

1998 Venture Trip

July 25 – August 16

Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico

Troop 275 – Ames, Iowa

1998 Venture Crew Photo:



Back L to R: 1) Tim Parkin, 2) Russ Parkin, 3) Phil Gillott, 4) Doug Houghton
Front L to R: 5) Tom Meyer, 6) Greg Elliott, 7) Andrea ? (Ranger), 8) Matt Helland, 9) Doug Houghton

1998 Venture Crew T-shirt:

Venture 98

**Philmont Scout Ranch
Cimarron, NM**



**Troop 275
Ames, IA**

**Jul 27-
Aug 8**

1998 Venture Crew Patch:



1998 Map(s):

n/a



1998 Venture Crew Journal

Troop 275 Venture Trip – Crew 727A
 Philmont Scout Ranch
 Cimarron, NM
 July 25 – August 9, 1998

Prepared by Tim Parkin

Preface

This journal reports on the backpacking trip taken by the Venture Crew of Boy Scout Troop 275 (Ames, Iowa). The Philmont Venture Crew consists of experienced boy scouts, all possessing the rank of Life Scout. In addition to the 5 boys there were 3 adult advisors. For most of the boys, this was venture trip number 4, and their third backpacking trip. As in past years, the Venture Crew met 2 times a month



during the winter and spring months to prepare for this trip. It had been decided 2 years ago that this year's trip would be to the Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico. Also, as in past years, preparation included training in equipment use, safety, first aid, cooking, and backcountry ethics. This training was review for the older boys, who already have superb camping skills. Philmont Scout Ranch is located near Cimarron, New Mexico, and is the world's premier Boy Scout facility. Every year it is host to 15,000+ scouts and explorers. A detailed description of the Wilderness area is provided in Appendix 1. Our 16 day trip (including 4 ½ driving days) started on Saturday, July 25,

and ended on Sunday, August 9. We spent 11days hiking a total of approximately 75 miles. Our route took us essentially the length and breadth of the Philmont Ranch. We had a fabulous trip.

This journal was written to not only provide a description of the events, but also give the reader a feel for the experiences we enjoyed. Much of this was written at day's end, so my recollection of the facts may be in error at some points. I apologize for any inaccuracies or omissions. My thanks to my son Russ, and my fellow crew members for providing an enriching and enjoyable experience. I would be proud to trek with any of you, anytime. -*Tim Parkin*

	Miles	Journey	Significant Events
--	-------	---------	--------------------

Day 1 July 25	500	Ames, IA to Ogallala, NE	Traveling in style
Day 2 July 26	500	Ogallala to Great Sand Dunes,CO	Climbing the dunes.
Day 3 July 27	65	Great Sand Dunes to Philmont Scout Ranch, (Cimarron, NM)	Arriving at Philmont, Philmont training by Stephanie,
Day 4 July 28	3	Base Camp to Rayado River Camp	Raining and training.
Day 5 July 29	8	Rayado River to Crater Lake Camp	Spar poling, Matt declared the toughest man in camp, and campfire.
Day 6 July 30	7	Crater Lake to Clarks Fork Camp	Lunch at Shaefers Pass, chuckwagon, branding, and a muddy campsite.
Day 7 July 31	7.5	Clarks Fork to Ute Springs Camp	Trail work, junk food at the trading post, and Squincher.
Day 8 Aug 1	9.5	Ute Springs to Visto Grande Camp	Side trip to Cimarroncito Camp for rock climbing, Showers, Gand views, a wonderful campsite
Day 9 Aug 2	6.5	Visto Grande to Upper Dean Cow	Fishing the Cimarron, a tough hike, wild turkeys and another wonderful campsite
Day 10 Aug 3	7	Upper Dean Cow to Miranda Camp	Challenged by the platform, the web, the wild gerbils, and the wall. A rainy afternoon in Miranda
Day 11 Aug 4	8	Miranda to French Henry and Return	Baldy canceled, gold panning and blacksmithing in French Henry, throwing tomahawks, more rain
Day 12 Aug 5	11	Miranda to Flume Canyon Camp	An uphill morning and a downhill afternoon, missing the trail, the bear accident, fishing the S. Ponil
Day 13 Aug 6	8	Flume Canyon to Indian Writings Camp	Root beer, Hart Peak, camping in the home of the Anasazis, petroglyphs, and meadow crashing
Day 14 Aug 7	4	Indian Writings to Six Mile Gate and Back to Base Camp	T-rex, Base Camp Food, Showers
Day 15 Aug 8	565	Base Camp to Ogallala	Pizza
Day 16 Aug 9	500	Ogallala to Ames	Home!

Saturday, July 25

Quote of the Day "This is the best chicken I've ever eaten." - Greg

Eight of us, packed into a pair of caravans, were headed to Ogallala from Ames. Ogallala was not our ultimate destination, just a stop of convenience. In two days we hoped to be at Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico. We met at Tom's house at 8:00 in the morning, and



with little ceremony we arranged our backpacks and other travel gear in the vans. This other travel gear included, not only the items we would need on route, but also a TV/VCR combination for each vehicle. Tom, Doug II, Greg, and Matt rode in one of the vans leaving Tim, Russ, Phil, and Doug III in the second. After snapping a few group photographs we took to the road.

Soon into our adventure, CB call signs were proposed for each vehicle. Bear Bait 1 (Tom) and Bear Bait 2 (me) would be our handles for the journey. We drove to Lincoln where we stopped for lunch. There was surprisingly little CB discussion concerning the precise fast food restaurant that was to be our host this noon. In past years, hot debate was the norm when approaching lunch time. Today the boys were sedate in the back seats, mesmerized by the flickering blue screens of the televisions. We had a quiet afternoon trip. After a stop at a dairy bar in central Nebraska for ice cream, we were caught in a cloudburst. It rained on and off the rest of the trip, but quit as we reached Meyer's Campground in Ogallala.

Our tents were set up in a grassy area at the western edge of the campground. The boys went off to explore, while Tom and I went into town for provisions. We had brought with us, breakfasts for 2 days but only one dinner. On the shakedown hike two months ago we had decided that barbecue might be an enjoyable break from our first night's canned beef stew tradition. We had decided to defer shopping for this meal until we could confirmed the existence of a grill at our campsite. Needless to say, we did have access to a grill which, in its former life was an automobile wheel. But now with iron rods as legs, and a grate on top it would serve to cook our dinner. At the Safeway, we picked up chicken breast (skinned and boneless), BBQ sauce, chips, and a bag of salad along with a small bag of charcoal briquets.

Back in camp the coals were started and the chicken prepared. We decided to cut the chicken into finger sized pieces to facilitate its grilling. We ate our meal family style. It was the general impression that the chicken was much superior to Dinte Moore. Greg even went so far to declare that, it was the best chicken he had ever had.

The boys played cards for a while then some of them wandered off to the recreation hall, a building near the south end of the campground that housed a boat, an old pool table, and a cable TV. However, a few of us, namely Russ, the younger Doug, and I were in the mood for dessert. So we piled into the van and headed for town. We eventually ended up back at the Safeway where we purchased boxes of Little Debbie's and Hostess Cupcakes. Quantities of these items were purchased, with a vision of a potentially profitable business venture. I do not know how many of his pastries Doug actually sold to the others, but I gave many of mine away.

The advisors advised an early bed time to that we could get an early morning start tomorrow. This action was facilitated by the rain which started as the sun was going down. End of Day 1.

Sunday, July 26

Quote of the Day "This is becoming too familiar." -Tom

Another car day. Woke up to the wet. It rained most of last night. Phil was up early, and so was Russ. Breakfast was muffins and cold cereal; an informal affair, each ate as he arose and made it to the picnic table buffet. Tents were packed up wet and vans were loaded in short order. Reminiscent of last year, we were on the road early, by 6:30 mountain time. We drove to Denver in the rain. Traffic around Denver was intense-bumper-to-bumper and moving fast. We had a brief diversion when we detoured to locate the Denver REI store. It was during this excursion that Tom made an illegal left turn, an act which was vociferously announced over the CB airwaves by Doug. Now that the boys have their drivers licences they can be considered official back seat drivers. We did locate the REI but left without entering, opting not to delay our trip the 1 ½ hours until opening time. After only a brief discussion we decided on a Mexican lunch; however, we were unable to locate a Taco Bell or John so



we lunched at Subway.



Aside: It was difficult to judge the temperament of the group. So far, activities have been subdued and attitudes somber. Perhaps it was a result of the rain, but perhaps not. While we were pulling into Pueblo for lunch, Phil indicated that as an alternative to continuing our trip we should apply the balance of our funds to the rental of a couple of

rooms in a Holiday Inn, a sentiment that was not met with disapproval by the other boys in my van.

Pushing deeper into Colorado we took state road 160 west from Walsenburg. The Eastern Colorado countryside, which had been here-to-fore open range, was becoming pre-mountainous. We stopped at Fort Garland for gas where the lines for the rest room were longer than the lines at the pumps. About 160 miles from the interstate 25 turnoff we arrive at the Great Sand Dunes National Monument Country Store, Gift Shop, Café, and Campground. The establishment is not part of the National Park Service per se, but it is located just outside the entrance to the Great Sand Dunes National Monument.

We were assigned group site #3 which was up the slope from the Store, the RV parking, and the Lodge. The erosion rutted, rock strewn road up to the site was very similar to the last leg of our last year's trip into Dickinson Creek Campground, only shorter. We set up our tents among the stunted and twisted pinyon (or perhaps bristle cone) pines and piled back into the vans for an excursion to the sand dunes. To reach the dunes from the parking area we had to cross a wide, shallow, cold, creek. Some took the creek barefoot, while others remained in their shoes. We then set off across the sand, headed for the highest dune in the landscape. The sand was firm underfoot, being compacted by the winds, but there was loose stuff being carried by a stiff southeastern wind at such a velocity that it stung as it slammed against the bare skin. Russ and I were left behind as the rest of the crew made it to the top. Tom's plan of doing some hiking and of spending the night at >8000 ft. in order to get a head start on altitude acclimation was a good one.

We returned to camp about 5:00. Some went off to shower, while dinner was started. After our spaghetti dinner, the big poker game, a carry over from last night, was resumed. Russ was ahead for the night. In sitting at the picnic table catching up on the days events, Matt was overheard saying, " I think I tore my sack." This quote was discussed in regard to future Lion's club presentation, and it was speculated that if this quote were repeated at the presentation, Matt would surely not receive a pen. I wasn't too sure what this quote was referring to, but I assumed it had a grocery store connotation, as 4 of the 5 boys in the crew are employed by either Hye Vee or Fareway.



Despite this brief boisterous outbreak, the mood of the boys remained calm. The sun has just set, and we have just turned in for the night. As we settle in, the rain begins to drum the tent and Tom remarks, "This is becoming too familiar". End of Day 2

Monday, July 27

Quote of the Day "Well that was certainly the most recent meal I've eaten." -Russ

We woke to watch the sun wash over the Great Sand Dunes. The tan colored dunes set against the purple Sangre de Cristo mountains looked out of place, like they were dropped there. We packed up

quickly and were soon headed south. The first statement I heard after loading into the vans was, "Turn the TV on." The TV in Bear Bait 2 (the call sign for my vehicle) stayed off until we turned east on highway 160 - at least 15 minutes. The last leg of our journey took us back through Fort Garland, the armpit of the Sangre de Cristos. As soon as we reached Interstate 25 a heavy Colorado rain hit and plagued us right to the New Mexico Border. We arrived in the town of Cimarron at about 10:00 in the morning, and after topping off the vans we still had time to spare so we stopped at the St. James Hotel (est. 1872). The interior was authentic (reproduction?) late 19th century decor down to the furnishings, stuffed animals and animal parts mounted on the walls, and a painted tin ceiling riddled with bullet holes in what used to be the gambling hall. We spent a few moments looking around then packed back into the vans for the last 5 miles of the trip.

We arrived at Philmont Camp headquarters in a fine rain. Greg, as our Crew Leader, and Tom, as Commander and Chief, went to initiate the check-in process. Twenty minutes later we were still standing in the gravel parking lot when Greg reappeared with a ream of forms, regulations, and instructions which were delivered to him in rapid fire fashion. While we were waiting for our ranger to meet us, Greg regurgitated as much of the information as he could recall concerning our future activities.

Although the boys were not overly exuberant at any time previously during our trip, a wave of sedation washed over them when our ranger arrived. Stephanie Goforth (sp?) is one of several female rangers leading crews. She is 5'3 ½", and hails from Oklahoma. She has been a ranger for 2 years and completed a trek in 1993. She was to be our companion for the next two days, training us in all manner of backcountry protocol. The boys maintained their somber demeanor during the introductions and throughout much of the rest of the day, although glimpses of their normally jovial personalities and offbeat humor were occasionally observed.

The first order of business was to retrieve our packs and other gear from the vans and establish



temporary residency in tent city. We were assigned 5 canvas tents, each erected over a wooden pallet and containing two "beds". After we settled in, Stephanie started our training by informing us about pending events and of their attendant procedures. Primary among Philmont policies, was the institution of behavior to prevent hypothermia and dehydration. We were required accessories to have in our possession at all

times, while in base camp, rain gear and a water bottle. Again, in our training, Tom had prepared us for this requirement. Stephanie left us for a while to our own devices in the short time before dinner. We hooked up with her again outside of the dining hall, where all the rangers, each in their green shirts (referred to as pickles) were gathered around the large bell in the center of the courtyard outside. After a brief session of chanting, shouting, and trust falling, the Rangers received assignments for their crews' places in the dining hall line. The sloppy joe mystery meat that comprised lunch was decidedly unremarkable as noted by Russ, who, when leaving the dining hall was overheard to say, "Well, that was certainly the most recent meal I've eaten."

