores, as a healthy place for children. I would consider family involvement in an intentional community where cultural independence existed & where non-State, non-coercive educational services were available.

"I expect to spend part of this summer working in S. California but hope to make one extended trip to Canada in July/August. I would enjoy meeting anyone with similar interests either in S. Calif. or along

my route. My message service is xxx-xxxx; this is answered most days & evenings. When I am in the area I check for messages every few days. P.S. The typewriter and mimeo machine on which I prepared this are carried on board.”

Letter From Rayo (Feb. 1970)

(Editor's note: I have acquired a number of previously unpublished letters from Rayo, form editor of VONU LIFE (see "The Story of VONU LIFE" in LF 14). In future issues of LF I'll publish the parts of these letters that are of general interest. These letters may be lightly edited for clarity and security, but the meaning will not be altered.-JS)

Lumping in self-liberation with retreating seems to be a common error, caused no doubt by superficial similarities of techniques. While I hold that a fully-liberated life-style must be able to cope with any likely emergency situation, and that a disaster of one kind or another is very probable sometime within the next 30 years, I don't think that the primary objective of present living is to prepare for a disaster. (For more on this, see El Ray's remarks in Autumn 69 INNOVATOR.) Most important, I reject the present/future dichotomy of retreatists – that they will continue servile living until "conditions get much worse" and then, presumably, move permanently to their log cabin and watch society obligingly collapse – on schedule!

I have never maintained that motorized-nomadism is a panacea. I did choose it for and have found it to be an excellent INTERIM life-style for someone still extensively involved in the servile society (through earning money, seeking a woman, etc.). I have always considered dependence on State-controlled highways and gasoline to be a major shortcoming, and a compromise I intended to rectify, which brings me to the main subject:

After much study and evaluation, my freemate and I have largely decided on a mix of troglodysm (underground) and pedestrian-nomadism as a FULLY LIBERATED (no compromises) life-style, into which we will evolve. Since nomadism and troglodysm intergrade nicely, this will be a gradual process. We will retain our camper indefinitely but as an ACCESSORY – secondary mobile home – to be sold or parked permanently if/when highway controls become appreciably worse.

For location we are considering areas from S Calif. and N. Cal. to interior B.C. One factor affecting location choice is access to other potential free men. (For personal self-satisfaction, we want to help build viable libertarian mini-culture(s); if liberation never gets beyond a

handful of recluses hiding here and there, and libertarian philosophy died as they die, I will be disappointed.) And with less capability for long-range migration and increasing unreliability and restrictions of state postal, location will be increasingly important.

Our move toward pedestrian-nomadism/troglodysm is prompted in part by a feeling that we are not really free so long as we depend to any degree on legal interstices – including the State not (yet?) being as bad as the State could easily become. I want a life-style which can easily withstand the worst technocratic super-totalitarianism that is within the realm of reasonable possibility. We may still have some contact with That society but we won't have to worry appreciably over what idiotic thing the people-molesters do next (anymore than somebody who takes a vacation at the Riviera now and then needs to be much concerned about the politics of France.) Our change in life-style will be, in a sense, an answer to the omnipotence-of-State line of Rothbard and Hess. We will answer not in words but by doing – the only real way.

Letter From Rayo (March 1970)

I strongly disagree that retreatism offers more security. Most “multi-fortresses” never get out of the dreaming stage – BECAUSE of the present/future dichotomy implicit in retreatism: somehow most retreatists never have enough money and time left from “living it up” in the present. But, assuming a retreatist does carry through & build his fortress, he still faces the prospects of long-distance travel under hazardous conditions. And he will be making formidable changes in living conditions precisely when there is no time for further learning & little margin for errors. And if, instead of an apocalypse, there is only an almost-imperceptible deterioration, he will probably never bring himself to move – he will only bitch, as usual, & “adjust.”

But I can’t be very down on retreatism: many retreatists graduate to self-liberation. (For several years before opting out, I carried food supplies around in the trunk of my car, explored retreat sites, etc. What finally prompted my move was not society getting worse, but my own head getting better – disentangled from status and Statist games – more & better ideas on how to liberate myself.)

Once a super-retreatist has a fortress or 2, is it rational for him to keep living in some city apartment, earning still more money to build still more vacant fortresses? For the cost of several years of “middle class” existence he can equip & fortress with almost every facility & comfort he (& his harem) could want: machine shop; liquid-nitrogen-temperature deep freeze; huge book/record/film library; secret communication links to other fortresses & urban contacts, etc.

The person who expects to do nothing until there is an emergency, on the supposition that he can THEN get help from self-liberators (or serious retreatists) had best have something to trade – besides bullshit! And most of them won’t, I suspect.

We spend less time (& most equivalent) on “repetitive & uninteresting biological requirements” (obtaining, preparing food & shelter, etc.) than do “conventional” dwellers; more time on certain tasks but less overall.

But genuine biological necessities don’t consume much time anyhow. The big drains in the Servile Society are the status games: biological luxuries which become psychological (& often political)

necessities. Even most traditional “primitive” people spend more time on status games than biological necessities – often with fatal results.

While it might seem that one could live “conventionally” & yet avoid status games, this is seldom possible – the games are too interwoven with “conventional society.” Even if one is not incarcerated for “peculiar behavior,” or fired from job after job for “anti-social attitudes,” he incurs crushing psychological burdens – spending most of his life in contact with people & media hostile to his values. A degree of physical separation seems to be essential for liberation, as well as for long-term mental health.

Certainly it may be wise to play sheep on occasion. But those not of sheep mentality will be freer, happier, healthier, in a life-style where such occasions are few and far between.

Notes From Rayo

Nov. 1970

In your opposition to accepting money from The Monster, are you not overlooking Parkinson's Law? It is ability to collect taxes which determines total expenditures, not the other way around.

My position: victim of robbery only has special claim to stolen property so long as he is in "hot pursuit" so to speak – actively resisting, etc. Thereafter property is morally unowned, and becomes the property of any non-coercer able to take possession of it.

Jan. 1971

We plan to head south in a week or two. Expect to be back up during March and maybe April but busy on den and difficult to communicate with.

As van-nomads our life-style reached a peak of refinement about a year ago – for a description of a very similar life-style see "Further Report From a Nomad" in last issue of INNOVATOR.

Now our living patterns are in transition. If you came to Grants Pass now we would probably meet you there – parking our camper in the back yard of a friend. We can sleep four without severe crowding (two double beds) so you could stay with us. Our main activities at the moment are catching up on mail, shopping, and camper maintenance.

You might consider renting a camper or motor-home (this is off-season so you should be able to get a good price) and experimenting on your own in your area. I recommend a rig with a good propane furnace and two propane tanks, for comfort. Also, make sure it has tire chains and a good jack, in case it gets stuck. Have a shovel.

Regarding your comments, I recommend selective access, not isolation. I suspect we have as much meaningful/useful outside communication as you do. I am impressed, though, by the fact that you have apparently remained a rational libertarian and in good health for over 5 years without opting out. I know very few who have done as well. Perhaps knowingly or not, you have developed psycho techniques for coping with "immersion" in a hostile culture. These could be of value to others.

Mar. 1971

We remain eager for contact with people into or going into life-ways compatible with our own – especially people doing it in Siskiyou region – for trading potential. In most cases this will be people already out of servile (conventional) living to at least the extent of van-nomadism.

In another year, when we have shelter and food securely provided, we hope to develop something to help people still in that society evaluate and gain experience and confidence at vonu – this will probably take the form of an intensive weekend workshop session – mostly self-doing, very little talking or watching others do.

We have never claimed that our way is the only way to vonu. There are many possible ways – wilderness and urban. But all require the courage/perseverance/determination to break old habits and tolerate transient inconveniences.

Oct. 1971

I think BC Wilderness Caching Service and some associated services are potentially valuable. But the retreatist pitch I consider misleading. Do you really think that someone who has lived 99% + of his life in populated areas can abruptly move to the wilderness and live there indefinitely provided he has the cache that they provide? (“instant liberation”)

A nomadic vonuan, on the other hand, might like such a cache, not because a collapse will cut off future supplies (tho it might), but because he personally doesn’t want to buy and haul them. (He may not have serf-tags (ID) or may simply dislike visiting that society.

I was a “food maniac” for a while last winter after eating 90% wheat and cow peas for 2 months (which resulted from a wrong assumption on how long a certain creek would be passable.)

My Visit To Vonu-Land In Fall 1971

By: Jim Stumm

Now & then people ask me what happened when I visited Tom & Roberta in Oregon in 1971. Twice I've written an account of my visit in private letters. But I've been reluctant to tell the story in print in the past for reasons that have mostly faded away by now. So the time has come to tell all.

I was corresponding with R.L. Gifford during 1971. He wrote in LC & VL using the pen name of Orion. Gifford was living in Oregon, camping out at "Jack's place," in contact with Tom & Roberta, having been hired by them to pick up their mail from their P.O. box in Grant's Pass. G was encouraging me to come out, painting a rosy picture of an embryonic vonuist community there with great potential for growth. I was ready to make a change anyway & in Sept 71, after quitting my bank job in Buffalo, I drove to Oregon, intending to stay. The final push that led me to make my move at that time was Nixon imposing wage & price controls on 15 Aug 71. In my apocalyptic state of mind at that time, I decided that that foreshadowed the beginning of the end politically, & it was time for me to go underground. What better place to do it than with Tom in Oregon.

My car was a little 1967 Toyota 4-door that I had modified by taking out the back of the back seat & installing a board so I could sleep in back with my feet sticking into the trunk. Even so, my body just barely fit. I drove out from Buffalo to Oregon in 4 days (& back in 5), driving alone, up to 700 miles a day, sleeping every night in my car. G had sent me directions to a "squat spot" outside Grants Pass where I was to meet him (the spot designated "Grants Pass NE7" described in VL2 p.8). I found it at dusk on the 4th day of my trip & settled down there for the nite.

Next day I went into Grants Pass to announce my arrival. I wrote a postcard addressed to the Vonu po box & dropped it in a mailbox. Then I went looking for the GP mail-drop, which I found easily: a 5 gallon Olympic paint can in a pile of rubbish behind a garage on an alley at a certain address. I left a 2nd message in the drop & returned to my squat spot to await contact (feeling deliciously conspiratorial, as you can imagine). G showed up later that afternoon, having picked up my

message in the drop. We drove to “Jack’s place” in my car. (G had no car, rode a bicycle.)

As soon as I began to learn details about the situation there, I began to find it much less attractive than I had imagined it would be. In his letters, G had tended to exaggerate, in his youthful enthusiasm (he was about 20 then; I was 27). Eg Jack’s place: In his letters G told me this guy Jack, who lived in California, had bought some land way back in the woods in Oregon, near Grants Pass, & was building a house there. G was camping out there, at the half-finished house, doing some painting or something for Jack, who wasn’t in residence while I was there. Before driving out, I had it in my mind that I might camp out at Jack’s place for a while, maybe even until Spring, until I became familiar with the area.

Upon arrival at Jack’s place, I found it very different from what I had imagined. I suppose it looked like “way back in the woods” to G, a city boy from New Jersey, but not to me. I’m a city boy myself, but I have spent a lot of time in the Adirondack Mtns of NY State, once hiking alone for 3 days w/o seeing another human being. Jack’s place looked to me like outer suburbs, thin 2nd growth woods. Apparently Jack had purchased about 5 acres from some farmer & the access road that dead-ended at Jack’s house passed right by the farmer’s front porch, which was maybe ¼ mile from Jack’s house. So the farmer had full view of all comings & goings. It wasn’t at all the secluded place I was looking for.

I told G that I would like to meet Rayo & he went off to make arrangements while I set up camp up the hill from Jack’s house. I was using a small canvas pup-tent & a thin rectangular sleeping bag. I had a good one-burner gasoline stove for cooking, but I hadn’t yet discovered the quick way to light it on a cold morning. My camping gear was inadequate for cold weather camping, & the nights were already starting to get cold.

That evening, as G & I sat around a campfire eating popcorn, G told me that a meeting with Rayo was set for the next day (Sunday). We would be driven to where Rayo was staying by a guy in the real estate business who was a friend of Rayo’s. Then, so I wouldn’t be surprised & confused, G went on to tell me what I hadn’t known before then, that Rayo & Tom were one & the same person. (I was going to meet “Rayo” & the real estate guy always called him Tom.) That meant Rayo’s “freemate” (wife) “Dr. Naomi Gatherer” was Roberta. I also

learned then that Roberta sometimes used the pen name Haelan Hygeia. So, I had been expecting to find a somewhat loosely associated vonu community consisting of at least 6 people: Gifford, Tom, Roberta, Rayo, Gatherer, & Haelen. Turned out there were 3 people & some pen names. That put G's claims about a vonuist community in a different, less favorable light.

Next day I walked with G across fields & through woods to the real estate guy's house & he drove us to some rural land he owned where Tom was staying. He drove by a round-about route it seemed, so I wouldn't learn the way. Very James Bond-ish, but wasted on me; I wasn't making mental notes. I believe this was a place where Tom stored stuff in 5-gallon cans stashed in the woods, & he was there temporarily, sorting through his stuff. It was a nice meadow, near woods, with a stream down the hill, & a long view off down a valley. No houses in sight. Dead end dirt road led to the meadow. We spent the afternoon sitting in a circle near Tom's camper, on overturned 5-gallon cans, munching on walnuts & talking. I've forgotten what we talked about.

My overall impression of Tom was favorable. He appeared 40-ish, skinny, but tough, Gandhi-esque looking. Strong-willed, kind of a suspicious guy; no one would call him warm & friendly, but could rely on him to fulfill any contract or promise he had made. But I knew most of that from his writing. He was, however, something less than the libertarian hero I had built him up to be in my mind. And I was beginning to have doubts about his vonu strategy. For one thing, he was dead set against owning land, but here he was using land owned by someone else to store his supplies, depending on favors from his friends to make up deficiencies in his own program, it seemed to me.

Roberta was a big, strong woman; overweight, tho not grossly fat, & hairy; kind of masculine. I went along with her when she went down a trail through the woods to get water from the stream. She filled 2 5-gallon jerrycans, must have weighed at least 40 pounds each. I wondered to myself: now how is she going to get those up the hill to the camper? I decided I would make myself useful & carry one of them for her. But before I could make a move, she suddenly grabbed them by the handles on top, picking up both, one in each hand, & marching off up the trail. I stood staring after her as she disappeared around a bend in the trail, astonished at this feat of strength that I don't think I could have managed. It was just her normal daily routine, I gather.

Before dark, G & I returned to Jack's house. Next day I took my car into Grant's Pass to have the blown muffler replaced. (It had blown in the Midwest where Toyota dealers were then as scarce as fish feathers. So I drove it, noisy as it was, out to Oregon.) That afternoon, or maybe it was the next day, Tom & Roberta drove the camper over to Jack's place. As they drove in, they had a small accident that made a big impression on me. The camper had a glass door on the back, like a patio door. They carried a small trail bike outside, strapped on the back. As Tom drove up the washboard road, the camper started bouncing. Before he could get it to stop, the trail bike had slammed against the glass back of the camper a couples times & cracked it. When that happened, the thought occurred to me that now Tom will have to go back into that society to get a replacement for the glass. And it struck me as more than an isolated problem. It was also an exemplar of a fundamental defect of his vonu strategy; He claimed to be free of that society in some sense. And yet at any moment an unexpected event like this might require him to go back into that society for repairs or spare parts, if he wasn't to suffer a decline in his way of living. He depended on that society utterly for equipment in general & for most of what he consumed. He was living on the fringe of that society rather than actually out of it. And only the sufferance of govt allowed him to get away with it. A more authoritarian govt could have snared him easily, eg simply by putting up roadblocks & questioning everyone who came through: Where do you live? Where do you work? Etc. From that moment, the vonu idea seemed a whole lot less effective than I had believed.

