

Warrior

the

Writer

We follow the muddy trail

through ragged stands of alder and maple up into bigger timber. Harvey Manning, author, conservationist, and reluctant guru of backpacking, leads the way. Still a strong, burly man at 71, Man-

ning moves slowly but with the effortless ease of someone completely at home in the backcountry. With a practiced pace he follows the soggy track higher up Tiger Mountain

until it enters a cathedral-like grove of giant fir and hemlock. This beautiful remnant of ancient forest, just a few miles from downtown Seattle, is a magical place. But if it weren't for Manning's dogged efforts, we'd be hiking through a subdivision instead of the 10,000-acre "Issaquah Alps," the largest urban wildland park in the nation.

You might expect Manning to indulge in a little prideful self-satisfaction upon surveying the fruits of his labors. But out here in his element, it is his love of wilderness and innate humility that shine through. In fact, there's little about Manning's demeanor or unkempt appearance to suggest that he is the man former Sierra Club Director David

"I'm not trying to be nice or make friends,"

says Harvey Manning, "I'm trying to save

wilderness." BY PETER POTTERFIELD

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Brower calls a "hero of the earth." His pants are baggy, his hat a funky relic from a bygone era, and his well-worn wool shirt a palette of campfire burns and forgotten backcountry meals. Nothing about Manning hints that his prolific writing, steadfast commitment, and sheer force of personality helped create some of the largest backcountry sanctuaries in the West.

Like his clothes, his home reflects the man's unpretentious character and preference for a simple life of substance, not possession. He lives outside of Seattle on a few acres that, although now surrounded by manicured suburbs, have themselves remained wild. The roof of his board-and-batten cabin is so thickly grown with moss that large ferns happily thrive there. Inside is the old typewriter on which Manning wrote the epic *Backpacking: One Step at a Time* 25 years ago, along with more than 30 other books, and where he continues to write. Surrounded by 100-foot-tall trees, the cabin seems an appropriate dwelling for this hard-boiled philosopher, writer, and wilderness advocate.

Manning, face framed by bushy gray hair and a full beard to match, is famed for his feisty attitude and sharp intelligence. "People think I'm too outspoken," he says, "but I see one side of the story. And while I'm aware there are good people on the other side, I attribute all sorts of evil motives to them—and in many cases I'm right!"

Manning's skillful use of invective and colorful language has served his cause, but it has earned him the enmity of many, and a reputation as a curmudgeon. He shows no signs of mellowing, and continues to rankle a lot of people—anybody, in fact, who threatens his cherished wilderness. Mountain bikers are among the latest to discover what timber and development interests have known for decades: The receiving end of Harvey Manning's eloquent diatribes isn't a fun place to be.

"It's impossible to be nice when I'm driven off a trail by a pack of yipping, chattering youths dressed in their sisters' underwear," Manning recently said when asked about mountain-bike riders. His remarks infuriated bikers,

including the president of one Washington club who said it was wrong for Manning to publicly insult a class of citizens. He added that Manning must have a personal hatred to bring that kind of "psycho-babble" to the debate.

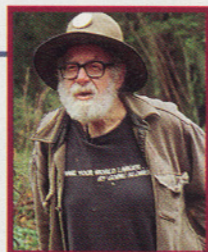
Manning later explained that mountain bikers aren't all bad, they just don't belong on hiking trails. "I have a real problem with mountain bikes, or jet-powered pogo sticks or any other mechanical contrivance in the wilderness. I absolutely reject the idea you can have a wilderness experience on a bike." And while he takes the criticism from his offended opponents—be they loggers or mountain bikers or shopping-center developers—with a smile, he apologizes for nothing. "I'm not trying to be nice or make friends," he says. "I'm trying to save wilderness."

So it's no wonder that the part poet, part rabble-rouser has been described as a Northwest Ed Abbey, although a better analogy may be to Thoreau. Completely unimpressed with trendy thinking, material objects, or compromising attitudes, Manning remains utterly faithful to his own values. He has a profound love of the wilds forged by deep respect, and he sees the effort to save wilderness as well worth the enemies it has brought him.

