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Rolling Nowhere, Ted Conover, Penguin Group (USA) Incorporated, 1985, 0140095500, 9780140095500, 28 pages. Offers a personal account of the author's adventures riding the rails with America's hoboes and presents a factual glimpse into the world of the modern-day hobo.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place , Aron Ralston, Sep 7, 2004, Biography & Autobiography, 354 pages. A mountaineer who survived a near-fatal accident by amputating his arm when it became trapped behind a boulder in Utah describes how he endured more than five days of ....

Boxcar Bertha an autobiography, Box-Car Bertha, Ben Lewis Reitman, 1937, Biography & Autobiography, 285 pages. Boxcar Bertha Thompson describes her life as a hobo and her misadventures with pimps, addicts, anarchists, wobblies, and criminals.

The Village of Waiting , George Packer, Aug 1, 2001, Biography & Autobiography, 336 pages. Now restored to print with a new Foreword by Philip Gourevitch and an Afterword by the author, this book is a frank, moving, and vivid account of contemporary life in West ....

Inside Life Behind Bars in America, Michael G. Santos, Jun 26, 2007, Social Science, 336 pages. A controversial exposé of imprisonment in America, written by an eighteen-year inmate, shares the stories of the author's fellow prisoners from gang leaders to Wall Street ....

Whiteout lost in Aspen, Ted Conover, Nov 19, 1991, Travel, 269 pages. Takes readers on a tour of Aspen, Colorado, exploring its conspicuous consumption, body worship, spiritual yearnings, billionaires, drugs, New Age parties, cultural life, and more.

Praying for Sheetrock A Work of Nonfiction, Melissa Fay Greene, 2006, History, 335 pages. Finalist for the 1991 National Book Award and a New York Times Notable book, Praying for Sheetrock is the story of McIntosh County, a small, isolated, and lovely place on the ....

Knights of the road a hobo history, Roger Bruns, 1980, Social Science, 214 pages. .

Rogues, Hoboes, and Entrepreneurs Coping with the Great Depression, Cy W. Greenhalgh, Oct 1, 2000, Biography & Autobiography, 236 pages. .

Fish , Jillian Powell, Mar 1, 1997, Cooking, 32 pages. Describes how people have used fish as food throughout history, ways fish have been raised and prepared, and their nutritional value. Includes recipes for baked haddock and ....

Sally Trench's book , Sally Trench, 1968, , 191 pages. .

Seasons in the Desert A Naturalist's Notebook, Susan J. Tweit, 1998, , 224 pages. An esteemed nature writer combines witty prose with natural history and ecological fact to examine and expose the lives and ways of forty plants and animals of the American ....

Holding the Key My Year As a Guard in Sing Sing, Ted Conover, 2000, , 329 pages. .

Tales of an American Hobo , Charles Elmer Fox, 1989, Biography & Autobiography, 226 pages. Tells the story of a life spent riding the rails, traveling all across the United States in the tradition of the now-vanishing hoboes.

The Harvest Gypsies (2002 Ed.) On the Road to the Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck, Charles Wollenberg, Jul 1, 2002, Fiction, 62 pages. Collects seven newspaper articles on migrant farm workers, squatters' camps and the Hoovervilles of California that the author wrote for The San Francisco News in 1936 ....

Half a million tramps , W. A. Gape, 1936, Social Science, 352 pages. .

Hoboes fascinated Conover, but he had only encountered them in literature and folksongs. So, he decided to take a year off and ride the rails. Equipped with rummage-store clothing, a bedroll, and a few other belongings, he hops a freight train in St. Louis, becoming a tramp in order to discover their peculiar culture. The men and women he meets along the way are by turns generous and mistrusting, resourceful and desperate, philosophical and profoundly cynical. And the narrative he creates of his travels with them is unforgettable and moving.

As a young man, in his early 20s, Ted Conover traveled on foot and by rail over most of the Western states, first with hoboes and then with undocumented farm workers from Mexico. In his travels, he discovered two itinerant worlds, sometimes overlapping, that are often misunderstood, and invisible to most Americans. In many ways naïve and sometimes too trusting, Conover also discovered the limits of his middle class upbringing. His first two books, "Rolling Nowhere" and "Coyotes" were based on his experiences. Together they represent a kind of coming of age in America.

With little knowledge of real hobo life, Conover left college in the East, jumped a train in St. Louis and headed west. In the months that followed, he crossed and recrossed 14 states, meeting and traveling with a dozen or more modern-day hoboes. He learned from them how to survive, living off of handouts, sleeping rough, avoiding the railroad police. And he learned about loneliness and loss of identity.

There are moments of pure pleasure, a tin cup of steaming coffee on a cold high plains morning, the unbroken landscape gliding by open boxcar doors. And there are times when the romance of adventure disappears completely -- in bad weather and bad company. I greatly enjoyed this book and was often touched by Conover's youthful pursuit of independence and experience, often taking risks and crashing head-on into realities he does not anticipate. At the end, the romance of the rails has been pretty much stripped away; he's not sorry, but he's had enough.