But to this day I remain convinced that camper-nomadism is a way to live in reasonable comfort inexpensively, say on \$2000/year or less today. So, living that way would give you a lot of freedom, not from the State, but from obnoxious employers. Such a low income would also free you from paying income tax & reduce what you pay in sales tax. And if you spend a lot of time out of sight in the wilderness, you can ignore a lot of annoying regulations. But it will not make you invulnerable to coercion. That overstates it. And if you get rid of the camper & move into a tent to increase freedom by getting off the roads & doing away with need for driver's license & vehicle registration, that would reduce your comfort levels below what I would find acceptable on a permanent basis.

Another thing I noticed was that Tom & Roberta seemed to form a tight, closed society between the 2 of them, with not much need for outsiders, hard for any 3rd person to get close to them (more so than other married couples I have known). G was less close to them than he had led me to believe, not Tom's right hand man, as I had gathered. And it seemed like G could flit off to anywhere at any moment. He did, in fact, leave for New Jersey a few weeks later, & he never returned to Oregon, although my leaving may have influenced him in that. I saw no evidence that any other persons were likely to join the vonu "community." So where did that leave me, I wondered. Pretty much on my own, if I stayed in Oregon. And I had to do something fast. It was almost October, winter coming, nights were already cold, & I could see that my camping gear wasn't adequate for winter camping. That would have been an easily solved problem, I had money (cash, travelers checks, & a stash of gold coins wired up under the front seat of my car), but it was one more thing to deal with. I had to get settled into some place for the winter, not Jack's place which I didn't like, or if I was going to leave, I had to get over the mountains to the east before snow started falling in the high passes. So I had to decide.

Overall, finally, Tom & Roberta struck me as quite nice people, like a friendly rural couple, a little shabby looking, the sort you'd find on a remote homestead somewhere & be happy to have for neighbors. But I had been expecting much more. They fell far short of the super-human, libertarian heroes I was expecting. There didn't really seem to be any room for me in their little community, us against the world. It wasn't likely anyone else would join us & G would probably leave. So I decided I might as well go back east. If I was going to be pretty much alone anyway, I might as well make my base on familiar territory, where I had relatives & some other friends I could possibly call on if needed.

I had pretty much made that decision before that evening when the 4 of us spent some time sitting around the table in the camper. We spoke in general terms as if we were going to be staying near each other for a while. I didn't want to say that I had decided to leave. I didn't actually say that I was planning to stay either, although I let that impression stand. I didn't commit myself to anything in particular & no one pressed me to say what my plans were. I don't know what I would have said if they did. I felt I was being a little deceptive & that made me feel uncomfortable, but I was loath to get into an argument with Tom by mentioning the shortcomings I saw in his vonu ideas. I still

had a high regard for Tom and I was somewhat intimidated by him even tho he was not quite the hero I had thought he was, & I knew this evening would probably be the last time I ever saw him. I didn't want to end up in bickering disagreement. So we had a friendly talk, & I was careful not to promise anything that I wasn't about to fulfill. Later, in the dark, I went back up the hill to my tent.

Next morning, early, I packed up & left to drive back east without saying goodbye to anyone. I left a brief note at my campsite saying I was leaving. Later I wrote to Tom & expressed my doubts about the vonu strategy in writing.

My leaving was partly a failure of nerve on my part, but it was also a reasonable practical decision. What I found was quite different from my expectations, partly because my expectations were unrealistic, partly because I was misinformed by G. I was under pressure to do something fast because winter was roaring down on me. It would have been different if I had come out earlier in the year, in early summer. Then I could have hung around, camping out here & there in the West, for a few weeks & maybe I would have decided to stay anyway, despite my disillusionment with the vonufolk. But then I would have missed interesting experiences that I had over the next few years in co-ops in Buffalo. It's impossible to know what might have happened if I stayed in the West. The Road Not Taken.

Letter From Rayo (Nov. 1971)

Your info concerning us being around Grants Pass [G.P.] a great deal is out of date. A couple of times since we moved to Siskiyou we lived in the camper in or near G.P. for several weeks at a stretch. But we haven't done that since last January & don't intend to again.

During periods when I am processing mail (Orion did it during Aug.), I hike & ride on motorbike to G.P. every week to 10 days. This is a fairly long hike/ride totaling about 3 hours one way. During short days of autumn/winter, I barely have time to go, process mail (send out initial copies to new subs on the spot), do half a dozen shopping errands & get back in daylight. If something delays me & I don't start back until dark, the return trip takes about twice as long, since I must go much slower for part of the way. I dislike laying over at G.P. since this means packing along sleeping gear (in cold weather). (I have intended to scout & set-up an overnight camp stash near G.P. but haven't got around to it.)

I now find a visit to G.P. (or any town of that society) to be rather unpleasant – it's the massive impact of values of that society, I think, values I find distasteful. This represents a change for me from a couple years ago when I rather looked forward to occasional visits.

Orion was recently hassled 3 times during one 3-day stay in/around G.P.

When we do meet people in/near G.P., this tends to misrepresent our lifestyle. Recently, we did visit with someone near G.P. – this was a would-be “immigrant” anxious to meet us; to do this we lived in the camper for several days, parking it on relatively unsecluded private land (with permission of “owner”). After a day, the would-be “immigrant” left as precipitously as he came (cold feet, literally, I think; he was tent camping, apparently for the 1st time in his life). In a subsequent letter he said he was rather disappointed with our lifestyle -- it didn't seem very vonu, especially our dependence on “private” land!!!

Also my visits to G.P. are unscheduled, especially in autumn, winter & spring. I don't relish riding the motorbike in rain & snow.

So these are all reasons why we do not wish to meet somebody around G.P.

Now that we are at our winter base-camp, we are better able to meet with people. We will meet them at a vehicle squat-spot which is

several miles from our base-camp. The squat-spot is roughly 50 miles from G.P. on all-weather roads (gravel part of the way). The squat-spot is accessible for the average auto in all but the worst weather. The visitor must bring his own shelter. Upon arriving he hikes to a particular tree about a half mile away from the squat-spot which we use as a signal flag pole. He puts a combination of flags on the rope & runs them up to announce his presence. About once a day we climb to a peak near our camp from where we can see the flags with a telescope. One of us (or more, but only one at a time) then go on foot to visit him at the squat-spot. We do not have visitors at our base-camp.

If we should be out of the area for more than a day (unlikely in winter), we leave a message at a guest message drop near the squat-spot.

All factors considered, I think that a visit is worthwhile only for someone who is squatting in the area for other reasons (such as a prospective immigrant who is scouting the area).

Most vonuists & libertarians, I find, are not nearly as interesting in person during a 1st visit as in letters & articles. This is true of myself, I think. First meetings tend to be consumed talking superficially about a lot of things – there is little depth.

I certainly recommend that possibilities for communication by mail be exhausted before considering a visit, including such things as cipher messages & tape recordings.

Comments On Previous Letter

The “would-be immigrant” Rayo mentions here in the last letter was me. I visited him, his freemate, & Orion in Sept. 1971, intending to move to that area. But I found the situation there to be not all that appealing to me, so I returned to NY.

Here’s the paragraph from my Oct. 71 letter to Rayo in which I mention private land:

“Having seen your lifestyle up close, I now have my doubts as to how invulnerable you really are to State coercion. You generally oppose buying land because this makes the buyer subject to property taxes & various restrictions. Yet, you use private land owned by others. Also, if you make a camper your home, you still need a State driver’s license & vehicle registration, & you have to comply with State regulations concerning RV design. It seems to me that if the State takes the easy course of just shearing the sheep, then you won’t need so much seclusion & abandonment of technology to be reasonably free. On the other hand, if the State really tries to root out every resister, even vonuans likely won’t escape their net. The trouble is, you are not a separate & independent society. You have to import food, fuel, & spare parts from the coercive society & export labor to make a living. And your communications are mainly through the State mail system. This leaves you highly vulnerable through your supply lines. Long term storage helps with this problem, but the only real solution is to produce everything that you need. I suppose that you hope to progress in this direction, but I don’t see how you can do much w/o more people, & I don’t see how you can attract more people w/o being able to offer more independence of statist servile society, more than a backwoods-man-type standard of living, & more of a real community of vonuans. Each seems to require the other as a pre-requisite – it’s a dilemma.”

As for my camping expertise, I had done some camping before, in the Adirondack Mtns, but not much. My camping gear was inadequate, small pup tent, too thin a sleeping bag. I recall one morning out there sitting in the sun for a while, warming my chilled bones. But that’s all minor stuff. I could easily have bought better gear if I had decided to stay.

Of greater concern: I had been led to expect (by Orion, not by Rayo) that there was an embryonic vonu community in Siskiyou. I

found no such thing. Only 3 people. And one of them, Orion, was a butterfly who could flit off at any moment, and he did, in fact, leave for the East Coast a couple weeks later.

Rayo is also referring to me when he says in VONU LIFE 5, p. 1 “WARM BODIES: One visitor came expecting to count a large number of them & was disappointed because he couldn’t.” Rayo goes on there to say that most contributors to VL are scattered over a wide area & are in contact with each other only by mail.

My judgement then was that wilderness vonu was too rough a lifestyle to ever attract many people to it. So the prospects of a vonu community developing were slim. Time has proved that prediction correct. Since my main reason for moving to Oregon was to live in physical contact (rather than mail-contact) with like-thinking people, when I found that wouldn’t be possible, there was no good reason for me to stay there. Western NY, on the other hand, at least was familiar turf, where I knew my way around, & had relatives & other useful contacts. Reconsidering now, returning east still seems to have been a correct decision, especially considering that wilderness vonu never went anywhere. My only doubt is, I wonder if anything would have changed if I had stayed? Perhaps Orion would not have left. Perhaps other people would have joined us after all. But then, if I had stayed in the West, I wouldn’t have taken part in founding North Buffalo Food Co-op, & I would have missed the rewarding experience I call my “summer at Fred’s farm”, & half a dozen fine people I hung out with for a while.

Letter From Rayo (Nov. 1971)

Since you and/or C.S. are apparently uninterested in camping out in the Siskiyou for several days & we are uninterested in hanging around any town, I suggest an alternative: tape recordings.

Rather than simply “letter-on-tape” monologues, since 2 or more (?) of us can get together at each end, we can experiment with livelier formats. Some possibilities:

*Conversations between H & I & whoever else is around (Orion has headed east for a while to pick up some possessions & perhaps export some labor) on one end, & between you & C & ? on the other. Talk would be about what we have recently done, are doing, etc. or whatever comes to mind – or on specific topics requested.

*Question & answer with critical cross-examination. E.g. you direct questions at me & request that H attempt to act as your agent in cross-examining, asking further questions, giving contrary interpretations, etc. (In this case what she said would not necessarily represent her own attitudes & views, & she would include a disclaimer to that effect.) Of course, H would not necessarily ask the same follow-on questions you might, but as she got to know you & your interests & attitudes closer & closer she could do better & better. Then you would direct questions at H & ask me to cross-examine, etc.

*Tape recorder left running while certain types of activities were in progress – cooking & eating, erecting tent, making BCW caches, etc. During this time we would attempt to ignore the recording & act “as usual” – at 1st we probably wouldn’t succeed, but our/your behavior would be no more, probably less, untypical than during a physical visit. Before each tape was sent, the persons making it would listen to it & dub in comments about what was going on, what background noise was, etc., also erase anything not for the ears of a possible postal inspector (until such time as a scrambler was added.)

This last mode would be very limited for us at present since the only recorder we have at present requires 60 cycle, 110 volt electricity, which requires an inverter which we only have at the camper. However, we expect to have electricity at our camp (from storage batteries + engine/generator to recharge) before winter is over. And/or we will procure battery-powered recorder if the recording

exchange proves beneficial. If it works well between you & us, we would suggest it to others.

Recordings can be supplemented with pictures (of foam huts, wilderness sites, etc. not people) – preferably taken with polaroid (which we don't have but would also procure if it seemed worthwhile).

Subject matter would be limited until audio scramblers could be added. These would ideally be of such a type that message would sound (through non-descrambling player) simply as background noise (poor quality tape); then music would be recorded over it. Upon descrambling the message would come clear & music would be noise.

Although this depends on P.O. or other means of physical delivery, economy & reliable range are much greater than any radio approach. Yes, hams occasionally talk to people across the continent & even around the world, but VERY occasionally – weather conditions must be just right. Or hams can relay messages from one to the next. But that's involved. I have never been a ham. Becoming & remaining one involves contact with bludge. I think there are possibly services which could be beneficially provided by any vonuans & libs already into it, but I don't think it's worth going into.

I'm very interested in, & have ideas for, undetectable radio equipment. It's not especially difficult to do, but a transceiver with a 20-30 mile range might cost \$200 (that's a 1971 price-JS) in production quantities of 100. And marketing would have to be vonu, unlike audio scramblers, which, so far as I know, are not illegal yet. I had a preliminary design & was thinking about building 2 prototypes 6 years ago. I tried "cryptostrips" as a test of the market & reception was luke-cool, so I shelved the idea. Market may be bigger now, since more freedomists are moving beyond bullshit, but not yet big enough, I think.

But considering only equipment on the market right now, one can buy a tape recorder, polaroid camera, perhaps tape duplicator (or 2nd recorder) & quite a few other goodies for the cost of one or 2 physical trips. I don't recommend you buy a recorder, if you don't already have one, just for this purpose. If this works out we will probably switch to cassette tapes which records at slower speed & which uses less tape. But chances are that some acquaintance has a recorder which you can borrow for a few test exchanges.

Our tape recorder is the conventional reel variety, monaural 3 ³/₄ or 7 ¹/₂ inches per second. So if you want, give it a try.

Vonuans and applied libs talk much about the desirability of technology, & about the pitfalls of “primitivism” & yet still rely on that most primitive means of personal contact – physical visitation will be obsolete for all forms of association except sexual relations & a few personal services. (This will require an undetectable radio net, of course.)

Comments On Rayo's Letter

Rayo's correspondent tells me that this tape exchange idea was never tried. Today a video tape correspondence would be possible, adding movie pictures to sound. But Rayo, I suppose, would see to it that no persons, or at least no faces, were visible.

It seems to me there's some merit in the idea of a group conversing with another group via tape. The main benefit is that you can speak many more words than you can write, or even type, with the same amount of time & effort. Also, sound can carry more info because you can hear tones of voice, emphasis, etc. There is also the possibility of conveying sounds other-than-words on tape, such as music, & sounds of animals & machinery. But it's not immediately apparent what use that capability would be in a private correspondence.

Disadvantages: 1) Privately made tapes are often undecipherable in spots because of background noise, or because voices are too muffled. This could be a problem especially when recording a group sitting at various distances from the microphone. 2) Some people are nervous in front of a microphone, stage fright, but I guess you'd soon get over that. 3) A tape is much harder to edit than writing on paper. 4) Similarly, it's much harder to find something on tape compared to paper, if you want to refer back to it, because you can't skim through a tape as you can through writing. 5) Tape correspondence is much more expensive than paper & pencil.

Rayo's 3rd suggestion, to let the tape run to record domestic activities, is, in my opinion, really worthless. All you'd get would be a lot of meaningless sounds, mostly incomprehensible & of no value to the listener. A more useful idea is to make a tape as if you were making a radio documentary. You start by writing a script, at least in rough outline. You need a narrator to paint word pictures to replace the missing visual aspect. Example: you could tape a tour through your camp/homestead, describing each point of interest as you come to it: "...& on the left there, we have the outhouse. This is so high, so wide, & smells like..." You get the idea. You could also describe activities, & interview people you meet "accidentally" on your tour. Even richer possibilities are available if you use a video cassette camera.

