

# Past Tents

Mental meandering by SOLAR historian..... vol. 10

Each month we will dig into our archives and ponder on the past and present minutia of our club.....

I hope in the future to also be a bit of a document of record and comment on current event and perhaps give a historical context.

Welcome to my mad mad world of run on sentences and mental meandering

## Commentary Please

Benchmark: *An outdoor store that was on Grand River in Farmington Michigan, it was a destination store for backpacking, paddling, mountaineering and more...*



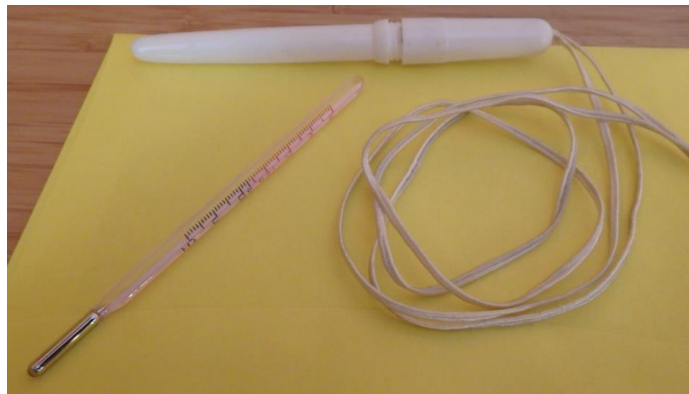
Back in Past \ / Tents vol. 1, we asked about outdoor stores before they became the behemoths they are today, I had found reference to The Benchmark and now have the commentary from them that's been there. The man who knows, Michael Banks gave this comment:

**“....I’m sure by now you know that the Benchmark and Raupp’s were the only stable and genuine sandal wearing, granola crunching, peace sign hanging , free loving, tree hugging, all American outfitters in the Detroit area. Benchmark had 3 successive locations in Farmington. They also had another store in Rochester for a while. Raupp’s started in Royal Oak, Redford and Ann Arbor. You could tell you were in the real thing. They all came equipped with big friendly ‘outdoor’ dogs. Everything seemed to smell of pine, ski-wax and patchouli. These were places of great knowledge. You could spend hours talking to sages and mentors who knew about the gear and how to use it....”**

Now I don’t rightly call myself an old timer, proto-hippie or boomer, but I have been in those stores and just like legendary book stores or local grocery markets when wood floor and well-worn counter were a sign of comfort and home, I did go into these older outfitters and talked to those sages and felt as one. I am glad I got a chance to experience it before the change who knows what will happen when we just go to demo days and have stuff shipped home, perhaps we will be nostalgic for REI, Cabela’s or Bass Pro Shop of today.

## Old Gear and Nostalgia

So, like many of you I was sick this winter, I went to my medicine chest to check if I had a fever, it turns out that the easy read, flexi tip, digital, electric thermometer has a shelf life of one charge.....it was battery dead and no good, not designed for replacement. I go looking for that new gear, I want that plastic strip that you press on a forehead and the temp change material shows you how warm you are.....great they have them but only in the baby basic kit.....I **know** I have a fever, I go home and get to bed, I didn’t buy it, I don’t need more duckies. I am thinking unbreakable no batteries it is just what I need. I complain a bit to my Dad it turns out he has 4 thermometers all without batteries and proven old tec.



I got one with a case that had a string attached and the glass thermometer safely screwed inside. I was overjoyed, only a mere forty five or fifty years earlier I had seen it and help my mom spin down the thermometer. Yep instead of it zeroing out automatically, you washed it off and with the case used centrifugal force to get it ready for the next sick kid, instead of manually having to shake down the thermometer.

I am not saying I am a gear hog or ready to get the newest fad for my kit but this but of nostalgia made me think of my gear. I have old tents from friends, last year camped in a bomb proof canvas one while canoeing and I have a sil-tarp for most back pack weekend trips I make. I do truly love the old wool hunting suits that my dad and uncles wore. I am also a bit cheap and if I find them I will get that nostalgic gear to camp with. Weather you camp or glamp remember the function and don't overload yourself unless it is with style.....

### Old school style and a trip idea

By the way, love the RV/MH Hall of Fame near Elkhart IN <http://www.rvmhhalloffame.org/museuminv.cfm> combine that with the Gilmore Car Museum and you have a two state weekend trip and get away....

Look here too <https://tincantourists.com/blog/> for Tin Can Tourists info, love this group, vintage campers, they let you tour their trailers when they rally in your area, they have held them close (Camp Dearborn), look them up for another day trip or destination outing....

### Flags and Memories

I mentioned finding pictures of a SOLAR flag in past images and in meeting minutes, I thought that it might be nice to have some flags or bandanas made for the club to take out on treks and trips so we can post pictures with it all over the place. Here are some image of the old flags whereabouts unknown.....the other are some fun inspirational “fakes”..... if you have any info on the old flags please contact the club historian.....we hope to also take interest in making up some real bandana style flags so look for that or let us know.....



**If you have ever wondered what the SOLAR Historian does  
(this is a repeat commentary, just hoping to inspire)**

You may or may not have known that our club has an official position for historian

For the last nine months I have written monthly articles to grow interest in the history and activity of our club. I believe that especially in the transition time from newsletter edited paper issues to club integrated digital blog format that we needed a bridging document of record and inspiration. I tried to make those articles just that, but the historian position has great leeway to be molded to personal styles and goals with minimal requirements. Please consider helping the club by becoming the SOLAR Historian. You will have access and possession of our physical archives as well as being able to participate with the Steering Committee which has enabled, with membership, over forty year of outdoor adventure. I find being on the Steering Committee to be a social and enhancing club experience. This position has inspired me to a greater view of just what this club does and has inspired me to delve into our past and plan for the future. I hope that you will consider and put your name up to become our next great SOLAR Historian.

All Steering Committee positions are open for election, if you feel like you could socialize, contribute and help out the club a bit more, please do.