In Search of the Perfect Pot

By David Wescott, with Steve Watts and Don Kevilus, 2020

Part 5 - Wrinkles, Kinks and Dodges - Bushcraft Uses for the Humble Tin Can

By Brotherhood of the Open

ED- Please be aware that quotes and sources need to be italicized

(QUOTE)

A distinguishing mark of the true sportsman is his constant readiness to give freely to his brothers in sport the benefit of his knowledge and experience. Naturally the spreading of information by word of mouth is far too slow for the up-to-date American outdoorsman…. a vast number of small personal tricks and practices have heretofore obtained but little publicity in this way. Individually they are scarcely important enough to serve as the basis of a regulation magazine article, and their originators, moreover, are often too modest or too unskilled with the pen to attempt anything so ambitious.

Many an old woodsman, to whom even the writing of a short letter is an awkward task, has sent in with knotty handwriting and vague spelling, a halting description of the fruits of his wisdom. There has been a good deal of labor expended in whipping these suggestions into shape for the printer, but there has been pleasure in the knowledge that by this work we were perhaps also doing our bit for the splendid Brotherhood of the Open.

H. N. Katz, Kink Editor

From *Kinks: A Book of 250 Helpful Hints*, 1917

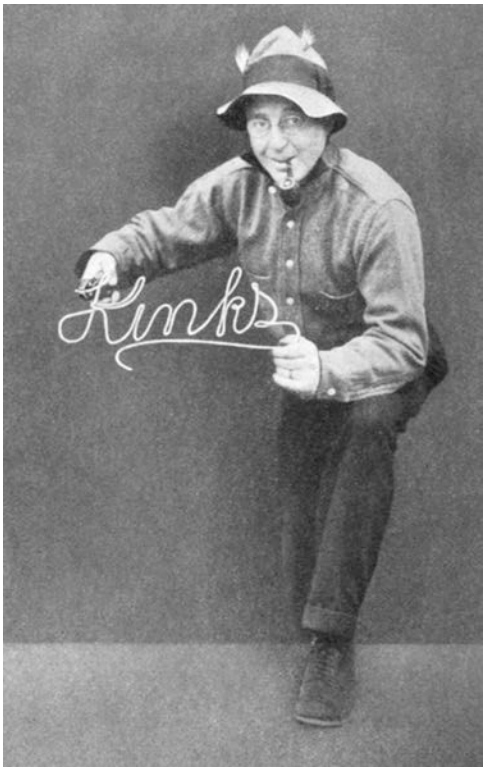
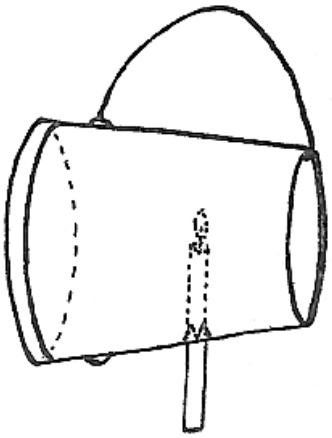


Photo 1 - Kinks

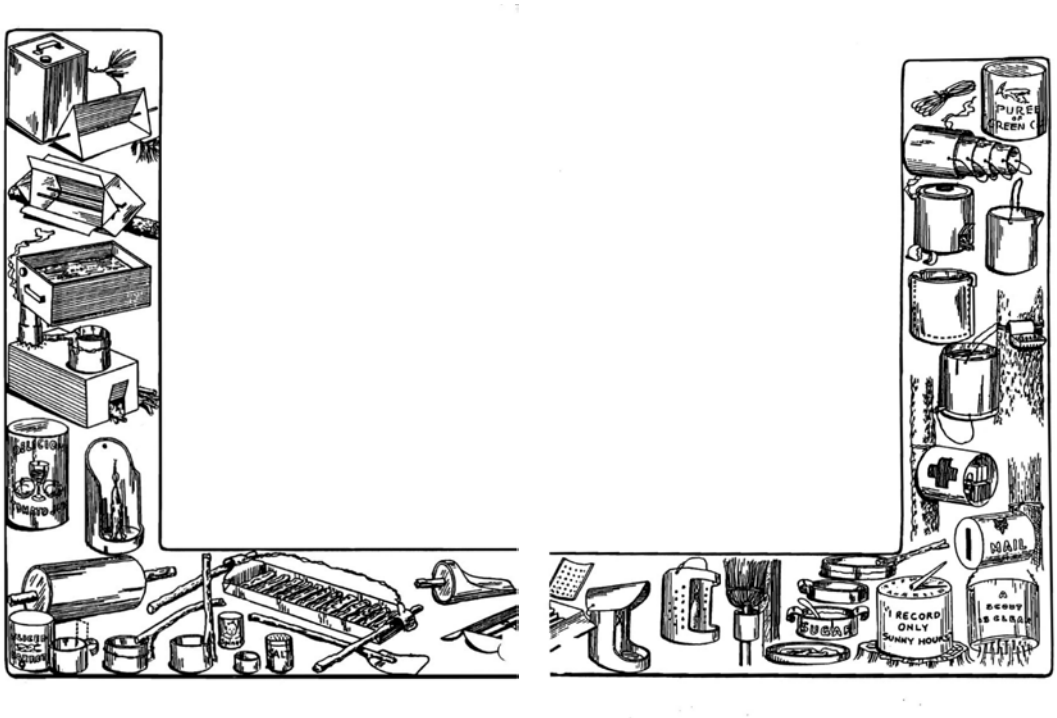
One F. W. Kendall sent in his version of a "Tin Can Outfit" consisting of wood burning stove, frying pan, cup, plate and pot. He wrote, *"This outfit is made from used cans from the household supplies. The tools used are a tack hammer, an old pair of shears, a pair of pliers and a nail. The time of making is about four hours, with no cash outlay. The outfit is intended for two people, but with the addition of cups and plates, a couple more may be served."* **(QUOTE)**