Much of the early afternoon was spent preparing for our upcoming trek. The first order of business was to go over some first aid basics. Stephanie led the discussion by presenting us with several hypothetical situations in which Camper Timmy would be injured or require some sort of medical assistance. It was during this training that the true nature of the group began to emerge. In one scenario Camper Timmy had been bitten by a wild animal and when queried on what should be done, someone in the group, Doug (y) I think, immediately replied, "Find the animal and kill it." Agreement with this proposed course of action was voiced by several of the crew, but was viewed with alarm by our ranger who advised us that Philmont policy prohibited killing or other molestations of the wildlife. As the training continued, Stephanie's consternation was not diminished. In another hypothetical, Camper Timmy had been running and managed to lodge a tent stake in his eye. In such situations, removal of the stake is not recommended, as leakage of the vitreous humor from the eyeball or possible removal of the eyeball from the socket might result. Rather, the recommended first aid is immobilization of the object so that further damage is avoided, and since the eyes move in synchrony it is also recommended that the other



eye be covered as well. However, when asked what should be done with the other eye, Matt replied, "Put a tent stake in it, too". We were all pretty sure he was kidding, but Stephanie looked perplexed.

As noted earlier, these outbursts of outrageousness, characteristic of our crew, were infrequent. During the remainder of our administrative duties that afternoon (health check and

equipment checkout) everyone was subdued. The crew's dispassionate behavior did not go unnoticed by our ranger who, more than once, tried to enliven the group by asking in enthusiastic tones, "Aren't you guys excited?" Grunts of assent were the typical responses to these queries.

Activities did liven up in the later part of the afternoon during a hacky sack game. At one point the fact that a cactus leaf served up in place of the hacky sack (by Greg, I think) stuck to someone's foot was received with much animation. Also, several grudge matches developed; notably those of Greg vs. Doug (y) and Phil vs. Matt. Russ, Tom and I played with relative impunity. The game ended with a loud expression of approval when Tom scored a hacky welt on Matt.

At 4:45 Greg attended the crew leaders meeting while Tom, Doug (e) and I went to the advisors meeting. We later learned from Greg, that in his meeting the importance of the role of crew leader was reinforced. He was informed that he was responsible for the smooth operation of the crew. Given Greg's nature, we had every confidence that he would take this responsibility seriously. In our meeting, among other things we were advised to watch for the perils of Day 3. Data from past years indicated that the incidences of sprains and dehydration peak three days out. We also learned that bear activity was very high due to last year's bumper crop of cubs, and this

years drought which was limiting food supplies. Clean camping procedures were reiterated.

We adjourned in time to meet Stephanie and the crew outside the mess hall. As with the noon meal we were gathered in the courtyard with 10 to 12 other crews (all trail bound the next day) waiting for our rangers to obtain our line assignments. We lined up much the same as with lunch, although our ranger was somewhat annoyed with us as we were slow in joining her in line. As with lunch (and every meal) at the door to the mess hall we paused, removed our hats and said the Philmont grace,

For food, for raiment

For life, for opportunity

For friendship and fellowship

We thank Thee, O Lord,

-Amen

We were pretty rough the first couple of times, but eventually most of us got most of it right.

After dinner there was a little more free time to pick up last minute items (i.e. postcards, socks, water bottles) at the trading post, play cards or kick the hacky sack. At 8:30 we met with all the other crews at the welcome center. Here we had a brief conclave. One activity was for each crew to come up with an impromptu cheer which would be uttered when the crew was called on. Our boys came up with "HERE!", which when yelled in response to our crew's expedition number being called, received a rather disgusted stare by the ranger conducting the activity. We all thought it was funny. All were then marched off to the campfire where we were treated to a brief passion play on the history of Philmont. The boys, when later polled, did not particularly enjoy the campfire. "Thee guns were cool, but it was mostly a waste of time.", commented Greg. However, I rather enjoyed the skit which briefly portrayed the sequential roles of the Native Americans, the Spanish, the Trappers, Miners, Loggers, Settlers and Gunfighters in the development of this part of country. The skit ended with a description of how Wade Phillips, founder of Phillips Petroleum, donated the land to the Boy Scouts of America. Actually, the end of the program was the best part and not necessarily because it was the end. After singing the Philmont

Hymn we were enjoined to take a few moments of silence to enjoy the mostly cloudless night sky and reflect upon our upcoming trek.

After the campfire, bed was early for half of us. Phil, Doug (y), Greg, and Matt remained at the welcome center playing poker (despite the pronouncement by our ranger that gambling was not to be tolerated). Attempting an early repose was somewhat futile in a camp full of excited boy scouts and scouters. Eventually it did quiet down and despite the occasional clear & copious interruption, everyone rested comfortably. End of Day 3

Tuesday, July 28.

Quote of the Day "When you bet high it makes you feel tingly -Doug (y)

It was an early morning for most of us. The crew next door was up and loud by 5:20. Our trail bus departure was 1:00 pm, but we did want to make the 6:30 breakfast. Those of us who did oust early (Doug (e), Tom, Greg and me) were greeted by a beautiful pink sun rise. It took a couple of tries at getting the rest of the crew out and about, but we all made breakfast. The next 1 ½ hours were spent in Philmont tradition of hurry up and wait. This time for group photos. Like yesterday, a subdued demeanor clouded the boys, prompting our ranger to encourage them to "WAKE UP". Two fine photos were eventually snapped, with the base camp tents and the surrounding Philmont scenery in the background.



Stephanie led us in a shakedown where the entire contents of our packs were emptied, checked, sorted, accepted or rejected, and then re-packed. This was not a new exercise. This was a common routine Tom had adopted for all of the Venture outings, and to our credit there was darn little extraneous stuff to be left behind. The crew gear - stoves, fuel, tents, rainfly, and food was distributed and packed up. When everyone was set, we stored all extraneous gear in the cars, and then carried our packs to the welcome center where they were stacked in a line against one of the roof support posts.

The crew spent some of the next 2 hours taking care of last minute details such as visits to the post office and procurement of fishing licences, but most of the time was spent playing cards. Poker looked to be the leisure activity of choice on this trip. Apparently, in Ogalalla, each boy contributed \$5.00 to the kitty and a running game ensued. Money, chips or tokens were not used: all betting was conducted

verbally and scoring was done on paper. It was during one of these poker sessions that Doug (y) uttered, "When you bet high it makes you feel tingly." Card playing was interrupted briefly for another unremarkable lunch in the dining hall, then back to the picnic table at the welcome center for more poker. It was the general consensus that a 9:00 am departure time would have been more agreeable as Tom remarked, "If we're going to sit around, I'd rather do it in the backcountry." In response to this comment, Greg remarked that this must be the front-country.

The yellow school bus did finally arrive and we loaded our packs into the back, and along with another crew sharing the ride, piled aboard. The trip to the trail head was punctuated with commentary from the two rangers accompanying us. We were provided trivia snippets about local landmarks and points of interest. At one point we were regaled with a story about the smart but slow mini-bears of the front-country and the dumb but fast mini-bears of the backcountry. The concern stemmed around the



potential impact of the intermingling of these sub-species. We were encouraged to stomp our feet on the bus floor when crossing cattle guards in order to dislodge any unwanted hitch hikers. We were mildly amused.

What we did not find one bit amusing was the ominous sky to our west. All morning, while we were hanging around base camp, we were watching the sky to the south become darker and darker. Now, our destination, Rayado Camp to the

west of us was directly under the weather. Sure as thunder, as soon as we unloaded our packs from the bus it started to rain. Pack covers and rain gear were donned, but before setting out Stephanie wanted us to play a game. Everyone formed a circle and started drinking from their water bottles. Each person had to continue to drink until the person to their left quit drinking. This was done in an attempt to keep us hydrated, although my water intake count for the day was upwards of 6 liters so I found this exercise decidedly uncomfortable.

This afternoon's hike was painfully long. It was only about 2 miles from the trail head to Rayado River Camp, but at every trail branch we stopped to consult map and compass. We were attending to the protocols proscribed in base camp; "Don't trust the signs" and "Orient at every trail junction". In addition, decisions on which direction to follow were not made by the hike leader, they had to be consensus decisions of the group. This necessitated somewhat prolonged discussions and the occasional

debate throughout the afternoon. During the hike we were also obtaining instruction from our ranger on matters such as stream crossing and trail cutting.

When we finally reached Rayado Camp it was still raining, but the rain stopped as soon as we selected a camp site. At each Camp in Philmont there are many potential sites, each identified by a fire ring and a sump pipe sticking out of the ground. The site we chose was passable. It was near a bear rope, and there were level locations for tents and the dining fly. It was set amid tall ponderosa pines and there were several large chunks of granite that served well as seats. Despite the rain, the bare areas were not muddy. We took notice of this phenomenon on last year's venture trip, that the pine litter and associated surface soil does not wet up from the rain, rather the water seems to run off. Whatever the reason, this phenomenon made camping more tolerable in wet conditions.

The next hour or so was spent setting up camp. Normally, it would not take so long, and in the days that followed we were much quicker about it. But we were receiving training from our ranger on the Philmont way of setting up the rain fly, bear bag hanging, cooking, cleaning, scraping, sumping and peeing. Yes, even urination required instruction. The do's and don'ts of relieving ones' bladder are as follows: 1) Don't urinated in the outhouse. Animals are attracted to salt, and will chew the wood where splatters occur. 2) Don't urinate within 200 feet of open water, 3) don't go within 200 feet of the trail, 4) don't go on trees (for reasons described under #2), 5) Do go on a rock. I think the thought here is that going on a rock rather than the bare dirt will prevent erosion. Stephanie emphasized this last point to us by stating, "If I can go on a rock, you can go on a rock." , and finally 6) Go a lot and often. This was the Clear and Copious rule. Many of the same rules applied for bowel movements - although these were encouraged to be taken in the latrine, but if an out-woods experience were necessary it was suggested that a shallow hole be dug, that no toilet paper should be used (Woolly mullin is a good substitute), and



that after one is finished, take a stick and stir it around to make a "poop soup" in order to facilitate the rapid decomposition my soil microorganisms.

At this juncture let me make two points of clarification. First, the tone of the preceding recount on our training may appear critical, but let me assure the reader that I fully support these efforts. Perhaps the inclement weather induced some exasperation, and the fact that we had been well instructed by Tom these past several years, so that much of this training was review, contributed to some impatience. I

wholeheartedly support the effort, and the quality and condition of the back country at Philmont reflects the training efforts. Even in

camp sites there is little trash or debris to be seen. Second, the reader may think me crude for the preceding emphasis on bodily function; however, on the trail this emphasis seems to be a natural regression. For whatever reason, priorities shift such that the activities of food intake and waste expulsion become topics of primary importance and interest.

After the dining fly was strung, tents were set, and smellables were hung in our three burlap bear bags from the middle of the bear cable that was strung 20 feet off the ground between two trees, we had some free time. Tom, Doug (e) and I strung our poles and headed down to the Rayado river for a little fishing. The rest of the crew engaged Stephanie in their poker game, although, I think play was for candy - not for money. The advisors did no good at fishing. Due to the rain, the Rayado was running high and muddy. We soon returned and spent some time relaxing around camp.

Stephanie and Phil cooked dinner - a one pot concoction with noodles and chicken flecks. Cleanup of the dinner dishes was demonstrated by Stephanie and involved removing all the food particles from the pans. This was preferably done by eating, but any leftovers were filtered through our sieve (a frisbee with holes drilled in it) set over the sump pipe. The frisbee leavings were scraped into a plastic bag (affectionately known as the 'yum yum bag'), and as a final step the sump screen was cleaned of any small particles. This last step involved rhythmically thumping the sump screen with our rubber spatula while chanting "sump lump, sump lump." This procedure causes the food particles on the sump screen to dance around until they eventually coalesce into a lump which can be removed to the yum yum bag.

After dinner clean up we had some quiet time and a formal period called Thorns and Roses, in which all could reflect upon the days events. We went around in a circle and identified each of our thorns and roses. The weather dominated as a thorn, while being out on the trail again was a popular rose. Buds were also identified, and dry weather hoped for. We turned in early. End of Day 4

Wednesday, July 29

Quote of the Day "I tore my sack." –Matt

We awoke to a clear sky. This was not really a surprise since, after returning from one of his nocturnal mini-treks, Tom announced that the night sky was abound with stars. Greg was up early, seconded by Phil. Breakfast was oatmeal, flavored with Rayado River silt. Power bars, beef jerky, and hot chocolate (or coffee) rounded out the meal. After breaking camp we packed up, and after only a slight delay in trying to decide what to do with the excess water, we set off. We were on the trail by 7:30 and with Matt as lead scout, and by 10:30 we had covered nearly ½ of the day's 7 mile hike and gained nearly 1400 feet of elevation. Not a trivial feat given the fact that this was our first full day on the trail. The



crew did an outstanding job orienteering our course. Several trail-side consultations were necessary, but no wrong turns were logged. Overall it was a very pleasurable hike over a semi-solid trail and in the warm sun. We stopped at a spring for water, and soon after stopped for an early lunch at Bear Caves Camp which was only an hour out from Crater Lake, our day's destination. At the shady, pine needle covered site, we enjoyed peanut butter and jelly (in individual squeeze packets) on crackers. After lunch we received instruction on trash disposal. All the staffed camps would accept our refuse, but it had to be compact. In addition, the use of duct tape to aid in containing the trash was frowned upon. So we had a brief round of trash compacting calisthenics then shouldered our packs and continued the last 'ranger mile' of our day's trip.



The last stretch of trail brought us uphill into Crater Lake Camp. Since this was a staffed camp, the first order of business was to check in at the staff cabin. As with most activities at Philmont, there was a generally accepted protocol to be followed when approaching a staff cabin. Behavioral 'fopas' include going up onto the porch without an invitation or setting up the pack line against a fence or building. Greg and Stephanie approached the cabin and secured an invitation for the rest of the crew to join them on the shady stone porch. Here we met Bob Bullwhip Bush, the 'Boss' of the Continental Tie and Lumber Co who harangued us about who was in charge and how things worked at his camp. While calling us 'rail greasers' and 'whistle

some things' he then treated us to donuts and invited us back for the campfire and 'union meeting' to be held that evening. As Bullwhip was finishing up with us another crew came up. While we waited for Bullwhip to finish with this new crew so he could direct us to our campsite a crew of female campers arrived and persuaded Bob to give a log rolling demonstration. Bob stripped off his shirt, waded out into the small murky pond, just down from the cabin's front porch, and proceeded to harangue the newly arrived crew with the same spiel he had given us, all while trying to sit astride a large floating log. During this performance we were sitting among the granite in the shade, observing. However, it was not a silent observation; comments like, "Say no to crack" from Matt drew condemning expressions of "Sssssh" and "Be Nice" from our ranger.

