

About 1900 words

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THE NEW SPORT'S GLOSSARY
(sic)

Do not be misled if my wife tells you that I never go shopping. How would she know? Anna hadn't met me when it happened. Had she been there, she would have seen that I passed voluntarily under a sign reading "Abercrombie & Fitch," and that inside there was much of interest. The nice man in the tweed suit might have guessed that I was going to school nearby, because he didn't show me the shotguns till I asked. The price of the Parker was absurd: would have bought gas for my father's Willys station

wagon for six months. Ferrules on the fly rod came apart with a pop that made the salesman jump. I'd have spent the seventy-five dollars for that Payne, but I hadn't saved ten years' allowance yet. The Russell boots took only two years' income and were worth it, though my consulting podiatrist would now have me believe that they are worn out.

It is true that in recent weeks, or possibly decades, the catalogs have been so appealing that shopping in person had not seemed imperative. Mr. Bean kept me on his mailing list as a deserving charity for years, then Mr. Orvis started selling all of the important things I consume, and later Mr. Hunter and Mr. Matthews started sending fly-tying catalogs worth about ten dollars each in return for my annual orders of \$6.49 in thread, hooks, and rod varnish. Now I get other good catalogs -- about three daily, and six on Mondays. At least, they come in my name. When the goods ordered therefrom arrive, they generally seem to be in large, light-weight boxes for Anna instead of the small heavy ones I like, and UPS stock has risen since we moved to a country road. Mr. Bean must have known that schoolboys eventually get married. His long-term investment has paid off for the economy as a whole.

Recently, the decline of the Russell boots did threaten my lifestyle. They still looked good to me, with just a few thread holes from the last two or three pairs of soles, but the village

cobbler (I didn't make that up: it's what he calls himself) insisted that he couldn't find enough leather to stitch on another pair. Then, as I wrestled with this mid-life crisis, David King called and said that he had a few hours to go hunting the next day.

David is a physician who takes good care of everybody in the valley but himself. On Friday, he said, he would see patients in his office; Friday night he would spend in the hospital performing gizzardectomies; and on Saturday before dawn he proposed to climb 2,600 feet to the top of a ridge that might have a bull elk on it. Dr. King should not have to drag out elk unassisted. He is lankier than me -- a condition which my wife, heretofore, had considered metabolically impossible. The young doctor inspires in her a flurry of soup-making, but she can rarely hold him still long enough pour it down.

Faced with the choice of shopping or dragging an elk five miles through the snow barefoot, I weighed the pros and cons in my best whine until Anna kicked me out of the house. Then I drove to a large store which seemed to resemble the one I remembered. Inside, no bamboo rods or guns with two barrels were visible, and that should have alerted me to the decadent nature of the establishment. The boots were in a section called "sportswear." The salesperson this time was a nice lady, dressed, like my wife, in the latest sporting fashion, with shoulder pads. This lady

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was, however, more understanding; she made no mention of my flapping soles. She recommended a pair of two-toned boots with racing stripes and felt liners. The boots had wide, bucket tops, and the liners were exposed above them. The lady did not have gaiters big enough to cover the buckets, so she also sold me a pair of nylon ski pants with elastic cuffs and thirty feet of zippers.

The next scene is in a ponderosa-pine park on the shoulder of a ridge overlooking most of the known world. Here walking tracks have turned to running tracks and we know we won't be dragging that elk. David, wisely, catches a nap while the woods quiet down. Says he'd like to sleep a bit every night, but down in the valley his beeper always interrupts. Up on the mountain he can lean against a soft rock in a patch of sunshine and doze off. The sun here is helpful like that. Montana's winter, like Wagner's music, isn't as bad as it sounds.

A snooze would also speed my recovery from the shopping ordeal, but the sun can't warm the shivers out of me. My zippy ski pants did not stay down. My new snow-bunny boots would keep me toasty warm, on the way from a clubhouse to a restaurant. In the mountains, deep snow piles up on the buckets and melts on the tops of the liners. The felt then sucks up the water.

Historians will want to know that my glossary -- an important fashion statement -- began on a ridge 8,024 feet high

where an elk used to be. The first insight was that the purpose of outdoor equipment has changed. It's not meant to be used outdoors anymore. There are, to be sure, good new items -- almost as good as my old boots -- and some of the catalogs have these things for sale. The catalogs had sheltered me from real life in the 'eighties (and, come to think of it, the 'seventies and 'sixties). To see where it's at, I had to visit the shopping malls. There old folks stroll for exercise and younger ones search for adventure.

