

SKIP YOWELL EDITION



Rudy Liwanag photo

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You never know what a gift of frozen donuts and bologna sandwiches might mean. For Skip Yowell and the Boy Scouts of America, it has meant a great deal.

Mr. Yowell died recently, leaving a legacy of innovation, adventure, and support of Scouting. A co-founder of JanSport, he touched the lives of many who have swung a backpack onto their shoulders, pitched a dome tent, or gone to class carrying a daypack full of books, papers, and pens.



SKIP YOWELL

Harold Murray Yowell, known by everyone as Skip, was born in 1946 in western Kansas. Hiking country roads with his Scout troop and camping on the Kansas prairie helped spark his love of the outdoors. As a young adult in the 1960s, Skip considered himself a hippie living a nonconventional life and open to exploring the world.

"When he was in college, Skip and three friends headed for Mexico on a spring break trip with little money," says Mark Anderson, Director of Camping at Philmont Scout Ranch. "Skip was an Eagle Scout and knew about Philmont. As they passed through northeast New Mexico they stopped at the dining hall. Philmont gave them a box of bologna sandwiches and some frozen donuts, enough to allow them to continue their trip."

Soon after that journey, Skip went to Seattle where his cousin Murray Pletz was developing plans for metal backpack frames that could be adjusted to fit the torso size of any user. They launched a company in 1967 to market the frames and named the firm JanSport after Jan Lewis, Murray's girlfriend and then wife, who sewed packs to go on the frames.



JanSport photo

Jan Lewis and Skip Yowell with an early JanSport pack

"In the early days, nobody made frame packs for young people," Skip recalled in an interview with SNEWS Outdoor. "So one of our earliest designs was a frame for kids in the Scouting age, and we actually called it the Scout."

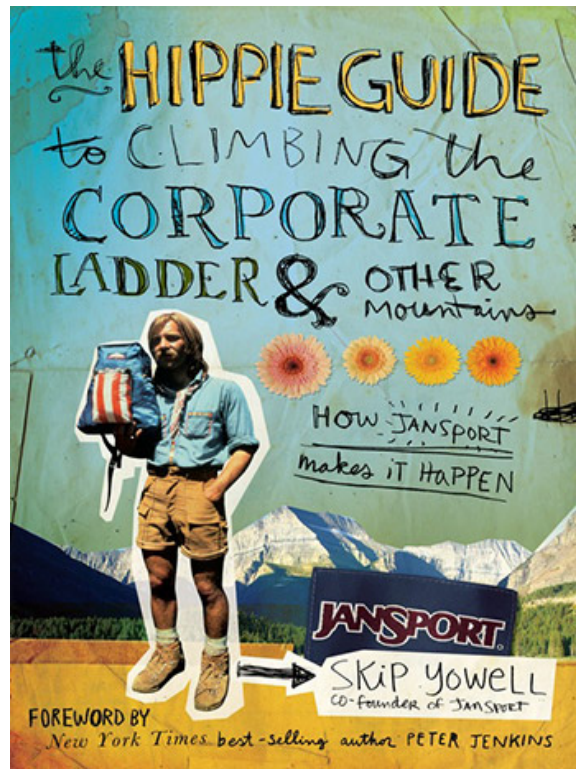
Skip, Murray, and Jan put their packs to the test on outdoor adventures of their own. During a stormy trip in the Washington Cascades, they realized the A-frame tents of the time didn't stand up well in bad weather. Before long they had developed and introduced the dome tent to the outdoor equipment industry.



JanSport photo

Skip Yowell and Murray Pletz with JanSport packs and their Trail Dome tent

Skip enjoyed a life as a worldwide adventurer and as a businessman helping build a multi-million dollar company. He wrote about both in his book *The Hippie Guide to Climbing the Corporate Ladder & Other Mountains*.



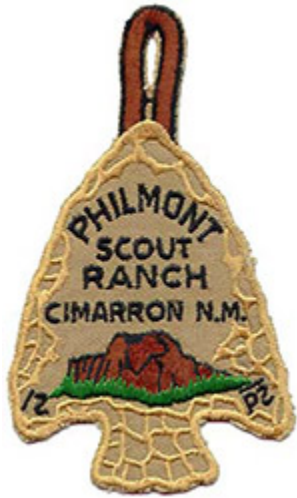
At the heart of Skip's book are the principles guiding JanSport:

We'll succeed because we will work the hardest
We value and appreciate each person
We believe there's more to life than a day's work
We'll make fun a part of everything we do

"Live life to the fullest," Skip encouraged. "Enjoy every moment. Don't be afraid to do what you want to do. And, I'd especially encourage young people to exercise social and environmental responsibility as they get out and explore the Earth."



THE PHILMONT CONNECTION



Though he never went on a trek, Skip Yowell's fondness for Philmont extended long after the donuts and sandwiches he was given as a young traveler. He returned to the Ranch many times to speak at all-staff events, assist with ranger training, and share his expertise with Scouts getting ready to embark on journeys into the backcountry.



