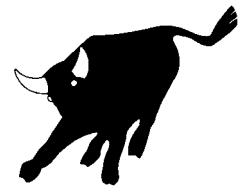


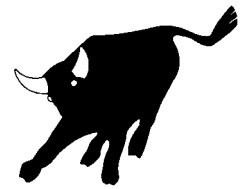


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As related by Tom Morin, Scoutmaster Troop 1776 and Lead Advisor on Crew 724-CW

Pre Philmont Trip Planning

There was much excitement in January 2002 when we got the notice that we were 4th on the waiting list for a 2003 Cavalcade. Several of us had been on a Cavalcade in 2000 and still had fond memories. Even though we did not have a firm reservation, the Troop decided that the chances were good that we would land a spot. So we added this to our 2003 High Adventure offerings. We had no problem filling the Crew.

Several of us signed up for a second Cavalcade including myself, Michael Stong, Alex Jaracz and David Jaracz. Others that filled out the Crew Roster were Doug Morin, Eric Harrison, Matthew McIsaac, Kevin Ness, John Nuttall, Eric Daiber, Thomas McNabb, Andrew Vandenberg and Stephen Green. Steve Harrison and Bob Stong also signed on to give us eleven Scouts and four Advisors in the Crew.

It was great when we heard in the summer of 2002 that we had the spot. There were 3 available choices. One was for a Crew after school started and another was conflicting with our Summer Camp week. So we turned around the request almost immediately for 7-24CW. I was a bit disappointed because CW meant a Southern Route, which is what we went on in 2000. But I was going back to Philmont. It is as close to Heaven as I will be while I am in human form.

Having been already in 2000, I volunteered to be the Lead Advisor for the Crew. We got a lot of help from other parents in getting us ready for the trip. Mrs. Vandenberg served as Treasurer, Mr. Ness organized the transportation and Mrs. Daiber handled our pre Philmont arrangements, including the lodging at the University of New Mexico.

We made plans for Crew Development to take place but it never took place. OA Conclave and other opportunities seemed to get in the way. But we encouraged everyone to take some riding lessons and trail rides to get used to sitting and being around a horse.

We had Crew Elections and Michael Stong was elected Crew Chief. As Michael had been on a Cavalcade and was our lone Eagle Scout in the Crew, I strongly endorsed the selection. Alex Jaracz, another experienced Philmont Scout was selected as the Quartermaster. Stephen Green was selected to be the Chaplain's Aide and Eric Harrison was our First Aid person. These turned out to be key Crew Leadership selections.



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July 22, 2003 – The Adventure Begins

Today was the start of the Trip. We gathered at La Salette Hall at 8:30 as planned. Everyone was relatively on time and together. We were dressed in our Philmont Cavalcade Travel Class A's – Class A Shirt with neckwear, Blue Jeans and Cowboy boots. We took all of the obligatory pictures and said the appropriate goodbyes. Then we piled in a couple of cars and went to the airport.



We checked in at curbside without incident. Then we went as a group to go through airport security. Things have certainly changed since 9/11 especially at Atlanta Hartsfield. We had planned two hours just in case there were issues. They directed us over to the far left and what seemed like the longest line. As we inched towards the security point we carefully took off boots and belts so that we could pass through security without setting off an alarm. Most made it but Doug had his bag searched and a knife confiscated.

Once we made it out to the Concourse, we all took off separately to get breakfast. A couple of Scouts had to go to a different Concourse since what they wanted was not on Concourse B. But we set a time to rendezvous and used the Buddy system. Everyone was back in time and we took off as scheduled.

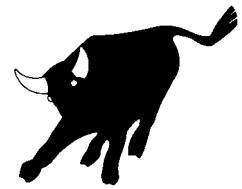


It was an uneventful flight to Albuquerque. We landed close to on time. Steve, Bob and I went off to rent the vans while David and the Crew got the luggage. Everything worked smooth as silk, almost like it was planned that way. We loaded up and drove over to check in the University of New Mexico where we were staying the next two evenings. On the way over it seemed like the Crew could not wait to disrobe from Class A to Class F uniform. I was upset but controlled myself as now was not the time to lose it.

After we checked in and changed to our Crew T-shirts and Shorts for comfort, we loaded up and went over to Old Albuquerque area to tour and eat. Our first stop was Little Anita's Mexican Restaurant since food was top of most everyone's list. We got our own room and everyone ordered whatever they wanted. This was a budgeted meal so many of the Scouts were very relieved to hear Mr. Morin was picking up the bill. It was really good Southwest Mexican food though some of the Scouts had hamburgers.



