

My annual Christmas grant request

My wife of many years claims I am the hardest person on Earth to buy presents for. She says every time there is something I want, I just purchase it, making it near impossible for anyone to get me a gift. She also takes issue with the cost of some of the items that head my list.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Her claim is pure nonsense. While I admit that occasionally I request something that may have to clear the finance committee, I take vigorous exception the need for filing an application for a grant request to fund my few necessary items. After all, I give so much and ask so little.

One of the things I am really big into is outdoor clothing. I travel on a dozen hunts a year, in all types of climate, and the proper clothing is important. I spent many a year, due to budgetary requirements, surviving on hand-me-downs, military surplus and discount stuff from the big box stores. While this stuff may work, it certainly is not optimum.

Then I discovered Sitka. These are the same folks that brought us Gore-Tex, the very important waterproof fabric that is in everything outdoor related. Sitka manufactures everything from base layers, outdoor and packs for weather ranging from subzero blizzards, rain-drenched days to the heat and humidity of the south.

The clothing is available in a variety of solid colors and a series of camo patterns. My favorites are the Optifade and the Sub Alpine patterns. The clothes fit extremely well and are very durable. I have several sets of Optifade clothing that have been on over 75 trips and still look and function as new.

One problem ladies have always had was finding outdoor clothing that fit properly. Most women have had to endure wearing men's clothing in smaller sizes. Fortunately, Sitka solved that problem by offering a complete line of women's outdoor clothing. It is designed to fit properly and provide the features that the lady outdoors person requires. My wife has recently discovered Sitka and there will be some for her under the tree this year.

It is true that Sitka is expensive, but not when you take the durability and performance into consideration. Check out Sitka at Murdoch's, Cabela's and Sportsman's Warehouse.

An item I discovered this year is the LifeStraw Go water bottle. This bottle comes equipped with a water purification filter that removes 99.9 percent of all the bacteria, including e-coli from the water.

In the past, you had to filter water from one container into another. I could never keep straight which container was the clean one, and usually made a mess of things. With the LifeStraw Go, you fill the bottle from any stream, lake or even a puddle. It sure makes life easier when you are in areas of questionable water. I will use this on an upcoming trip to the jungles of Argentina. The device runs \$29.99 to \$34.99 at Wal-Mart.

I am often asked, what is the best way to summon help when you are 100 miles northwest of nowhere, and Murphy has struck. The best answer is a satellite phone, but they are bulky and very expensive. Garmin has solved the problem with the Garmin inReach Mini.

This unit provides global messaging, interactive SOS, and basic GPS, all weighing in at just over 4 ounces. It requires a subscription to the Iridium satellite network and will allow you to send and receive custom and preset text messages, and get a response back. It can also track your progress and location via GPS and keep your location updated automatically.

The mini can also send an SOS message to GEOS, who is a global monitoring service, operating 24/7. You can access downloadable maps and satellite imagery using a free Garmin app.



The unit provides an optional InReach weather forecast update service, directly to your handheld device. You can send and receive messages through Garmin compatible devices, included connected wearable's and handhelds. The mini has a rechargeable lithium battery that provides 50 hours of battery life in the 10-minute tracking mode.

This is a gift that can also save a life. I can think of dozens of times some lost or injured soul could have been saved, if they only had a way to get help. This is it.

The Garmin inReach Mini retails for \$349.99 and requires a monthly satellite subscription service. The services begin at \$11.95 for the basic and go up from there. Check it out at www.buycgarmin.com.

The Christmas list would not be complete if I did not include a couple stocking stuffers. One item I recommend to everyone is the Side Lock carabiner from Nite Ize. While the carabiner is very strong, it is not suitable for climbing.

What makes these lightweight tools unique is their ability to easily lock closed by sliding a small ring into the locked position. I have several of these hanging from various locations on my pack. They are great for keeping items, such as gloves, secure and easily accessible. They are available in a variety of sizes and configurations, beginning at \$3.99. Available at Murdoch's, Cabela's and Wal-Mart.

Everyone should carry some duct tape in their pack whenever they head into the backcountry. It is great for everything from first-aid to emergency repairs, to include "redneck fixes." The Gorilla Glue Company has come out with a product called the crystal clear Gorilla Tape. This tape is can fix, patch, secure and seal just about everything. It is heavy duty, super sticky and even works underwater.

I carry the small 15-foot roll in my pack, and a larger roll in the truck and one in the ATV. The small roll is just north of five bucks and is available at True Value Hardware and Ace Hardware, as well as Wal-Mart. A very practical stocking stuffer.

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and hope that the tree is packed with wonderful outdoors gifts. Meanwhile, I have to finish filling out my grant request to the finance committee for my Christmas list. I hope my wife does not think those stocking stuffers are my "big" gifts.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org



(Top left) Life Straw water filtration comes with a kit that you can use on a water bottle of your choice. (Top right) Another version of the water filtration kit comes with its own bottle. (Center) The Nite ize carboneir and the Gorilla Tape make a great stocking stuffer any outdoor person would use and enjoy. (Above) Sitka Gear clothing comes in all sorts of styles and colors, with a size for every outdoor person. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

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