

OUTRAGEOUSLY OUTDOORS

By Steve Gilliland

As I sit down to tap away at this edition of Outrageously Outdoors, for some inexplicable reason I feel the need to pay homage to man's best friend, for nowhere is man's best friend appreciated more than in the world of outdoor sportsmen. They sit beside us in hunting blinds; often so close they're nearly beneath us. They help us carry our gear to and from campsites, the boat, the woods and even back to the truck when the excursion is over. They are perfectly at home in the pickup, whether in the back, on the floor or in the seat beside us. They require very little in the way of maintenance, perhaps an occasional scrubbing to keep them squeaky clean. Yet, these stalwart companions provide us with years of dedicated, selfless service. Of course I'm talking about man's best friend, the plastic 5-gallon bucket.

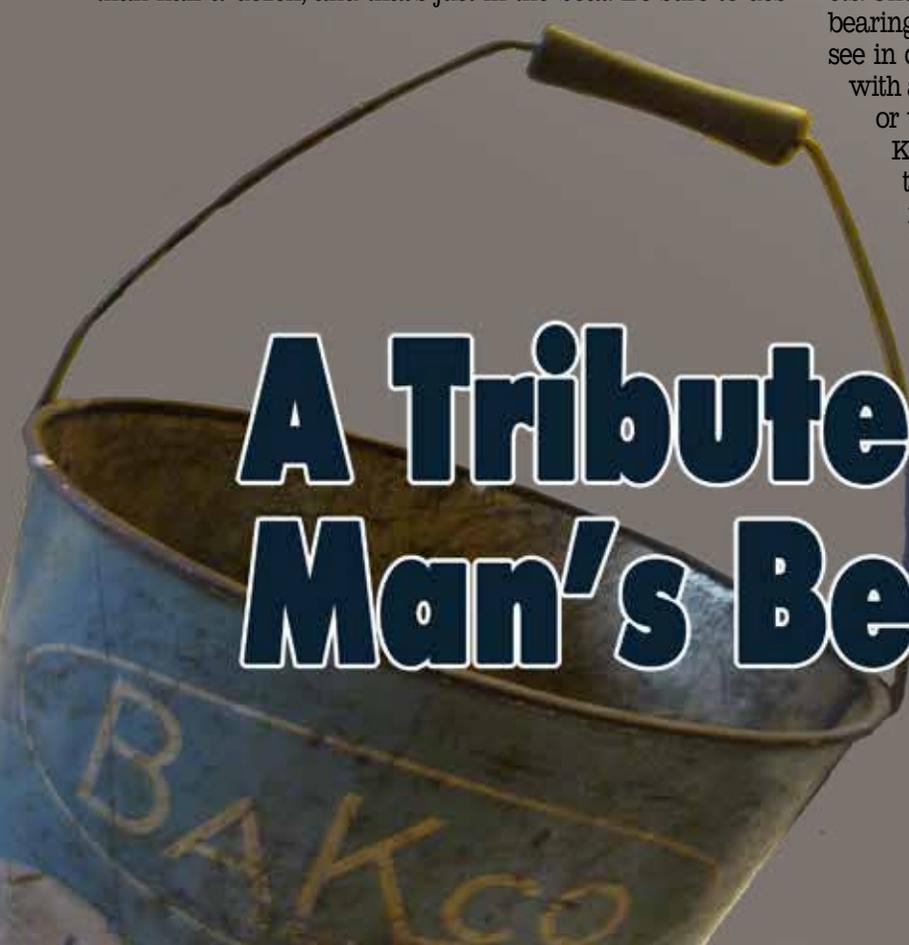
I wish they had existed when I was a kid. Oh, we had 5-gallon buckets, but not plastic. Dad had a hanging feed bunk in the barn and if you couldn't surprise the steers and beat them to the bunk at feeding time, the only way to survive the ordeal was to beat them out of the way with the bucket. I ruined more metal buckets than I care to remember by beating cows with them. Had they been plastic, they'd have lasted forever. But, like I stated above, no one depends upon plastic 5-gallon buckets more than the outdoor sports enthusiast. They come in white, gray, green, black and camouflage. They can have metal handles or plastic. They are the ultimate rear rest/foot rest/equipment carrier rolled into one.