Here is what they find.

sportswear Clothing designed to make wearer look as if he's doing something real when he's not. ". . . an essential manifestation of the leisure-oriented, youth-centered, American way of life." (New York Times) Sportswear makes up by far the largest category of department store sales.

sport 1. (obsolete) An active recreation involving physical exercise and the acceptance of rules. 2. An abbreviation for sportswear. ". . . a man is only as good as the sport he wears." (Newsweek) 3. Person who wears sportswear, usually indoors, to spectator events, or for grilling chicken over charcoal.

television Electronic apparatus which provides outdoor adventures to sports.

chicken Tame pheasant.

charcoal 1. Originally, a fuel produced by the destructive distillation of wood, valued for flavor when used for cooking.
2. Currently, a fuel usually made of pressed coal, soot scraped from chimneys, and other unidentified ingredients, producing in food a flavor of same.

hardwood chunks Waste products of the lumber industry which can be sold if the price is high enough; usually trucked two thousand miles and employed to improve the flavor of charcoal.
"We are, it seems . . . starved for self-expression yet so out of practice that wearing denim and cooking with mesquite seems expressive . . ." (George Will)

designer 1. Frenchman selling sportswear from Taiwan to Americans. 2. American trying to sound French.

systems approach Method of providing customer with series of items that work together harmoniously; for example, pants that ride up, low boots with wide tops, liners that protrude, and felt liners designed to wick snow-melt to all toes.

hobo person in scuffed boots, army-surplus wool pants, and shirt with holes in elbows.

hunter person in scuffed boots, army-surplus wool pants, and shirt with holes in elbows, carrying a gun.

hunting coat Any coat with shell pockets which is too warm to be used after the sun rises, requiring wearer to decide between (a) sauna bath and (b) leaving shells behind.

parka Any hooded jacket which cannot be opened in front to allow cooling, as in waterproof parka, which does not allow evaporation, either. Usually recommended by sportswear departments for hunters planning to climb their first mountain.

shell Lightweight unlined jacket, opening down the front, worn by hunters climbing their second mountain.

insulation Warm material usually sewn into hunting coats, parkas, boots and other apparel so that the insulating layer cannot be removed for drying after a sweaty day at the mall.

socks Obsolete form of insulation that can be removed from boots for drying.

sweater Obsolete form of insulation that can be removed from torso for drying.

insulated hat A head covering with thick, warm material over the crown, which would stay hot anyhow, and thin fuzz over the ears, which are the coldest parts of the body.

shooting gloves Any hand covering that keeps the fingers too cold to feel a trigger.

gloves, extra large Any hand covering large enough for persons under eleven years of age.

cuffs, elastic Constrictions placed around the opening of gloves in order to cut off circulation at the wrist, so that wearer will not feel his hands getting cold.

hand-warmer Heating device which burns warmly on kitchen table but goes out when wrapped in flannel and put in pocket.

day-pack Any backpack that (a) binds the shoulders so the wearer cannot shoot or cast and (b) is too small to carry waders, vest, or elk liver donated by a hunting companion.

frame pack Device for shifting loads from shoulders to hips.

suspenders Fashion accessory designed for shifting weight of hunting pants from hips to shoulders.

lug sole Protrusions placed on the bottom of boots for traction in singles bars.

skis Lug soles after snow clogs the lugs.

underwear, long An undergarment reaching to the knees and elbows after the first washing.

shell belt Belt containing thirty-eight pounds of ammunition, worn by (a) Pancho Villa and (b) male model in advertisement for sportswear.

cartridge bag Leather container, made in Britain, holding forty-five more pounds of ammunition and held by strap over shoulder of male model wearing Pancho Villa shell belt.

ascot Form of neckwear worn by aforementioned person to conceal bulging veins in neck.

riding breeches Type of trouser worn with hiking boots by same dude.

Tires, snow Tires which will let a passenger car reach deep snow before getting stuck.

chains Device to put on snow tires for getting half-way home.

truck, 4-wheel-drive Vehicle for getting the rest of the way home.

truck, deluxe Cheapest variety of truck, with rubber floor mats, plastic seats, and manual windows, used for getting from home to hunting or fishing and usually back.

truck, special limited designers' edition Vehicle for the expression of personality, costing approx. twice as much as deluxe truck, with carpets, plush seats for wiping mud off dog, electric windows, sound system, automatic everything, and illegible gauges, so that expeditions to the shopping mall will not be spoiled by concern over low oil pressure.

Range Rover Vehicle costing approx. twice as much as Special Limited Designers' Edition truck; used for carrying mesquite chips from shopping malls to barbecues in Connecticut.

oxymoron A figure of speech combining contradictory elements for rhetorical effect; for example, soft rock, easy elk-hunting, dry duck-hunter, warm gloves, stupid brown trout, tasty carp, strong dry-fly hook, waterproof leather boots, non-freezing duck call, intelligent moose, cool waders, spacious tree stand, snow tires, well-dressed hunter, sportswear for the active person.