The point of all this was that Rayo was suggesting a tape correspondence as a substitute for physical visits. He was missing the

point about what physical contact is for. It's much more than just a means of communicating specific bits of info. It's clear that Rayo wasn't one for visiting just for the enjoyment of good fellowship, to say nothing of partying. Rayo's comment: "Eventually physical visitation will be obsolete..." reveals only his own extreme social isolation & should not be taken seriously as a prediction for a world anything like what presently exists. Humans are social animals. That's coded into our genetic structure, the rare exceptions might turn up who are content to be hermits (or say they are, tho I wonder). One of the failings of Rayo's vonu lifestyle was that it didn't allow for a sufficient development of this social component. I think a person can get along perfectly well w/o contact with masses of other people. But most people need to be part of at least a small group of maybe 10 to 15 people. Rayo's 2-person vonu "society" was much too small.

Vonu Week – 1972

The following ad appeared in VONU LIFE 6, March 1972:

“Live and learn wilderness-vonu living for 6 days in Siskiyou region this summer. We will show you how, help you: scout site; erect shelter; finesse trails; forage wild foods; eat inexpensive wholegrains; cook invisibly; store supplies; cache valuables. 15 hours personal instruction, demonstration, assistance.

“We furnish: campsite; tent; mosquito bar; ground pad; cooking gear; food (mostly wheat, beans, rice); lamp; saws; books; maps & catalogs from our library. You bring: clothes, bedding, any personal items such as snake-bite kit, camera, binoculars, firearms. Extras we can furnish (extra charge): bedding; local transportation; vehicle parking; help setting up ‘permanent’ shelter.

“Your camp-site will be in forested, low mountain area; swimming hole in clear creek less than ½ mile away; moderately secluded – over mile from nearest settlement. We are still learning too. But maybe we can advance you in your quest. One or 2 people, \$40; additional people in group, \$10 each; additional days, \$1 per person. Sorry, no animals. 20% deposit. Say when & how you will arrive at least a month in advance; we’ll send directions to the meeting place.”

The following letters were sent to the 1st Vonu Week customer (not to me):

LETTER FROM RAYO (April 16, 1972)

Thank you for reservation for Vonu Week & \$10 deposit. May 30 or 31 is fine. Please set exact time & day for meeting you, if possible, so that you don’t have a long wait. Any time is okay with us, but meeting place will be easier for you to locate in daylight. Since I haven’t seen you for several years, please also provide identifying information, such as colors of shirt, pants, vehicle, which can be seen from a distance.

Enclosed is a preliminary description, also directions to meeting place. Within a week or so you should also receive further information about Rialtoville which you ought to have. Consider the typical Programme to be illustrative only. Look at it, then tell us what YOU want. Let us know you & your companion’s relative interest in: seclusion, comfort, vehicle access (how far you are willing to hike), access to swimming hole big enough to actually swim in, not just dip in

(weather is often very hot in June – 90° to 100° highs), distant scenery (view), nearby terrain (some fairly level/grassy areas rather than all trees/brush), foraging wild plants (berries probably won't be ripe), hunting & trapping (we are not yet very proficient at this, sad to confess; but I had 2 mice for breakfast (along with a pot of sprouted wheat & beans) – a year ago my reaction was iickk when I had to remove one from a trap, showing that attitudes can/do change); caching valuables; stashing bulky commodities, self-mobile human shelter (base camp), relatively stationary human shelter (smial, Shuswap), import-export, techniques applicable to Northwest coast rain forests, techniques applicable to interior, techniques useful mainly for summer, techniques useful for the year around, foods you dislike, etc. Will female companion be freemate/potential freemate? How important is comfort & “recreation” potential for her? Is one tent, one double-bed foundation adequate? Of course, you can tell us what you want when you arrive, but we can prepare & do a better job if we know in advance.

The area I have in mind for Vonu Week is accessible (only a few miles access road unpaved) but not especially secluded. While we have never been molested camping there (several months total, at various times) several vehicles per day drive through, also distant highway noises are audible, which might be disconcerting for someone (companion?) who might subconsciously equate vonu with absence of man-sounds. So let us know how far you prefer to hike, especially on rocky, brushy terrain w/o a trail.

We would like to rap with you about strategy, BC vs. Siskiyou in general, etc. & if you would also, don't consider this to be part of the 15 hours.

Possible hazards: poison oak, ticks, rattlesnakes. The 4 ticks which have so far managed to bite us apparently didn't transmit any disease. We have seen, throughout Siskiyou in 2 years, 4 rattlesnakes, killed 2, ate 1.

LATER LETTER FROM RAYO ABOUT VONU WEEK

Consider the availability of the camper & bedding to be a “1st-customer-discount.” We will be identifying & correcting problems in our proceedings. (2 other people have made deposits but won't be coming until Aug.)

I request that L. (or whoever) have a fairly good understanding of our motives & goals (vonuism) before arriving. If she reads the 1st 6 issues of VONU LIFE before coming, then discusses it with you on the way, this should be sufficient. I will assume that whoever comes understands in general what we are talking about. (If she doesn't, she will think we are very weird people, & indirectly, you must be weird for wanting to come, etc.) Also, I will assume she is discrete, regardless of the particulars of her philosophy.

Food we provide will be mostly vegetable. We are not as much into hunting & trapping as we would like to be (& intend to be in another year). If you have time you might try to visit R.P. near Eugene. He has lived around rural areas of the region for 50 years. But unless you contemplate moving to Siskiyou, you might do better to get further advice from someone in the locale of interest to you, since possibilities vary considerably from area to area.

Since you didn't specify miles to base camp, I am picking a fairly accessible spot – about ½ mile from camper (or 1 mile from original meeting place). But you will be near the edge of a large wilderness (relatively) & can hike in as far as you want.

Vonu Week – Preliminary Description (April 1972)

By: Tom & Roberta

INTRODUCTION: Vonu Week provides a sample of our present way of life & 15 hours instruction in our techniques.

We are living in a low-mtn area of the Siskiyou region. Winters are long & wet but mild – mostly rain, little snow. Summers are hot & dry, but there are many creeks that flow year round.

Many of our techniques, especially for shelter, are useful only in this climate. They would not be suitable in desert, arctic, or regions of heavy snowfall (including northeast & north central US).

Our present shelter & techniques (as of April 1972), after a year & a half of experimentation & development, is adequate or better from April through November; marginal from December through March. When daytime temperatures are below 45° F, which is often the case in winter, we are comfortable lounging in bed, on one hand, or doing strenuous work, on the other, but not when doing light work that requires standing or sitting. Our highest priority right now is further development of shelter, & by next winter we expect to have adequate year-round shelter. However, during Vonu Week, we will demonstrate present, not anticipated, methods, since new approaches invariably have problems that are discovered & corrected only through experience.

EMPHASIS: We are living almost full-time in the wilderness, not merely surviving until we can return to “civilization.” Our objective is not maximum self-sufficiency as such, but maximum vonu (invulnerability to coercion) with comfort. We use whatever mix of “imports” & native materials will yield maximum vonu, given our present skills & numbers.

We admire any “survivalists” who are able to walk naked into the wilderness & obtain all food, shelter, & tools strictly from what they find there. And we are eager to learn from them. But very few, if any, survivalists live that way all the time. Most do it for a couple of weeks & then return to their city abodes.

While most of our tools & supplies still come from that society, we spend little time there – including time spent earning money to buy

supplies; much less time than most survivalists. Gradually we are increasing our foraging abilities & reducing our use of imports, but always striving for maximum vonu-with-comfort overall. All our essential imports are storable for a year or more, so in event of some catastrophe, we will have additional time to learn to do without.

ENVIRONMENT: The immediate area is moderately secluded – a mile or more from the nearest settlement. Some land is unowned; some is private but little used. During summer an average of 2 vehicles per day pass through on a dirt road. And there are a few unofficial picnic spots along this road that are occasionally occupied on weekends. There is little evidence of people away from the road and major creek.

Within one-day hiking distance are many square miles of much more secluded land. In the creeks there is at least one nice swimming hole; many places deep enough to take a bath or cool off. Within a 100-mile radius there are elevations from sea level to over 8000 feet; areas of heavy timber; areas of scrub timber & brush; old mines & placers; rain-forest to semi-desert.

During June through September the weather is mostly hot & sunny. However, the rare rainy spells can last a week or longer, so anyone not limited by weight might bring a rain suit. There are a few mosquitos in spring, small biting flies spring through fall, but not in large quantity in most areas. There is poison oak in many places. For summer we like long-sleeved nylon dress shirts – fairly cool, stops most insects, easy to wash & dry, doesn't mildew if left wet.

PROGRAMME: Our instruction is personalized. We will show you how & help you do whatever you want, to the best of our ability. We can do this best if you let us know in advance what your interests are. A typical Vonu Week might include:

Day 1: You drive, or hitchhike, or bus-&-hike to the meeting place. One of us meets you there at noon. We hike about 2 miles to a camp site I* have already scouted. On the way I point out features of interest, edible plants, etc. You pack any personal gear you have brought. I pack food & camp gear. We clear spot, erect tent (polyethylene A-tent, about 25x8x7 feet), make trail to water source, prepare bed foundation. I cook boiled whole-kernel wheat & beans on a propane camp stove. There is also sprouts and/or wild greens. I put food to soak for tomorrow, I leave you about 6 PM.

Day 2: Morning, you relax, read, or explore immediate area. I* come at about 2 PM bringing remainder of food supplies in drum. We gather wild edibles (in season). We grind grain for bread & chapatis. We put up fire tarp for wood stove. We rap about food – procurement, storage, preparation. At dusk, we cook dinner on wood fire.

Day 3: You are alone – to explore, forage, swim, read, relax, think.

Day 4: I* come about 10 AM. We camouflage tent. We bury a 5-gallon can of pretended valuables. We prepare inconspicuous trail through heavy brush area. I show/describe footgear that doesn't mar the turf, electric fence, warning systems. We rap about concealment.

Day 5: You are alone.

Day 6: I* come about noon. General rap about Siskiyou region, types of shelter, life-styles. Elaboration on subjects of special interest.

(*I means Tom or Roberta, usually alternating.)

GROUPS: At present we can provide shelter for up to 3 groups, 6 people total, at one time. For learning, a group size of one or 2 may be optimum. In larger groups a "pecking order" sometimes develops with one or 2 people doing & the rest just watching or goofing. A large group should consider splitting up for most of the week, then coming together toward the end.

CHILDREN: Accompanied children are welcome but are sometimes a distraction for their custodians. You know best about yours.

Unaccompanied children are welcome only if (1) weaned & housebroken; (2) come at their wish; (3) are self-responsible enough not to hurt themselves with ordinary utensils, tools, matches, etc. We will provide additional care-taking upon request of a client (for example, stay overnight with a lone child who is afraid of the night sounds) but reserve the right to reduce instruction one hour for each 5 hours of such care-taking.

With any client we will only advise, not command, unless his actions endanger us or our property. (For example, if a child wishes to climb a mtn for which he is not equipped & does not want one of us to accompany him, we will advise him against it but not stop him.) We are not responsible for injuries. We will give warnings of likely dangers in the area & attempt to render first aid in event of injury.

Hazards in the immediate area are no greater than around a conventional home, perhaps less. There are rocks & a few cliffs but no stairs or roofs; creeks but no streets or bathtubs; a few rattlesnakes &

coyotes (who usually avoid people) but no dogs or child molesters; poison oak but no sugar-coated pills or airplane glue.

We have no children of our own but have caretaken children from age 3 and up.

No animals.

FOOD: Unless you have special diet problems, we suggest that during Vonu Week you consume only food that we provide or that you forage, to discover/cure any problems you may have eating mostly grains & legumes. (We will also provide small quantities of storable goodies & demonstrate some cake-&-candy substitutes.)

GETTING TOGETHER: The meeting place will be less than 10 miles from a paved highway on which there is at-least-daily bus service. An average auto can be driven to the meeting place in most weather.

When you send deposit please tell us: expected date & time of arrival, number of people & groups, approximate ages, means of identifying you, particular interests, special services needed. We receive mail about once a month. We have no phone. We will then send you directions to meeting place. We will also send a duplicate to your name c/o General Delivery, Grants Pass, OR, if we believe it is likely that you will have left home before we reply.

One of us will check at meeting place from one-half hour before until one-half hour after the time you set for meeting (daylight hours only). If you do not arrive within a half hour after the time you set, you will be instructed to erect a flag on top of a nearby hill. We will check every couple of days for a week or so.

If I was bringing a vehicle that isn't especially attractive to vandals or valuable, I would probably leave it parked near the meeting place for the week. If you do this, the risk is yours. We will caretake a vehicle for a week for \$2 plus \$1 per \$1000 value; it will not be accessible.

For pickup & delivery: one small person (motorbike, person plus luggage 150 lb max) – Cave Junction \$5, Grants Pass or Medford Airport \$15; 2 or more people (1500 lb max) – Cave Junction \$10, Grants Pass or Medford Airport \$30. (There is also a light plane airport between Cave Junction & O'Brien).

Sorry, but at present we cannot offer Vonu Week on an apprentice basis where you pay through work done for us. Perhaps in another year we will have enough easily-contracted-out-work for this to be possible.

Programme Notes For Vonu Week, Day 1

[Transcriber's Note: I have decided to scan the outlines Rayo put together – I had trouble formatting it correctly, and plus, there are images and diagrams that needed to be added.]

(Editor's Note: Roger Kenmore (Living Free 28, p. 4) supplied a copy of what appear to be lecture notes that Rayo used for his Days 1 & 4 presentations during Vonu Week...These notes are sketchy but they contain much valuable information. Here are the notes for Day 1.)

**PLEASE CONTINUE
READING ON NEXT
PAGE**

PROGRAMME NOTES FOR VONU WEEK, Day 1 by Rayo

(Editor's Note: Roger Kenmore (LF28p4) supplied a copy of what appear to be lecture notes that Rayo used for his Days 1 & 4 presentations during Vonu Week. (See LF27p2 & LF28p2 for explanation of Vonu Week.) These notes are sketchy but they contain much valuable information. Here are the notes for Day 1.)

I. Ground Cover:

Consider various types of terrain, geology, vegetation. Each has advantages (indicated below by +) & disadvantages (indicated by -).

A. Heavy timber, uncut:

- + good air cover
- ? no vehicle squat-spots
- few edibles & little game
- little sun
- there may be future cutting
- + soft soil, easy to dig

B. Timber, clearcut, regrowth:

- +? many old trails suitable for hiking, but usually not for vehicles due to washouts & overgrowth
- +? many edibles & much game (but that makes it attractive to hunters)
- + much sun, open
- ? slash, ie sticks & small branches left over from logging operations
- poor air cover
- + soft soil, easy to dig

C. Timber, selective cut (mostly plateaus & "basins" at higher altitudes):

- +? many trails adequate for vehicles, many squat-spots
- ? easy walking
- +? game in summer
- poor air cover
- ? soil varies

D. Scrub timber, brushland:

- + no commercial value unless it has minerals or it's near a city
- + fair foraging & game
- +? open to sun
- poor air cover
- +? difficult hiking
- ? no vehicle trails or squat-spots unless it's an old mining area
- difficult to dig (rocky)

II. Site Check List:

1. air cover (trees)
2. ground cover (heavy brush)
3. access (distance from paved road, distance from any roadhead, raging rivers to cross in winter or spring, snowy ridges to cross in winter)
4. seclusion (distance, brush, location relative to traffic flow, artifacts in evidence, ie beer car & other trash indicating people have been there)
5. altitude
6. exposure (south-facing?, for solar energy)
7. water source
8. water noise
9. slope
10. soil (if digging is required)
11. uniqueness in the area (are others apt to spot it?)