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Then we walked down to Old Albuquerque for a walk around and through the shops. It was a neat place and some interesting spots. Several of the Scouts had money burning a hole in their pockets and just had to buy knives. Others found the ice cream parlor or the store that sold hot sauce of all kinds. There were several that wanted to stay longer, but the stores were closing at 6:00. So after a Crew Meeting and vote, we decided to move on to go up to Sandia Peak.

Sandia Peak is a tramway that takes you up through the Cibola National Forest to the mountains that are to the east of Albuquerque. It takes us up close to 4,000 feet in elevation and it offers some awesome views as we traversed through the sky over two towers.

The views from the peak were awesome. You could see for miles and the city of Albuquerque looked so small from this vantage point. The temperature difference from our ascent as we probably dropped 15 degrees. You could even see the storms come across the landscape as adjoining areas were left void of disturbance. The Advisors were set to take a hike but got caught by a storm and found shelter. The Scouts retreated to the lodge and found a television (the electronic babysitter) or played cards. While our original plan was to watch the sunset, we decided to go down early as a group.

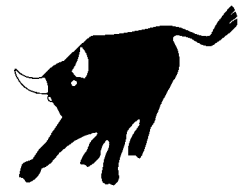


Returning back to the UNM campus home, we settled in. I did insist on a Crew Meeting Thorns and Roses session that we held in the dorm kitchen. During the Crew Meeting we discussed the schedule for the next day. Thorns and Roses is a session that we would hold daily on the Cavalcade. We would go around the room once to share our Thorn for the day, what was the downside of the day. This is when I shared my disappointment in the Crew disrobing before we arrived to UNM Campus in the afternoon. The point was well taken. The second pass around the Crew concentrated on our Rose for the day, which there were many varied Roses reported.

A long first day to the Cavalcade, but it was a Great Day for Scouting.



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July 23, 2004 – Touring New Mexico

David and I awoke early since we were two hours different on time. We showered early and took a walk to Denny's for breakfast. When we got back the rest of the Crew was also up and ready. We had breakfast ordered in the Dining Hall. Unfortunately we let the Scouts sleep in and they missed the Cheerleaders that shared the campus with us.

After breakfast we went to the Pueblo Indian Museum. It was a very interesting place where we got to learn more about Native Americans and the history of the Pueblos. They had a great gift shop that we spent time at. We found some awesome music for OA ceremonies there. They also had some great Indian artifacts but Old Albuquerque probably had better prices.



While we were touring the Museum, we found out the Pueblo Villages we had planned to visit were closed. So we went to Plan B, the closest open Pueblo was Taos which was three hours away. We sped on our way but as we went, I made a decision to forego the Pueblos and to stop in Sante Fe since some of the Scouts expressed an interest to stay in Old Albuquerque. We drove around the town several times before we figured out parking. Finally we pulled in and explored the old Southwest Capitol of New Mexico.



It was a quaint little town with some interesting things. But it was pricey and artsy. But we gave the Crew a couple of hours of loose time to roam around town. For many of us this was our chance to get last minute supplies before we headed out for Philmont. Probably the highlight for me was to tour St. Francis Cathedral and to eat some ice cream. We set 3:00 as our meeting time and loaded up again.

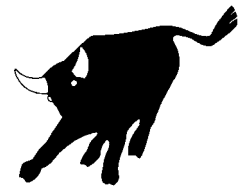
On the way back to Albuquerque, we stopped at a relatively new museum that I had heard of called the Legends of New Mexico. Here they focused on displays of some of the colorful history and inhabitants of New Mexico over the years. Among those were several that we had come to know including Billy the Kid and Bat Masterson. Waite Phillips was certainly mentioned here as well, as were the local legends such as the Unser Racing family.



At this museum there was also a collection of Windmills that were of different sizes and shapes. This was very different and interesting. But a storm was coming in from the west that would move us along.



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We went on to Albuquerque, where we went to eat at Fresh Choices in downtown. We found it advertised as an “All you Can Eat Pasta and Pizza” place. It was every thing as advertised and we were the only ones in the restaurant so we got great service. The managers name was Melissa and she had a great time with the Scouts. We stayed afterwards just talking to her and enjoying the cool evening breezes.