"A lot of people wish he'd hit a little softer," says Brower. "But they need to understand that Harvey's ire is well placed, that the various people who want to diminish the Cascades need to be stopped. He's uncompromising because he has to be."

If this man has proven one of the environment's most persistent soldiers, it's because his first love is, and always has been, the backcountry. Even now, he frequently ventures into the Cascades for days at a time. In fact, Manning makes it clear there will be no chair-bound interviews unless it's raining. For him, every blue-sky day is a hiking day. He carries on his conservation work just as steadily, but he's not one to dwell on past achievements. "I just do what comes naturally," he says with a crooked grin, his eyes shining behind the trademark Buddy Holly glasses. "If along the way I've been of use, well, that's fine."

"Harvey knows more about back-



packing than anyone else," says Jim Whittaker, the first American to climb Mt. Everest. "Hell, he's an icon. It's no surprise his book became the definitive hiking guide." Whittaker was president of Recreational Equipment, Inc. (the outdoor gear retailer better

known as REI) when he asked Manning in 1971 to write *Backpacking: One Step at a Time*, currently in its 13th printing with more than a quarter-million copies sold. "Not only did Harvey write a thorough and entertaining how-to manual, but his environmental bent helped guide a lot of people in the right direction."

Manning already had made a name for himself in the 1960s by editing *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*, a book, now in its sixth edition, that remains the standard text on climbing and alpine travel. He followed that with a series of guidebooks that began with *100 Hikes in the Cascades* and has since grown to include

other Pacific Northwest volumes for the Olympic Mountains, North Cascades, South Cascades, Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Mt. Rainier National Park, and the lowlands around Puget Sound.

His early hiking guides proved so popular that a two-year supply of the first book sold out in three weeks, according to Manning's trail-guide collaborator and photographer Ira Spring. Together the pair tramped thousands of miles researching the books. But soon Manning sought to do more with the guides than just suggest trails. "Harvey was one of the first to come up with the notion of minimum-impact camping," says Spring. "By putting that ethic in the trail guides, he got the word out in a hurry."

In fact, well before "environment" had entered the global vocabulary, the main thrust of Manning's work began to shift from wilderness travel to wilderness preservation. Working with photographer Tom Miller, Manning produced a book called *The North Cascades*. It was most Americans' first exposure to the spectacular rock-and-ice wilderness hidden away in a remote corner of Washington state. Timber interests, says Manning, already had encroached on some lower valleys

and were on the verge of "destroying a pristine wilderness." Manning says he couldn't let that happen without "yelling my head off." The North Cascades was the first salvo in his campaign to save the area, which ended in victory when North Cascades National Park was formed in 1968.

Perhaps the most dramatic influence ever wielded by any environmental book came with *The Alpine Lakes*. This volume celebrated the beauty and variety of the central Cascade Crest, a stunning landscape of lakes, glaciers, and rocky peaks that, in the early '70s, was earmarked for protective legislation. But as the story goes, President Gerald Ford was considering vetoing the bill. Dan Evans, then governor of the state of Washington, appealed to Ford to save the area, using Manning's book as his sole argument. As Ford began to leaf through the book, he grew more excited with each page. "This is beautiful country," he declared, "it must be saved." The president eventually signed a bill creating the Alpine Lakes Wilderness area.

"I have great faith in what a book by Harvey Manning can do," says Brower, who introduced the "exhibit-format" books when the Sierra Club published Ansel Adams' *This Is The American Earth*. "Harvey is extremely well informed. He's been all through that country, and he isn't about to let people trash it."

The far-reaching impact of his

books doesn't surprise those who know Manning. Donna DeShazo, his long-time editor at Seattle's The Mountaineers Books, credits his "expressive and evocative writing style." Polly Dyer, a Pacific Northwest conservation pioneer, sees Manning's forthrightness as his main asset. "His books certainly appeal to a lot of people," she acknowledges, "but the main thing is Harvey has never been afraid to call a spade a spade."