Bob did finally manage to get himself upright on the log for a few brief seconds, an act which terminated his log rolling session for the afternoon. He walked us back down the trail to a grassy area with a few tall pines. Camp setup occurred much more smoothly than in previous days. Greg directed erection of the dining fly and hanging of the bear bags. Soon our three tents were pitched (Stephanie pitched her own) and we were preparing to hike over to the spar poles.



Spar pole climbing was one of the organized activities at the Crater Lake Camp. A spar pole is a pine log, 30-40 feet long, with the bark and limbs removed, set upright in the ground. Spar pole climbing is done by strapping a steel spike on each foot and a harness around the hips. A belt goes around the pole and serves to keep the climber from falling backward. The procedure demonstrated to us by the instructor is to plant the spikes into the pole, lock the knees, then pull on the belt, while at the same time slipping the belt up the pole. Technique is very important in this activity as our instructor indicated, "You don't want to get your feet too far apart or they will slip

off the pole, and you'll get wood in Captain Knockwurst." All of us tried the activity, but some had an easier time than others. Doug (*e*) had a particularly rough climb, but he persevered and eventually got to lay his lips on Kerri, the anthropomorphized carabineer at the top of the pole that held the belaying rope.

Dinner time was fast approaching as we concluded our spar poling. While the meal preparation was started the boys and Stephanie played cards and ate candy. Dinner was quickly eaten and as we were finishing up, Stephanie brought out a pound cake and a can of cherries that she had been carrying in her pack. It, too, was quickly devoured. We had an early Thorns and Roses and presented Stephanie with one of our venture shirts. Tom, Doug (*e*), and I made our way up to the staff cabin for the advisers coffee. The rest of the crew was to report to the cabin in ½ hour for the Continental Tie &



Lumber Co. union meeting (the campfire).



When the boys arrived, they waited at the fence while Russ brought up the crew trash to deliver to a staffer. This was a tense moment. Stephanie had warned us that the trash had to be extremely compact to be acceptable, and Bullwhip Bob had promised humiliation for the crew who brought him loosely compacted trash or trash held together by duct tape. We, in fact, did use small pieces of tape to hold down the lid on one box of trash. The other refuse, however, we had packed into a tight, plastic wrapped ball. To this Russ had attached a small rock with a strip of plastic, the idea here was to

illustrate that our trash sphere was so dense that its gravitational field could hold a small stone in orbit. The staffers were so impressed they took our waste, and did not notice the duct tape.

As soon as all the crews had arrived, the union meeting was started. The crews were told to put forward their toughest man to enter in the Toughest Man in Camp contest. We promptly drafted Matt and forced him through the split rail fence into the grassy arena with the contestants of 6 other crews. The battle was not a physical one per se. Rather, it was a contest to describe how tough one was. The first contestant described an incident where he cut his finger doing chin ups. The second, gave an exaggerated tale of how he cut his legs and broke both ankles playing flashlight tag. The third story related a difficult birth followed by a sickly childhood, while contestant number 4 told of falling off of the toilet seat when she was a child, and cutting her lip. Then came Matt. Matt's story was so succinct yet so powerful it is recounted here.

"Once I was climbing a tree and I grabbed a power line and the electricity blew me out of the tree. I landed on the ground and there was a stump and I TORE MY SACK!"

The camp erupted with laughter. The contest winner was decided by applause. Of course every crew cheered their own contestant, but the field was eventually narrowed down to Matt and Cheryl, the girl who cut her lip on the toilet seat. The decision between these two finalists was decided by rock-paper-scissors. Matt won the first round, but Cheryl soon tied it up. In the final round Matt took it all with 'scissors cuts paper'. He was loudly proclaimed the Toughest Man in Camp. Our pride in Matt's accomplishment was displayed by loud cheers and hoots and chants of 'Raymond, Raymond', but Matt's enthusiasm was quickly quenched when he discovered that first prize was the honor of carrying water to the site of the evening's campfire. Expressions of our amusement at Matt's story and his fate continued as we all trooped off to the campfire.



The campfire site was set on a shelf at the edge of the mountain. The staff crew giving the program had as their backdrop Shaefers Peak and the Tooth of Time Ridge across the valley. It was near dark and a roaring fire was going, despite the backcountry fire ban. We were seated on rough cut logs. The staff was equipped with guitars, a harmonica, a flute, a banjo, an accordion, and a washtub base. The program started off with a couple of lively bluegrass and country numbers. Then we were treated to a parody of the History of Philmont skit presented at the opening campfire two nights earlier. During this account, Wade Phillips was portrayed as a bloodthirsty killer who had acquired Philmont to use as a hunting preserve, and who shot anything that moved. Favorites also included *the Spanish Song*, whose only lyric was "I am Spanish, I come from Spain" and the ancient Chinese song, *Tu Ning*. We were highly entertained. The program ended with John Prine's, *Mulenburg County* followed by a hard rock version of the Philmont Hymn. We stumbled back to camp and turned in for the night; a most enjoyable day. End of Day 5.

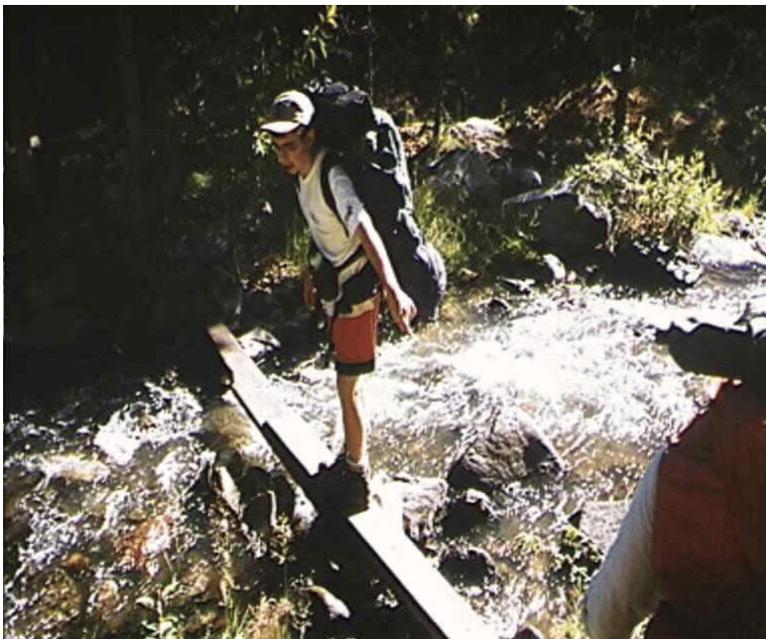
Thursday, July 30.

Quote of the Day: "It takes 18 stakes to put up a Philmont tent right.", Doug (y)

The morning started 5:00 when we all turned out to watch the sunrise. We hiked up to the site of last night's campfire and sat in silence watching the bright orb inch its way over the horizon. We were somewhat disappointed with the quality of the sunrise; it was pretty but not especially spectacular. The sunrise view from this particular spot had been touted by the staff as fantastic. Perhaps it was just a case of the reality not measuring up to our expectations. Nevertheless, it was a fine way to start the morning. After our breakfast of dry nugget cereal, dried pineapple and cliff bars, Stephanie gathered us to bid us farewell. She gave out backcountry pledge cards to each of us, told us how much fun we were, and encouraged us to continue to work together and to enjoy our trek.



We were on the trail and losing elevation by 8:00. The mountainside was on our left had side and to our right a spectacularly sheer cliff dropped to the valley below. Further down the trail, Russ led us across a small log bridge at the bottom of the valley then up a short distance to where the trail intersected a dirt road. While we were deciphering the map our sister crew passed us. The next 45 minutes or so were spent on easy uphill into Miners camp. Here we filled our water bottles and, in a discussion with one of the rangers, learned that good fishing awaited us ½ an hour away where our trail crossed Urraca Creek.



A series of downhill switch backs brought us to Urraca Creek. Here we took a 30+ minute breather. Tom and I strung up our

fly rods, tied on elk hair caddis flies, and made our way to the stream bank. As our fishing time this trip had been thus far limited to the brief time we spent on the muddy Rayado, we were both anxious to get to it. The Urraca was a clear water, swift running creek that was not more than 6 feet across. The creek's small size and the tight brush on each side prohibited conventional fly casting. The style we adopted was to stalk up to likely pools and dangle the fly at the end of 4' of line into the current. Nearly every 'cast' we tried in this way

produced a strike. We both landed several cutthroat trout in 4 to 8 inch range.

Soon we were on our way again. The trail from Urraca Creek to Shaefer's Pass was constant switchback uphill. But the trail was good (respectable switchbacks, and not too muddy or rocky) and the views were gorgeous. Part way up the trail we stopped and looked back across the valley to where we had camped the night before. Approaching Shaefer's Pass, we strode by our sister crew (we had passed them at Miners Camp), and a few hundred yards down the trail we broke into a large meadow. There was a large rock near the trail that called out to us "Lunch break."

I'm not saying that the rock actually spoke, but it seemed the natural place to take our lunch. It was our third day on the trail now, and we were genuinely appreciating articles, objects, and conditions that might normally go unnoticed; things like the way your shoulders feel when your pack weight is lifted, or the way your feet feel when you get a chance to sit down, or the faint pine scent in the wind. Perhaps this effect is related to the fact that backpacking is not simply mindless trudging across the countryside. In only a short time the backpacker realizes that he/she has to be concerned with and plan where each foot step is going to go. Perhaps this constant attention accentuates a condition of enhanced self awareness. At any rate, lunch was delightful. It was observed, that "Not many things were better than sitting on a flat rock in the sun, at altitude, squeezing cheese on your beef stick.



We enjoyed some pleasant moments sunning ourselves after lunch, but the sound of distant thunder motivated us to pack up and get going again. We passed our sister crew who were enjoying their lunch in the meadow (they had passed us during our lunch) and continued up and over the pass. Off in the distance we could just make out a shadowy image of Mt. Baldy, 2 ridges away, and our destination 4 days hence. Our descent north from the pass appeared steeper than our ascent on the south side. We pulled off the trail several times to allow upcoming crews to pass us.

We arrived in Clarks Fork Camp about 2:00 and obtained our obligatory audience with Rich, the staff Wrangler who assigned us to site #1 which was about a trek and a half away from the showers, staff cabin, and

program areas. We hustled to get camp set up so we could make the showers by the 3:00 deadline. The water wasn't actually turned off at 3:00, just the use of soap was prohibited after 3:00 due to the potential bear attracting smell. We just made it and at 2:55 Tom, Doug (*e*) and I had hit the showers. We were quick about it, but by the time we had finished the boys had decided not to use the showers (youth and adults used the facilities separately) but rather had opted for sponge baths in the long metal sink attached to the outside of the shower building.

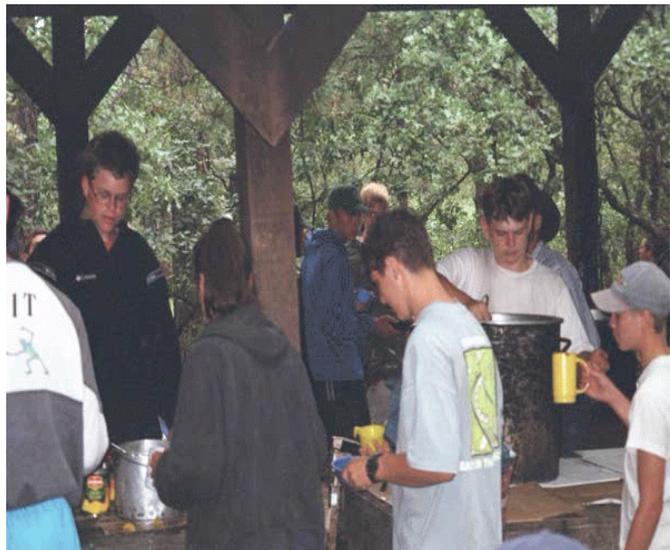
Clarks Fork Camp has a western theme, so activities, in addition to riding, include roping and branding. These later two activities did not include animals, but were restricted to inanimate objects. No one was



particularly interested in roping, but we did want to participate in the branding program. Russ, in particular wanted to follow in the footsteps of Ryan Jeffries, who, as told by Tom, years past had branded a Pemmican Bar. To our disappointment, the wrangler in charge did not want his brands defiled by the stuff in Pemmican Bars so Russ ended up branding his knife sheath. He also put the Philmont brands on my boots; one with the 'Bar P Crazy S' used on the cattle, and the other with the 'Slash Crazy S' horse brand. Matt was not interested in branding anything; he was just hanging

around waiting for his kitchen duties to begin. Both Matt and Russ were on cooking detail and since a chuckwagon dinner was being provided at the staff camp, they had to help out with meal preparation and serving.

Leaving them, I trekked back to the camp site, and trek it was. Of the camp sites we had stayed at so far, this one was by far the worst. In addition to being so far (and uphill) from the staff camp and program areas (half-an-estimated mile), the site itself is a miserable excuse for a campsite. The entire area is the side slope of a hill, and contains few adequate places to pitch a tent. In addition to the lack of level sleeping accommodations, the rills of soil erosion that cut through the site are a source of concern especially if we get a late night thunderstorm. Finally, the ground cover is minimal with regard to either grass or pine needles. It is mostly mud. We did finally get the tents located. Tom, Doug (*e*) and I pitched ours on a semi-level area between 2 erosion gullies. Russ, Greg and Phil put their Eureka



Timberline up the hill and over, nearly out of the bounds of our campsite. Matt and Doug established their "Philmont special", a two person blue pup tent obtained from base camp, on a sloped area near the bottom of our site. This was the third time Matt and Doug had occasion to set up their tent, and their first time without the benefit of Stephanie's advice. It was during this activity that Doug (y) expressed his observation of the number of tent stakes required to properly erect a Philmont tent..

4The beef stew served at the chuck wagon was delightful stuff, with shreds of beef and chunks of potato swimming in a dark brown gravy. Canned peaches were served on the side (or for those with only one bowl, on top). After dinner Tom and Doug (e) opted to hang around the staff camp and wait for the advisors coffee rather than make the hike back to our camp site. Doug (y), Russ, Matt and I choose to return to camp. Greg and Phil had to remain behind and help with clean up.

