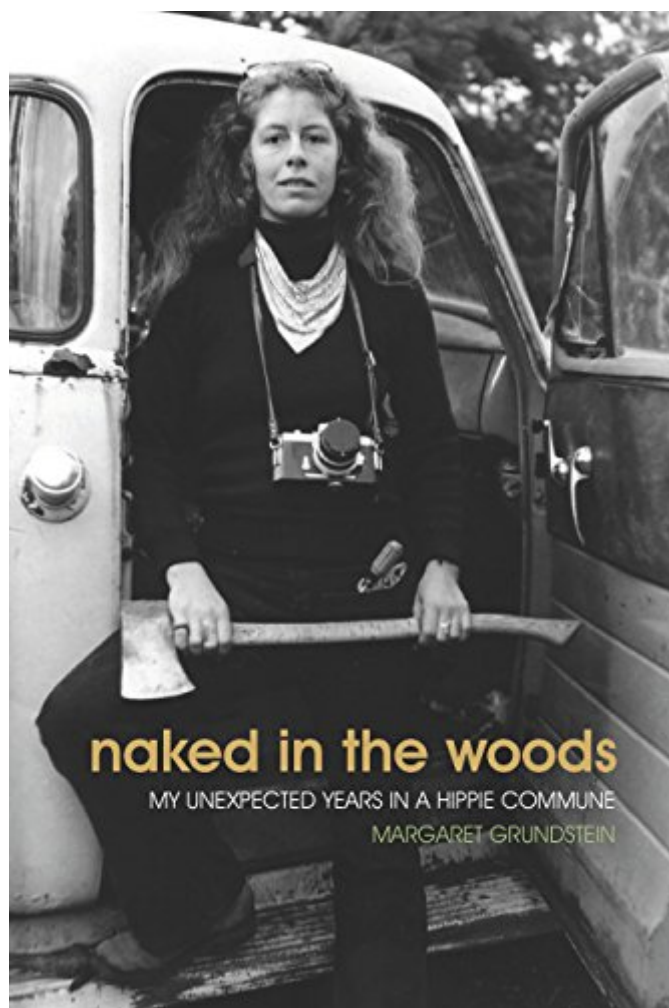


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# Naked In The Woods: My Unexpected Years In A Hippie Commune



## 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 a carefree 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?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When we think of the word "naked" there are so many directions we can be taken into. What I thought was so interesting about Margaret Grunstein's book *NAKED IN THE WOODS* is that it probably includes every use of the word you could imagine---but the most important one is the unveiling and the freeness that comes from understanding yourself and being comfortable in your own skin. The woman who wrote this book has come a long way from the photograph we see on the cover, but her lessons and adventures are all part of the puzzle that make up not just her but people of so many different generations. Margaret has been able to take her experience of living on the land and trying to enjoy a simple way of life and showed that no matter where we are there are issues that have to be dealt with and circumstances that can either shape us or destroy us. She was able to enjoy some peace along the way, but there was a price for a "simpler" life that many of us can easily relate to. She had to understand her own value and worth and realize what was really important. So do we all. Yes *NAKED IN THE WOODS* for its sensational title is really about stripping off all that tries to hold you back or keep you down and realizing that freedom can be yours if you choose to pursue it.

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 going 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.

After having been to two reading events for the book, one at the LA Times Festival of Books and then the sold out one yesterday at Diesel Books in Brentwood I am hooked on this story. I couldn't not share my enthusiasm for *Naked in the Woods*. Grunstein is sharing from a time of US political turmoil when all were trying to change the world, and then chose to change themselves by leaving

Yale graduate school, creating a commune and going off the grid. This is a very personal and compelling well written first book that speaks to today. She is an inspiring and thoughtful author who left me feeling ready to tackle anything. A great read and am eager for her next book!! highly recommend it!

Margaret Grundstein's book is riveting. I picked it up expecting a linear narrative of her time in a commune, but found it to be more of a series of vignettes, due to the fact that it jumps around in time a bit, which I found a touch disconcerting at first (commune members are sometimes portrayed as leaving the commune, then reappear in the next chapter). I happen to be very interested in this time period and in the communal living that was more common then, having had a special interest in the Source Family, and having worked on the documentary about that commune/cult. This is a different story, one of highly educated individuals wanting to create a shared life together, without the spiritual basis common to many other groups of the period. Grundstein's book is sublimely evocative of a time in history that should not be forgotten. She has many insights to share on the times, especially in the area of gender roles. I am in awe of her ability to build her very own cabin in the woods, along with memories that will endure for generations to come, now that they are in print!

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.

For most of us in the post-baby boom generations, the word "hippie" is primarily synonymous with an uninspired Halloween costume choice, following by "something about peace and love ... long hair ... drugs" as faint, reflexive half-thoughts. Margaret Grundstein takes the mythos of drop-out counterculture and gives it a touchingly earnest face, placing it in a historical context that gives it depth, immediacy, and relevance. Looking back at herself, her companions, and their ideals with warmth, tenderness, and vivid amusement, she tells a relatable, entertaining story with characters I loved getting to know. Wisely sidestepping any hint of grandstanding about the glory days, and without ever lecturing about the significance of this movement, Margaret Grundstein gently tethers her own tale to a moment in history well worth pausing to see freshly through her eyes. I'd give this five stars, but I want to save something for her next book, which I'm already looking forward to.

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