On the way back to the University, we passed by several groups of Cheerleaders that were there for a Cheerleader Camp. Several of the Scouts decided it was time to take a walk and explore the campus.

We had our Crew Meeting at 9:15 along with our nightly Thorns and Roses session. We all have had enough touring, it was time to go to Philmont.





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July 24, 2003 – On to Philmont

The plan was to arise early, have the van packed and be in line for breakfast before the doors opened at 7:00 AM. Michael Stong was banging on doors by 6:00 waking up the Crew. He banged until they opened the door and he could actually see them standing. Incredibly, all of the Scouts had their gear packed and loaded in the van by 6:35. We actually were first in line for breakfast and had a chance to check out the cheerleaders that followed us in for breakfast.

Exercising extreme will power, Michael had the whole crew moving at 7:30. On returning our keys for the dorms, we found that they wanted our meal cards as well. All was well until Andrew could not find his meal card. We searched all over for it until finally Andrew just plunked down the \$5 for a lost card. With that behind us we were on our way to Philmont.



It was over a 3 hour drive to Cimarron from Albuquerque. We stayed on Highway I-25 all of the way. The sights were great along the way. It was certainly different landscape than Georgia. The boys kept occupied with a variety of things along the way. We pulled over in Las Vegas (New Mexico) for gas and a chance for the Scouts to say they had been to Las Vegas.



We pulled into Philmont Base Camp at 11:05. Michael and I did some quick registration stuff. At least registered enough to get our Tent assignments and tickets for lunch. We parked the cars, left the gear in them and headed off to lunch.

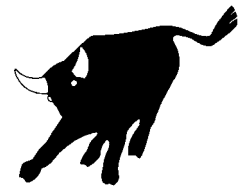
After lunch we were scheduled to meet our Horseman and Wrangler at the Welcome Pavilion. But first we had to move in our tents. The Advisors were there early but our Horseman Eric Perry and Wrangler Mitch Schroeder were there in advance waiting for us. It was not hard to spot each other as we were the ones in cowboy boots and not hiking boots. And Eric and Mitch had on Cowboy Hats.

Eric was a junior from Virginia Tech majoring in Civil Engineering. He is an Eagle Scout with over 80 Merit Badges. He has been on eight other Cavalcades before this. We all continued to be very impressed with Eric, in fact we became more impressed every day with this young man. He was always polite, always cheerful, always helpful and was blessed with unlimited energy. He was an outstanding role model for our Scouts to be with and follow for this Cavalcade.





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Mitch was our wrangler. He had just graduated from High School in Iowa. Mitch is also an Eagle Scout and was working the Ranch Hand program this summer at Philmont. That gives him one Cavalcade and we were lucky enough to have him with us. He was a quiet guy but he was very knowledgeable around horses.



Eric, Mitch, Michael and I worked through the rest of the Registration process quickly. I did the paperwork in Registration, while Michael and Eric worked through Logistics. Eric and Mitch had already pulled our food and equipment, so we missed that station altogether. We did get our Photos taken in front of the Wagon

On we went where we did our Medical Checks. A few of us had weight anxieties and a couple had to sit and take a second blood pressure check. But in the end we all passed and were cleared to go. Eric and Mitch reviewed with us what to expect, what to pack and got to know the Crew better while we were waiting.

We had a window of time to go across to see the Philmont Museum. It had pictures and gear from the 60 year history of Philmont. Some of the gear on display was the same gear the Advisors used as Scouts in the 60's. Times have changed.

We had a little down time to explore Base Camp and the Trading Post. Some of us had a chance to celebrate making weight. The Trading Post had been remodeled and changed since I was here last. There was lot's of neat stuff and souvenirs to tempt us all.

Before long it was dinner time and then meetings for the Advisors, Crew Leader and the Chaplain's Aide. Drought conditions existed and there was a ban on outdoor fires. We also learned of a new program the Chaplain's staff was sponsoring for Duty to God. There are requirements that the Chaplain's Aide keeps track of, then we can buy the patch after we are back. We decided that we were going to go for this program.

At 7:00 every day Philmont Base Camp shuts down as the daily religious services are held. Steve, Bob and John Nuttall went over to the Protestant Service. It turned out that Steve knew the preacher there from a friend in Atlanta. Reverend Gross was a retired Lutheran Pastor from Montana. I took the rest of the Crew to the Catholic Mass. Father Don Hummel, who was the National Catholic Chaplain to Scouting, said the Mass.