I am sitting in camp now catching up on the journal. Matt and Doug (y) have just returned from the outhouse which is located across the meadow from us, and Doug remarks, "...can't sh*t and breath at the same time in that place". Matt begins discussing his bowel functions and Russ is dancing across the meadow - not because he has to go - he is actually returning from the outhouse, but he is hopping and zigging because we were told not to make a path in the meadow. The boys are now designing video games with a toilet themes (Sh*tty Games and Crappy Games for the Crapper have been proposed titles). I won't reproduce the conversation here, but great joculariry is experienced in discussing the shooting of flying feces with video laser beams. Phil and Greg have arrived - back from clean up duty at the chuck wagon - and the computer game development discussion continues.

After an hour of relaxation we hang the bear bag (the bear cable site is also a muddy mess) and trudge back down the muddy trail to the evening campfire. The campfire program is not especially entertaining and much too long, but the evening sky is impressive. A redish orange sunset in one sky, and dramatic steel blue cloud formations in another sky. After campfire we hiked back up to camp in the dark, revisited the bear bats to insert some forgotten smellables, and turned in for the night. All are anxious to get to bed. End of Day 6.

Friday, July 31

Quote of the Day "Squincer? I wonder what that tastes like?" -Phil

Phil was up early again today. The others boys, especially Matt and Doug (y) were difficult to roust. The routine of taking down camp was well established. Breakfast (cold cereal and power bars) was caught on the fly, and tents were struck and stowed without much discussion. We were on the trail by 7:50. The plan for the day was to get to Ute Springs camp early, quickly set up camp, collect our next 4 days of food, put in 3 hours of trail conservation work, then hike the 2 miles over to Cito camp and do the rock climbing program; an ambitious agenda to be sure.

The hike out of Clarks Fork was pleasant. We had a bit more uphill but since we were on the north side of Clarks Fork Camp we had gained most of the altitude we would obtain today. Soon we reached the Cimarroncito Reservoir (a 5 acre pond) at the base of Cathedral Rock. The lake was a muddy puddle, but one or two rises broke the murky surface and suggested fish activity. Although we had been on the trail less than an hour we took a 20 minute break. Tom went searching for a cave and an eagle's nest in the crags of Cathedral Rock; both were here on his last trip, but couldn't be found today. Fishing produced

only one strike. The rest of the crew enjoyed the sun and the scenery while sitting on the concrete spillway. We were soon on the trail again. The sun was out and bright, and we traveled at a strong pace set by Doug (y), taking only a few short breaks.



We made Ute Springs Camp by 10:30, and considered campsite #5, a very spacious level site with lots of ponderosa pines and a thick pine needle carpet. However, due to the fact that the bear cable could not be located and that we were on the southern edge of the camp we opted to scout the other sites. Tom, Phil and Greg walked up the trail to inspect campsite #3 which was further north, and that much closer to the commissary where we would be getting our provisions later in the day. Our scouts soon returned with a report of an adequate campsite about 5 minutes away so we shouldered our packs and headed up the trail. Campsite #3 was not as spacious as #5 but it was a level 3 tent + dining fly size. The

only potential problem with the site was the open air latrine which was up the trail about 50 yards, and sitting in full view of the campsite next door.



After hanging our smellables, we hiked up to Ute commissary with 4 empty packs. We obtained our provisions, dropped off our garbage, and settled



in a grove of stunted pine trees outside of the commissary for an early lunch. Some of the crew visited the trading post but the delivery truck had not yet arrived, and the inventory was meager. After lunch we quickly hoofed it back to camp to hang our newly acquired food and then set out to find the conservation site. The signs posted at the commissary indicated that conservation work started at 1:00 on a new trail that was to connect Ute Springs with Cimarroncito Camp.

We arrived at the conservation site right at 1:00 and found our trail conservation supervisor-to-be sitting in a wheel barrel awaiting the arrival of whatever work crew happened along. A female crew arrived soon after and dominated the attentions of our approximately 18 year old conservation leader. We eventually were put to work doing finish work on a trail that had earlier been roughed into the side of the mountain. This work required that we shape the mountain on the uphill side of the trail at a 60° angle and modify the slope of the trail itself so that it has a 2% slant to the downhill side. Smoothing the trail and removing the false tread (the loose dirt that tended to accumulate on the downhill side of the trail) were other aspects of the finish work. The boys swung tools and shoveled dirt like they were born for physical labor. After about 2 hours of steady work we had 'finished' the 40' section of trail assigned to us. This effort plus the ½ hour conservation lecture we received prior to starting and the travel time



to and from the site accounted for our 3 hr requirement. So Greg obtained the appropriate authorizations on our trek sheet and we headed back to camp by way of the commissary/trading post.

We spent the better part of an hour sitting in the shade outside of the trading post eating chips and pretzels and Cheetos and Onion-yums and M&Ms and Skittles and Snickers. Aside from the trail food each of us had packed, it was the first junk food we had tasted in 4 days and it was salty and sweet and delicious. The only thing missing was soda pop. This fact did not go unnoticed, and subsequent talk was dominated by a discussion of the root beer stop we had scheduled at the cantina in Ponil Camp 6 days hence.

We are, at this moment, sitting around camp. Tom and I just got back from Ute Springs proper (a cattle tank catchment that holds the artesian waters of the spring) where we

treated ourselves to bandana foot baths. Russ, Phil, Doug (y) and Matt are playing cards and getting rowdy. Foul language is being bantered with increasing frequency and volume, and there's a hint of mutiny in the air. Our planned side hike to Mt. Baldy two days from now has just been challenged, but the challengers were voted down. I have just voiced my concern about the direction the behavior is heading. This prompted the rather strong rebuke, "@#\$* you , old man!", from Matt which was cheered by the others. I decide it is best not to respond and turn my attention back to this writing.

Still current. Dinner has been started, attentions have been diverted, and things have quieted down a bit. In searching through the dinner pack Matt, finds some Squincher powered drink mix. Typically we have opted not to prepare the powered drink mixes that come with each breakfast and dinner, but Phil, intrigued by the name, comments, "Squincher?, I wonder what that tastes like?". He heads off to get his canteen. In a few moments a batch of the lemon-lime Squincher is mixed up and Phil dispenses it to the extended cups. "YAAAA!" and "Tastes like urine!" are some of the responses evoked. Phil looks at his bottle and notes that there is yet a pile of undissolved powder in the bottom. Swirling the remaining liquid he forces it into solution and again dispenses a somewhat thickened liquor to our cups. A much

different reaction ensues. We are enthralled by the sweet smooth sensation followed by the intensely sour lemon-lime aftertaste. It is decided to use the remaining 3 packets (each makes 1 quart) to make a single quart of triple strength brew. On the count of three we all down our cups. Opinions are mixed. Doug (y) found the taste disgusting, but Matt was very pleased. All agree; however, that the experience was intense. We break for dinner.



Dessert is now being prepared by Greg. The looks of the blueberry cobbler mixture bubbling in the pot is drawing a variety of comments from the crew. "Looks like something I'd step over on the trail." Doug (y) comments. "I'll bet this is one of the highlights of our Philmont experiences." states Tom. Matt refuses to comment, and Russ, upon tasting remarks, "This tastes a lot better than you'd think purple colored apples would taste." (Inspection of the ingredients does indeed indicate that apples, not blueberries,

are the only fruit present). Greg is somewhat defensive about the material but we assure him with comments such as, "It really doesn't taste too bad" and "Its not your fault, Greg." The conversation has now deteriorated into a discussion of enemas, and Giardia and diarrhea.

While dishes are done by two of the crew, the rest of us relax around the campfire ring relaxing and nursing our developing wounds. Doug (e) is developing some blisters on the bottoms of his feet and I am getting some on my heels. Dishes are finished and the smellables have just been hung. We turn in at sunset. End of Day 7.

Saturday, August 1.

Quote of the Day "One week from today we'll be having a wonderful breakfast at base camp." –Tom

"One week from today we'll be having a wonderful breakfast at base camp," comments Tom as we partake of a dry cereal breakfast. He reminds us that one week ago today we left Ames, and one week from now our trek will be over. It is hard to believe that we have been on the trail only 4 ½ days. It seems like much longer. This phenomenon of 'the stretching of time' is one we had felt and discussed

earlier. It is probably related to the sister phenomenon first verbalized by Tom, that backpacking causes space to become compressed. It is difficult to provide printed examples that convey these feelings of distorted time and space, so I won't try. Those who have experienced it will understand.

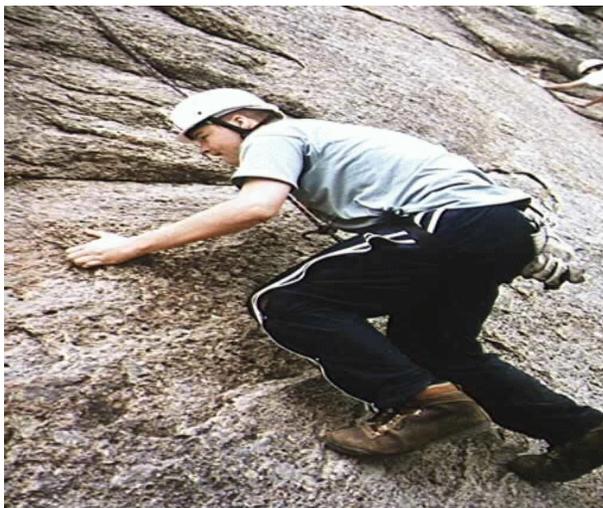


We awoke early today and struck camp by 7:00 Our goal was to hike the 2 miles to Cimarroncito Camp by 8:00 in order to get in on the early rock climbing program. The route we selected, over two other possibilities, was to follow Grouse Canyon around the mesa that separated Ute Springs from Cito Camp. Some elevation change was required but not as much as the other routes.

Crossing Grouse Creek was like stepping into a different region. The microclimate in the narrow canyon was significantly more humid. The rock formations with the slate grey slabs of stone and the lush green vegetation were what one might see in the Appalachians, not New Mexico. It was a refreshing change from the scrub oak and ponderosa pine dominated landscape to which we had grown

accustomed.

We made Cito Camp by a quarter to 8. We dumped our packs and hiked to the top of a mountain just to the west of camp for rock climbing. We were given brief instructions, then roped in and sent up a mostly sheer rock face; perhaps 30 feet high. All tried and made it to the top, and once at the top we repelled down. Impressions from the boys: "Fun", "Awesome", "Good", "Challenging", and "A Rush". Impressions from me, "Painful"; my form had been less than impeccable and I acquired two skinned knees as souvenirs of the experience.



We followed our rock climbing experience with another high point of the trip, showers. We also took the opportunity to do a little laundry with the



washboards and tubs provided outside of the shower house. We backtracked to Ute Springs via Grouse Canyon and ended up at the Ute Springs

Commissary where we had an early lunch, supplemented by chips and candy obtained from the trading post. We afforded ourselves only a short pause to let our food digest as it was after noon and we had a long hike ahead of us.

The afternoon hike was a tough one. Leaving from the back of the commissary building, we immediately started uphill over a narrow, chunky piece of trail. The fist size chunks of rock rolled and skidded under our feet and the scrub oak was growing so close that it grabbed our legs and shoulders as we hiked along. The rough walking was more than compensated for by the scenery - and the weather. Near the top we took a twenty minute break in an open meadow. Continuing on, we topped the mesa, and looking back we could view, across the valley, Tooth Ridge, Shaefers Peak and Cito Camp below. Greg led us at a good pace despite our loaded packs. At about 3:00 we broke through the tree line to a rocky outcrop that hung above the valley below. This was Visto Grande. From here we were treated to a grand view across the Cimarron River to Mt. Baldy. We took some time here to enjoy the sun and the scenery. Our camp tonight was only 15 minutes and a few hundred feet below us.

Once in Visto Grande Camp we spent some time scouting the available sites and finally selected one with a large rock outcrop set amid a grove of scrub oak. The rocky outcrop which looked something the fake rock formations seen in the old movie, *Planet of the Apes*, afforded several depressions and nooks for seating. We made this area our living room. After lines were strung and our wet laundry from this



morning was hung to dry (some had transported it in plastic bags, while others had tied it to their packs), we spent several hours sitting, lying, filtering water, nursing our sore feet, and talking about Mexican food. This latter topic we explored in detail. It was decided that we would definitely eat Mexican (food) on the drive home. Greg was telling of a restaurant in Denver with a

Mexican buffet and fire diving waiters. Doug (y) didn't really care; he just wanted a super burrito with guacamole. We know this because he mentioned it several times.

This discussion of food prompted our dinner preparation efforts. We had several meals to choose from, but the red beans and rice were finally selected because they were the heaviest. Initial reaction to this selection was mixed, but it was well received by all. After dinner we discussed tomorrow's plans. In the early stages of going over our itinerary, Tom, Doug (e), and I had planned on fishing the Cimarron river today. But since the river was about 800 feet and 1 mile below us and since we had already had a fairly full day, we had not been especially keen about pursuing this activity this afternoon. It was decided that

we would get up early tomorrow morning and fish then. The rest of the crew could sleep in, and we would just get a leisurely start on tomorrow's hike. With our plans developed, we spent some time on Thorns and Roses; an activity we all agreed was a beneficial thing to do but something that we had occasionally forgotten. The day's Roses included the trading post junk food, the rock climbing, and our superb camp site. Thorns were not many, but included the water (it tasted of sulfur), and sore feet. Buds were fishing and root beer.



It is near dusk and dinner is finished, Russ and Matt have just sump thumped the last of the dinner cleanup. We hung the bear bags as the sun was going down. There are streaks of orange in the western sky and a few drops of rain fall from a low, fast moving cloud. It looks like its clearing off to the south and west. I'm sleeping outside tonight. End of Day 8.

Sunday, August 2.