III. Shelter Considerations:

1. can it be built on 10% to 30% slope (very desirable)
2. concealment (surface, semi-underground, completely buried & concealed?)
3. economy:
 - a. cost of materials (consider time to earn

- money including all overhead)
- time procuring non-native material
 - time packing-in non-native material (weight, distance)
 - time preparing trails
- materials
- time cutting/debarking/preparing native
 - time digging
 - fabrication
 - visibility while construction is in progress (native materials shd be gathered away from site & concealed until used)
- insulation (how warm must how much of the shelter be on the coldest winter days?)
 - condensation (in summer on thick walls or ground surfaces)
 - rain shelter
 - dew shelter (summer)
 - shade (summer)
 - insects (summer)
 - bears
 - mice
 - wind
 - snow (weight)
 - flooding (if underground, cd shelter ever fill with water?)
 - strength (if underground, is structure strong enuf not to cave in?)
 - rotting (cd timbers placed underground rot, weaken, & collapse?)
- (I added #14 to 16 - JS)

CONTEMPORARY POLE & BARK WICKIUP

NORTHERN PAIUTE POLED SAGEBRUSH ENCIRCLEMENT

SOUTHERN PAIUTE BRUSH & POLE WICKIUP

SPONTANEOUS SHELTERS in the GREAT BASIN.

IV. Shelter Techniques: semi-conclusions as of May 1972, subject to change.

- Heating with wood is not desirable for a woman for these reasons: visible smoke, smell, heat radiated, time spent cutting & transporting firewood, removal of trees (visual evidence), noise of firewood cutting & splitting. Consider instead:
 - body heat (heavy insulation of part of shelter)
 - solar heating (in sunny locations)
 - ground source heating (it stays warm, up to 50°F., several feet underground, even in winter.)
 - propane (convertable to methane)
- Wood Construction: When making a den, digging & covering, even in rocky soil, takes less time than cutting, preparing & hauling timbers. On all forms of construction so far attempted, timber preparation was the most time-consuming part. - Appearance of area must not be appreciably altered (big difference from conventional log cabin). - The fewer & smaller the timbers needed, the better.
- Drainage: In Siskiyou west of the Cascades,

assume that any depression will become a pond, any terrace a waddy, during heavy rains. Look for evidence of streamlets. For winter shelter either put in a floor above ground, or dig a ditch around your shelter.

4. Nailing is difficult with timbers. Thick nails will split wood, thin nails will bend. Lashing is preferable, especially with cheap, synthetic cord/rope (which also won't rot). If nails must be used, drill holes 1st. Power drill will save time, but it's noisy & needs electricity.

5. Timber preparation: Actual cutting takes relatively little time. Most time is spent scouting suitable trees (overtopped by neighbors, away from site), hauling, trimming, debarking, shaping (for lashing), or drilling. Power saw not desirable.

6. Conventional Tents not worth the money. Poly film is much cheaper, waterproof, translucent, simple to erect. Not very durable, but neither are most tents.

7. For Scouting I do one day trips away from base camp, move base camp to go further. 2 or 3 day duration trips with "light weight" camping gear is not worthwhile.

8. Be skeptical of "living off the land" claims unless body weight was maintained (proved by careful before & after weighing). Most people who claim to have lived off the land actually lived off (consumed) their body fat, which you can do for a few weeks, but not indefinitely. Roberta has fasted for a month (for therapeutic reasons) & remained vigorous. - Indians had generations of experience & use of rich bottom land (which is now settled, built on, or used for agriculture). - A one week survival course can be dangerous if it instills false confidence.

PROGRAM'S NOTES FOR YONU WEEK, Day 4

(See LF29p4 for explanation)

by Rayo

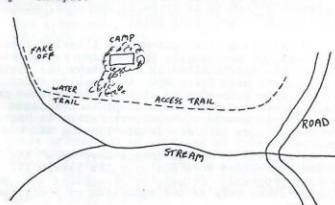
1. Trail Making:

Ground surface, in this order of preference:

- creek, if rocky & for summer use only & not for extremely heavy loads.
- large rocks (no tracks)
- leaf/needle debris (easy to repair)
- gravel/sand
- grass/soft vegetation

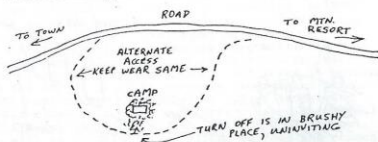
Do not saw what you can break; do not break what you can bend; do not bend what you can avoid. I spend about 4 hours scouting out route for each hour moving/bending. Angle up/down slopes, like animal tracks, except at fake-offs.

Never be near "end" of trail. Arrange continuity. Example:

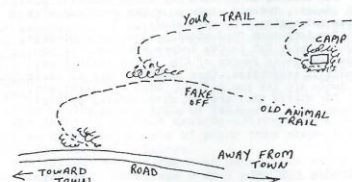


At turn-offs: Make "main trail" (fake-off) distinct. Make turn off: thru heavy brush, and/or at rocky place, and/or uphill, and/or re-entrant with

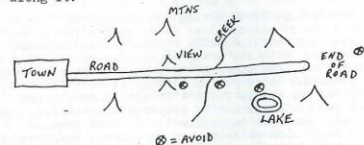
respect to travel of stranger. Another example (level country):



Most non-vomans go for outing from habitation to wilderness - are more energetic/curious & likely to explore on way out than on way back.



Do not locate near end of vehicle road, always along it:



Do not locate near creek accessible to road, lake (specially attractive in most areas), view place, campground, or any "thing" marked on maps. "Wilderness" areas often have more people in them than near-by areas not specially designated. Arrange "ambushes" along trail where you have view of backtrail while resting.

II. Precautions on hiking trails:

1. Wear drab clothing, but not conventional "camouflage." Dark green best color all around - safer than grey or brown because game animals are not green.
2. Go alone or don't talk.
3. Stop every 50 to 100 yards & listen (also good when hunting).
4. When aircraft heard, move into shade & sit down if there is time. If not, sit down & freeze. Sitting person is less obviously "human" than standing person.
5. Walk quietly.
6. Wear soft footgear (unless on rocks).
7. Never run to get out of sight.
8. Do these things consistently, to develop correct habits even when/where not "necessary."
9. Go on nude hikes (weather/insects permitting) to develop proper attitudes (but not near base camp.)

Weekends are best time to move around. Better to be seen by recreationers (who will assume you are other recreationers), than by forest workers on weekdays (who will wonder more about someone they see).

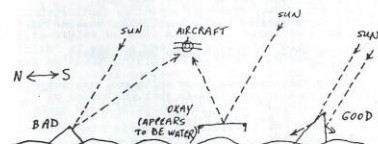
III. Access Roads:

Pick one which either goes somewhere (recreation spot), or which turns off main road where there is no settlement. Avoid road which deadends soon after passing last settlement. (People living there will be curious about anyone driving in.) Never stop along road & remain in vehicle while consulting map etc. Forest bludg are more likely to question someone in a stopped vehicle than to stop a moving vehicle.

Don't hike on roads, except at night.

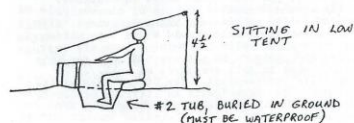
IV. Camouflage/Deception:

Polyethylene reflects light, so for "permanent" camp, surfaces should be vertical, angled toward north, or horizontal.

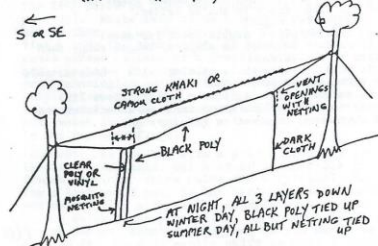


Even partial shade is very desirable because shade breaks up shapes.

Keep dwellings low. Partially underground (if soil is soft & drainage can be arranged), or learn to live in a low structure. 8 foot high structure can be seen much farther than 5 foot high. Full standup height is needed only for a few jobs. 4 1/2 foot high sufficient for sitting.



BEST, BUT MORE EXPENSIVE (HAVEN'T TRIED YET)



Top cloth is non-reflecting, takes snow load so it must be strong. Surface debris sprinkled on top. Polyethylene provides waterproofing.

Clear poly in south wall provides light. Or use vinyl (more expensive) if you want a clear picture window.

Space between top cloth & poly provides summer shade.

*This dimension is chosen so that winter & morning sunlight enters for solar heating, but summer-noon sun doesn't.

Dark cloth of north wall is for escape of H₂O and CO₂ from breathing. Should not be waterproof. Should be heavy enough to stop light.

Vent any stove to outside (except propane cook stove).

It's much easier to hide several small camps than one big one. Put camps several 100 yards apart so that discovery of one doesn't automatically lead to discovery of others. Commute between camps.

Also, small camp will arouse much less curiosity if discovered than large, obviously-long-used camp.

And/or keep minimal things at camp. Stash most things 100 yards or so away in drums, in bushes. Drum can be hidden better/easier than tent.

Keep out of/away from tent anything: confidential, illicit, work-related (not plausible for someone "on vacation.")

Warning while occupied: heavy brush (noise), bird alarms.

Warning that camp was found while you were away: light branches or fine threads that you string up will be dislodged/broken, footprints in sandy spots (brush out your own before leaving).

V. If Discovered:

Have most important travel things in pouch so it can be put on quickly (money, ID, knife, matches, etc.) If discovery seems imminent, try to get away from camp with pouch, shoes, clothes, firearms. Hide within range of sound.

Whoever happens to be dressed/up should get away, not wait for others. One person at camp, other hidden within sound & with firearm, is a good defensive situation.

Unless discovery of camp appears imminent, stay put & quiet if you hear human noise in distance. Wandering around increases chances of discovery.

Have calls for salutation, acknowledgement, all-in-well, locating. Calls should sound like bird calls. Have other calls for warning (you are in jeopardy) and "help." Do not use SOS code for help unless you want to call strangers as well.

Keep calls confidential. Use others when visiting friends. Use these calls as little & as softly as possible. Call whenever approaching camp or meeting place.

Types of calls/signals/messages:

1. hoots - carries much farther than voice enunciations.

2. whistles - with a little disguise, less conspicuous than voice.

3. semaphore - (with Morse code), right is dot, left is dash, front is end of letter.

4. light (at night)

5. taps on pipe - double knock for dash.

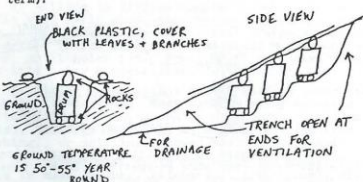
6. radio - dot/dash is simpler, longer range than voice transmission.

7. hand pressure while holding hands - undetectable by strangers in same room.

8. position of letters in a letter: above line means dot, below line means dash, on line means end of character, or slant to left or right.

VI. Storage:

Metal drums with banded lids are the best means I have found. Keep painted for long life. Needs good gasket. Bears will destroy almost anything else if left unattended for a long time. For food, keep in shade (short term), or in a trench (long term):



For cooling short term (eg large animal), put in stream. Trickle water over rag over top with hose (siphoning from upstream).

For long-term food storage also use a plastic drum liner. Put in CO₂ before sealing. If you use dry ice as source of CO₂, leave seals loose until it evaporates, then tighten. Use at least 1 ounce dry ice per gallon. Also add desiccant.

For stores that are not deteriorated by heat, stash drums in bushes, in small groups.

YONU WEEK RESULTS

by Rayo

Two groups of 2 people each came during 1972 -- about what we had hoped for -- many more & we would not have had time for other things we wished to do.

Both groups lived during their stays in 'tents' rigged out of polyethylene film, within fairly secluded (tho not especially remote) wooded mountainous areas. With one group we erected the shelter on the 1st day; the other group used a shelter already in place but later put up a small stash 'tent.' We supplied dry staple foods & Roberta demonstrated many recipes which can be prepared with simple, economical, storable ingredients. We also foraged wild foods with which we are familiar. One group & I cached (buried) a 5-gallon can of simulated valuables. There were many long raps. On days when they were alone they explored the surrounding land, swam, & read.

Some who came were more knowledgeable in some areas than we, which we expected & happily admitted. In general our clients were well satisfied altho we felt that some portions of our program were marginal. One criticism was that Rayo relied too heavily on words with some subjects (psycho drama was suggested as an alternative.) Another was that we did not check-out clients' knowledge of 'conventional' 'survival' skills such as orienteering.

Our present plans for 1973 are to offer 'custom'

services on demand -- give demonstrations, set up shelters or supply caches, consult in a secluded setting. Our rates are very low for services which do not require travel into that society -- we are still rather inexperienced (tho we know of no vonu who is experienced).

Now that we are solving shelter problems we can devote more effort to communication. We have tentative plans to live in a 'visitation area' suitable both for vehicle squatting & backpack camping during one month of summer (most likely early summer) where we can meet people within a day or so without advance notice.

(reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1, 25 March 73)

Vonu Week Results

By: Rayo

Reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1, 25 March 73

Two groups of 2 people each came during 1972 – about what we had hoped for – many more & we would not have had time for other things we wished to do.

Both groups lived during their stays in “tents” rigged out of polyethylene film, within fairly secluded (though not especially remote) wooded mountainous areas. With one group we erected the shelter on the 1st day; the other group used a shelter already in place but later put up a small stash “tent.” We supplied dry staple foods & Roberta demonstrated many recipes which can be prepared with simple, economical, storable ingredients. We also foraged wild foods with which we are familiar. One group & I cached (buried) a 5-gallon can of simulated valuables. There were many long raps. On days when they were alone they explored the surrounding land, swam, & read.

Some who came were more knowledgeable in some areas than we, which we expected & happily admitted. In general our clients were well satisfied although we felt that some portions of our program were marginal. One criticism was that Rayo relied too heavily on words with some subjects (psycho drama was suggested as an alternative.) Another was that we did not check-out clients’ knowledge of “conventional” “survival” skills such as orienteering.

Our present plans for 1973 are to offer “custom” services on demand – give demonstrations, set up shelters or supply caches, consult in a secluded setting. Our rates are very low for services which do not require travel into that society – we are still rather inexperienced (tho we know of no vonuan who is experienced).

Now that we are solving shelter problems we can devote more effort to communication. We have tentative plans to live in a “visitation area” suitable for squatting & backpack camping during one month of summer (most likely early summer) where we can meet people within a day or so without advanced notice.

Against Social Reformism

By: Tom (of Preform)

Reprinted from PREFORM #9, May 1970, p. 18

For those not acquainted with it, collective-movementism (also called “utopianism” & “bullshit libertarianism”) comes in many styles. There are the “educationalists” who think freedom will be achieved by just talking about it, the “politicians” busily campaigning for tweedle dee as the lesser evil to that terrible tweedle dum, & the “revolutionists” who want to play cops-and-robbers with the Establishment (or, more usually, TALK about doing it). Some dream of a utopia of “limited govt” capitalism, some anarcho-capitalism, & some anarcho-communism. But no matter how great their surface differences or how bitterly they feud among themselves, they share the same fundamental fallacies.

The basic premise of the collective-movementists is, in essence: no one can be free unless/until everyone is free. From this authoritarian assumption comes what there is of their strategy: to change society as a whole – to achieve freedom through altruistic crusades and provide it for all as a free gift.

Such strategy goes contrary not only to historical experience but (in the case of the “individualists”) to their economic theory & social ideals as well. (The anarcho-communists are at least consistent in their mistake.) The collective-movementists propose to produce & maintain freedom by means proven ineffective for the large-scale production of anything of value – failing to recognize that incentives/benefits must be individualizable. They embrace a dichotomy between means & ends failing to recognize that, in social movements, the means employed will determine the ends (if any) achieved.

The collective-movementists are invariably utopianists – dreaming not of INDIVIDUAL freedom for those willing to expend the effort to achieve & maintain it, but of a “free society” wherein millions of people behave as the dreamer thinks they should. Such a view is implicitly authoritarian – perhaps another reason why the best-intentioned political crusades have brought forth only more tyranny & destruction. Consider the results of the Russian revolution, & of the many “social reform” movements in the US of 50 yrs ago.

Collective-movementism, in all its bizarre variations, is too flagrantly irrational to be explained just as an error in philosophy. The cause must be sought in psychology – for this I highly recommend Eric Hoffer's *THE TRUE BELIEVER*.