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After the services, we all gathered for the opening campfire. It was the New Mexico story, which was basically the same as 2000 and 2002. But for those that were new to Philmont and New Mexico, it was an outstanding program. Michael went down and received an American Flag to carry throughout our Trek.

After the campfire, we regrouped in the pavilion. Eric P. gave us our options for the morning. An early start would help us to get good horses. So we agreed to be at breakfast by 6:30 dressed and ready to go for the day. The crew had our Thorns and Roses session for the day. There were mostly all Roses, very few Thorns today.

The Advisors checked out the Advisors Lounge for a bit but we did not last long. It was going to be an early morning.





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July 25, 2003 – We should have been Cowboys

We all got to the Dining Hall on time, but we were among the last Crew to be called. Probably because the other Crews were hiking and they were headed out of Camp today. On the Cavalcade, you stay in Base Camp two nights so you can receive some horse training. But we ate quickly and then loaded up in the vans to head for the Philmont Livestock HQ (LHQ).

We did arrive before the other Cavalcade Crew that would also be out the same time as us. Eric and Mitch awaited us to give us horse training the Philmont way. We covered many of the basics such as the parts of the horse, grooming, saddling and putting on the bridles. After this we were all assigned our horses for the week. We went from there to get our tack assigned so we could saddle up our new friends.



The horse assignments were as follows:

Advisors

Mr. Morin – Post
 Mr. Harrison – Montego Bay
 Mr. Jaracz – Rhesus
 Mr. Stong – Oh Boy

Scouts

Michael Stong – High Five
 Eric Daiber – Honkie
 Stephen Green – Tom Thumb
 Eric Harrison – Crook
 Alex Jaracz – 60 Dollars
 Matthew McIsaac - Hawk

Thomas Mc Nabb – Oreo
 Doug Morin – Brennan
 Kevin Ness – Scout
 John Nuttall – Tennessee
 Andrew Vandenberg – Red Wing

We all got our tack assigned and saddled our horses up. There were the initial first day issues, mostly with getting the saddles cinched up and the bridles in the mouth. But overall everyone did a pretty good job. We came to understand the term hung like a horse this afternoon as well. A horse in the next corral decided to mount a female horse for our education and entertainment. After the fourth time the novelty wore off.



Once we got set, we went for a trail ride out in the pastures towards the Urraca Mesa. We got a good view of the Tooth of Time on the way. This is probably the most famous landmark in Philmont. We had lunch in a group of trees on a hill. It was your typical Philmont lunch of crackers, squeeze cheese, salami stick and a granola bar. We mounted back up after lunch and circled back to the LHQ. There was some challenge staying in a straight line but overall everyone



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handled their horses well. As we met the road, we had a great overview of not only Base Camp but also the LHQ and the Training Center. It is quite a complex. When we arrived back to the LHQ, we unsaddled and fed the horses.



It was 2:45 when we left the LHQ for Base Camp. We had a 4:00 appointment to tour Villa Philmonte, the former home of Waite Phillips – the benefactor of Philmont. It was an incredible tour. It gave us a better view at the spirit of Waite Phillips, his vision for the area and the nature of the outdoorsman. Adjacent to the mansion is the Philmont Training Center. That will probably be my next reason to return to Philmont.

Dinner was next and then we were to meet Eric and Mitch for an equipment shakedown at our tents. The shakedown is to kick out of our gear items we would not need. What did not fit in the Philmont issued Stuff Sack, did not go on the Cavalcade. The experience we had from our 2000 Cavalcade showed as we had very few items that shook out. Eric went out of his way to tell me how prepared the Crew was.

We had some time after the shakedown. Several of us laid down for a power nap until the Trading Post opened up after the evening services. Most of us headed down to the Trading Post for Ice Cream. We were missing two from the Crew – John and Andrew. Andrew just took an extra long nap. John, it turned out woke up from his nap to find the camp heading for the opening campfire (the same one we saw the first night). So he followed the crowd and enjoyed a second time. He was hoping to find our Crew when the Patrol Leaders went down for the flag but Michael did not go down there this night. We were reunited when he came back to the tents. We held Thorns and Roses outside the Snack Bar and called it an early night. It was a good day today at Philmont.





