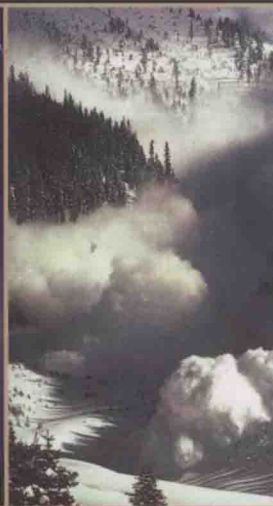


“... this book could very well save your life.”

Jay Cassell

Deputy Editor, *Field & Stream*

OUTDOOR SURVIVAL GUIDE



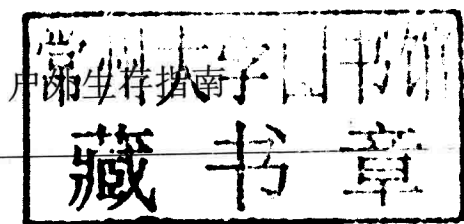
**SHELTER • FIRE • WATER • FOOD
NAVIGATION • SIGNALING**

RANDY GERKE



Outdoor Survival Guide

survival guide



RANDY GERKE



Human Kinetics

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This book is dedicated to my father, Robert William Gerke, who instilled in me an appreciation of adventure and a love of nature when I was a very young boy.

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PREFACE >>

EACH year thousands of people venture off the beaten path to find adventure or enjoy nature and all that it has to offer. Some travel as groups of friends, others travel as families, and still others choose to go it alone. Their reasons for seeking wild places are as varied as their background and experience. Some prefer to experience nature under their own power by hiking, climbing, biking, skiing, or paddling. Others enjoy using motorcycles, ATVs, snowmobiles, four-wheel-drive vehicles, or even the family car to take them to less-traveled areas. No matter the reason, the method of travel, or the activity, these people have one thing in common: They must be able to survive on their own when unforeseen events arise that prevent them from returning to the safety of their vehicles, camps, and homes.

All too often we hear reports of tragedies that occur when people are suddenly thrust into an emergency survival situation. Many die needlessly because of poor preparation and lack of knowledge. Those who arm themselves with basic survival knowledge and carry a few simple items with them have a far better chance of returning home, maybe not unscathed, but returning home nevertheless.

Outdoor Survival Guide is a reference for those who want to be prepared for an unexpected outdoor emergency. The book is a valuable resource for people who consider themselves novices as well as those with experience in the outdoors. This reference is designed so that you can carry it along on all your adventures, whether traveling on a remote highway in a car, climbing a snowy peak far in the backcountry, or exploring a deep canyon in the warm desert. This book, along with a cool head and some common sense, can save your life.

Covering every aspect of the topic of survival would require several volumes. *Outdoor Survival Guide* contains the most important practical aspects of outdoor survival in a concise, easy-to-follow format. The material presented includes both primitive and high-tech skills and information. One of the most valuable aspects of this guide is its ease of use. The book is organized so that you can quickly find the critical information for a particular survival emergency. The “Survival Skills Quick Reference” on page vi can help you quickly locate the skills presented in the book.

The chapters are organized in order of priority, beginning in chapter 1 with how to assess your situation and avoid panic. Chapters 2 through 8 teach specific skills such as building shelters, making fire, obtaining water and food, navigating, and signaling. A special photo guide to edible plants is provided on pages 83 through 98. Chapters 9 and 10 cover injuries and common illnesses, dangerous animals, and survival in extreme environments. Chapter 11 is a guide to building or customizing your own survival kit.

Reading about outdoor survival and romanticizing the idea of living without the aid of modern technology is one thing. Being required to live that way because of an emergency is quite another. During the more than 30 years I've spent as a wilderness guide and survival instructor, I have had the opportunity to experiment with many outdoor skills and techniques. I have field-tested the information and skills contained in this book, and all have proved to be effective, and in some cases, life saving. If you are among those who enjoy the feeling of adventure that only an outdoor experience can provide but look forward to a hot shower and a warm bed when the adventure ends, *Outdoor Survival Guide* was written for you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS >>

WRITING a book is certainly not a one-person job; it requires an entire team laboring many hours to bring it to completion. It has been my good fortune to work with especially qualified and helpful people during this project.

I owe a special debt to Tom Heine, the acquisitions editor at Human Kinetics who first approached me about writing this book. He continued to encourage and gently push me along during the writing and submission process. Special thanks to Heather Healy, the development editor for the project. Her cheerful disposition, insightful comments, and thorough examination of the manuscript improved the book and helped me to improve as a writer.

To my wife, partner, friend, and illustrator, Kay Wiemer Gerke, I owe the most. It is a difficult challenge to blend a personal and business relationship. During the 33 years we've spent together teaching wilderness skills and raising a family, we've gained enough interpersonal survival skills to fill more than a few volumes. I'm grateful for the never-ending supply of patience, support, and encouragement she's shown me during our years together. These gifts have been especially appreciated during the writing of this book. Her skill as an illustrator has greatly added to the quality of this project.

I'm also grateful to the many students I've worked with over the last three decades, who have allowed me to learn with them and from them.

Thanks to my friends and associates at the Ouray Mountain Rescue Team of Ouray, Colorado. It's been one of the great experiences of my life to be a part of this team and to serve with some of the most skilled and dedicated people to be found anywhere. Ouray is the quintessential learning laboratory for the study of survival. The experiences I've had there have expanded my knowledge and skills and have motivated me to share what I've learned with others.



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The Art of Survival

WE live in an extraordinary age. Technology has provided our society with all the comforts and conveniences that we need for a high quality of life. We are no longer personally responsible for maintaining our physical existence. We leave this duty, for the most part, to public service agencies, which provide electricity, water, and heating fuel and even dispose of our waste. We no longer have to provide shelter for ourselves; we hire people to build our homes. All that we have to do is work in a specialized field to earn the money to buy the services that meet our needs.

Most of us can only imagine what would happen if we were suddenly cast into a desperate struggle for life. In this situation, reality quickly changes from all that we had considered normal to a strange new world filled with fearful and threatening circumstances. When placed suddenly and unpredictably in such a situation, technology seems far away, and we become keenly aware of our physical limitations. But in a survival situation, our emotional and psychological limitations can be more critical than our physical shortcomings. Normal ethics and standards crumble around us, and we are generally unprepared for the

challenges that we must face. In an elemental struggle between human and the environment, money, position, and education are mostly worthless. This realization only adds to the already staggering challenge of staying alive. The survival skills and equipment that you possess are important in a survival situation, but how you score on this most difficult test depends largely on your attitude.

Characteristics of Successful Survivors

Successful survivors are stubborn, determined, and even fanatical about staying alive. They are not passive about their situation but instead struggle to gain control of themselves and their new environment. They continually stay busy and productive by working to improve their circumstances. They struggle aggressively against their situation but not against themselves or others. They are good to themselves and have a sense of personal worth.

No formula can predict who will survive and who will not, but odds favor those with reasonable knowledge about the environment and survival techniques, emotional stability, good health, a sound ego, and a history of active participation in normal life (see table 1.1). People

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Survivors and Nonsurvivors

Characteristics of survivors	Characteristics of nonsurvivors
Knowledgeable about the environment and survival techniques	Apathetic
Emotionally stable	Passive
Physically healthy	Fearful
Confident	Injured
History of normal life participation	Easily discouraged
Strong will to live	Isolated
Willing to improvise	Quick to anger
Eager to work with others	Impulsive