Not surprisingly, most collective-movementists fail to achieve even their own personal ends. Most “mass movement” advocates end up as feuding little sects. Most “educationalists” talk only to themselves in their little magazines, books & conferences; their utterances so dogmatic & unrelated to reality as to repel most people.

As an alternative to collective movementism/utopianism, I advocate what I call libertarian realism, the application phase of which is self-liberation. I believe that freedom can be achieved by individuals/small groups regardless of how others choose to live. I intend to demonstrate this not through verbal manipulations but by becoming more and more free. But words may suffice to clear up some misconceptions regarding libertarian realism:

In rejecting collective-movementism the libertarian realist does not shun association with others. Rather he recognizes that friendship & love can be the coin of trade among close, compatible personal acquaintances.

In rejecting utopianism the libertarian realist does not discard his ideals. Rather, he rejects trying to impose HIS ideals on others; he actualizes them in his own life.

In rejecting “educationism” the libertarian realist does not oppose education. Rather, he rejects the notion that most of the population can be propagandized into values & world views which clash with their living patterns. He recognizes that education-in-freedom & self-liberation must proceed hand-in-hand.

In rejecting crusades the libertarian realist does not neglect selling. Rather he refuses to try to sell an empty bag – which is not selling but preaching. He recognizes that he can SELL freedom to rational people as he is able to DELIVER it. (How many automobiles would be sold by someone who claimed his design would run 30 miles on a pound of sage brush & a quart of water, but who could not make his 1st delivery until 50 yrs after he had received 20 million pre-paid orders – with the automobile then to be given to everyone, whether they had paid for it or not?)

In rejecting “revolution” the libertarian realist does not necessarily shun active resistance. Rather he rejects attempts to destroy the State

per se. He uses force only to repel or deter attack upon a freedomite client. (A private protection service does not attempt to eradicate stealing as a mode of behavior; rather it prevents or discourages burglars from molesting its customers.)

In rejecting “social change movements” the libertarian realist does not deny the possibility of social progress. Rather, he recognizes that social change comes only as the summation of individual changes.

In rejecting utopian speculation the libertarian realist does not neglect theory. Rather, he recognizes that theory must relate to practice, otherwise it becomes mysticism.

Letter From Rayo (June Or July 1972)

I'm more optimistic about crypto-culture (hidden gardening – JS) than I have may have sounded. With intense cultivation – including irrigation, mulching, poly cover in winter – a small patch will produce much food. But we haven't done it yet.

Shelter remains our big concern, as it has been for 2 years. I prefer to be a “systems engineer” & use other people's components. But there is nothing on the market close to adequate (in respect to vonu with comfort & convenience) so I have to develop/build components. But our current approach (plinu) will be completed by Autumn, and if it proves out, we will be shifting major effort to food and communication.

Now that I'm not involved with VONU LIFE (except for an article now & then, & occasional mail pickup & relay) I will try to do better on personal correspondence. Thoughts on this topic:

While newsletter forums (VL, LC) have their uses, correspondence is better for some things. Disagreements are more apt to be resolved when people disagreeing are not verbalizing for an audience. Privacy is greater because info is relayed selectively, friend-to-friend, not broadcast. Correspondence as a whole can be thought of as a vast, decentralized, discriminating communication net.

One thing: I now put destroy-after-reading writings on different sheets of paper than okay-to-keep-and-maybe-pass-on writings.

The fastest way to reach me usually is still VONU LIFE (R). Sometimes G or I pick up; sometimes Lan (or whoever picks up for him) does, in which case it gets left in a drop for us.

I regret that you didn't get to all the subjects you wished to cover. I missed some too. I can guess a couple of questions you probably had about Lan so I'll answer:

Trustworthy? While he doesn't have an objectivist/libertarian background, I'm convinced he is vonuan or vonuist. Character references he supplied (upon my request before I parted with VL) were impressive tho not of the “club.” I've never met him face-to-face, but I don't consider that important because I'm not good at evaluating people that way. (He may be more than one person for all I know.)

Visitable? So far as I know, not; his private conduct is like his published policy. I've suggested to him that we explore trade

possibilities, especially pooling purchases and trips, but so far no response. This rather irks me since, in VL, he was all for local trade with outsiders. Apparently he takes the position that another vonuan who knows he is vonuan is less than to be trusted than a redneck who doesn't know what he is. But we have exchanged letters, books, publications, through drop. Also I sold some stationary (bulk purchased) along with VL. So maybe more trade will develop.

Despite my irritation, my overall impression is that he is thoughtful & careful ("cool") – that maybe he has been at it a few more years than I have – has thought of a few more angles, has gotten his lifestyle further refined.

He doesn't seem well-informed in economics. Unfortunately the "club" literature he has seen (exchange pubs) apparently have turned him off to "libertarianism." (He categorized it as "political" (collective-movementist?) in his comment to me. We haven't gone into it further.)

I think his main interest in VL is, he thought he could increase circulation & make quite a lot of money. But after seeing his first issue, I'm not so sure. He didn't make the kind of changes I had expected. I have contractual strings on VL – if he loses interest & lets it drop, it comes bouncing back to me.

After careful thought, I don't think vonuist versus servile as such is innate. Contributing factors are undoubtedly partly innate – intelligence, "independence" ("stubbornness?"). Among my peers, in, say, slave-school 3rd grade I don't think I would have been picked by an observer as most likely to become vonuan. In my case I think it was interaction of various innate & environmental factors. But I agree with Wolverine that, whatever the causes, the characteristics are probably irreversible at adult level.

The crucial question for anyone remains: how much will he pay for vonu? ("Freedom" not only isn't free, it's quite expensive. I think the price may drop a little during the next few decades, but only a little.)

What makes someone a vonuan is not any particular life-style, but willingness to change life-styles whenever desirable to achieve/preserve vonu. What makes a vonuan is a high relative value on vonu.

I believe there is emerging a new "club" of vonu & applied lib doers – a "club" which cuts across life-styles as well as geographical boundaries – a "club" of people who value freedom highly – indicated by their working effectively to achieve it. The collective-movementists

are not part of the “club” (tho a few may graduate to it). The “club” may use Rothbard’s economic theory without considering Rothbard a “fellow” just as it may use electronic enciphers without considering the inventors of transistors to be “fellows.”

Might a vonuan be more vulnerable while visible? Not according to our experience. To the contrary, we seem to be hassled less, even proportionately, perhaps because we are more careful, also we don’t have the same psycho need to “talk back,” etc. But perhaps what you suggest would happen with someone out of sight much more or longer than us.

No, I don’t think the 2 definitions are identical. But someone who spends most of his life “within sight of...” must spend most of his life behaving similar to a sheep-person, which is an enormous psychological load. I’m not convinced this is healthy (wasn’t for me when I tried it.)

I think eventually there will emerge new, sophisticated blends which are both more vonu & yet provide more access. We, presently, are more vonu, yet have better trade access than, say, Fletchers of “Driftwood Valley.” But I think wilderness squatting for a year or two may be a necessary stage for most vonuans – (“to get their heads together”?).

Thoughts On Rayo From Living Free Subscribers (Dec. 84 & Mar. 85)

LETTER FROM JAMES H. (Dec. 1984)

The long piece on Rayo was fascinating. Maybe less so to a recent subscriber, but to those of us who have been with you for some time & know the background, it is very good. Rayo comes across as less of a practical fellow than I had expected. All these guys seem to rely on modern technologies even as they seek escape. His polyethylene tent, for example, could have been abandoned in favor of a woodcutter's pole-and-leaf hut, which is made more quickly with local materials & is its own camouflage.

(Comment: The trouble with a pole & leaf hut is that the roof leaks, which would be intolerable in Oregon in winter where rains are torrential. Making a leak-proof roof is the hardest problem when you're building with native materials, & poly offers a quick & cheap solution. I think it's okay to use modern technology as long as you don't depend on it. Rayo could easily shift to native materials if/when he could no longer get plastic, or it became too expensive. Why do it the hard way before then?

I fault Rayo on other grounds, the opposite grounds actually. I think his lifestyle was too primitive rather than not primitive enough. His whole program seems to maximize discomfort & inconvenience, for what reason? To gain freedom, he would say. But what kind of "freedom" is it if you have to impose such very restrictive rules on yourself? It's like wounding yourself to prevent other people from wounding you. I think I'm a lot freer on my rural acreage than Rayo was in his hideout. Sure I pay \$100/year in taxes, but after that I can do as I please. That costs me less than all this sneaking around costs Rayo. I think he made an unwise trade-off. -JS)

LETTER FROM ROGER KENMORE IN RESPONSE TO JIM STUMM'S COMMENT (Sept. 1985)

Dear Jim,

I am writing in response to your comment in LIVING FREE #31:

“I think I’m a lot freer on my rural acreage than Rayo was in his hideout. Sure I pay \$100/year in taxes, but after that I can do as I please. That costs me less than all this sneaking around costs Rayo.”

You could also say that you spent two years in the US Army, but after that you can do as much as you please. Modern statism, with its claim of preserving a “free society”, will allow you to “do as you please” after you have complied with its regulations and paid its taxes. But as you yourself make clear (in “Is Self-Liberation Impossible?”, RANDOM WRITINGS #2), “sneaking around” is the best means of achieving more freedom in a society dominated by a State. You fault Rayo for bearing too high a cost for too little a benefit. But you forget that his values are not necessarily your values. Perhaps his valuation of freedom was higher and his disvaluation of “sneaking around” was lower than yours.

What sort of “freedom” do you get on your rural acreage for your \$100 per year taxes? How free would you be at \$1,000 per year? How free would you be if the state took over your land to build a road or used your deed as a means to find you to send you into the Army? If by “freedom” you really mean “solitude”, why not say so (it is a legitimate enough desire)?

I have often thought that the notion of “freedom” is closely connected to “pride”. To that extent, the power of another (including the state) can be opposed by either self-liberation or power. Rayo sought to live without needing a driver’s license or vehicle registration. You have given up this “freedom” and consider it a benefit worth the costs to be able to drive on government roads with little fear of harassment, even though you know the government has you by the balls. It is hard to rationalize the benefits of not having a vehicle, owning land or collecting a taxable income aside from the pride of knowing one is not at the mercy and bidding of the state. Unless, of course, one is running from the law because of a specific crime...or one has nightmares of a totalitarian future...or one sees oneself as pioneering a new life-style. How do you rationalize your own long-term efforts and discomforts to minimize your taxable income so as to give as little money as possible to the government? As if, in this society of millions, your income tax could make any palpable difference to the state.

Sincerely,
Roger Kenmore

RETURN COMMENTS FOR ROGER KENMORE FROM JIM STUMM (1985)

Here are some of the things I'm free to do on my rural acreage that a wilderness vonuan is not free to do: Of greatest importance, I can be seen on my land by neighbors, or even by govt officials, w/o the fear of bad consequences, whereas a vonuan must avoid being seen by anyone, as Rayo makes quite clear. Then, I can openly plant gardens, trees, bushes, while the vonuan can only attempt "crypto-culture" trying to hide all signs of cultivation. I can cut down any trees I want, while the vonuan must select trees to cut at wide intervals far from his building site. I can cut trails & clearings & make any changes in the landscape that I please while the vonuan must spend his time wiping out signs of trails, etc.

Of course, I wouldn't be any freer if I paid \$1000/yr in property taxes rather than \$100/yr. It's not a question of buying freedom in proportion to tax \$ spent, but rather a yes/no situation, to be in legal possession of the property or not.

You ask how free I would be if the state took over my land for a road. The probability of that happening to any given landowner is lo, about like being struck by lightning. But the same question could be put to a troglodyte vonuan. How free would Rayo be if he spent a couple years building an underground home on public land & then the state cut a road through nearby? Actually, a landowner has the advantage because if the new road bypassed his property by only a few yards, he could still remain, but if a new road was cut through even a mile away from Rayo's remote den, he would probably feel compelled to abandon it.

You ask what if the state used my deed to find me to send me into the army. I haven't heard of draft boards searching property deeds to find draft evaders. Anyway, I'm not at risk from the draft. If I were, I would probably use an alias & lease some acreage from a farmer rather than buy it. Still, there are ways to buy land & still keep your name off the records. You could create false ID in your new name. Then again, I don't recall being asked to prove my identity when I bought my land. I suppose I could have used any name I wanted, as long as I could receive mail in that name.

Other ways are to set up a corporation, perhaps offshore, & buy land in the name of the corp. Or you might make a deal with an

organization that you have no connection with, eg for-profit corp., or a non-profit, or a church, by which they buy land you select, with \$ you “loan” to them, then they lease it back to you for as long as you live. At your death it reverts to them; that’s their pay-off. (A non-profit or church may be exempt from paying property taxes, but playing that game may be pushing your luck.)

As for really meaning “solitude” when I say “freedom,” that charge applies to Rayo more than to me. I have had visitors at my land & I didn’t blindfold them or swear them to secrecy. It’s no concern to me if they tell others about my property. Rayo, on the other hand, is notoriously secretive about his homesite. So which of us is really pursuing solitude?

Lowering my income taxes isn’t the only reason for my low income lifestyle. I also want to be employed only about 20 hours a week so I have time for other things. And I found I didn’t like the pressures to conform imposed on me by employers when I was in management (as manager of a checking account department in a bank). Now, as a janitor, I find that mostly nobody pays attention to me. The main thing is, I pursue my own values, which are somewhat different from yours or Rayo’s. I mention quite often that we all have different subjective values. Rayo, however, seems to have never realized that. He often says or implies that people who don’t adopt his wilderness vonuan lifestyle must be not truly committed to freedom, not realizing that other people may want to be free to different things which cannot easily be done in the woods, or not easily w/o owning one’s on land.

Sure you can scrupulously obey all laws & pay all taxes & govt would then probably not harass you. But LIVING FREE is edited for people for whom that “solution” to the freedom-problem is intolerable. My argument for landowning is not just advocacy of that solution. Rather, I see landowning as a special case where costs can be so lo & benefits so hi that avoiding it makes no sense. Eg, I get 2 tax bills a year in the mail totaling about \$100. I pay them by mail. That’s all the contact I have ever had with govt as a landowner since I bought my land. The county knows nothing about me except name & address, & they have no reason to inquire. I also paid one time \$2500 for 6 acres, which I would recover more or less if I sell the land. That’s all my costs for which I get all the benefits alluded to above.

You can make a stronger case against legally driving a motor vehicle on govt roads because that costs much more than owning land

costs me. My (mandatory) car insurance alone costs more than my property taxes. And a driver is at risk of being stopped & harassed by cops every moment that he is driving, whereas the landowners is at much less risk of being harassed while he is at home on his land. On the contrary, it is the vonuan hiding out in the national forest who is constantly at risk of being harassed by forest bludg. So who is really freer?

Comments On Camping, By Bert In Oregon (Dec. 85)

Concerning the controversy over whether it's better to buy acreage or to use the wilderness (LIVING FREE #32 p.6, and earlier issues):

Holly and I have backpack camped for 8 years now full time except for occasional short house sittings and visits with city friends. We have camped both on farms/homesteads and on open forest lands, in dozens of places in western Oregon, also in Washington and Colorado and elsewhere.

Both types of situations have worked out well for us. Only twice have we had disagreements with private land owners that prompted us to move sooner than intended, and that happened many years ago when we were inexperienced with such arrangements. We have never had any trouble camping on open lands, including land owned or administered by forest services, timber companies, and BLM.

Most of our camping on private land is while working for the owners, though we also do so occasionally to be close to town or to borrow electric power tools. At other times we prefer public lands because there's more room to roam and less noise, and because we aren't put under obligation to anyone.

We once considered buying a few acres, but didn't, because the advantages didn't seem worth the costs and responsibilities.

Jim wrote that on land he'd bought he could plant a garden or trees more freely than in the wilderness. We haven't planted much, but talking with people who have, my impression is that out in the bush and even in many rural areas, the biggest loss isn't to thieves, but to deer, rabbits, mice, cutworms, etc. "No trespassing" signs won't matter to them.