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July 26, 2003 LHQ to Clark's Fork

It was a Great Day for Scouting at 6:00 this morning. We had to pack up our stuff sacks and saddlebags. The remaining gear was put back in the vans, which would sit at LHQ while we are out on the trail. After breakfast we drove over to the LHQ at 7:40 to begin our journey.

First, we fed and saddled our horses. Then we needed to get introduced to our packhorses and get a lesson on how to pack them. Nibbles was an old friend from our 2000 visit. He was so named because he liked to nibble on people or grass. Cloud, who we would later learn where he is named after the cloud that follows behind him. Valentine was a skittish little horse with a big heart brand on his back thigh. Generally a packhorse makes that designation because they lack the intelligence or cooperation to be a trail horse.



Packing the packhorses is an art itself that we would learn. Balancing the weight from side to side then tying a diamond hitch to secure the pack. Mr. Harrison, Mr. Stong and I all had experience with this back when we were Scouts many years ago. After Eric and Mitch packed out Valentine, the Crew got to try their hand with Nibbles and Cloud.



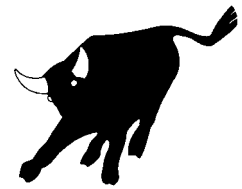
Today's ride would be relatively easy. We rode past Base Camp and through the Staff's Frisbee golf course to the north side of the Tooth Ridge. We continued through the big valley that Eric identified as the buffalo pasture. Last time we found some sheds in this pasture, we would not be as lucky this time around. It was a hot ride as we were in the sun most of the way. But the ride went quickly and by 12:45 we were at Clarks Fork.

After feeding the horses and putting up our tack, we walked down to the cabin for our porch talk and lunch. While we were there the Crew learned about the Philmont treasure hunt tradition of Swap boxes. These were boxes where unwanted foods were left for others that wanted them. Our Crew jumped into this activity with both feet, combing through the box for their new favorites. The nice thing about a Cavalcade is that you did not have to worry about weight as much as those backpacking.

We signed up for a 3:00 Branding session but we never made that. We spent the day instead learning about the Bearmuda Triangle and how to set up camp the Philmont way. This was to ensure safety from bears and mini bears while in camp. All smellables had to be raised up in the bear bags. Tents were away from the bear bags and the kitchen/sump area. All of the Crew gear got stored under a low hanging dining fly.



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At Clarks Fork we enjoyed a Chuck Wagon dinner of Beef Stew, biscuits and peach cobbler. Matt and Alex went up to help cook the dinner while the rest of us finished setting up camp. There was a brand new dining area this year for Clarks Fork. It had a long line of a charcoal that Dutch Ovens could be cooked on. They must have used 50 Dutch Ovens for dinner that night. But there was plenty for seconds on everything.



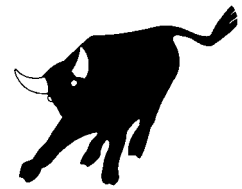
After dinner we kind of kicked back until the evening campfire. The Crew either were pitching horseshoes or lassoing the fake steer. Some of them got quite good at it. But as all games, they sometimes go to far as they started to lasso each other. We went to the Campfire that night where there were songs, stories and good fellowship. WE kept waiting for the Bear song to reappear from the 2000 Campfire but it was not going to happen.

We had a quick Thorns & Roses session back in camp. We made plans for an early morning and called it a night.





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July 27, 2003 – Clarks Fork to Beaubain

An early day it was as we arose at 3:30 AM. This would be our longest day on the trail so we needed to get an early start if we wanted to make it to Beaubain before dark. Eric H., Alex and Michael left to go get the packhorses while we all broke camp. We had it all together and had five minutes to spare before the packhorses came down the trail. We had to pack them in the dark since the LED lights would spook the horses, especially Valentine.



By 5:45 AM we were on our way up to the corral to feed, curry and saddle our horses. The sun was finally beginning to rise over the horizon, as we were getting ready to saddle up and hit the trail. We rode out to the north past the Cimmaroncito Reservoir where we got some photo opportunities. Then we went up past the Hunting Lodge and up along the creek to Cyphers Mine. It was a nice ride though the woods crossing the creek several times along the way and we spotted several deer.



We arrived at Cyphers Mine about 10:30; there was a program there for mining and blacksmithing. We were introduced to these in the porch talk, which was given to us in character of the earlier period. The Scouts also jumped right into their new hobby of hitting the swap box. Several others took the time to go down to pan for gold in the stream. We have as much chance as hitting the lottery as we had in finding gold there. But it was good fun and an experience.