Quote of the Day "Up Sucks." -Doug (e)

Tom, Doug (e), and I were up before sunrise. Doug (e) decided to enjoy the early morning solitude in camp but Tom and I grabbed our fishing gear, water bottles, and rain gear, then set off down the trail. Negotiating the rocky switch backs, and scrambling under a barbed wire fence, we reached the river in about 25 minutes. The Cimarron averaged about 20 feet wide and was running clear and swift. The willows along both banks were thick, but the occasional granite boulder that jutted out into the stream provided likely perches for fishermen. Tom selected a large flat rock in the stream, and I moved up river to locate my own platform. After about 15 minutes of dipping an elk's hair caddis into the eddies and pools without a rise, I switched to a gold bladed Mepps which I fed out into the current. Within the next 15 minutes I had landed 6 fish, all brown trout, with the largest one being perhaps 10 inches. I moved back downstream to check with Tom. He had a couple of rises on his Griffith nat, but hadn't landed any yet. I pulled my fly reel off my



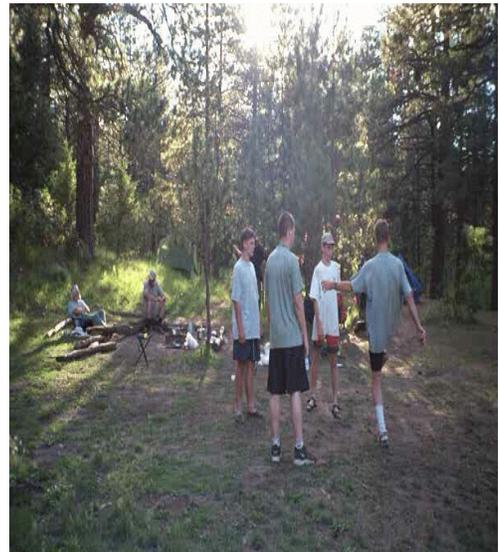
pole, replaced it with a spinning reel and continued working Mepps spinners downstream. I succeed in landing a couple of more trout, and when I check back in with Tom, he has landed one as well.



Forty five minutes of fishing is all we afforded ourselves before heading back up the mountain to camp. We made it back by 8:00 and were greeted by Doug (*e*); the boys were not yet stirring. We had a lazy breakfast, packed up and were on the trail by a little after 10:00. A short time later we crossed the Cimarron River and the sun was beating down. We started the morning with downhill, but the majority of the remainder of the day was uphill. The plan was to hike up Bear Canyon then cut down and across to the northeast, and follow Dean Canyon into Upper Dean Cow Camp. This route took us from a little over 7000 feet to just under 9000. By the time we hit Dean Canyon we were exhausted. Several of us were out of water, and our feet hurt. Dean Canyon contained a small stream, but it was barely deep enough to wet a bandana. We rested for 20 minutes,

then followed a dirt road up the canyon. Just on the outskirts of the Upper Dean Cow Camp we hit the well. Russ, Greg, Doug (*e*), and I off-loaded the water filters and bags from the other crew members' packs and remained at the well to collect water. Tom, Phil, Matt, and Doug (*y*) went on up the trail to secure a campsite. After nearly 20 minutes of filtering (and drinking), the water group made way up the trail. We passed our sister crew who motioned us on ahead to campsite #5 where our crew had taken up residence.

Our site was a large, fairly level grassy area that spanned nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ the width of the valley. The mountains on both sides of the valley were covered with ponderosa pines. At the one end of our site was a mostly dry reservoir. Unlike past days tents were set up and gear unpacked soon after reaching camp, today we remained immobile for a long time; laying on the ground, resting, and snacking on dried fruit leftover from past lunches or on the trail mix that Doug (*e*) was trying to unload. The steady build up of clouds which threatened an afternoon shower eventually motivated us to roust ourselves and set up dining fly and tents. We did get a few sprinkles, but not enough to create mud of the dusty patches of ground. The flurry of activity to get camp established was soon replaced by relaxed conduct. The bulk of the remaining afternoon was spent at the insect arena by Doug (*y*), Greg, Phil, and Matt. Tom, Doug (*e*), Russ, and I napped.





We did finally muster enough energy to assemble, but it was hardly worth the effort. A barely adequate minestrone soup was followed by a bland 'beef' stew. Our chefs for the evening, Matt and Russ, did; however, prepare a delightful dessert - apples d'lite. This looked to be the colorless version of the blueberry cobbler we had two nights ago, so initially only one pouch of the stuff was prepared, but it received such rave reviews that a second batch was soon prepared as well. To this second batch we added the extra dried apples (again from previous lunches) and some extra sugar and cinnamon. It was good.

After dinner, around the fire ring, reflections of our day were verbalized. "Too much hiking," notes Doug (y). "Too much hiking in the heat of the day," replies Tom. "Up Sucks!", summarizes Doug (e). Despite the strenuous nature of today's activities the boys are up now playing hacky sack. The game continues for some time then discontinues in favor of discussing video games that must be purchased upon our return to civilization. At dusk Doug (e) and Tom notice that a small flower is starting to unfold its yellow peddles, apparently in response to the diminishing daylight. There is a large patch of these flowers across the reservoir from us. As we are observing the floral activity a flock of turkeys emerge from the wooded slope across the valley and move toward the reservoir. They are apparently feeding on insects in the grass, and like the all of the other wildlife we have observed thus far, appear oblivious to our presence. There is a random suggestion about turkey dinner, but this is just idle talk. The turkeys soon retire, as do we. It looks to be a clear night. This observation coupled with the availability of large flat grassy areas prompt many of us to sleep out under the stars tonight. End of Day 9.

Monday, August 3.

Quote of the Day "This was an excellent Camp site." -Greg

We arose to a great morning where we were greeted by a clear sky and a brisk 41°F temperature. Most had a good night last night, although those who slept out had their sleeping bags covered with dew. The sun coming over the ridge line to the east made short work of the wet bags and tents. Greg's comment this morning, "This is an excellent camp site.", was echoed by all. I felt well rested from yesterday's hike, and others appeared to be rested as well. Camp was quickly struck and breakfast was the typical help yourself affair. Back from his morning outing to the latrine, Russ reported on the



interesting graffiti resident there, "Gorbachev has a long one, Bush has a short one, Madonna doesn't have one, and the Pope doesn't use his. What is it?"

The hike out was fine. Even though it was uphill, everyone seemed to be strong. The Mexican hats (look like black-eyed Susans) were closed up - well actually the peddles were drooped around the stems.- and the Hookers were still in full bloom. We were headed farther up the valley; our destination, Head of Dean Camp.

At Head of Dean we stacked our packs and prepared to engage in the Camp's program, The Challenge Course. Our instructor in this activity was Curt who, wearing sandals and bearing a cup of coffee led us out of camp. First he had us sit in a circle and discuss the reasons for being in a circle; going around the circle Curt prompted a response from each boy. The discussion then shifted to safety, and again Curt elicited contributions from each boy. Finally, Curt addressed the meat of the program with a Challenge Chart which, in outline form, highlighted the steps to be taken in cooperative problem solving. These steps were:



Determine the **Problem**, Identify the **Goal**, **Brainstorm** ideas, **Plan** the course of action, **Execute** the Plan, and **Evaluate** the action. The boys were responsive and engaged in discussing these concepts.



After voicing that we were ready, Curt led us to the first challenge. This involved a wooden platform approximately 18" square. We were asked to get the entire crew onto the platform, but only have 8 points of contact on the platform. Also, once on the platform, we had to remain there while we sang a song. Rather than singing, we opted to whistle/hum the theme from *The Rock.*, a tune that has been only occasionally whistled by Doug (y) on this trip, but incessantly trilled by the same on last year's venture outing. We all know the tune by heart. To start us off, Curt first went around the circle and asked the boys to determine the problem or in

other words, why did we need to get onto the platform. "Flood", "hot lava", and "pack of ravenous dogs" were some of the responses. He then had the boys go through the problem solving process. The first attempt to conquer the platform failed, but additional brainstorming following the evaluation resulted in a new plan that was successfully executed. Throughout this and all of the challenge activities, the advisors were allowed to participate, but had to remain silent.

The next Challenge was the Spiders Web. Here the goal was to get the entire crew through a large string spider web strung between two trees. Additional caveats of this task were: 1) no contact could be made with either the trees or the web, and 2) once a given opening in the web had been successfully negotiated by a member of the crew, it could not be used again. Much time was spent at this activity, but it was eventually negotiated.

Next was the Wild Gerbil Pit. This was a set of stumps set in the ground in an irregular hexagon pattern, with one stump in the center. Our goal was to cross the pit without being bitten by the rabid gerbils residing there. The crew had, at their disposal, four 4x4 beams, about 8 feet long. As past challenges, there were limitations placed on our activities. Greg was blindfolded. Phil, every time someone said



"log" or "span", had to shout. And Matt was prohibited from using one arm. In addition, to these limitations, it was soon discovered that the beams were not long enough to span from our starting post to the center post. There were many false starts and numerous aggravating moments (e.g. Greg, in his blind boredom at being left out of the execution of the plan, found amusement in continually saying 'log' in order to prompt the required shout from Phil. Phil soon became irritated with Greg's game.) However, the boys did succeed in accomplishing the task. The final challenge was The Wall. Here, the task was to get the crew up and over a 10' wall with only 2 helpers at the bottom and 2 at the top at any one time. The boys did a fine job planning the order ascent, and executing the plan. Doug (e)

had the difficult job of going first. With a boost up from the base of the wall, he latched on to the top and hoisted himself up and over. The rest of us followed in quick order. Greg was the last one on the ground, and after several running jumps he managed to grab the hands of those waiting at the top of the wall and was pulled up.

When we finished at 11:00, no one really wanted to go, but we had a 6+ mile hike that day. We took an early lunch at Head of Dean Camp and were primed to continue our trek into Miranda Camp. We hadn't gotten ½ a mile down the trail when the weather started forming. We got pack covers and rain gear on by the time the rain started. A short time later, we had another brief delay when Greg's hip belt broke. We traveled some seriously steep switchbacks down a greasy trail to the valley formed by Ute Creek. At the creek we took a wet 20 minute break, then continued across the creek and up a gentle side slope to Miranda Camp. We broke out of the tree line and into an open meadow. A large buck was grazing a few hundred feet away. We could see the staff cabin, up the hill, nestled in



an aspen grove almost a quarter of a mile up a long and not-so-gentle slope. We walked part way to the cabin, but we didn't all forge ahead. We sent our Crew Leader (Greg) and Assistant Crew Leader (Russ) up to get our campsite assignment.

While they were gone, the skies opened up. It was still raining when they returned with news that we were to pick our own sites. We opted to backtrack a short distance to site #15, an unoccupied site we had previously passed. It was still raining when we arrived so we decided to just set up the dining fly and wait it out. For 15 or 20 minutes we experienced hail and rain and thunder and lightning. Some of us were huddled under the dining fly, while others had opted to hike up the hill to one of several teepees that were erected partway up the valley.

The rain eventually quit and we set up clothes lines to make use of the sun that was trying to break through. Tents were set up, and crew gear was separated from personal gear. One job that needed doing was water collection. The cloudy weather had eliminated solar power to charge the batteries for the well pump at camp, so the chlorine treated water usually available at staff camps was not to be had. Instead, we had to walk down the valley to a small creek. Tom went for water and returned telling of how the collection site was downstream of the burrow corral. We decided that the salty aftertaste of the filtered water must have just been the product of our imaginations.

The normal program activities, black powder rifles and tomahawk throwing, had been canceled due to rain so a substitute presentation on the history of trapping in the area was planned. At 4:00 we plodded up to the staff cabin, removed our boots on the porch and, along with another crew, were ushered inside. The combination of damp clothes, bootless feet, and the fact that we had been on the trail for over a week prompted a rather terse comment from the staffer and the rapid opening of all the cabin's windows. The lecture about beaver trapping was very informative and enjoyable. The fact that the cabin was decked out in early fur trapper decor, complete with skins and traps hanging on the walls, coupled with the period dress of the staff, not to mention just being warm and dry, added to the enjoyment of the afternoon.

We returned to camp and despite the coalescing clouds, the rain held off. We had lasagna for dinner, and peanut butter chocolate pudding for dessert. Both were delicious. Tom, Doug (*e*) and I went back up to the staff cabin for the 7:00 pm advisors meeting. We spent some time drinking hot tea and conversing with the advisors from other crews. I wandered back to camp, accompanied by Roger and Daryl, the advisors of our sister crew camped next door.

When I got back to camp everything was buttoned down for the night. The boys were in their tents, all the dinner dishes were washed and stacked by the sump pipe, and the bear bags were hung. Wow. I'm in the tent now catching up on the journal. Tom and Doug (*e*) have just returned from the advisors coffee with tales of a stealth bomber sighting over the camp. We all hope the weather stays clear. Baldy tomorrow. End of Day 10.



Tuesday, August 4.

Quote of the day "Lucy, forgive me." -Greg

Thunder and rain all night. Originally the plan this morning was to wake at 4:30 and be on the trail by 5:00. The early start was desired so that we could get down from Baldy before the afternoon thunderstorms.

Because of the morning rain, we canceled our intended hike up to Baldy, and instead planned a day hike to French Henry to do some gold mining and black smithing. After a leisurely breakfast we strapped on 4 empty packs (plus the C.Y.A. pack that contained emergency gear) and set off for French Henry via Baldy Town. The empty packs we were carrying were for the provisions we had to pick up at



Baldy Commissary.

We had a steep hike up the muddy trail to Ute Meadows, and from there we picked up a gravel road that led us uphill to Baldy. The scene in Baldy Town was very likely similar to what one might observe at the base of Mt. Everest. Crews were milling about everywhere waiting to assault Mt. Baldy. The weather had Baldy socked in and the trail was closed. We pressed on up and over Aztec Ridge. After a brief stop at the Aztec

Mine entrance, we followed the trail into a steep valley that led down to French Henry Camp. The climate and vegetation in this narrow valley were very different than that a few hundred feet above. The vegetation was lush and green, and the air was humid.

We made French Henry Camp and after eating lunch, we panned for gold. We had heard a lecture on the gold mining history of the area and instruction on how to pan the stuff. We were informed that there was still gold to be found in the clear, fast moving stream. Almost immediately, Russ found a large chunk, but it turned out to be a piece of granite that had been painted gold. Greg was also lucky, and went around proudly displaying his minuscule fleck. The scene was reminiscent of the old flea circus bit.

While we were panning, the rain started again. So we headed for the blacksmith building. The open air, corrugated steel roofed structure leaked like a sieve, but it did offer some shelter against the ensuing



downpour. We spent nearly an hour with Andy, the near sighted blacksmith, who taught us something of the trade. We learned about coke and coal, and the difference between a blacksmith and a redsmith, and how to temper. Each of the boys got to 'squirrel' the fire in the process of making a Philmont screwdriver. Greg was charged with the delicate job of forming the screwdriver tip. During this operation he accidentally let the hammer strike the anvil. As it turned out, Andy was very fond of his anvil; so fond, in fact, that he named it Lucy. For striking Lucy in the 'face' (the flat part of the anvil), Greg had to apologize loudly and profusely, and following his expression of remorse, had to kiss Lucy and ask her forgiveness. All, except

for Greg, found this hysterically funny.