(QUOTE)

There was also a nifty little dodge sent in by A.W. Stevens - *a very simple and efficient candle lantern well known to the miner and woodsman.*
It may be made of any good-sized tin can, but a lard pail, about 5 lb. size, works best. Select a point in the side of the pail a little more than half way down and directly under one of the ears that holds the bail. Cut a slit whose length is a little greater than the diameter of a candle. Then cut another across it at right angles. This forms four points which may be bent inward. A candle thrust through the hole is prevented by these points from slipping out, and it may be pushed farther in as it burns off.
Loosen the bail from the side on which the hole has been punched. Squeeze the ends a little closer together and hook the loose end under the flange in the bottom of the pail. This forms a handle by which the pail may be carried on its side-and the lantern is complete.
The bottom of the pail forms a reflector and makes it a real searchlight. Although the whole front is open, it will burn in almost any wind because there is no other opening to carry the draft past the flame.



Page 2 – Bug Light



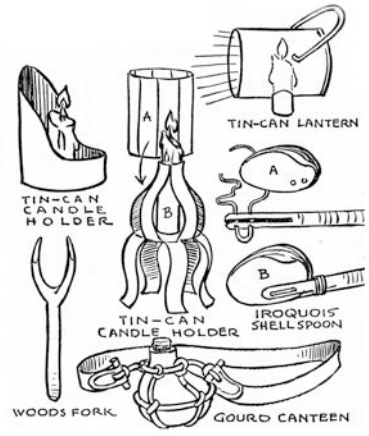
Page 3a and b – Marginalia – Bernard Mason
(Ed – Some good bookend margin art for this section. Combine the 2 for a bottom margin on one page. Unfortunately, I don't know the source or its age.)

A number of years ago I sat-in on a presentation by Doug Getgood about his year spent alone in a backwoods cabin in the northern woods of Ontario. I was most impressed by the variety of tools and gadgets he was able to create through his own ingenuity, simple upcycled materials and skilled hands. It reminded me of a scene from *Alone In The Wilderness* where woodsman Dick Proenneke laid out a display of tin can gadgets and utensils. There must be something to that "Mother of Invention" idea after all.

Page 3c and d - Doug Getgood and his display of tin can treasures.

Page 4a - Doug's excellent tin can ration cup.
Page 4b - Drainer

Here are a number of project ideas from Ellsworth Jaeger's *Wildwood Wisdom* and Bernard Mason's *Woodcraft* books