You've got to give Conover credit, the kid has guts. Discontent with his college studies, which seem a bit unreal and removed from real life, he decides to do some hands on research and give the life of a hobo a try. Predictably, things are not what he expects. The life of a hobo (more accurately known as a tramp) is far from romantic and most often full of hardship and danger. However, Conover also discovers a world of fascinating folks who, when push comes to shove, are not so different from the rest of us.

There is Lonny, the eternal optimist whose head is full of dreams that never materialize, Pistol Pete with his injured hand and jealous sidekick BB who propose a 3-musketeers deal and then run off with most of his gear, Forrest and Bill with whom he discovers the depths of being a tramp, and Monty who is pursued by personal ghosts.

Equally important to Conover's education is his personal transformation from a well-dressed, polite city kid to a rail smart tramp who won't let anyone take advantage of him. His hair grows, his clothes become dirty, layered and ragged, he learns to smoke and drink cheap booze, to scavenge in dumpsters for leftover food and how to apply for food stamps. Even more revealing to him is how he

is treated as his physical appearance changes. Suddenly people look away, a policeman finds a reason to arrest him for walking on a public sidewalk and he is treated with mistrust and even disgust when he goes into stores.

Conover emerges from his adventures with a bad case of head lice but nothing worse physically. However, it is clear that his inner psyche has undergone a transformation. He has questioned the assumptions of his middle class upbringing and dared to immerse himself in the lives of one of our country's most misunderstood groups. [Read more](#) &rsaquo;

While growing up, author Ted Conover was fascinated by the hobo lifestyle which represented freedom, independence and adventure. So, in 1980, he took time off from studies at Amherst to play hobo and ride the rails through the western states, ostensibly gathering material for a senior anthropology thesis. Hopping a freight in St. Louis, he went by stages to Denver, Salt Lake City, Pocatello (Idaho), Havre (Montana), Fargo (North Dakota), Spokane, Seattle, Portland, Eugene (Oregon), Oroville (California), Elko (Nevada), Oakland, Bakersfield (California), Los Angeles, Yuma, El Paso, and back to Denver. Along the way, he meets and loosely befriends those that wander from one place to the next in search of food stamps, discarded edibles and a safe place to sleep - an autonomy and liberty gained at the sacrifice of loved ones, comfort, security, and the income from a steady 9 to 5. The most interesting was 50-year old Sheba, the rare female tramp, who'd built herself a multi-room shelter out of old tires.

From the book jacket: Hopping a freight in the St. Louis rail yards, Ted Conover embarks on his dream trip, traveling the rails with [the knights of the road](#). Equipped with rummage store clothing, a bedroll, and his notebooks, Conover immerses himself in the peculiar culture of the hobo, where handshakes and introductions are foreign, but where everyone knows where the Sally (Salvation Army) and the Willy (Goodwill) are. Along the way he encounters unexpected charity (a former cop goes out of his way to offer Conover a dollar) and indignities (what do you do when there are no public bathrooms?) and learns how to survive on the road.

But above all, Conover gets to know the men and women who, for one reason or another, live this life. There's Lonny, who accepts that there are some towns he can't enter before dark because he's black, and Pistol Pete, a cowboy who claims his son is a doctor and his daughter a ballerina, and Sheba Sheila Sheils, who's built herself a house out of old tires. By turns resourceful and desperate, generous and mistrusting, independent and communal, philosophical and profoundly cynical, the tramps Conover meets show him a segment of humanity outside society, neither wholly romantic nor wholly tragic, and very much like the rest of us. [Read more](#) »

Ted Conover (born January 17, 1958, in Okinawa and raised in Denver, Colorado) is an American author and journalist. A graduate of Denver's Manual High School and Amherst College and a Marshall Scholar, he is also a distinguished writer-in-residence in the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute of New York University. He teaches graduate courses in the Literary Reportage concentration and an undergraduate course on journalism and empathy.

Conover's books of narrative nonfiction have typically been explorations of off-beat social worlds. He will often become an active participant in the subculture he is writing about. His first experiment with this melding of anthropological and journalistic method took place in 1980, when he rode freight railroads back and forth across the western United States with some of the last remaining hobos. This experience, initially rendered as an ethnography for an honors thesis, became the basis of his first-person book, *Rolling Nowhere: Riding the Rails with America's Hoboes* (1984).

A few of those Conover met on the rails were Mexican nationals, and in his next book, *Coyotes: A Journey Across Borders with America's Illegal Migrants* (1987), he turned his attention to illegal immigrants, describing them as "the true modern-day incarnation of the classic American hobo." Conover spent a year traveling with Mexicans in order to write *Coyotes*; he lived in a "feeder" valley in the Mexican state of Quer taro, spent time in Arizona, Idaho, California, and Florida, and crossed the border three times. The 1987 book came out in a new edition in 2006 with a new

preface and subtitle: "A Journey Across Borders With America's Mexican Migrants."