No fisherman worth his or her fish and chips will have less than half-a-dozen, and that's just in the boat. Be sure to des-

ignite one on the boat for those inopportune times when the need arises to relieve yourself of your morning coffee while fishing. If you're lucky you might get your wife or girlfriend to use one also, instead of having to run to the dock when they get nature's call. Although a tad large, they also work well for bailing out water rushing into the boat, when you fail to put the drain plug back into the drain hole in the transom before leaving the dock. When ice fishing, two nice white ones (to color coordinate with your surroundings) will carry your rods, tackle, bait and lunch onto the ice. One turned upside down will then become your seat, while the other holds your fish. Fitted with a lid of some description, one bucket can do both. When a fish is caught, simply jump up, lift the lid, deposit the fish, then close the lid and repose yourself again. For you intense ice fishermen (you know who you are) this also hides your catch from prying eyes. In any fishing situation, plastic 5-gallon buckets are the ideal tool for transporting fish. Once home, they again spring into action as the supreme vessel to hold all the "by-product" when cleaning your catch. Bass Pro even sells a fish cleaning board specially made to fit the top of one. I also found a kit containing all the necessary parts to turn a 5-gallon bucket into an aerated bait container.

Though fishing seems to bring out the best in 5-gallon buckets, hunters also benefit from them. Again, they are the cat's meow for carrying equipment to and from a blind or stand. To carry all my trapping supplies, I use one fitted with a canvas tool carrier. Though small camp chairs are probably more comfortable for a long wait, the buckets again excel as seats. Cabela's offers a variety of seats, all made to fit 5-gallon buckets. One named the "Silent Spin Bucket Seat" is equipped with bearings like a lazy susan, allowing a hunter to swivel and see in different directions. This seat can be purchased alone, with an added storage pouch that drapes around the bucket, or with an attached "stadium" seat, complete with back.

Kits are also available with all the components needed to convert our friend, the bucket, into a hanging deer feeder (a nice camouflage colored number is probably best suited here.)



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Not a hunter or fisherman, and feeling left out? . . . Wait, there's more! What's the most logical use for a plastic 5-gallon bucket around the campsite? . . . Right you are! I found several products to turn 5-gallon buckets into portable camp toilets. One called "Luggable Loo" is a toilet seat and lid that the company says, "effortlessly snaps on and off" any 5-gallon bucket, and allows you to "Stop dreading the call of nature when enjoying your next hunting, fishing or camping trip." Now if you truly do dread "the call of nature", you may have some deeper problems than where to answer it. Anyway, they should probably make one in pink for the ladies and call it Luggable Lucy (this might be just the ticket to get her to use one in the boat.) Just remember, these things won't flush and don't set over a hole in the ground, so you become responsible for disposing of the contents! Please take the high ground here and empty them at the camp's designated dumping station. Don't toss it under the neighbor's camper and try to blame it on their big dog.

On the web, I also discovered a drinking water filtration system, once featured in Popular Mechanics, called the Mission Water Filter System, sold by the Eagle Springs Co. It uses chlorine tablets or household bleach and special filters, housed in . . . you guessed it two plastic 5-gallon buckets!

Now even in the outdoor sporting world, I imagine I've just scratched the surface as to the myriads of uses for the plastic 5 gallon bucket; quite amazing, actually, from something that is usually a by-product itself. Think about it; we buy them full of some product, use the product, and are left with the bucket; which, in some cases, is probably more useful than the product inside. So after you've read this, find your best friend and give them a little extra attention; kiss your wife and scratch the dog too, while you're at it.

I guess I'll stop here to stretch my legs. My chair is broken, so I'm finishing this week's column sitting on a plastic 5-gallon bucket. Now where is that Silent Spin Seat I just bought? ■

Steve is the author of the weekly outdoor column Exploring Kansas Outdoors and can be contacted by email at stevegilliland@idkcom.net.