The rain let up as our screwdriver was dipped in oil for the final treatment, so we made our way back to Baldy camp where we picked up some extra fuel, some moleskin, and our next 2 days' worth of food. Everyone got an apple at the commissary so we sat for a bit eating apples, watching the mini-bears, and looking down the wide open valley.

On the way into Miranda Camp we passed by a crew who look somewhat perplexed when we responded "Miranda" in answer to their question, "Where ya coming from?" We stopped by the beaver staff cabin and learned that we would be able to shoot the black powder rifles at about 4:00, so rather than go all the way down to our camp



site we opted to wait near the shooting area. We passed the time throwing tomahawks. Russ was the champion, sticking 2 of 3 his first time up. Phil and Tom earned honorable mention, each sticking 1. As the hour neared 4:00, the rain started again, canceling the black power shoot, so we made our way back to camp.

It had been cool most of the day, but now the temperature was heading lower. Water was put on the stove and a variety of hot treats, including coffee, tea, beef broth, hot Gatorade, and oatmeal were prepared and consumed. This was just a prelude to our somewhat nontraditional stroganoff dinner

which included corn and rice as ingredients. It was edible. After dinner the rain started in earnest and clean up had to be moved under the rain fly.



I am now in the tent catching up on this record. I have discovered the location of the leak in our tent floor which revealed itself last night. When I go outside to assist with the bear bags I will attempt repairs. The camp is now being serenaded by the tom-tom sounds of Phil and Greg sump-lumping. I am reminded that we heard coyotes today, in the middle of the day. Also, we saw a large beaver dam on Ute Creek.

It is now 7:00 pm. The bear bags have been hung. My role in the hanging process this evening was one of cheerleader. It is still light out, but everyone has turned into their tents and, hopefully, dry sleeping bags. The rain has

quit for now. I hope it has stopped for good. I am thankful for the little things; namely, that my sleeping bag is dry and that neither Doug (*e*) nor Tom snore. End of Day 11.

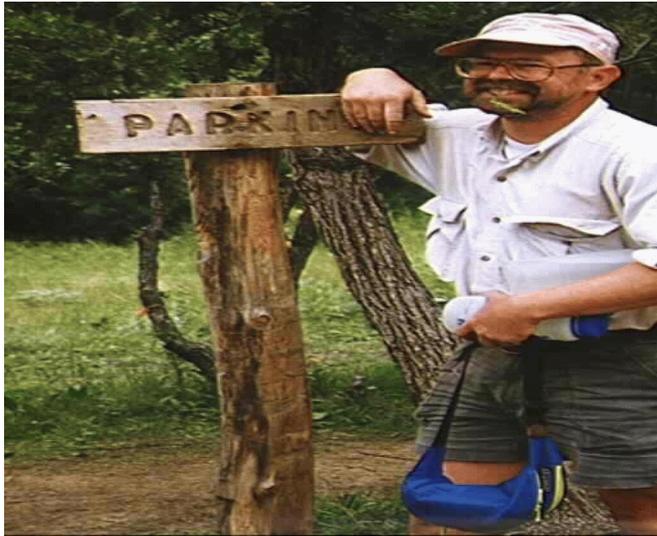
Wednesday August 5.

Quote of the Day: "Don't look up", Tim

Sprinkles and overcast greeted us this morning. It rained again on and off last night. It did clear briefly and the sun came out while we were packing up camp. After getting bear bags down and sorting through the food, we discovered that breakfast was missing. It later turned up in Russ' pack; he had lugged it down from the Baldy Camp commissary, and never unpacked it. Although the food had, remarkably, made it through the night in his pack with relatively little damage, we decided that some sort of punishment was still warranted. It was proclaimed that he had to carry the food the rest of the day (he was going to carry it anyway).

We hiked back up the hill to the staff cabin set amid the aspen grove. Uphill was the name of the game this morning. We had to get up and over Aztec Ridge in order to reach the valley that held South Ponil Creek. Rather than back track up the switchbacks that, two days ago we had come down from Head of Dean, we opted to swing north though Ewells Park. We made our way up to Ute Meadows following the same route we had taken yesterday, but when reaching the road, instead of turning left and following the road up to Baldy, we followed the road down a few hundred feet then cut east up the trail.

We had learned in our trail conservation work that the trails were constructed so that the maximum grade was 8% - an angle that yields a reasonable slope, and as we were told, a grade that mimics those



of wild game trails. Well, whoever had engineered this particular trail had obviously been drinking too much Squincher; it was a 30% grade, as least. In addition its steep uphill nature, the trail was also covered with flat, plate-like slabs of stone that tipped and slid underfoot and clinked and clanked when banged together.

We took a 20 minute break at Ewell Park and among other things discussed the pronunciation of 'Ewell'. The boys amused themselves briefly by chasing a mini bear around our packs. Our descent along the valley of South Ponil Creek was shaded by tall deciduous trees. The sun had come out and it looked to be a pleasant day. We made another stop at Pueblo Ruins, where we took 20

minutes and our boots off. By now some feet in the crew were in pretty sad shape. Doug (e) had, for several days, been culturing some nasty blisters on the bottoms of his feet. I had moleskin and duct tape stuck to strategic locations on my feet as well.

Further down the trail we took lunch, at Pueblo Camp. We had crackers and jalapeno cheese spread. Matt and I availed ourselves the opportunity to use the latrine at the camp. It was a fine latrine. The wooden seat was dry; not like many of damp, slimy things we had come across in our travels. Best of all, it was level. So many of the facilities we had occasion to use during the past week had been perched on the side of a hill or mountain, or just set



on skew for the heck of it. What a pleasure to sit and take care of business without bracing oneself against the wall or grabbing a roughhewn timber for support, although according to the recommendations we received, it was still necessary to sweep underneath the seat with a stick in order to dislodge any black widow spiders that might be lurking there.



Continuing out of Pueblo camp we took the road, but we soon crossed the South Ponil to pick up the trail. This is a point of minor significance; however because of the group discussion that occurred and the ensuing events, it is included here. One point of concern was that our intended campsite lay along the creek, downstream of the trail/road intersection. However, the trail took off at a tangent to the stream and up the mountain side. To the footsore backpacker, unnecessary uphill in the

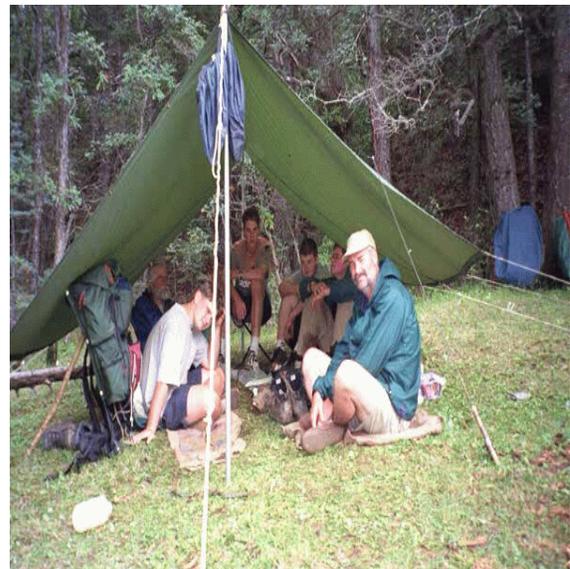
afternoon on the final approach to camp is a matter to be seriously considered. The unpopular decision



to take the trail, was made; the deciding factor being Philmont policy discouraging hiking on the road (dubbed the drunken chaplain policy). After nearly 2 hours on the trail we met another group coming from the other direction. By now we had reached the peak and were going downhill. When we asked how far Flume Canyon was, we were informed that there was no Flume Canyon from the direction in which they had come. We had missed a turn. Backtracking and more unnecessary uphill was the result. At this point in time, "Crabby", is a good description of how we were feeling. Another 15 minutes; however, and we did reach the junction that we had passed earlier. We followed the trail, which was a steep downhill grade that looked more like a wash than a trail, about 200 yards to Flume Canyon.

There was a campsite set right where the trail touched the valley floor, but we did not immediately accept this site as our resting place for the night. In addition to wanting the best site available, we had received information at lunch concerning a bear trap in the vicinity of the Flume Canyon Camp. We did not want to locate our camp near a baited bear trap. We ended up selecting a just-barely-adequate site well away from the trap, but near our sister crew. The site was picturesque; a sloping grassy area set up against the pine-covered hillside, but there was little level land to pitch the tents. We made do by setting one tent near the sump pipe, contrary to bear-safe protocol. We did not; however, use the sump pipe for our waste disposal, rather we ended up using the sump of the adjacent camp for our dinner clean up. Soon after we got the rainfly and tents in place it started to sprinkle.

Leaving the others to their own devices, I grabbed my rain gear and fishing pole and headed for the South Ponil Creek which was bubbling away just 20 yards from camp. The creek was small, perhaps 6 feet wide on average, and shallow, but we had heard from the crew we met on the trail that little cutthroats resided in it. I had my 4 ½ foot ultra light spinning rod with a fly reel fixed to handle. Although in dry runs, I had found that this combination could produce casts of 35 to 40 feet, such distances were not necessary on the South Ponil. It, like most of the other streams we had encountered was confined by dense brushy banks. With an elk hair cadis on a 7' leader, the technique of choice was 'dip-n-drift'. Stalking up to a small pool at the head of a riffle, I dropped the fly into the current, and almost immediately a fat little cutthroat rose to



take it. Since the sentiment in camp before I left was "fish for dinner", I stored the trout away in my makeshift creel, a plastic bag with a little wet grass. I continued working downstream several hundred yards and picked up 2 more fish; both cutthroats of 9 and 11 inches (approximately).

It was still raining when I made it back to camp and found the crew huddled under the rain fly. The discussion turned to how to cook the fish. We had no oil for frying so poaching was the method of choice. It was quickly pointed out by Tom that the fish would actually be "twice poached". Technically, he was correct. The fishing licenses we had purchased in the trading post at base camp had run out the day we camped at Visto Grande. However, we rationalized that since we had actually purchased 5 day licenses but only had two occasions to fish, that we indeed had 3 days left. Luckily we did not have to test our reasoning on a conservation officer.

The rain soon stopped and with Matt's help I prepared the evening's appetizer, twice poached trout. The recipe for this delicacy is as follows:

In a 6 qt. pot place 5 small stones and 1cup of river water. Place pot on Peak I stove. In a smaller diameter and shallower pan place three trout, cleaned. Season with 1 clump of butter buds (broken up into smaller granules), and several dashes of lemon pepper, salt, and onion power. Arrange the shallow pan containing the fish on the stones in the large pot. Cover the large pot and turn up the heat on the stove to maximum. When steam starts to leak from under the lid, guesstimate 5 minutes. Remove the lid and carefully lift out the small pan containing the trout. Cut trout into 8 pieces, serve in sierra cups.

Everyone found the appetizer enjoyable, and as is often the case with appetizers left us wanting more. The next course was cup-o-soup; Cream of Chicken flavor. This was followed by the evening's main course, chicken with noodles and peas. Just as we were prepared to eat, we had a spontaneous outbreak of the Philmont grace, something we have all agreed is a fine tradition, but something that has frequently been forgotten. During dinner someone, I think it was Doug (e), actually got a sizeable piece of chicken. While we were eating the skies cleared. The boys engaged in a game of hacky sack during the dinner dishes clean-up.

The sun is preparing to retire and it is getting cooler now. We had a slight mishap a little while ago. Our first accident of the trip. While hanging the bear bags, we managed to get the rope stuck in a tree, and in attempting to free it I gave it a stout pull. The rope came free along with the large dead limb it was tangled with. The whole mass struck Russ right across the face. He gave a yelp then danced around a bit, verbally expressing



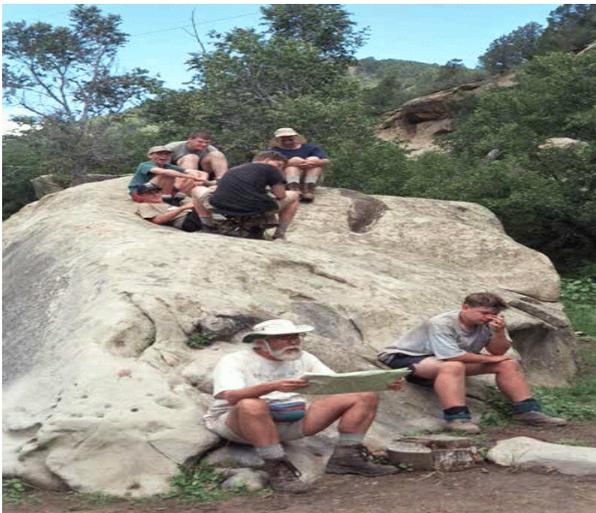
his displeasure with the current turn of events. Tom had him sit down (to avoid shock) and I examined him. Only a couple of nasty cuts, one under his eye and another on the bridge of his nose. A little Neosporin ointment had soon had him fixed up; a close call.

We engaged in a round of 'Thorns and Roses' right before turning in. Like grace, this is another activity we value but have only practiced periodically. Popular thorns were the day's unnecessary uphill and missing the trail. I neglected to note some of the roses mentioned by the others, but my roses were catching fish and the fact Russ' injury was relatively minor. A common bud I do recall was root beer at the cantina tomorrow. As I am now lying in the tent writing this, Tom and Doug (*e*) are having a far ranging discussion that includes: Dr. Who, Red Dwarf, network TV, O.J., Kenneth Starr, and now food. Food, eating and other bodily functions have been conversation favorites on this trip. Again, to return to a theme alluded to earlier, the intense physical nature of backpacking, coupled with the relatively simple existence seems to promote a focus on the basics. We are attuned to the changes in our surroundings as well as those of our bodies. The boys are in their tents. I would venture to guess that nearly every one of our crew is having a thought similar to mine, "Root beer is only a 2 hour walk away." End of Day 12.

Thursday, August 6.