Jim also wrote that on land he'd bought he could be seen with less fear of bad consequences than in the wilderness. When we hike on backwoods trails we aren't seen by many people. (I recall only 3 in 8 years. Two were hunting deer. One was gathering mushrooms.) If we do see someone, we say "hi," maybe exchange a few pleasantries, and trek on. So what are the bad consequences? No one has tried to kill or rob us. I suppose it's possible someone might. But how would our owning the land stop them? In fact hiking and camping on just our

own few acres might jeopardize us more, because people would get to know we were there.

I've seen two VONU books and most back issues of LIVING FREE, but I don't understand why vonuans must never be seen. I can appreciate them not wanting strangers wandering into their camps – neither do we nor do most people. But, when away from camp, why does being seen have worse consequences for a vonuan than for anyone else?

Jim wrote that road construction a mile away would compel Rayo to abandon his den. Why? Most of our camps have been less than a mile from the nearest road (Oregon west of the Cascades is so laced with logging roads we'd be hard pressed to get a mile away) and we don't make great efforts to hide our camps (though we don't call attention to them either), yet no one has ever visited us uninvited. I assume that Rayo's den (underground, is it not?) would be much harder to spot than is one of our camps.

We do occasionally hear logging, motorbikes, shots, dogs, etc. Even if there were no roads we'd still hear airplanes. We like solitude but not so much we want to move to Antarctica.

I wonder if the disagreement doesn't reflect east-west differences. In most of the west there is plenty of open land suitable for camping, but not many small plots you can buy (except near towns and along highways, and that land is expensive). In the east, my impression is, it's the other way around.

Whether on land you've bought, land you've rented or open land, camping offers many advantages (along with disadvantages, of course), compared to building a house or cabin, or bringing in a mobile home. Attractions for us include easy changes of scene, more choice of locations, more natural surroundings, and more privacy. But the bottom line is – very low cost. Jim mentioned needing to work only 20 hours a week. We need to work only 5 hours a week each.

(That's averaged over a year. Actually we work only one or two months a year usually, but put in 40-50 hours a week then. Working on farms the pay is low but we clear more than we did at factory and office jobs where there was rent or commuting, taxes, convenience foods (because less time to cook), special clothing needed, etc.)

Many people try camping but have an unpleasant time because of insufficient or inappropriate equipment, or inexperience, and conclude that camping necessarily means hardships, discomforts and

inconveniences. Not so. We've been as comfortable camping as we ever were living in apartments. There have been unpleasant moments, such as an unexpected rain while moving. But every dwelling-way has its problems. In a house or apartment, the electricity may go off, the furnace breaks down, the pipes freeze, the frame eaten by termites, etc.

A commercial. Most of the LIGHT LIVING LIBRARY is now on microfiche. 38 plans and booklets (95 pages) concerning portable dwelling and low-cost self-reliant living, all for only \$1 postpaid. From MESSAGE POST, POB 190-LF, Philomath, OR 97370. (Also see Unclassified Ad.)

COMMENTS FOR BERT FROM JIM STUMM

Regarding gardens being eaten by varmints: That seems to be the major problem in the boondocks, as I have found out for myself. It's not that way in urban areas where I never have that problem. The solution is to put a fence around the garden. But if you do that on "public" land, & the bludg (bureaucrats, forest police, whatever they are called) find it, they will at least break down your fence, & may harass you for putting it up.

Regarding being seen: Vonuans are not directly concerned with being seen by "civilians," & not much worried that they might be robbed or killed by private criminals. Their main concern is that they don't want to be seen by bludg, or by "civilians" who will squeal & reveal their presence to bludg. Why? Vonuans want to live free. That's primary. Their strategy for gaining max political freedom is the govt won't (can't) oppress you if they don't even know you exist. So the idea is to live "out of sight & mind of those who might coerce you," meaning mainly govt bludg. Vonuans want to disappear from mainstream society which they consider unbearably oppressive. Rayo often refers to it as Slave Society, or "that" society (spoken contemptuously). But they pay a high price for this invisibility, & I suggest in LF that the benefit may not be worth such a high price, at least not until USA becomes a much worse police state. [Emphasis mine]

I'm only speculating when I say Rayo would abandon his underground den if a road was built as near as a mile away. I mean a road with some traffic on it. Rayo wouldn't be concerned about abandoned logging roads. He uses such roads himself to get his camper back into the woods. But a new, well-traveled, through road would give

access to outsiders, to bludg, & to hordes of “good citizens” who act as willing ears for bludg. His invisibility could not long be maintained if people who were wandering in the woods within a mile of their parked vehicles, stumbled across his den & then went off blabbing in every bar & gas station in the area (as they would) about the extensive construction that some weird hermit had built way out there in the woods. Soon Authorities would hear of it & would pay him a visit to ask him how dare he build w/o permission on their (ie public) land? Then at least they would break up his construction (they bulldoze cabins built w/o permits on private land), & they might even arrest him for something. The need for invisibility arises if you want to build something permanent: a cabin, fences, hydropower system, etc. It's less essential for a transient camper, unless there's a warrant out for you. – The east/west difference you note is true. Also, in the northeast, even wilderness that is inaccessible in summer may be wide open to every yahoo on a snowmobile in winter.

Letters From Rayo/Tom Of Preform

19 Sept. 1972

Half-life of engineering capability in digital electronics/computers is only a couple of years. Result: everyone is out of date except on the particular thing he is working on. Someone 10 or even 20 years out of date can learn current techniques almost as fast as someone 2 years out of date. He just dives in (at a good engineering library) & learns where the technology is now, in subject areas relevant to his project. He doesn't have to learn the intervening history. I don't presently have time or facilities to do electronic development, so it is more efficient for me to wait until I do & then catch up. (I am receiving one electronics journal which I glance at & then store away.)

Not knowing more about the scrambling technique, I can't comment on decodability. It is no great feat to come up with a technique which is essentially unbreakable. But a difficult-to-break rather than unbreakable technique might be chosen for lower cost & simplicity of use.

Possibility of death: How many 1000s have taken Outward Bound? How many have been killed? And that is a course designed to generate stress – push people to the limit. So what is the chance of someone dying during Vonu Week? Not zero, but so small I don't consider it worth considering in advance. There are many more-probable dangers & discomforts to be considered. It is not efficient to prepare for, or even to consider, the very-low-probability possibilities.

Only one out of 100 persons bitten by rattlesnakes die – & this includes little children & people with bad hearts, etc. But good care will reduce length & severity of illness.

"Space blankets" are presently very expensive. However Alcoa sells finely perforated aluminum foil (to restaurants for keeping baked potatoes warm, etc.) which might work as well in a stationary structure (not as strong). But I try to minimize use of metal in new development because of possibility of detectability in future (though I don't think this is a present problem).

Enclosed is a food consumption tabulation for Vonu Week. I don't know what caused your digestive upsets. You might try eating nothing but boiled, sprouted wheat & beans for breakfast & lunch

every day for a week, while otherwise living in your ordinary way & eating your ordinary food for supper.

I submitted to VONU LIFE a long article on our present life. This may be in a Sept. issue. (I haven't received a copy yet.) This tells something about our experience with mice and rats. There are many lizards around, but an edible portion. I suspect, is even smaller than a mouse. And they eat flies, thereby reducing that problem. We will begin eating insects in quantity if/when we find an easy way to procure some kind in quantity.

I agree that presentation of Vonu Week could be much improved – will work on it if we continue to give it.

I remember reading your LC article & liking it except for disagreeing with the part about the sado-masochistic club analogy. If I were the involuntary victim I would probably wreck the joint & mangle some of the members on the way out, if I could do so without too much additional risk or bother, to discourage them from bothering me & my friends in the future. Certainly I would feel that it was moral for me to do so.

Interesting that L. considers you & I “political,” whereas we consider ourselves “non-political” as she considers herself. Actually we are “post-political” – both of us went through a political (or at least an educationalist-ideological) phase, but we are past it. Apparently she hasn't gone through it. Then there are the “bullshitters” (or “true believers”) who get hung up in it.

I continue to believe that an anti-statist ideology is necessary although certainly not sufficient for vonu (any form). Question: how can someone develop from an unaware to an antistatist/vonuist/antipolitical worldview without going through the collective-movementist/utopian stage?

How self sufficiently is the author of the Iconomics article now living? I just finished reading LAST OF THE MOUNTAIN MAN. Wasn't too impressed.

Our lifestyle this Autumn & the first part of winter: We sleep in the lay-foam hut under a small poly tent which is within easy commuting distance of our camper. We cook and eat (except breakfast) & do most other things in camper. During spells of good weather I go for several days at a time to the plinu on which I am still working. The camper is now in a different squat-spot than the one you saw but in the

same general area. I expect we will move to the plinu in Feb. or March, if structure & drainage prove out.

I don't recommend doing Vonu Week, like we did with you, in Feb. since poly tent is marginal shelter then. (We lived under poly most of last winter but we had foam hut.) So I suggest that C. check with us later in the Winter regarding our situation & his interests. After we move to plinu, we could put him and family up quite comfortably in camper plus foam hut. But this might not be what he wants.

Since you were a paying guest I felt it would be as improper to ask you to clean up (except for your personal things) as to expect a tenant at a motel to wash the bedding & vacuum the rug before leaving. The day after you left I hiked up, took down the tent, brought down the food things & stashed most other things in the drum in some bushes nearby. I have since brought down the drum. The bed frame is still there. I don't expect it will be seen by many people (it is much less visible even than the tent was). Nor would it arouse much curiosity if it was seen. (There has been logging in the area – so there are other artifacts.) And if we want to move camp sometime in a hurry, it is nice to have a bed already there.

My present thoughts on future Vonu Week: Most of VW presentation was verbal, & that form is adequate, if not most efficient/entertaining. (The best way to remember is by actually doing, & there is a fair amount of that.) So we intend to put the words on the paper – have plenty of illustrations, very clear labels (“sprout jar,” etc.). We will sell or rent “Vonu Place” – squat-spot already scouted, equipment, grubstake & detailed instructions stashed nearby. To the client we send directions. He comes when he wants; leaves when he wants (we get deposit on equipment), & he never sees us. We anticipate as many questions as possible in instructions; others can get answered, slowly, through message drop. We offer a variety of squat-spots – varying in access/remoteness, terrain, vegetation; “used” spots sell/rent at discount. This way our vonu isn't degraded if we get large clientele. Eventually I hope to provide communication links for live answering of questions, but not next summer.

21 Nov. 1972

Did you receive my letter of 19 Sept.? P.O. box was broken into about 21 Oct. By good fortune mail had been picked up 19 Oct. so not much was stolen (“Betterment” Committee? Don't know.) Anyway I

am concerned that, either, my 19 Sept. letter did not reach you, or your reply might have been among the items stolen.

Roberta & I will obtain a mailing address in a large city, with UP link to local pickup, as soon as we can arrange it. (This is something we have been going to do for a long time. Now we will move faster.)

Have you heard anything about random opening & checking of mail at US border?

14 Dec. 1972

Perhaps it is only a coincidence but the 2 letters of mine which you didn't receive were both over an ounce but with sufficient postage to go first class.

There was a little bludg activity in the area that might possibly have been precipitated by something in Sept. letter but was more likely caused by a hunter.

While I was working in that society I spent a large part of my time doing technical work which was essentially puzzle solving. Perhaps that's why puzzles have not appealed to me since I was a child. Now projects like Volan (artificial language) fill this "need" for me. (Whether Volan proves sufficiently useful to justify my time expenditures as other than "recreation" remains to be seen, but perhaps the fact that it MIGHT prove useful makes it more appealing than puzzles.)

I would not have guessed about L. what you said about her in your 2 Dec. letter. So much for ability to evaluate face to face. My impression at the time: very competent, few hangups, but mysticism was incongruous – indicative of some problem.

I received a long report from someone who was at Atlantis I for several months. (I cannot reveal the source nor pass it on.) But, based on it, I would withdraw any money I had in ATCOPS.

I find I'm especially interested in erotics when I'm not getting any. This hasn't been a problem since I met Roberta.

If your "lover" would feel "betrayed" & end the relation because you took another girl (with whom you were not even having erotics) to Vonu Week, what does this say about the rationality of your "lover"?

I find your suspicions of lifestyle "seduction" incomprehensible. If you recall, L. expressed definite interest in staying. My reply was something like: "Sure, go ahead & stay at your camp. And we can bring you another drum full of food & mail every couple of months." If we were desperately seeking more people we could have made her a more

attractive offer, such as employment with us for a few hours a month (clearing squat spots or something) sufficient to pay for her food & leave her a little over.

Actually Roberta & I are not as committed to wilderness vonu (at least to the exclusion of everything else) as we might seem. (We go through a period of doubts/rethink each winter.) If it were not for the nuclear threat we might be trying to build a smial under St. Monica mountains or maybe Tilden Park (Berkeley). At the moment Roberta is more sold on wilderness vonu than I. We now look upon ourselves as “vonu experimentalists.” We can afford the luxury of this partly because we AREN’T in a desperate need for vonu – no immediate problems with draft, school-aged children, etc.

About you: 1) I had no reason to believe you were interested in becoming a wilderness-vonuan. (You have REPEATEDLY said you weren’t –I have no reason to disbelieve you.) 2) IF, nevertheless, you did, I expect you would do it in your present location. The main emphasis of Roberta & I right now is developing a way of living FOR us that combines maximum vonu with comfort. Until we have problems of living the year around better solved than we do at the moment, it is foolish to attract others to join us. (If somebody wants to experiment on their own, fine. Good luck.) Orion’s visit the previous summer convinced us that we were not yet prepared for associating (at least on a year-around basis) with anyone who wasn’t at least as experienced/equipped as we were. The thing we can do which is most likely to attract others, & attract them on a sound basis, is to increase the vonu/comfort/convenience/capability of our own lifestyle. What people might then come, I have no idea. Most likely they will be people we don’t even know of at present.

We probably value you as much as a non-coercivist (anti-statist, if you still are) with a different but somewhat interrelated lifestyle, living in a region in which we have some interests, as we would as a neighboring wilderness-vonuan. Enough?

My evidence isn’t conclusive but judging from the few experiences I have had or heard about others having, when a reliable contact/agent/friend/helper is needed under emergency conditions (involving bludg) even a “bullshit libertarian” (“educationist” collective-movementist) will probably be more reliable/competent than a normally-reliable-&-competent non-libertarian. The bullshit libertarian is at least anti-coercion in theory & this has had some effect

on his subconscious emotions/attitudes. Also the bullshit libertarian has probably had a few daydreams/nightmares about what he would do if...which is more than the non-lib has had & is better than nothing.

One case I heard about. Bludg were seeking x. They went to x's mother & identified themselves. She supplied the only address she had for x which was the address of a life-long non-lib friend of x's, who was forwarding x's mail. Bludg went to friend of x. He supplied them with the last residential address of x he knew. But x had recently moved. Bludg went to residential address. They got no information from several "libertarians" (probably mostly "educationalists" tho I'm not sure) who were there but received "full cooperation" from a "very capable" "non-libertarian".

An explicit non-coercivist ideology certainly isn't sufficient. But I continue to believe that it is necessary. I intend to limit friends & close acquaintances to those who evidence it. Supposedly "non-ideological" people usually have an ideology at the subconscious level, & it is usually the prevailing Statist ideology of that society. They don't verbalize much about it in part because they perceive little conflict between that ideology & the world around them. Bullshit libertarians at least perceive a conflict so they verbalize. (The latter is just a thought at the moment; I suspect it's more involved than that.)