His next project, which he has stated he undertook in part to see whether the participatory approach could work with wealthier people, describes life in the mining-town-turned-lifestyle-capital of Aspen, Colorado, where Conover worked as a driver for the Mellow Yellow Taxi Company, the Aspen Times, and for a catering company. The result was *Whiteout: Lost in Aspen* (1991).

A few years later, Conover took a job at Sing Sing prison in New York state, where he worked for nearly a year "without the state's knowledge" as a rookie correction officer. The resulting book, *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing* (2000), was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize[1] and won the 2000 National Book Critics Circle Award in General Nonfiction,[2] among other honors. For many months, prisoners and their visitors were banned from reading *Newjack*; now, inmates who receive a copy have to wait up to several months while the state redacts several pages that it considers a threat to security.[citation needed]

In addition to books, much of Conover's work has been published in magazines. He frequently contributes to *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *National Geographic Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, and others.[4] He is on the editorial board of the literary magazine *The Common*, based at Amherst College, and published work in the debut issue.[5]

Hoboes fascinated Conover, but he had only encountered them in literature and folksongs. So, he decided to take a year off and ride the rails. Equipped with rummage-store clothing, a be...more In Ted Conover's first book, now back in print, he enters a segment of humanity outside society and reports back on a world few of us would chose to enter but about which we are all curious.

What is most interesting about this book about riding freight trains with the tramps and hobos is that this is from the early 80s, not present day. I know lots of folks who ride freights and many of them have written zines about it. If this book was more present day, I might view it a bit different. Essentially Conover was an east coast college student who decided to experience tramp life riding the rails. He went about it as a bit of an anthropological study and gave himself to it 100%. His exp...more What is most interesting about this book about riding freight trains with the tramps and hobos is that this is from the early 80s, not present day. I know lots of folks who ride freights and many of them have written zines about it. If this book was more present day, I might view it a bit different. Essentially Conover was an east coast college student who decided to experience tramp life riding the rails. He went about it as a bit of an anthropological study and gave himself to it 100%. His experiences are interesting and insightful and while ultimately his young white male middle class privledge gives him an "out" anytime he needs it, he tries not to and consequently learns quite a bit not only about getting around on the rails, but also on surviving in yard jungles amongst those who (mostly) have little or no choice in their circumstances. What is quite depressing is how hard it is to get up and out of the life for most and the drinking that ultimately consumes so many. While some drink their days away, others go for day labor, or welfare, or relief offered at the missions. Conover learns a lot and survives quite well to tell an interesting story. Many things have changed in 18+ years and many have not, just as though much has changed on the rails in 60 years and much has not. I'm curious to check out his other books about Coyotes on the border and working as a guard at Sing Sing.(less)

Yes, hoboes still ride the rails west of the Mississippi. Black, White, Mexican, even a few (very few!) women. They own what they carry, their food is often scavenged from dumpsters, their clothes come from charities, many are addicted to cheap booze, and they are...more Ted Conover, raised in Denver and educated at Amherst, read about hoboes riding the rails during the great depression and wondered if they still existed. In 1980 he took a break from his university to find out, and this is his story.

What sets those hoboes apart from (say) the homeless of New York is their close association with railroads. A hobo's schedule may involve avoiding rail yard guards ("bulls"), boarding trains already in motion, huddling beneath "piggyback" trailers tied to a flatcar which is rolling at high speed into pouring rain, and arriving at unexpected destinations. His geography of the United States differs

from ours, focusing on large railroad yards--Havre, Montana; Wishram, Washington; Colton, California, etc. Cities are rated by the opportunities they offer a vagrant.

Who are these people? Why do they put up with such a hard and dangerous life, even the many who are strong enough to earn a living conventionally? Some, in fact, do work, especially illegal Mexican immigrants, who form a class of their own--speaking Spanish, keeping their dignity and working diligently, but living in a legal limbo. Most hoboes however hit the road because they shun any long term commitment: they are loners, outcasts of society, rolling nowhere.

As the author befriends them (the associations rarely last long), he listens to their stories, often laced with fantasy, and find finds a great diversity. Hoboes do not lack ability and most can be surprisingly generous to strangers. But each seems to have his trail of trouble, of broken marriages, alcoholism, uncontrolled temper or unreal dreams. This book tells an interesting story, but seems to offer little hope for those that still ride the rails, whose greatest handicap is usually within their own minds.

I read Ted Conover's second book "Coyotes: A Journey Across Borders With America's Illegal Migrants" (1987) before I read "Rolling Nowhere" and think that "Coyotes" is a far better book if you are going to choose only one. It is more polished in prose and, I think, has a more interesting story to tell. Nevertheless, "Rolling Nowhere" is very good book and a recommended read to those who have ever wanted to hop a freight.

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