



Sometimes the best camp fuel around is a good old wood fire. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

My old man mentor of all things outdoors, Mr. Caster, used to occasionally hunt raccoons at night with some of his friends. Looking back on it now, I think it was just an excuse for him to go into the woods at night and drink copious amounts of his rheumatism medicine. I don't know if the contents of that silver flask helped his rheumatism, but it sure improved his mood.

The only time I ever got invited to go on one of those nighttime hunts was around my 10th year of life. What I remember most was this carbide lamp they put on my head. The thing must have weighed 5 pounds, or so it seemed. The light had a chamber full of calcium carbide and a small drip tube that put water on the carbide. This causes a gas to be

emitted called acetylene. This gas was lit on a torch tip and as it burned in front of a reflector, it gave off as much light as a candle. All I really remember was the thing gave me a headache and was a sorry excuse for a flashlight.

We have come a long way in technology related to the fuels that power our outdoor gear, and in some instances, we have not come very far at all. Take propane for instance. There was a French chemist, Marcelin Berthelot, who actually discovered the gas, but it was an American chemist, Walter Snelling, who put it to work as a fuel in 1910.

It was the great outdoor company, Coleman, who put propane to use for camping equipment. Coleman introduced the first butane lantern in 1955, and its first propane lantern in 1974. These lanterns were powered by a fuel that was already under pressure in a sealed cylinder, thereby eliminating the need for pouring, pumping and priming an outdoor appliance to get it to work.

Propane can be carried around in disposable cylinders for lanterns, cook stoves and space heaters. You can also rig

up refillable containers to run an entire campsite on propane. These containers are very familiar to anyone who has a barbeque grill in their backyard. A larger version of these refillable containers can be found on just about every camper or motorhome.

In the RV world, propane is a fuel that can run the whole show. Refrigerators, furnace, water heaters, and even lights can all be fueled by propane. Extra tanks can be carried for extended stays in the woods.

Propane is not without some serious dangers. Propane is non-toxic, however it presents a possible inhalation hazard if the gas is released in a confined space, such as a tent or a camper as it displaces oxygen and acts as an asphyxiate. Liquid propane is also a refrigerant that rapidly absorbs heat. Contact with the skin can cause a severe burn in short order.

Another problem with using propane, as well as oil and natural gas appliances, is that as it burns, it gives off carbon monoxide. This can be a real problem in a closed space, like a tent on a cold night.

Back in my younger days, I was on a late season elk near Eagle,

Colorado, in the White River National Forest. We had a snowstorm move through, dropping a foot of the white stuff. After the storm, the skies cleared and the temperature dropped, to somewhere between unbelievable and unbearable.

That night, I attempted to sleep in my war surplus tent, left over from the Russian Front. I was so cold that I ran a catalytic heater, lantern and cook stove, all in an attempt to keep from freezing to death.

I don't know the reason why I did not die in my sleep that night, but I suspect it was the amount of "ventilation" in this tent from all the holes and broken zippers on the doors and windows.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is known as the silent killer. Carbon monoxide is emitted when a fuel, such as propane is burned. CO is odorless and colorless and very difficult to detect. When inhaled, a person can very quickly suffer from carbon monoxide poisoning.

On average, around 500 people die each year from CO poisoning, with many of them in RVs and campers. Tent campers are also at risk. Annually, 50,000 people

visit an emergency room because of CO poisoning.

That might not be the biggest problem with using propane as a fuel for our outdoor equipment. Propane tanks can become a ticking time bomb if the internal temperature gets too high. More specifically, propane tanks can become explosive if the internal temperature reaches above 120 degrees.

Obviously, you never want to bring the propane tank indoors with you but be aware of the dangers of that tank sitting in direct sunlight. On a hot and sunny summer day, that tank can very easily exceed an internal temperature over 120 degrees. Keep the tanks in a shady place with plenty of airflow, and far away from anything that could act as an ignition source.

Coleman is now making something called a multi-fuel stove. They are designed to safely burn Coleman fuel/white gas or unleaded gasoline. The ability to use multiple fuels makes this stove quite valuable especially in emergency situations.

The downside to the unleaded gasoline is that in burning, it produces significant amounts of carbon monoxide, and

again, should be used in the open air and not indoors. I would also be extremely cautious about using gasoline. With my natural clumsiness, I could see myself spilling gas all over the thing as I try to fill it without a funnel. Then when I ignite it, I get a one-way ticket to paradise a bit ahead of schedule.

I am glad we have put technology to use in the outdoor world. I have a really nice headlamp, powered by a couple lithium batteries that throws a flood beam or a spotlight beam, and runs for hours. The best part is I don't get a headache from the fumes. I know Mr. Caster would have really liked one of these new headlamps.

*Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org*

# CPW accepting shooting range grant applications

SPECIAL TO THE MDP.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is now accepting applications for shooting range construction and improvement grants through the Shooting Range Grant Development Program. Established in 2009, the program is the largest of its kind in the nation and has supported

dozens of shooting range improvement projects across Colorado. An estimated \$750,000 will be available in the 2024 grant cycle, although that amount could increase based on available funding. Archery ranges are also eligible for grant funding. Applications are due by March 15.

Travis Long, coordinator of the Shooting Range Grant Program, notes that grants have helped develop new ranges, improved safety and upgraded facilities at existing ranges. "Many ranges have told us that their membership and usage dramatically improved as a direct result of program investments.

That helps grow the sport by bringing in new participants as well as retaining existing ones." Some examples of range improvements over just the last few years include taller berms and backstops, better lighting and electrical connections, ADA access, new firing lines and shade structures, development of entirely

new ranges and additional recreational shooting opportunities. Program funds can cover up to 75% of eligible project costs. "Public access commensurate with funding support is an important consideration," said Long. "CPW is committed to the continued expansion of recreational shooting

opportunities for everyone in our state, and this program highlights our commitment to a collaborative approach to achieve that goal." Information and further details on CPW's Shooting Range Development Grant Program is available at <https://cpw.state.co.us> (search under Things to Do)