When involved in a conflict between friend & bludg, the usually-competent non-lib is caught up in conflict of values which will likely cause him to act less competently than the usually-not-so-competent bullshit libertarian. (I'm conceding that a good many b.s. libs are not very competent under "normal" conditions which is one reason they're b.s. libs.) (Eric Hoffer's hypothesis))

Introduction To Pacscript #1

By: Tom of Preform

25 Mar. 1973

(Editor's Note: PACSCRIPT was a one-issue(?) newsletter edited by Tom, as he explains below. PACSCRIPT #1 was 2 pages long. I intend to reprint the parts of it that were written by Tom. I have already published "Vonu Week Results" taken from PACSCRIPT #1 in LF31 p. 6. I still haven't heard anything about any more issues of PACSCRIPT besides this #1. If anyone ever saw any other issues, please let me know, even if you no longer have it.)

I'm doing PACSCRIPT not because I especially enjoy writing, but, on the contrary, because writing is slow and difficult to me. If I relied entirely on personal letters, I could send brief "We are fine. How are you?" notes. But I wouldn't have time to develop ideas, pass on information, or tell about what we are doing.

The cost of offset printing is low, provided a printer has the proper equipment for the job. At least one printer in Berkeley charges only \$2.75 for 100 copies of an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet, both sides (not mail order). So, with photo-reduction, we can save money as well as time by printing that information which we wish to share with a number of people – postage savings pay for printing cost. Mottos: Every vonuan a publisher. Those that can write well, write; those that can't, edit.

PACSCRIPT is the 2nd zinet (mini-magazine – word coined by Lan of VL) I've started during the past 5 years. The 1st, PREFORM-INFORM, grew beyond original expectations, changed name to VONULIFE, and now, under management of Lan, seems to be becoming the "Popular Mechanics" of freedom achievers. As it grows, VL becomes more valuable for how-to-do-it info but less useful for making/maintaining contacts.

Unlike some zinet, PACSCRIPT is for vonu acheivers who would like to meet in person occasionally as well as communicate by mail. For this reason we are limiting distribution to the Pacific Coast. Also for this reason PACSCRIPT is traded only for information, not sold for money. We are not opposed to money transactions, but we wish to keep PACSCRIPT small and personal.

We welcome information relevant to vonu in any form – written or spoken – letters, newspaper clippings, loan of books or magazines,

publication exchange, conversations, introduction to other vonuans, leads to sources, etc. I'll assume I may pass on to PACSCRIPT readers unless you say otherwise.

“Vonu acheivers” include not only those who are decreasing their own vulnerability to coercion but individuals who offer services which reduce the vulnerability of others such as mail receiving/forwarding, phone answering, storage, squat spots, garden sites, & free market (no tax, no SS, cash pay) employment. All forms of vonu which can be implemented along the Pacific Coast are of interest to us: troglodysm, vehicle nomadism, smumism, boat living, urban anonymity. Opportunities for mutually-profitable exchange are often greatest between people with different life-styles.

I'll assume that every PACSCRIPT reader also reads VONULIFE & will try not to duplicate information that's in there. On the other hand there is much intentional duplication of what is in VZE publications such as VONULINK. (VONULIFE is now an annual book & is separate from VONULINK.) VZE members trade “pool pages”. This means I print extra copies of some pages (but not personal identifying data) which they include in their newsletters, & they do the same for me. (See poolpage b from VONULINK, which is part of this issue, for more info on poolpages.) So some of the material in PACSCRIPT is written, edited & printed by others & does not necessarily represent our views.

I'm sending this issue to: personal friends and acquaintances, some people who subscribed to P-I, people referred to PACSCRIPT by VONULIFE, some people who have published letters in VONULIFE (by forwarding through VL). Distribution of the next issue will probably begin in early summer (likely deadline June 1).

(Editor's Note: When he says “VONULIFE is now an annual, Tom is referring to VL 1973, the special handbook issue. An issue like that was to be produced every year, but only one such issue was ever published. He calls it a book, but it was printed in newsletter format, with very small print, on newsprint paper, which is now, after 13 years, becoming very yellow & brittle. – The poolpage b mentioned is the same as VONULINK page VL11 p. 4, on which Lan explains his complicated idea for splitting VL into a number of “zinets,” the details & purpose of which I never could comprehend.)

Letter To Ase Magainze, From Tom?

(Editor's Note: This is an obscure item: A letter appeared in July 1973 ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY MAGAZINE, unsigned, but I believe it may have been written by Tom. I base this conclusion on 3 clues: 1) writer mentions living in Siskiyou region, 2) address used is ALA, Box 91, Berkeley, CA 94701, which is the same address Tom uses in PACSCRIPT #1. I believe that that p.o. box was used by several libertarian groups in Berkeley & that ALA stands for Association of Libertarian Activists or something like that. 3) I recall that Tom was interested in developing hydroelectric power at his hidden underground den, which was well within his abilities, since he was an electrical engineer. So the following may be Tom speaking.)

WATER POWER

"We have a site suitable for small hydroelectric power – about 100 foot head at 10 gallons per minute, which we would like to use to drive an automobile alternator and recharge batteries for a 12 volt electrical system.

A friend recommended that we use a carbon vane pump such as Airborne Sales #1191. Has any reader had experience doing this?

A problem we've run into is that the surplus houses, not only Airborne but Palley, are sold out of carbon vane pumps (which can handle water). Does anyone know of places which still handle these?

We'd also like suggestions as to the best alternator to use. We need one that's fairly small with low friction, perhaps from a foreign car, since at best we will be getting only 2 or 3 amps out.

We live in the Siskiyou region of northern California and would enjoy contacted other A.S.E. readers in the area.

ALA, Box 91, Berkeley, CA 94701"

What Are We Doing?

By: Tom of Preform

Reprinted from PACSCRIPT #1 with some editing and comments

25 Mar. 1973

I'm sitting in our camper on a street in Berkeley putting this issue together (ie PACSCRIPT #1), tho much of it was written (or printed) previously. I'm doing it now because (1) we have a new mailing address & I want to make it known; (2) there is a low-cost printer in Berkeley; (3) I have some spare time over a weekend. Most future issues will be typed, & sometimes mimeod, in our mountain hideaways.

We are on our annual shopping/visiting trip to the Big Cities. From Berkeley we go south along the coast to Los Angeles; then to Baja (Tom has another tooth which needs a gold crown); then back to LA; then north on highway 5 to Tehachapi Mountains; then north on highway 5 to Siskiyou region. Temporary addresses: until about April 5, c/o General Delivery, Laguna Beach, Calif. (write us there if you wish to contact us while we are in S. Calif.); from about April 5 to April 15, c/o General Delivery, Lebec, Calif. (write us there if you wish to contact us while we are in Tehachapi Mtns, or along highway 5). I suggest putting our permanent address on the envelope as return address in case the letter misses us.

(Report on annual food purchases follows, with out-of-date prices. Tom mentions: brown rice, pink beans, black mission figs, pitted Iraq dates, nutritional yeast, wheat, raisins, powouldered milk, honey, & dextrose. They buy their year's supply of food on this annual swing through the Big Cities. -JS)

We can deliver non-organic brown rice or pink beans to any place on our route for \$13.50 & \$15.00 per 100-pound sack, respectively...Hulled sunflower seeds do no store well, even in cool CO2 atmosphere. This year we bought sesame seeds at 36¢/lb for a high-oil supplement/condiment.

At present our overall life-style is a blend of van-nomadism, troglodysm & smumism & is moving toward the latter two. (Troglodysm = living physically underground, smumism = moving between several homes hidden in the wilderness - JS). Except for one smial we are still experimenting with, we will not be building more completely underground structures in the near future. Our present

shelter work is mostly with small, well-concealed structures on the surface & partly underground. The shift in our interest is due not only to the problems with underground shelters (especially drainage/condensation) but to growing confidence in & ability at concealment on the surface. While it is conceivable that Big Brother may eventually have surveillance systems capable of identifying almost any human habitation on the surface, I don't think this will be a serious threat during the next 20 to 30 years.

We built the basic structure for a semi-underground home/shop last spring/summer. If it over-winters well we will complete the interior & move in this spring.

Although our shelter problems aren't completely solved, we seem to be close to year-around comfort with a high degree of vonu (perhaps 20 years MTH). (MTH = mean time to harassment, an estimate of degree of invulnerability to coercion – JS) We now believe that outside interfacing, not shelter, will be the most difficult part of vonu living. For this reason we are gravitating toward a smum way of life. (There may be an article on smum in VONULIFE 1973.) (There was; see Smumans, The Super Hobos, in VL73 p. 101 – JS)

We are becoming interested in cryptoculture. (Cryptoculture = hidden gardening – JS). A few years ago I had dreams of growing pot in hidden patches & selling it. (Apparently quite a few people are doing this.) Now we are more interested in growing potatoes, to reduce transport (we presently import 1200 lbs a year) & interfacing needs (there may be food rationing within a few years).

We stress physical concealment as much as we do because we are interested in the growth of an alternate economy, not just in personal retreat/retirement. And I don't believe that free-market enterprise will be profitable, much beyond what is already being done (illegal products/services at very high prices, mostly) until quite a few people have secure shelters. Such non-vonu "alternate" enterprises as food co-ops are likely to escape most taxes/regulations only so long as they remain too few & too small to offer substantial competition to fascist (regulated) businesses. There was a big co-op movement during the early 30's, too; the survivors, today, are as regimented & bureaucratic as General Mills (e.g., C & H Sugar).

I have been accused of being some sort of an ascetic who is "dedicating his life" to advancing vonu. This is true, in a sense, but the implications of self-sacrifice & masochism are utterly false. Once status

games & food fetishes are weeded out, “physical comfort” essentially means: having a soft warm bed, a cuddly bed-mate, & nutritious food (within easy reach of the bed on days when it’s cold & wet outside). There are also various kinds of intellectual stimulations/desires, but there are many alternate ways to satisfy these, including ways compatible with vonu living; one need not duplicate the specific entertainments of the servile society.

I’m “devoting” most of my life to advancing vonu because I find I can have the most pleasure/satisfaction this way. Not only are most tasks interesting/enjoyable in themselves, but there is an added exhilaration in overall integration – having an over-purpose – in most tasks means as well as ends. This is missed by a “playboy” who flits from ski slope to night club to chess game – each activity unrelated to the others. “Advancing vonu”, especially wilderness vonu, is an over-purpose especially suitable for a “rational hedonist” because of the variety of physical & mental activities involved & profusion of satisfactions offered. Many over-purposes, in contrast, involve intense specialization of activity & do not fulfill most emotional capacities, leading to frustration or conflicts. (Examples: trying to become world’s tennis champion, earn a billion dollars, discover a cancer cure, become a rock superstar.)

Comments By Rayo

From PACSCRIPT #1, March 1973

Comments on Villa Via Proposal:

(A proposal for “Villa Via” – a vehicle-nomadic community in So. Cal. – was published in PREFORM-INFORM #3, Jan. 1969)

When I wrote & published this 4 years ago, I was doubtful that there were enough fulltime vehicle nomads in the Los Angeles area, & potentially interested in such a life, for Villa Via to be feasible/profitable then. (I estimated one chance in 3 that such an association would actually materialize then.) But I felt that a definite proposal would stimulate interest & discussion.

About a dozen “advance surveys” came back; not bad considering the circulation of P-I was about 50 at the time. Only one respondent indicated interest in living “in” Villa Via most of the time, so there wasn’t sufficient market. There probably is now, assuming someone is interested in organizing something like that – I’m onto other projects.

I believe I was over-optimistic as to the degree of seclusion that could be achieved. With a large number of vehicles coming & going, including even trailers, there would be a well-worn trail to Villa Via. So it would probably have to be on fenced private land, with permission. Or else 100 feet or more of some special kind of ground covering (portable driveway) would have to be put down at the turn-off from the last access road each time a vehicle came & went (planks on pegs?). The cost of renting private land might be such as to make the venture unattractive – landlords who would welcome one family as “care takers” would be very dubious of a large group.

One serious oversight was not including a per-trip component in the rates, to discourage and/or pay the added costs/risks of frequent commuting.

ATCOPS

(Editor’s Note: ATCOPS (Atlantis Commodity Purchasing Service) was a silver bullion “bank”, meant to be a forerunner to a Bank of Atlantis, which was a project of Operation Atlantis, an attempt to start a libertarian new country in the Caribbean. ATCOPS offered accounts denominated in decagrams of silver.)

To Rayo: On the basis of your recommendation I withdrew about...from my ATCOPS account, leaving only a few decas to keep the account operational. You had intimated to me that ATCOPS was in a pickle economically & I took your recommendation in Dec. as further “proof.” Now I gather from VL #11 that the reason is based on an act committed by Travers (manager of Atlantis Motel). I further think that Stevens is probably right about the difficulty of obtaining a manager plus whatever who would have acted differently. Possibly when & if a better one comes along Stevens would phase Travers out. Just what do you expect Stevens to do – I’m sure he deals with many “less than ideal” persons whom he could avoid dealing with only by dropping hope for Atlantis. The absurdity of this internecine quibble is most tragically demonstrated by the fact that I now have the...sitting in a savings account at the Bank of...which (I am sure) is fully staffed by individuals much like those who constitute the mass of society: with a lifetime of fascist-socialist thinking as a background, unhesitatingly & obviously willing to commit coercivist actions far exceeding those committed by Travers. I don’t know of any Swiss Bank or Investment Company with a less coercivist management to keep the money on hand would make me VERY uncomfortable; & I do not want assets so unliquid to be in the form of buried gold.

Rayo’s Reply: I did not intimate that ATCOPS was “in a pickle economically.” I have no knowledge of the financial condition of ATCOPS, except, judging from the little information in ATLANTIS NEWS [AN], it’s rather speculative – the only source of income with which to pay interest is hoped-for profits from commodity speculation (according to AN). Nor do I know what if any connection Travers has with ATCOPS specifically. I have heard from a reliable source that Travers was effectively the manager of Atlantis’s boat project, tho I did not see this mentioned in AN. According to this same source, Stevens devoted only one day a week to all the Atlantis projects combined – effective day-to-day management was performed by others (Travers?).

Someone with “conventional” (statist) attitudes & morals is much less dangerous doing routine jobs in a “conventional, law-abiding” bank than performing tasks requiring initiative & integrity in an enterprise which is probably operating in legal grey areas.

But, from what I have head, Travers is not just a statist sheep, but a deliberate coercivist. Supposedly, he told others who worked for Atlantis (as a form of intimidation?) that, when a rock music group

which he was involved with, failed to pay him to his satisfaction, he arranged for the FBI to bust them for drug possession.

I do not at present have money in either ATCOPS or Bank of....

Note From Rogue About Vonu (March 1987)

I read “Vonu” and “How To Start Your Own Country” & neither sounded plausible. Vonu was a bit of a disappointment. The articles weren’t very well developed. What would you do about medical problems if you are living in the woods for example? Even if you could get to a hospital, you couldn’t afford it. Why take such drastic measures to get away from the state? (You could buy land & do the same thing, as long as you kept a low profile.) You still have to pay taxes on your paychecks, keep your vehicle registration & license up to date. The benefits of sitting out in the woods by yourself (or even with a freemate) seem minimal, unless you don’t like people. I think Rayo may have simply been justifying his need to live alone. The book was more a tribute to the man than a real guide to vonu.

COMMENTS FOR ROGUE FROM JIM STUMM

I agree with a lot of what you say about vonu. I’ve expressed similar criticisms myself. But let me say a few words here in defense. Remember that Rayo did live a wilderness vonu lifestyle from 1968 to 74 (& beyond?), so he’s not just some impractical dreamer.

As for medical care, some people who are young & healthy, see this as being of little importance. Maybe they get first-aid books like “How To Be Your Own Wilderness Doctor” by Bradford Angier & rely on self-medication. Actually, someone living in the woods in USA, if he has a vehicle, may be as close to medical care as any rural resident. It’s not like he’s in a log cabin in the high arctic, or on a small sailboat in mid-ocean, tho there are people in such places too. Is there lifestyle implausible? Cutting oneself off from medical care is a calculated risk some people are willing to take.