The mine tour was a true experience as we were the muckers, the lowest step on the food chain in the mine. We were given a lecture on how the mine worked and what was expected of us muckers. With that we were given our mandatory brain buckets and entered the mine for a tour. When we reached the end of the mine, the head lamps were ordered out and we had to work together as a Crew to find our way out in the dark. Thank God for the brain buckets as there were many low hanging timbers.

After the mine tour, we stopped by the blacksmith's shop for a live demonstration. Mrs. Sanderson was there in character of the period. The staffer that played the part never broke character throughout the demo. First she explained about the blacksmith shop and asked for the strongest Crew Member to assist her. John Nuttall immediately identified himself as the volunteer. As Mrs. Sanderson identified all of the tools that a blacksmith used, she handed them to John to hold.





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After about the 20th tool, John was getting loaded down and wishing he had not volunteered for this duty.



Then we all took turns making an S hook. We would have to heat the piece of metal and then shape it using the tools and an anvil. One important thing she neglected to tell us up front was not to hit the anvil with the hammer. Eric Daiber was the first to make the mistake by hitting “Rosie”, the anvil, with the hammer when he missed the piece of metal. Eric was scolded for this faux faux and was made to bend down give Rosie a hug and kiss and apologize for hurting her. Eric was not the only one to make such an action as each of the Crew got a chance to shape and form the S hook.

When we were done at the Blacksmith, we filled water bottles and saddled up for our long ride to Beaubain. It was almost a four hour ride mostly over back country roads. We ascended in altitude and then rode along the ridge at over 10,000 feet past Bear Mountain and Black Mountain. The views were spectacular as we rode along to Comanche Pass. We stopped for a late lunch on the way but it was nice to have a break out of the saddle.

From there it was a relatively short ride through the woods down into the Beaubain valley. We arrived about 4:30 and put the horses up in the corral with feed. Then we went over to the cabin for a quick porch talk about Beaubain and its history. Of course the swap boxes got a good look over by the Crew.

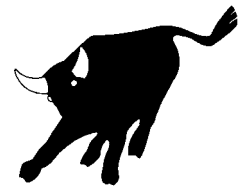
We cooked dinner in site for the first time. Eric came over to make sure we had things under control and being done the Philmont way. Everyone was hungry and tired at that point. There was a campfire program that night, but we opted out of seeing it. The early morning start had us looking for our tents early after our nightly Thorns & Roses session. Since it was Sunday, we also had an enhanced worship service led by Stephen Green and Alex Jaracz.



Not long after we laid down, though I had already drifted off, there was a startling yell of MR. MORIN, MR. MORIN.... One of the Scouts was sure that they heard a bear. What should they do? After I established everyone was safe in their tents, I told them to stay in their tents with their eyes closed. Nothing else was heard that night except the heavy dew that fell over night.



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July 27, 2003 – Beaubien to Fish Camp

This was a light day in the saddle. Fish Camp was not far down the trail after we went down the hill to Phillips Junction (PJ). So where yesterday was the longest day of our Cavalcade, today was the shortest. So we all had a chance to sleep in a bit today which was nice. The Advisors had hot water boiling for coffee early. The Crew heard the melodious sounds of “It’s a Great Day for Scouting” about 7:30 AM.

After breakfast, the Crew went down to brand their boots, belts and other gear with the Philmont brands. Because all of our gear was down, I stayed back to keep bears and mini bears from our gear. It gave me a chance to catch up on my journal. Eventually the Crew came back up with the packhorses so we could get loaded up. The Advisors advised while the Crew worked together to tie down the gear.



Through it all we were saddled and left Beaubien by 11:00 AM. We rode down to the end of the Beaubien meadow to the west, where we stopped to practice the Barrel Race for the Gymkhana. We all got to try the course twice and most were getting the hang of it. Stephen and John’s horses were being stubborn about how they wanted to run the course.

We rode down the hikers trail to PJ. Somehow I got in as the lead horse and Post was really cautious and slow along the switchbacks. But it kept everyone together as the Scouts were throwing things back and forth from horse to horse. You could tell that the confidence of the riders had grown tremendously since we got to Philmont.