Sentiment of the day: "This bud's for you." - All

At 6:00 I stepped from the tent and observed that Tom already had one of the stoves lit. It is a fine thing when trail-mates share priorities such as 'the morning coffee'. Doug (*e*) next emerged from the tent, and as he greeted the day he observed that the sky had just the perfect number of clouds, zero. We got a pretty normal start, although departure was delayed until the sunlight bathed the camp. It was a dewy night and there was a desire to get as much water from the tents as possible before packing them up. Despite the occurrence of the 5:30 sunrise, we were in a narrow canyon, and it took substantially longer for the sunshine reaches our site.



We hit the trail about 8:00. There was an intense desire to reach Ponil camp and visit the cantina where it was rumored that the root beer flowed like water and the bags of chips were stacked like cord

wood. At any rate, we had two choices this morning; follow the creek downhill along the road or take the uphill trail. There was surprisingly little discussion and we chose the Philmont path (the trail).

The early morning hamstring stretch effected by hiking a steep 200 yards uphill with a 50 pound pack felt quite normal. Greg led us this morning at a pace so vigorous that Doug (*e*) was overheard comparing our early morning trek to the Bataan Death March. We sprinted the 4 ½ kilometers to Ponil camp in 1 hour and 15 minutes, not including the 20 minute break we took just shy of our destination.



From our trail, partway up the mountainside we could spy Ponil camp where it lay at the bottom the confluence of 4 deep canyons. We made our way down and ran into several crews making their ways up and out of the camp. We crossed North Ponil Creek, which was running swift, high, and milk chocolaty, and made our way to the commissary to dump our packs. After a false start we had to return to our packs to get our cups/water bottles - the cantina had none) we finally bellied up to the cantina bar. The decor was authentic even down to the roughhewn plank floor and brass step rail under the bar. The atmosphere of the place was complimented by the surly bar

maid. We spent the better part of an hour consuming mass quantities of chips, candy and root beer while sitting at a picnic table on the veranda. A bud (the thorns and roses type) never tasted so good.

A few more leisurely minutes were spent on a large rock formation while Greg picked up our last two meals, and Russ tried, unsuccessfully, to get someone to take our trash. Then we were off. We were headed for Indian Writings Camp which was only one ridge line away, but we had several options for getting there. We choose the Hart Peak trail, which was steepest, but also the shortest. The trail rose from the valley floor like a staircase and continued for another mile and a half of steep uphill.



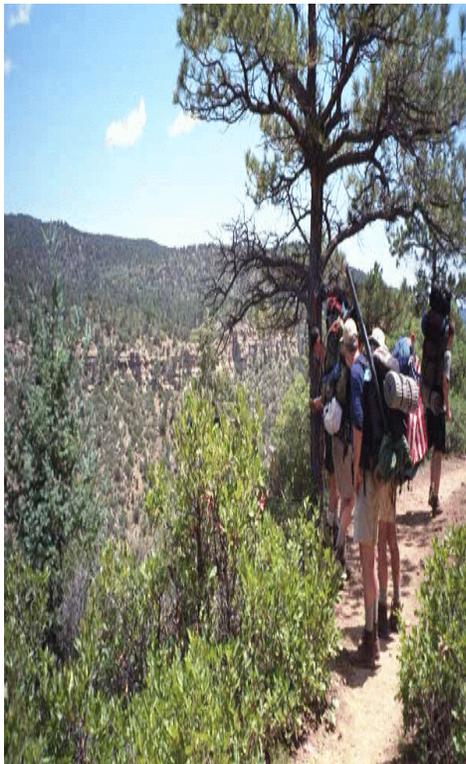
We spent several minutes in the hot sun on Hart Peak. From here we could see back to Baldy, over to Shaefers Peak, and ahead to the Tooth of Time. Several pictures were snapped. Just as we were leaving, our sister crew arrived. We spent a few minutes conversing with them, then shouldered our packs again and set off. Near the base of Hart Peak we stopped for lunch which consisted of Spreadables and Nutter Butter candy bars. During lunch, Greg was afforded the opportunity to commune with nature several times. We hoped that this activity did not portend a serious intestinal situation. We also took the opportunity to pad Matt's pack with a few large rocks when he wasn't looking.

Continuing after lunch, we emerged in an opening where, off to the left, a stone ledge hung suspended over the valley below. Greg led us off to have a look. Below our feet we could see a steep cut with jagged stone walls on each side. Looking ahead and under where we were standing, Greg spotted a cave with a thick stone wall built across part of the opening. We suspected (as was later confirmed) that this was an Anasazi Indian dwelling.

Another mile down the trail brought us to the edge of the canyon that held Ponil Creek. From our vantage on the ridge we could look across the valley to the brown sandstone cliffs on the far side, and looking down, we could make out individual camp sites of Indian Writings Camp. We followed the steep stair step trail down into the valley to where we hit Ponil Creek. It, like its northern cousin, was running high and muddy. Crossing over the creek on a narrow plank bridge, we arrived at the Indian Writings Staff cabin. Here we cooled our heels in the hot sun waiting for the staff archeologist to check us in and assign us



a camp site. While we were waiting our sister crew arrived and we were checked-in together.



We were given sites 10 and 11, upstream from the staff cabin and right on the creek. This sounded simple enough, but locating our camp site was somewhat complicated. It turned out that site 10 had already been assigned to another crew so we took site 12. Getting to site 12, required our negotiation of the fast moving creek. All made the jump intact, although we almost lost Matt to the swift current. Our site was a spacious one. The boys selected a wonderfully shaded grassy tent site in a cottonwood grove on the banks of the river. Tom, Doug (e.) and I set up our tent on higher ground in an open meadow. In the large dusty area around the campfire ring there were many chunks of wood that provided ample seating.

We spent some time in camp, bathing in the river (no soap) and putting on fresh mole skin. We did have another mishap. Doug

(e.) on airing out his sore feet was accosted by a wild bee and stung on the big toe. He was in severe pain for several minutes, but swelling was not great and he was soon able to walk again.

At 4:00 we wandered down to the staff cabin for a tour of the Anasazi Petroglyphs (petro=rock, glyph=drawing). We were led to 4 different sites in the cliffs on the eastern side of the canyon and treated to a lecture on the history and habits of those who inhabited this valley



approximately 900 A.D. We also visited two excavations of Anasazi dwellings. Following the tour/lecture we filled our canteens and water bags from the sulfurous spigot at the staff cabin and headed back to camp.

As a treat this evening, and to show our appreciation to the younger members of the crew, the advisors announced that we would prepare dinner and clean up afterwards. We had a delightful dinner with a splendid Brown Betty dessert and where powered drink mix flowed like wine.

Following a post-dinner hacky game amid the stones, cactus, and cow pies in the meadow, we gathered the smellables and loaded up the bear bags. At this point in our trip we had developed a strong bond with our three bear bags. We were especially fond of one in particular. Several days earlier we christened him with the name, "Stumpy", a label chosen because during the trip he has been developing two protrusions which reminded us of small little legs. We took Stumpy and his two brothers, along with some additional logs to reinforce the crude bridge over Ponil Creek, off to the bear rope where we hung them for the night.



Near dusk a flock of wild turkeys descended from the hills and made their way to the river. I stalked after them to get a picture. The Philmont turkeys were as tame as the deer, and I was able to get quite close. It was easy to understand why the Anasazi had chosen this valley as their residence. The security afforded by the rugged cliffs enclosing the valley along with the fertile soil bordering the river, and the abundance of game, not to mention the natural beauty of the area, all must have contributed to softening what must have normally been a grueling lifestyle.

As the sun was going down the moon was coming up; a full moon. Despite the fact that the star gazing would not be at its finest, several of us decided to meadow crash and sleep out under open sky. Tom, Greg, Phil, Russ and I lay out our ground cloths and sleeping bags on the small knoll just above camp, and are now watching the moon rise above us. I am finishing up this day's entry in the journal and have the opportunity to gather a few closing thoughts from the boys. Phil, "A good ending to a good vacation." Greg, "Overall, this day had the best views, especially Hart Peak. But I didn't like to have to poop 2 times in a 30 minute period." Russ, "I sure hope a bat doesn't take a dump on me." I wholeheartedly agree with all of these sentiments. End of Day 13.



Near dusk a flock of wild turkeys descended from the hills and made their way to the river. I stalked after them to get a picture. The Philmont turkeys were as tame as the deer, and I was able to get quite close. It was easy to understand why the Anasazi had chosen this valley as their residence. The security afforded by the rugged cliffs enclosing the valley along with the fertile soil bordering the river, and the abundance of game, not to mention the natural beauty of the area, all must have contributed to softening what must have normally been a grueling lifestyle.

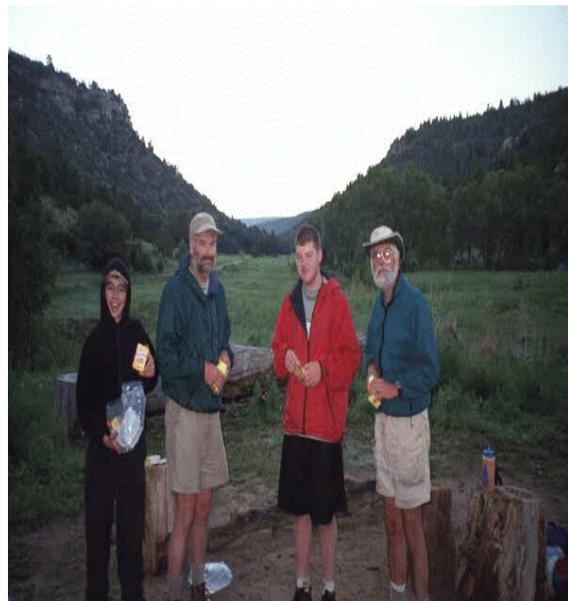
As the sun was going down the moon was coming up; a full moon. Despite the fact that the star gazing would not be at its finest, several of us decided to meadow crash and sleep out under open sky. Tom, Greg, Phil, Russ and I lay out our ground cloths and sleeping bags on the small knoll just above camp, and are now watching the moon rise above us. I am finishing up this day's entry in the journal and have the opportunity to gather a few closing thoughts from the boys. Phil, "A good ending to a good vacation." Greg, "Overall, this day had the best views, especially Hart Peak. But I didn't like to have to poop 2 times in a 30 minute period." Russ, "I sure hope a bat doesn't take a dump on me." I wholeheartedly agree with all of these sentiments. End of Day 13.

Friday, August 7.

Quote of the Day "Day 11!" - All

As I awoke Phil was trucking across the meadow to get the bear bags. I rose from my sleeping bag which was wet with the morning dew, started heating a pot of water on one of the stoves, and then trotted off to help with the bags. The sky was bright but the sun had not yet appeared over the ridge. Down the valley we could see faint streaks of pink and orange in the eastern sky.

The rest of the crew was somewhat slower to rise, with Russ being the slowest one out of the sack. The heavy dew had soaked the tent pitched in the meadow, and the sleeping bags of all those who had slept out, but the tents under the cottonwoods were dry. We had a quick breakfast then packed up all the non-wet gear at a pace that could be almost be described as frantic. However, our parting was delayed until the sun reached the valley floor. Not waiting for the sunshine to reach our camp, we strung our wet gear on vegetation at the far western edge of the valley so that it would receive the early rays. There was not much discussion this morning; everyone was anxious to get on the trail. "Day 11!" was a phrase heard uttered throughout the camp.





At 8:00 we decided to depart despite the fact that our things were not quite dry. We followed the road this morning instead of the trail. This made for a pleasant hike along the river towards the mouth of the valley. We could hike at our own pace, not constrained by a single-file-10-foot-spacing configuration dictated by trail hiking. Matt, Phil and Greg, walking 3 abreast, ranged 100 yards ahead of the rest of us. Hiking on the dirt road was also pleasurable because we were able to enjoy our surroundings, not having to devote serious consideration to every footstep. On the trail, where rocks and mud and roots and logs and sticks and other manner of false tread threatened a stumble or worse in return for any misstep, concentration was required virtually every step of the way (this is

the way it is for me anyway, and I suspect that it may also be the same for younger legs). Considering that the average step covers approximately 2 feet of distance, we can calculate that each mile traveled requires 2640 decisions concerning where to put one's feet. So, for an average day of 7 miles, the consideration of 18480 footfalls consumes a significant amount of one's attention.

Hiking out on this our last day, Russ and I collected several fragments of rocks. This started a reflection



on the geology of Philmont. The geological diversity we had witnessed on our trek was amazing. A variety of natural forces acting on the area had resulted in the variation. We picked up pieces of volcanic pumice around base camp and the Tooth of Time Ridge. We observed granite formations in great abundance throughout of our travels up the central portion of Philmont, and sandstone and other sedimentary formations dominated our vistas of the northern and eastern areas. Several days ago, I was leafing through Tom's *Philmont Fieldguide*, which confirmed the diversity we had been observing first hand. While the field guide provides substantial detail on the localization of the various formation process in relation to the relative abundance of the igneous quartzes and feldspars, a somewhat different characterization of the mineralogical diversity can be derived by traversing the area with a backpack. Trail hiking necessitates a more pragmatic classification scheme. For example, one quickly comes to recognize that the flat slabs of rock will tip and slide when trod upon. Obviously, the bowling ball sized (and larger) boulders must be stepped over or around. The chunky, fist sized balls lying loose on the trail will roll underfoot. And, of course, the partially buried slabs, boulders and chunks are always ready to grab a boot toe. We traversed trails with all of these diverse classes of rocks. Perhaps its obvious from the

above diversions that on this, the last leg of our trek, time was taken for reflection and to enjoy the short time we had remaining in the back country. We were all anxious to get back to civilization and our loved ones, but the last moments on the trail were too savored.



A brief diversion was taken across the swollen Ponil via a fallen tree to see a fossil of the only *Tyrannosaurus rex* footprint in the world (or N. America depending upon whom you talk to). We were told that it was only discovered a few years ago, and after viewing it we can understand why. It is not a distinct indentation of a footprint, rather it is a cast of the indentation. To those who lack imagination it may only look like a blob of rock, but close inspection reveals cracks and forms that could delineate toes and claws. At any rate there was a sign close by that proclaims the fossils presence, so it must be real.