A vonuan need not necessarily be impoverished. He might have money from savings, or income from investment, or from some location-independent occupation (eg writing) that he works on at his wilderness home. (Tristan Jones mentions writing some stories to sell while crossing the ocean in a one-man sailboat.) The vonuan might even carry medical insurance if he can afford it, why not? On the other hand, just because someone lives in a city doesn’t guarantee that he can afford medical care.

I would say that Rayo was mostly describing, not justifying, the lifestyle that appealed to him. His main error was to assume that some one way of life was best for everyone. You seem to make the same mistake, suggesting that buying a remote homestead is the one best way. By contrast, the point that I always stress is that people differ. There is no one best way for everyone. Find the one that suits you best & do that & never mind if other people prefer to live differently.

Last Letters From Rayo

June 1973

Yes, all our mail should now go to Berkeley. So far as I know there hasn't been problems with the Cave Junction Box since last Autumn, but we prefer to have an address out of the region. Besides the C.J. box is no longer ours & relaying mail has proven somewhat of a problem.

The impression I had of VONU LIFE when Lan first announced the split was that VONU LIFE would be a reprint of the best things from VONU LINK.

I was responsible for BCWCS being listed as source for the catalog. Lan said this address was listed by AA Directory & asked if I knew which address was latest. Since you had done more for VL than Cat staff & since their address might be no longer good (likely if catalog no longer being published) I recommended your address. I thought BCWCS would appreciate the business (if any). I didn't think about the possible connection. Sorry.

I find it hard to believe that bludg are busily correlating that kind of clerical flotsam tho. (But it might be a good idea to introduce some deliberate misleading clues just in case.)

After encouraging "competition". If 1000s of urban vonuans flock to...as a result of the article & look for temporary jobs (unlikely, I suspect), the result will be to lower wage rates some. This will cause (1) people for whom...has no particular attraction to go elsewhere, (2) some employers to shift some of their tasks to "temporary" help, (3) some companies to locate in...who would otherwise go elsewhere. Net result: wage rates only slightly lower, plus 1000s more urban vonuans busily trying to do many kinds of alternative enterprise things, opening many new possibilities.

If the particular line of work you are in is especially lucrative (due to "stiction" in the labor market – inertia, slowness of information travel) you can expect increasing competition which will bring your wages down whether or not you communicate about it. The only effect of communicating will be to speed up the change, & cause more of the competition to be your acquaintances.

Later that Winter we did cross that particular creek in fairly high water by previously rigging line. I find I now tend to be more careful/conservative about natural hazard than when I was a weekend

recreationist. This was demonstrated to me this Winter when I crossed that same creek without a rope but using a staff, carrying a backpack. Water was fairly high. I had feared that if I ever slipped & fell the increased water resistance would sweep me away. Well, the worst happened – both feet slipped at once & down I went – and simply sat there! My heavy back pack probably helped anchor me (dense load). I'm probably more conservative because of unavailability of medical aid, also because there is no status-game element of being daring.

I find I'm reluctant to delve into theoretical questions in strictly personal letters, preferring to write articles for wider circulation. This seems like more efficient communication but I'm not sure what it is. Your thoughts on ontogeny/phylogeny are interesting. My own thoughts on this aren't coherent yet. But the emotional reactions I had while writing "Rooting Out The Outposts" article in VONU LIFE 1973 support your hypothesis. On one hand, I had strong qualms about the article. On the other hand, I felt strongly enough that VL should include such an article that it be definitely published – charged against my advertising allotment if necessary (which I reserved for myself when I parted with VL). (This was probably unnecessary – Lan was short of material & kept soliciting more articles.) My feeling was that I didn't want VL to help clutter up the woods with statist clods. I didn't think the article would lead to the "conversion" of very many people, but that it would cause statist readers to turn off to wilderness vonu (if they were not turned off for other reasons – which seems more likely). So my article was an attempt to telescope movementism & vonuism. I'll be interested in any reactions as to how well it succeeded. Problem: it's hard to learn about the doings of statists & not be morally indignant ("they should be allowed to do these things – it's not right – etc."). Roberta & I discussed one hypothesis. Humans have spent most of their evolutionary experience in small groups where such a response is constructive. A coercer can be kicked out of the tribe. Even if he is bigger, stronger, quicker, & more popular, he can probably be done in by ambush. Problem arises when this emotional capacity, evolved for small group situation, is applied to "nation" where it is non constructive. Movementists, who get hung up on moral indignation, not only are non-constructive (often destructive) themselves but interpret any contrary response (vonu) as a "cop out". In order for a movementist to become effective he must redirect the moral indignation. (I think the indignation itself is desirable, maybe

necessary. I feel a large amount of indignation. But it is necessary to “sublimate” it somehow – to learn, not only intellectually but down to the emotional level, that Amerika is not Ye Olde Tribe & that a response appropriate in the latter is futile in the former.)

I never especially liked the word “freemate.” But Roberta says she likes it, better than any other term she has heard (so do I) partly for lack of role playing element. We grabbed on to it when we wrote our “free marriage contract” (another term I don’t especially like) because we couldn’t think of anything better.

I don’t think I could play a bludg convincingly & I’d hesitate to try, but suggestion is a good one. Having a fortnight instead of a week will allow starting off in a camp already set up, then people explore area, scout sites, discuss, scout some more, select site, move camp; then I try to find, & I have a camp for them to try & find – a continuing hide-and-seek game. This not a put-down of your suggestion. Nor is it to imply that there must be something wrong with someone who could play a bludg convincingly. I’m simply not a good actor.

September 14, 1973

My thinking has undergone major changes in the last several months on interfacing, “alternate economies,” interrelations in general. Perhaps I am coming to the same conclusions you have – tho I’m not sure what yours are. I will probably write an article on subject when my thoughts become further crystallized.

The only person I’ve had good, deep, on-going theoretical discussions with is Roberta, because she is the only person I’m around enough to facilitate such discussions. Often thoughts/replies/answers will occur to me, not at the time of a conversation, but sometime later when I’m off by myself (similar to what you say happens with you), so I don’t think one, or a few, intense, concentrated discussion sessions can provide the same opportunity as an on-going association. Several times we have visited and had long discussions with people who write theoretical articles, but the face-to-face was invariably limited to “nuts and bolts.”

Berkeley address is still good.

February 14, 1974

I am now more eager to sell the 600 pound stash we have near Bella Coola. The woman who owns the farm on which they are stored

is considering selling. There is no big hurry but I would like to dispose of the supplies by next summer at the latest. Also the chance that we will use them grows less. We would enjoy making another trip to that area (and the supplies give us a good excuse) but we have many projects we could better spend time on.

Your Nov 3rd letter, which we didn't get until a few weeks ago, because of misunderstanding with people receiving our mail, contained many interesting thoughts, as usual.

We withdrew from ATCOPS even before you did – irrelevant. My suggestion was to get out of ATCOPS, not out of silver. Without going to “unconventional” lengths, you could have bought bullion or coins from a local dealer and stored in a rented safety deposit box, for example. If you had asked what my recommendation would be if the only feasible alternatives were ATCOPS and a conventional savings account, my choice might have been different. Again, I didn't recommend against or for a particular form of investment: I passed along info I had received that ATCOPS's promoter was unreliable. I received a large manuscript detailing one person's experiences at ATCOPS. It is loaned out at the moment; I'll mail it to you when I get it back.

The last thing I recall writing on preserving savings was in VONU LIFE #6, page 8, was buying and storing silver coins.

I, too, am becoming very dubious as to the value of all “libertarian club” involvements, perhaps even more dubious than you. I still see some value for me in the kind of anonymous ideological/intellectual exchange which goes on in LIBERTARIAN CONNECTION, but we do not intend to use the “libertarian club” in the future as an avenue for gaining non-anonymous friends or associates.

Many more thoughts but not articulable yet.

(Editor's Note: I believe the manuscript critical of ATCOPS mentioned above, was the one written by Pyro Egon, which I also received on loan, read, & returned. – Since this Feb. 74 letter was received, as far as I have been able to discover, no one has heard another word from, or about, Rayo.)

Liberated Lifestyles

By: Jim Stumm

Feb. 1984

Self-liberation techniques fall into 2 categories, limited & comprehensive. Limited tactics provide some increase in freedom in particular areas of one's life for the person who employs them, eg using tax loopholes, or using a mail drop. Such tactics don't cost much, & they can be used by a person living a mostly conventional lifestyle, but their benefits are similarly limited.

At the other extreme, there are a few comprehensive self-liberation strategies that can provide a large increase in freedom across most areas of one's life. The cost of these strategies is proportionately high, usually requiring adopting an unconventional lifestyle. We advocate no particular path toward freedom, but rather we are interested in any approach that works. It's up for you to decide which ideas you want to implement yourself.

All of the comprehensive self-liberation strategies that I know about, the ones that are really feasible today, ones that some people are already practicing, fall under these 6 headings: live in a camper, be sea mobile, be internationally mobile, hide out in the wilderness, practice urban anonymity, live on a self-sufficient homestead. I will briefly explain what each of these entails & give some references for further information. The costs & benefits of these strategies are discussed in the references mentioned. Two particular sources of information that cover many of these strategies are the books: LAST FRONTIERS ON EARTH (LFOE), and VONU: THE SEARCH FOR PERSONAL FREEDOM (VONU).

1. LIVE IN A CAMPER – Live in a motor home, converted bus, camper on a pick-up truck, delivery van, etc. Park at hidden spots in the wilderness, at established campgrounds, on city streets, supermarket or shopping mall parking lots, or a friend's city driveway or country acreage. Stay no longer than a month or 2 in one area. Give no forwarding address, pay cash, use aliases, & use other similar tactics to develop anonymity.

References: See newsletters PREFORM-INFORM and VONULIFE, & see chapter 15 of LFOE.

2. BE SEA MOBILE – Live on a small sailboat. Make long ocean passages traveling from port to port, or visit uninhabited islands, tropical atolls, or remote coves on unpopulated coasts, staying some weeks or months in each place, or hang around one rugged, lightly populated coastal area (eg British Columbia) that has myriad islands & inlets to choose from. Be highly self-reliant, live off the sea, perhaps smuggle. More difficult or less desirable variations: develop a permanent home on an uninhabited island, or live on a houseboat on an inland waterway: bayou, swamp, river, lake.

References: See the newsletter OCEAN FREEDOM/OCEAN LIVING, & the “Water Power” issue of INNOVATOR, SU69, & see OCEAN FREEDOM NOTES reprinted from LIVING FREE. The 5 chapters of LFOE making up Part II discuss variations of this idea, some feasible now, some that may become feasible in the future. And see “Sailing The Farm,” by Ken Neumeyer, available from Loompanics Unltd.

3. BE INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE – Be a multi-national person. Pick the best features from a number of nations: be a citizen of one nation, earn income in another, live in others, bank somewhere else, etc. Make creative use of offshore tax havens. Live in hotels or rented apts or villas. Travel, usually by air, from city to city, continent to continent. This strategy is easier to pull off if you are affluent, or at least can appear to be.

References: See the newsletter INTERNATIONAL LIVING \$18/year, monthly, from 824 E. Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21218. And see “International Investing,” by Douglas R. Casey (which covers more than just investments, available from Loompanics Unltd.

4. HIDE OUT IN THE WILDERNESS – Adopt Rayo’s vonu strategy. Live in national forests, mountains, & other public wilderness areas. Be a nomad, traveling on foot, by canoe, on horseback, or whatever. Live in a tent, a remote shack, in a camper, or dig a hidden cave. Develop a handful of secret, remote homes & ramble among them, perhaps moving with the seasons.

References: See the newsletter VONULIFE, and the book VONU.

5. PRACTICE URBAN ANONYMITY – Live in rented, furnished apts or houses in a large city. Rent under an assumed name. Move every few months & give no forwarding addresses. Get mail at a mail drop, phone calls through an answering service. Use different

names for different purposes & change names regularly. Work at various free market (black market) jobs. Socialize away from home.

References: See “Free Man in the Slave State” by Allen Humble in INNOVATOR, Autumn 1968, & see “Confessions of a Variable Identity Person,” by Chameleon, in Loompanics 1988 Main Catalog.

6. LIVE ON A SELF-SUFFICIENT HOMESTEAD – Buy a few acres of rural land. Build a cabin, or park a camper, or an old delivery van on it to live in. Plant gardens, raise some animals, plant trees, but for your own use only. Don’t engage in commercial agriculture, which is a highly regulated business. Develop some small home business to provide a modest income. Deal in cash or barter whenever possible. Make & do as much as possible for yourself. This can also be done in a city to some extent, but with major limitations.

References: See MOTHER EARTH NEWS & numerous other magazines in the “back-to-the-land” genre. Loompanics sells many books with relevant information.

Or DEVELOP YOUR OWN WAY: For clarity only, I have tried to distinguish between these strategies, but even so, you see considerable overlap. In reality, there’s nothing wrong with that. The best course may be to pick & choose details from various strategies & put together a lifestyle that you like. And none of these need to be a life-long commitment. It’s not like joining a movement or taking a pledge. You might try different ways of living in sequence, or change seasonally. Anyway, the main idea is: it’s your life & you don’t have to live it like every Tom, Dick, & Harry unless that’s what you prefer. Open your mind to consider what it is you really want to do.

General References:

1. Loompanics Unlimited, POB 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368, sells many hard-to-find books that relate to many of these strategies. Send \$2 for a catalog.

2. See “16 Ways to Live Free, A Critical Evaluation” by Rayo in VONULIFE 1973, the Special Handbook Issue.

3. See “Self-Liberation Ways: A Compilation & Evaluation” by Rayo in INNOVATOR, Spring 1969.

4. See “More Self-Liberation Ways” by Rayo in INNOVATOR, Autumn 1969.

5. I can supply photocopies or reprints of any or all issue of the defunct newsletters mentioned here including: PREFORM, VONULIFE, INNOVATOR, and OCEAN FREEDOM. Tell me

what you want & I'll quote you a price. Write to Jim Stumm, Box 29, Hiler Branch, Buffalo, NY 14223.

Additional Resources

- **The Vonu Podcast:** If you want to learn more about anything covered in this book, I'd highly recommend you check out the podcast Kyle Rearden and I do. In season 1, we covered the philosophy of vonu, season 2 was the practice of vonu, and the current season, 3, is where we develop and update vonu to the modern day.
 - www.vonupodcast.com
- **Vonu: The Search for Personal Freedom, Number 2 – Letters from Rayo**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vonu2
- **Vonulife, March 1973 (Special Edition)**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vl
- **Ocean Freedom Notes**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/ofn
- **Self-Liberation Notes**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/sln
- **Going Mobile**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/gm
- **Low-Cost Living**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/lcl
- **Dwelling Portably [sic]**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/dp
- **Articles About Vonu**
 - www.vonupodcast.com/vonuarticles
- **Liberty Under Attack:** If you're seeking out paths to personal freedom, then you need to check out The Freedom Umbrella of Direct Action and the Direct Action Series.
 - www.libertyunderattack.com/FUDA
 - www.libertyunderattack.com/DAS
- **YouTube:** If you're pursuing any of the lifestyle changes or strategies covered above, then YouTube will be your best

friend. Recommended search terms: “van dwelling,” “living aboard a boat,” “minimalist sailboating,” etc.



**Looking for a liberty-oriented publisher?
We can help!**

- ▣ **Proofreading/Editing**
- ▣ **Kindle/Paperback Formatting**
- ▣ **Audiobook Production/Narration**
- ▣ **Marketing/Promotion**
- ▣ **Illustrations/Graphic Design**

 **LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK
PUBLICATIONS** _____

WWW.LIBERTYUNDERATTACK.COM/PUBLISH

Support Us

If you enjoyed the book and found it valuable, please consider making a one-time digital currency donation or become a patron on Patreon for exclusive content!



Bitcoin: 15Bdzduwt92jYFGFaK2NSkPYFTaLbtonJg