With what he calls the "backpacking fad" of the 1970s behind us, Manning tends to look kindly on modern backpackers, direct beneficiaries of his conservation efforts who often were introduced to the sport by his books and trail guides. In fact, some have suggested that Manning himself contributed to early overcrowding through his guidebooks, which sent thousands of hikers into the Cascades. "Early on," says Manning, "I took a terrible beating from people who said that the guidebooks would spoil the backcountry by encouraging hikers. But I'm convinced no book ever put boots on the trail. The people were already going. The thing is, they were all going to Lake Melakwa. The guidebooks just helped spread them around."

"But the other, bigger issue was this: Would you rather have a hundred pairs of boots on the trail, or one chain saw? There's many an instance where my guidebooks saved an area from logging. The Forest Service rangers went in to put up timber sale notices, and all of a sudden there's 150 cars at the trailhead. They said, 'My God, there's somebody here besides us!' It turned into an effective direct-preservation technique: Introduce people to a new area, they grow to love it, so they look after it. No longer could the loggers operate with impunity, or in secrecy, because all these new hikers knew what they were up to."

Manning strongly believes that instead of ruining the Cascades, his guidebooks saved the mountains by showing them to people, who in turn began to care about them. But he also knows this increasing population of outdoor enthusiasts faces a very different wilderness than the one Manning wandered in the 1940s wearing a Trapper Nelson pack and army surplus wool. The old man of the wilderness sees trouble ahead for today's backcountry users, and he needn't look farther than his beloved Cascades.

Ironically, one of his greatest preservation achievements now faces problems of overuse. The Alpine Lakes Wilderness, located barely an hour from Seattle, has become a popular playground for the Northwest's many

Advice From A Grand Master

Attitude is everything in the Harvey Manning school of backpacking.

Despite having written one of the most influential how-to-backpack books, Harvey Manning believes that we each should develop our own style of moving through the wilderness. After 60 years of backcountry travel, Manning's own path is that of a minimalist. His back-to-basics approach features an ancient Kelty external frame pack, heat tabs to boil water, and a simple tarp for shelter. His only concession to the modern world and his aging bones is a Therm-A-Rest sleeping pad. With that attitude, it's no surprise that the wisdom he proffers is directed toward matters of style, not equipage:

"Slow down." Manning says he can't understand why anyone who loves wilderness would want to hurry through it. So when people ask him what's the most important

tip he can give, he says: "Take the time to enjoy what you're doing. Moving slowly is the only way to get the best out of any backcountry experience." Manning then opens his jacket to reveal a T-shirt that reads, "Make your world larger by going slower."

"Get off the trail." Manning notes that the silver lining to today's seemingly crowded wilderness is that people stay on the trail. "Get off the trail and suddenly solitude returns. Learn cross-country skills, become adept at moving off trail without damaging the environment."

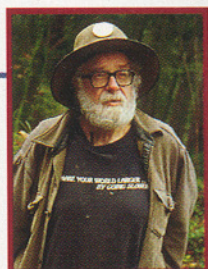
"Meet steepness with slowness." The biggest challenge to facing a long uphill stretch, says Manning is "deterioration of spirit." The solution, he advises, is to "forget the impossible ridge, ignore the wicked tree that can't be left behind,

and retreat into a reverie about baking brownies over a campfire or the plot line of a Marx Brothers movie."

"Study the land." It's not enough to go out into the wilderness without appreciating its interconnections and fragility. "Ecology, the study of ecosystems," says Manning, "should be the hiker's passion, not merely to enrich his trail pleasure, but so he can understand the functioning of the systems and how he can fit in unobtrusively."

"Appreciate all kinds of country." Manning warns against becoming a wilderness snob. "I do a lot of stump-country walking," he says, "and if second-growth monoculture is boring, it still allows for inner reflection. A person can walk along for hours with a pleasing internal dialogue, undisturbed by the outside world." —P. Potterfield

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backpackers and climbers. Reduced federal budgets mean fewer maintained trails, and as a result, the Alpine Lakes area has become a kind of laboratory for managing wilderness into the next century.

