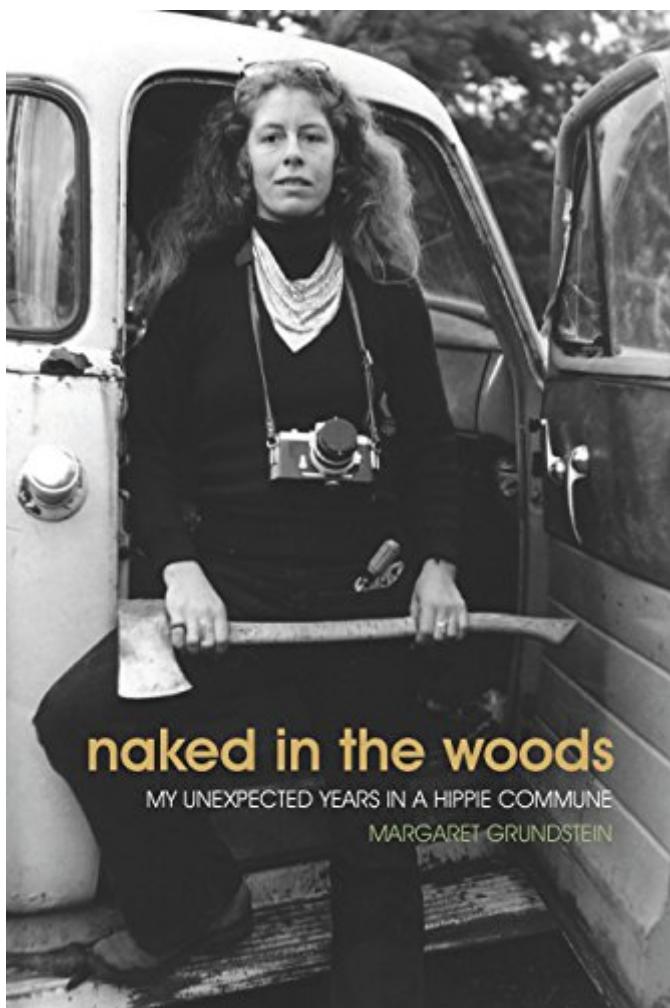


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Naked In The Woods: My Unexpected Years In A Hippy Commune



Synopsis

In 1970, Margaret Grundstein abandoned her graduate degree at Yale and followed her husband, an Indonesian prince and community activist, to a commune in the backwoods of Oregon. Together with ten friends and an ever-changing mix of strangers, they began to build their vision of utopia. *Naked in the Woods* chronicles Grundstein's shift from reluctant hippie to committed utopian—sacrificing phones, electricity, and running water to live on 160 acres of remote forest with nothing but a drafty cabin and each other. Grundstein, (whose husband left, seduced by "freer love") faced tough choices. Could she make it as a single woman in man's country? Did she still want to? How committed was she to her new life? Although she reveled in the shared transcendence of communal life deep in the natural world, disillusionment slowly eroded the dream. Brotherhood frayed when food became scarce. Rifts formed over land ownership. Dogma and reality clashed. Many people, baby boomers and millennials alike, have romantic notions about the 1960s and 70s. Grundstein's vivid account offers an unflinching, authentic portrait of this iconic and often misreported time in American history. Accompanied by a collection of distinctive photographs she took at the time, *Naked in the Woods* draws readers into a period of convulsive social change and raises timeless questions: how far must we venture to find the meaning we seek, and is it ever far out enough to escape our ingrained human nature?

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Customer Reviews

For those of us who opted for a more traditional life following college, but who once considered communal living, "Naked in the Woods" provides a very readable account of what we may have missed. Few books document the experience as well as Margaret Grundstein's authentic narrative. The struggles in building a utopia in the backwoods of Oregon in the early 70's are recounted as unvarnished as any social historian could wish. I had a very clear sense of the difficulties these ersatz pioneers faced as they set off to create an alternative way of living. The basic reasons the vast majority of all of these attempts to create successful alternative ways of living failed are evident as Grundstein discusses her own frustrations with power, money, inequality, and other salient elements that are more often notable in third world countries. Put this one in a time capsule that captures a time in America's development that has been idealized well beyond the realities these experiences entailed.

This was a very well written personal history of this phenomenon. The author has a knack, and I would imagine we could be hearing more from her in the future. I was about 6 when she was beginning to make these decisions, and this movement did end up helping to pave the way for the more mature development of self reliant living and the very necessary questioning of the status quo which continues to go on today. Even though I would have lasted 2 days in a place without structure, intention, showers and bathrooms, most anyone who has gone through youth understands the power of human connection and camaraderie which held these folks together in the wilderness for so long. I also think the presence of all the drugs (on day to day living and productivity) could bear more examination.

This book is a page turner! The author presents an intriguing and engaging memoir of her counterculture experience of communal living in Oregon in the 1970's. The story is rich with interesting people, relationships, and the imagery of day-to-day life in a hippie commune. A well told story and very satisfying read.

Want to know what it was like to live on a commune in the Oregon wilderness in the early 1970's? An interesting moment in idealistic utopian community building is gracefully recounted in the dreamlike "Naked in the Woods" expertly told by M. Grundstein.

Margaret Grundstein's Naked in the Woods is a loving yet unsentimental portrait of a place and time in history of monumental change and experimentation. Grundstein was on the front lines in the Sixties, living the utopian dream on a hippie commune in Oregon. She writes with the sharp eye of a photographer and the analytical mind of the urban planning student she was when she left East Coast academia for the forest. The photographs she took at the time illustrate the book beautifully. How could she and her band of friends, all twenty-somethings, live for over five years without electricity or plumbing or the support of their families or elders of any kind, isolated by miles of dirt roads deep in the woods? Grundstein tells us how. They chopped the wood to build the fire to heat the water to boil the diapers. They practiced free love and scavenged for free food and plowed the fields and slaughtered the chickens and often went hungry. Rural living set back the clock for women in many ways. It also taught the women of the commune how to survive. Grundstein writes with candor about the ethical dilemmas she and the others faced over the years. It's a fantastic, mind-blowing story told with direct, confident style, well-written, and ultimately universal.

Reading Ms Grundstein's book gave me a visual and visceral look into the dream and life I had only heard about during that special era of my young adulthood. She injected the image with color and texture with her inner flashlight and I appreciate her heart, soul and sense of family. Her daughters are very lucky to have her as mother and life guide. I could go on about the many women's issues she addressed as well as those of the era and the roles women and men played, both literally and in our minds. But I'll leave that for another time. And one last thing: I read for pleasure, but as important to me as the story, is how it is expressed. After I finished the book, it was not surprising to me how many phrases I had underlined, to be visited again at another time.

Cool Insights on the time and lifestyle. I expected more wild stories and more politics/hostory, but still good personal narrative of the times.

Was an interesting account of one woman's journey. I liked her spunk.

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