Philmont photo

Skip Yowell as keynote speaker for the 2011 Philmont Staff Banquet

Skip was a co-founder of the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), an influential organization promoting outdoor equipment marketers. "As we became more involved with the OIA, our paths crossed with Skip and he adopted us, opening doors and supporting us throughout the industry," Mark Anderson recalls.



Robert Birkby photos

Rangers carry comically-outsized JanSport packs during Philmont staff training



Robert Birkby photo

Backpackers heading for the Philmont high country



WILDERNESS PLEDGE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mr. Yowell also supported Philmont's conservation awareness. "With Skip's encouragement we also developed the Wilderness Pledge Achievement program," Mark Anderson says.

The Wilderness Pledge Achievement Program helps insure that there is crew leadership focused on outdoor ethics. Each crew has a guide called a Guia who provides environmental training throughout a trek.



Philmont Wilderness Pledge Achievement Patch

The literature of The Wilderness Pledge Achievement Award includes stories from Skip Yowell's experiences as real-life illustrations of the principles of Leave No Trace. Profits from the purchase of the award are used to expand the sustainable initiatives of Philmont Scout Ranch.

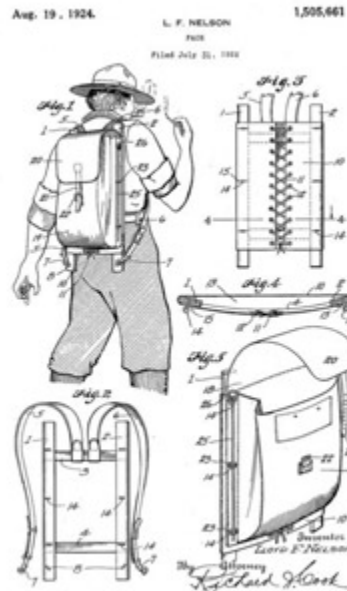
A SHORT HISTORY OF PACKS



Ready for the hike

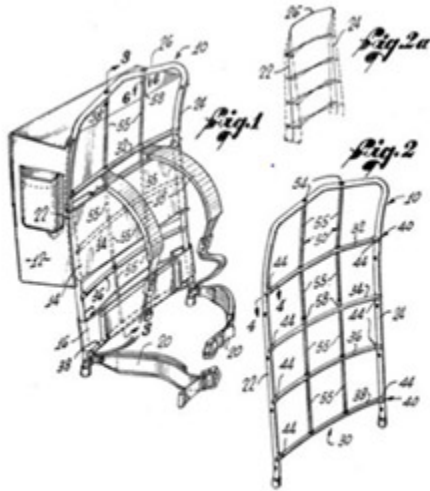
During Scouting's early days, boys didn't have many options for carrying gear and provisions. Rucksacks were little more than canvas bags with a couple of shoulder straps attached. The 1911 Boy Scout Handbook encouraged outdoor travelers to roll equipment and supplies in a blanket and wear the resulting "blanket roll" over one shoulder.

In the 1920s, Lloyd Nelson of Bellingham, Washington, decided to build a more comfortable pack than the traditional Inuit wood and sealskin pack he had used in Alaska. The result was the Trapper Nelson, a wooden frame with a canvas pack attached to it. The pack soon became the choice for Boy Scouts everywhere.



The BSA Trapper Nelson pack and Lloyd Nelson's patent application

Little changed in pack development for the next thirty years. Then Dick Kelty, who had learned metal working during World War Two, fashioned a frame from aluminum tubing and began to market it in 1952. He didn't get around to patenting the pack for a decade. By then, his external frame with a nylon pack bag and a hip belt for transferring the weight from shoulders to hips had become the gold standard for serious backpackers.



Robert Birkby photo

Kelty patent application and a Kelty pack in use on the Appalachian Trail

The adjustable metal frame that launched JanSport was one of many advances moving the industry forward. So was JanSport's revolutionary day pack, first sold in the University of Washington bookstore. Today, descendants of the first JanSport daypacks have saturated the market on college campuses and in high schools across America.



Early JanSport day pack



A PACK THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Scouts can choose from a terrific selection of backpacks and daypacks. Check out these at www.ScoutStuff.org.



Cub Scout School Bag



Boy Scout Book Bag



BSA Technical Venturing Backpack



Mountaineer 70L Backpack

Whatever pack you have, it's of no use unless you get outside with it and explore. Skip Yowell's quote in the newest *Fieldbook* of the Boy Scouts of America sums it up well:

**"I have seen firsthand what
a difference an extended
trip in the outdoors can
make in turning one's life
around in a positive way."**

**—Skip Yowell, co-founder of JanSport,
Eagle Scout**

(This edition of the *Be Prepared Newsletter* was developed and written by Robert Birkby, author of the current editions of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, *Fieldbook*, *Scout Stuff*, *The Conservation Handbook*, and *Eagle Scouts: A Centennial History*.)