Another brief delay to fix Russ' broken pack strap, was followed by an easy 2 mile stroll to the parking lot where we were to be picked up. We waited some time in the sparse shade and had a quiet recap of the trip. We also took the opportunity to load a

few more rocks into Matt's pack and jacket pockets when he wasn't looking. We realized that this was probably a cruel joke, but we were so amused by the animated reaction evoked by his discovery of these additions to his gear that we simply couldn't resist. We also found time to continue the development of nicknames for one another; an activity analogous to the assignment of Smurf names to each other on last year's trip, and a topic we had discussed on and off during the past week or so. Tom had previously informed us that on his last Philmont trek, somewhat raunchy nicknames had been assigned to crew members at the Miranda Camp mountain man rendezvous. However, no rendezvous was held during our stay at Miranda so we had to complete this activity on our own. This is what we came up with:

- Phil - **Pot-licker** (because of his continued willingness to human sump the cooking pots) or **Early Bird** (because he was frequently the first one up in the mornings).
- Russ - **Lord of the Fly** (because he had been responsible for carrying the dining fly the entire trek.) or **Scar Face** (because of his bear-related accident).
- Tom- **Gandalf** (because he was the oldest and wisest member of the crew, and because, with his white beard and staff, he presents an appearance of striking similarity to the what we imagine this fictional character to look like).
- Greg- **The Kybo King** or **Pectate Popper** (because of his short-lived bout of intestinal distress).
- Matt- **Tough Sack** (a reference to his tough man story related to all at Crater Lake Camp).
- Doug (e)- **B. Bait** (because of his attraction to the only bee we saw in all our travels).

- Doug (y)- **Trail Food** (we could not come up with a fitting name while sitting in the parking area at 6 mile gate. This name was assigned the next day because of an event to be described later in this narrative).
- Tim - We did not actually get around to assigning a name to me, perhaps because I was leading this exercise and the discussion never turned to the development of a label matching my talents, attributes, or experiences.



To remedy the situation I have, at the time of this transcription, assigned myself the name of **Kingfisher** (no explanation necessary).

Another activity of note while we were waiting for our base camp transportation was Tom's final fishing excursion to nearby Ponil Creek. We had briefly plied the creek's muddy waters yesterday, but to no avail. The creek, today, was still running high and muddy, but Tom was anxious to land a fish on his walking stick. Following our fishing success in Urraca Creek on Day 6, Tom had modified the Scout Whomper . He had attached an elk hair caddis fly to a 6' leader and fixed the line to the end of his staff. When not in use, he had the line wrapped around a small piece of

cardboard that was held firm with a rubber band. The thought behind this configuration was that whenever we crossed a likely stream, he could, in an instant, be daubing the fly in the current, without having to unpack his flyrod. This was a clever arrangement for two reasons. First, the streams we had encountered, like Urraca Creek were usually too small and overgrown to afford any type of cast one might normally dispatch with a flyrod, so most of the fishing performed was the 'dip and float' brand. Second, we usually did not have the time to unpack fishing gear at every creek we happened across so this configuration afforded opportunities to fish that would have otherwise been passed up. Unfortunately, the water was too high and muddy for fishing success.



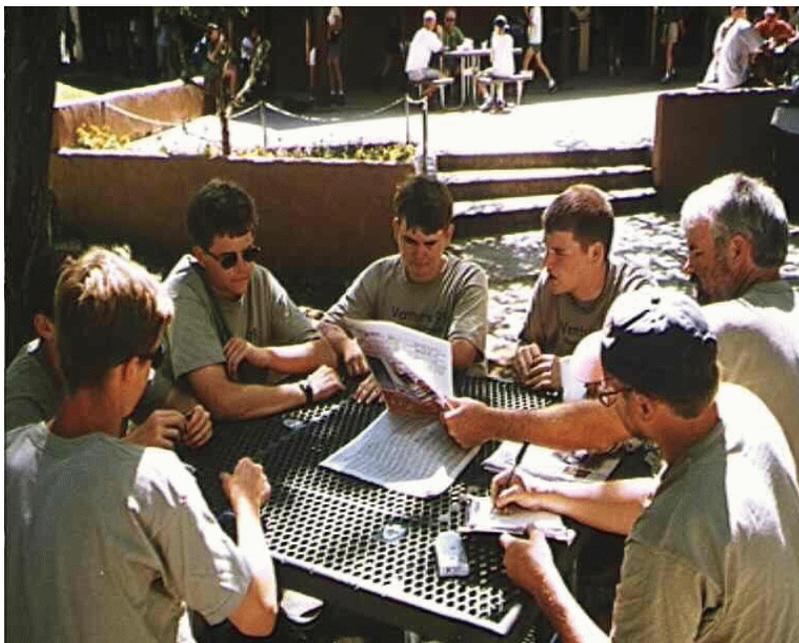


We had just finished saying farewells to our sister crew who was also waiting at 6 mile gate when the school bus that would take us to base camp arrived. We piled our packs into the back of the bus and boarded for the 20 minute ride to civilization.

Once in base camp, we had a whirlwind series of duties to attend to. Greg checked us in and obtained our tent assignments at the Welcome Center. We dumped our gear in our tent, grabbed quick showers, stopped by the post office to get our mail (there was none), then we hit the mess hall for lunch. Lunch was actually quite good. A cheeseburgers entree supplemented with fresh salad. Immediately following lunch we were witness to an interesting occurrence. On the way out of the dining hall someone

literally lost their lunch right outside of the door. As it turns out, we took lunch with all the other homeward bound crews, people whose diets had, for the past 11 days, consisted almost exclusively of

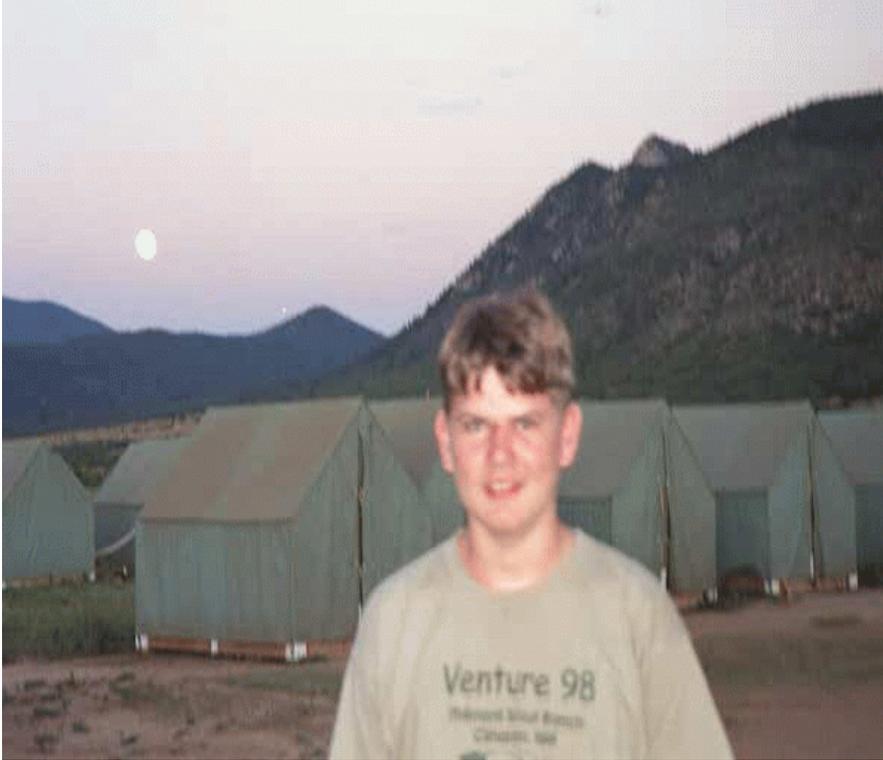
the dehydrated trail foods. It was Russ who suggested that perhaps the afflicted individual was the victim of a digestive system that simply couldn't accommodate the rapid transition to normal food.



After lunch we unpacked, sorted personal gear from the crew gear, and then resorted the crew gear into troop gear and Philmont gear. We then proceeded to equipment check-in to return the Philmont gear. We spent the next several hours engaged in a variety of activities including visits to the trading post for assorted maps and souvenirs, several raids on the snack bar for candy, ice cream and soda pop, and playing cards.

We attempted a 8 person hearts game, but soon abandoned it for a game of team Euchre.

After dinner we had a spirited hacky game where all participated except for Doug (e) who sat in view at the welcome center absorbed in a newspaper. The game eventually had to be terminated when the old grudges started resurfacing and it became too spirited. We returned to the picnic table at the welcome center and amused ourselves with reading or cards, killing time until the evening campfire.



Near dusk we assembled with the other homebound crews for evening campfire. Most of these other crews were wearing their class A uniforms. We were dressed in our class Bs, our venture-98 T-shirt sporting a cartoon of Tom's design that depicted a mother bear directing her cubs in a pinata party with a food bag. To our credit, our shirts were clean. Tom had the foresight to do a load of wash in base camp before we started our trek. Also, it should be noted that our shirts were classy. Throughout our trip we received several compliments on this shirt

as well as past years venture shirts that were worn on the trail. We realized as we were waiting for assembly that we did not have our American flag. This item was given to Greg at check in and we toted it throughout our trek. Greg was told to bring it to the campfire this evening, but had forgotten it. He made a quick run to the car where we thought it to be, but it was not to be found and he returned empty handed and somewhat concerned as to the impending consequences for not having it in his possession.

The campfire was a rowdy affair. The organizers had planned a very precise presentation, with audience participation to be elicited, but only at very specific portions of the program. The crowd, individuals of more than 20 crews who had just completed their treks, was feeling rambunctious, and not about to be contained. The many spontaneous outbursts were rebuked by the scouter in charge; however, admonishments did little to check our enthusiasm. We had a good time anyway. It turns out that there were not serious consequences to forgetting our flag. Greg, when assembled in front of the crowd with the rest of the crew leaders conveniently shielded himself near the back, and when it came time for each crew leader to present his flag to their advisor, Greg and Tom faked it. We were dismissed after 9:00, and it would have been dark except for the full moon that provided ample illumination for our hike back to tent city. We stayed up for a bit admiring the moon and taking care of some last minute chores, then turned in for the night. End of Day 14.

Saturday, August 8.

Quote of the Day "I'll have the large burrito." - Doug (y)

What a rowdy night. The Japanese crew occupying the tents across from us were apparently too keyed up to sleep. I woke several times to sound of animated discussions taking place only a tent flap away. There was also the shuffler, an individual that, for whatever reason, drug his boots in the dust and gravel as he traveled the streets of tent city. This group did not apparently suffer from the lack of sleep. When we awoke this morning, they were all in uniform and seated in a circle conducting a sunrise ritual.

Russ, too, was up in the middle of the night. He discovered, just before going to bed, that he had lost his wallet. I convinced him that it would be futile to search in the dark, and that we would make an attempt to find it in the morning. Apparently, he thought otherwise so sometime during the night he got up and, by the light of the moon, made his way back to the campfire location. He found his wallet lying under a bench, its contents intact.

We took our final meal in the dining hall then on the road by 8:00. The first leg of our trip home was, except for one event, most unremarkable. Doug (y) and Phil were hypnotized by movies playing on the VCR in the back seat while Russ, in the front seat next to me, slept most of the morning. Doug (y), however, did succeed in acquiring his nickname for the trip. About an hour out of Denver, he quietly informed me from the back seat that he was feeling sick and perhaps I should pull off the road. By the time I raise Tom on



the CB to request an exit, the deed had been done. I count our van lucky on two counts. First, Doug (y) had the presence of mind to find and use a plastic bag, and second the chain reaction effect that often results when an individual in a group tosses his cookies, did not ensue. We took a short break at the rest stop to give Doug (y) time to recover, and it was during this break that Doug is christened with the nickname, 'Trail-Food'. This name could be thought of as having dual meanings. The first meaning could be an allusion to the fact that his system had become so accustomed to trail food that it could not easily accommodate normal fare (similar to the post-lunch event we observed yesterday). The second meaning could be the literal reference, and relates to the act of depositing his food on the trail. I don't think Doug (y) was thrilled with the choice.

Doug's (y) affliction was apparently short lived. About a half an our later when we stopped at the Taco Bell in Colorado Springs, Doug (y) ingested a large lunch. He was not to be denied his burrito supreme with guacamole. I must admit I was somewhat concerned when we piled back into the car. I made sure that Phil, his neighbor in the backseat, had access to several plastic bags. Thankfully, there was no subsequent validation of Doug's (y) nickname.



We made a successful detour to the REI in Denver where several trinkets were purchased. Some of the boys visited the Toys-R-Us next door. Matt acquired some slime which occupied his attention for the rest of the trip. Nearing Ogallala, we stopped at the Sweden Cream drive-in. It was an interesting place. The inside was decorated with an Alien motif along with many placards on the wall sporting witty slogans and suggestions. The outside had an assortment of unusual plastic furniture, including one chair in the shape of a human hand. We stayed in the place only long enough to consume an ice cream. We found

Meyer's Campground pretty much as we had left it, except fuller. They had a last minute church group fill the remaining tent sites, but since we had reservations, they found a grassy area to accommodate us. After setting up tents, some of us snagged a picnic table that wasn't being used and played some cards, some took some showers, and others caught up on the recent news. We consumed mass quantities of pizza this evening at Valentinos. The boys stayed up late playing pool and filling their TV deficit in the recreation hall. I was ready for bed at sunset. End of Day 15.

Sunday, August 9.

Quote of the Day "Let's just get there." -Russ

We awoke the next morning to one of the prettiest sunrises of the trip. It was somewhat ironic that, after spending nearly 2 weeks in the backcountry, we should witness such a striking sky over the campers and recreational vehicles of Meyer's campground. In retrospect; however, perhaps it is heartening to be reminded that one doesn't have to travel to the wilds to experience nature's beauty, one simply has to be open to it.



Our last leg home was unremarkable. I took no notes, and do not recall where we took our lunch. I think it was in Lincoln, but I am not even sure of that. I do recall being appreciative of the 75 mile/hour speed limit in Nebraska. The boys were quiet most of the trip, and alternately watched TV and slept. We stopped for an ice

cream break outside of Des Moines, then raced the back roads on our way to Ames.

On arriving at Tom's house we anxiously unpacked and reorganized our gear. The troop gear was stowed in Tom's garage, and packs were reinserted into vans to shuttle the boys to their homes. I think I can safely summarize for the crew when I state, that we had a wonderful experience, but were very glad to be home.