While he watches the Forest Service and Park Service "struggle with ways to deal with overuse," Manning believes that in the end, federal agencies will have to let hikers go pretty much where they want. "That means that you'll have close-in popular destinations that essentially become 'sacrifice areas.' Even if a thousand people go to one lake, they'll still have a wilderness experience, although not a solitary one. The people who want more than bare-dirt campgrounds and crowded trails will learn to go farther, to work

harder. Wilderness will remain in more distant and difficult places."

Manning isn't taking the future's wilderness for granted, and tirelessly continues his preservation work. His latest project is a book that explores the Park Service's managing of the North Cascades; he advocates putting more land under the Park Service's protection. And he continues to help in the creation of a 60-mile "greenway," a scenic wildlife corridor that will stretch from Puget Sound all the way to the Cascades. Manning presses on, sometimes vilified, sometimes praised as he follows the true north of his internal compass. He couldn't turn back now if he wanted to.

"I can recall the precise point at which I stopped being a hiker and climber and became a conservationist," he says. "It was on a heather slope high above White Rock Lake. There

was beautiful wilderness all around me; lakes, forests, mountain ridges. Suddenly I saw this huge brown

blight, an obvious clearcut, way down there by the Suiattle River. I thought, 'My God, they have gotten this far already. They will take it all if someone doesn't stop them.'"

Manning knew then he'd have to join the fight, and he's been at it ever since. "You've got to make a stand somewhere," he says quietly, but with an edge of defiance.

Manning's Northwest guidebooks are available from *The Mountaineers Books, Seattle, Washington*; (800) 553-4453. *Backpacking: One Step at a Time, Random House, Inc., New York, NY*; (800) 733-3000; \$14.00.

Petter Potterfield resides in Seattle, Washington.

"Hero Of The Earth," In Brief

To get the quick and dirty facts about Harvey Manning, Mark Jenkins, *BACKPACKER's* Rocky Mountain editor, asked him a few pointed questions about his personal life:

Full Name: Harvey Hawthorne Manning

Date Of Birth: July 16, 1925

Place Of Birth: Ballard, Washington

Current Address: Issaquah, Washington

Occupation: Mountain bum

Type Of Hat Typically Worn: hot—handkerchief; rainy—Akubra Bushman; cold—watch cap

Brand Of Boot Typically Worn: Anything that doesn't have Gore-Tex.

Years Backpacking: 60 plus

Typical Backpacking/Climbing Trip: A week in the North Cascades or Olympics

Longest Day Backpacking/Climbing: 26 hours in the North Cascades

Worst Physical Pain Endured In The Outdoors: Sunburn on Mt. Rainier

Longest Backpacking Trip: 12 days in the North Cascades

Worst Night Out: Waterfalls Camp during a 16-hour lightning storm

Best Night Out: Summit of Mt. Rainier, experiencing natural sauna atop jet stream

Favorite Place To Backpack: Home hills

Favorite Trail Food: Peanut butter

Strangest Food Ever Eaten And Where: Mormon popcorn (fried grasshoppers) in the desert

Favorite Drinks: Water, beer, Tanqueray gin

Favorite Dream: Revisiting a mountain range I first dreamt of 50 years ago and have returned to regularly.

Greatest Fears: Free enterprise, carbon dioxide

Smallest Fear: Satan

Favorite Piece Of Equipment: Ome Dabier cup

Most Hated Piece Of Equipment: Other people's Gore-Tex parkas, and anything in colors other than forest green, field gray, and khaki

Favorite Campfire Song: "Preacher's Daughter"

Pet Peeves: Republicans, rap music, men and women proud to be in uniform, and yuppie "mountain" bikers

Personal Weakness: A tender heart that renders me unfit to be an assassin

Personal Strength: A wife with a good job

Greatest Achievement: Defenestrating a land developer

Most Dubious Achievement: Failure to defenestrate them all

Personal Hero: Dave Brower, of course