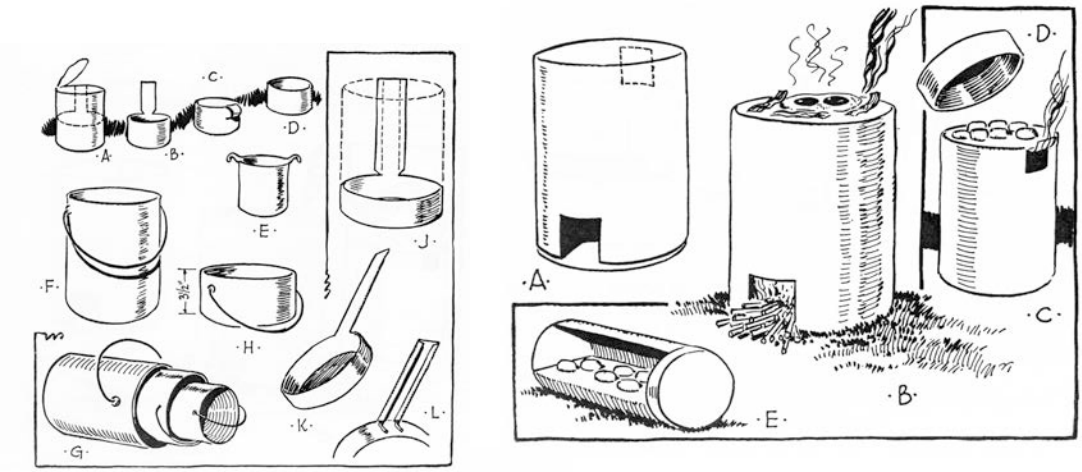


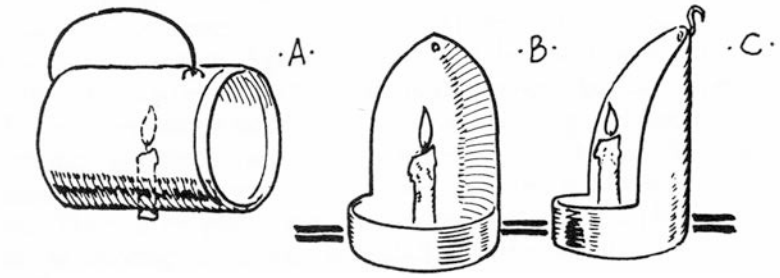
Page 4c – Tin Can Kits **Page 4d - Lights**

Ellsworth Jaeger *Wildwood Wisdom, 1945*

(QUOTE)

Perhaps it was Caesar who said "Beware of Impedimenta." At any rate, it is good advice to follow in the out of doors. But do not be scornful of comfort, for a true woodsman does not rough it: he makes himself as comfortable as possible with means he has at his command…..Additions to camp cooking equipment may be made from tin cans; a whole cooking outfit can be made from them. Ellsworth Jaeger, 1945





Page 5a – Nesting cans
Page 5b – Stoves
Page 5c – Sconce

Bernard S. Mason *Woodcraft and Camping, 1939*

(QUOTE)

The main idea is this: Living in the woods comfortably with what we have and fashioning the things we need but cannot buy. It is fun not bought with money. The art of woodcraft is discovering and perfecting these comfortable ways.

The tin can dominates the modern world - it is unavoidable, to some extent at least, even in the remote woods; it is part of the useful environment of the camper. It can be discarded as litter in the way of that despicable type of vandal who robs the woodlands

and the shores of their beauty and the lake bottoms of their safety, or it can be made into useful items of camp equipment. But whether or not it is needed, it should never be left to annoy those who follow.

There are many artistic uses in modern crafts for the old tin can, well set forth in many books on crafts, but our concern here is only with its woodcraft uses, its contribution to camping and to the lives of those outdoor folks who call the woods and open spaces home.

Bernard S. Mason, *Woodcraft and Camping*, 1939

Page 6a and b - A couple of kinks made by the author – a candle lantern, dipper and spatula.

Conclusion

This five part series was create to remind everyone that simple materials and tools can be adapted to even the city dweller by teaching them how to utilize their *Urban Bushcraft* skills. As mentioned in Part 3, *Woodcraft,* by definition, implies working with materials found in nature (Dan Beard). While using materials that are found around us on a daily basis we can be "upcycle or repurpose" to materials to create very functional items using the same woodcraft skills, tools and techniques - thus, *Urban Bushcraft* – perfect for those who can't make it to the woods, **and** you're still focusing on the "making" rather than "buying" of gadgets for your kit.

Jennifer Mancke photos (credit)

Page 6c and d - When a fixed bail is not available, an old-school kink is to improvise a tool that will tip the pot without dropping anything; one simple pot hook notch- no latches, clips or spouts required.

Page 7 - The Tin Can or "Hobo Stove"

Page 8 - A double boiler can be suspended from a pot hook and used to melt wax that will charge a new hobo stove “buddy burner.”

Assorted Billy Can Photos – use if you haven't already

Billys 1 - Notice the wooden toggle used for the suspension

Billys 2 - Pots suspended from a Lug Pole Crane with Pot Hooks

Billys 3 - Pots suspended from a Lug Pole Crane with Pot Hooks and wire. Survival lab with grass wickiup and Super Shelters.

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