Once we were down at PJ, we stopped for lunch (more squeeze cheese and crackers). Alex bagged a mini bear with a rock, which caused a lot of excitement. Especially from one of the female staffer’s from PJ who carried on about how her pet mini bear was dead. Eric helped Alex to save the tail as a souvenir and ditch the rest of the mini bear to stop the excitement.

After we restocked on food, we repacked the packhorses and road down the road to Fish Camp. It was an easy ride down along Buck Creek, traversing across the creek several times along the way. When we arrived at Fish Camp, we put the horses in the small corral that was there and fed the horses. Eric started to chew on an oat pellet while we were waiting. After he explained to our Crew how good it was, Michael, Alex, Eric D, Eric H. Matt and Doug were chewing on oat pellets. Matt even went back for seconds and tried to convince John, but John was not about to eat horse food.





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We took the packhorses down and tied them up in the campsite while we went down for a porch talk. The Camp Director, who portrayed himself as Waite Phillips, greeted us there. Completely in character, he gave us tour of the Fish Camp cabin and it's history. He invited us back up later that night for more stories and the Advisors coffee.

When we got back to camp, Eric had unloaded all of the packhorses by himself and had everything neatly stacked for us. As we started to set up our Camp, Eric and Mitch saddled up and rode back to Beaubien where they were going to shoe a couple horses and attend a staff dinner up there. Eric D and I cooked chili and chocolate pudding for dinner that night.

We all went down to the Fish Camp cabin for some more stories from "Waite Phillips". He even had his wife with him this time. He related an experience that he had just four days ago as Elliot Phillips, Waite's real son who is now 85, paid them a visit at Fish Camp. "Waite" admitted to being a bit intimidated performing his monologue of Waite Phillip's life with Elliot in the audience watching. But he said that Elliot was very complementary to the stories and the way he told about his father's life.

After the stories, we made it back to our camp where we sat through another night of Thorns & Roses. Tomorrow was out layover day. The Crew decided to get up early and do our conservation project first thing before it got hot.





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July 28, 2003 Layover Day

David and I got up about 6:30 AM to get coffee and hot water going. We woke the Crew up about 7:00 for breakfast and such. Unfortunately we were not moving very fast or efficient this morning so we ended up sending the Crew on to the Conservation Project while the Advisors did clean up and rehung the Bear Bags.



The staffers leading the Conservation were Ethan and Frank. Ethan was a student from the University of Missouri majoring in Wildlife Conservation. He had wild reddish hair and was very entertaining as he explained the Conservation project. He treated the entire lesson on conservation as an integral part of the project. They explained the 4 C's of conservation in an interactive way and Doug became Billy in their act. Several of our Crew Members ended up sitting in "The Hole" (which was a pile of rocks) for answering a question in a dumb way. Eric D and John seemed to be champions of the Hole. In the meantime Doug, Texas, Michael and McIsaac got to sing I'm a Little Teapot for their ineptness in the exercise.

We learned all about the tools we were going to use for the exercise. These included the Advisor's Leaning Tool (which I immediately took to), the Rock Multiplier (sledge hammer), the Texas Teaspoon (pointed shovel), the Full Spoon (flat scoop shovel), the Testicle Cutter (bolt cutters) and the Brain Buckets (helmets). The importance and usefulness of the Brain Buckets were described in full details including how your mother could use the contents to make brain jerky after the remains were mailed back to her after your misfortunes.

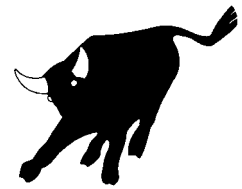
Before we left for the project Ethan also warned and instructed on the virtues of hydration to avoid illness. To demonstrate this point he invite all comers to a water chugging contest. Several of our Scouts challenged Ethan but no one could match him. He finished his liter nalgene bottle in 7 seconds flat. Doug was our best but he finished at least 5 seconds behind Ethan.



There was a crew on the project with us from Saudi Arabia. It turned out their Crew shirts were the same rust color Cool Max shirts that we had. It made it tough to tell the Crews apart. Because of the military buildup in the Middle East, most of the dependants were sent home to the States for safety. They all met in the Denver Airport from all over the globe to take part on their Trek. At least one of the Advisors was still stationed in Saudi Arabia, so he turned out to be the furthest to travel to get to Philmont. It turned out



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he was originally from Augusta and has been a season ticket holders for UGA Football even though he has been stationed in Saudi for the past 29 years. His family loves him for the tickets he gives them each year.



Our project ended up being three fold. David, Doug and John went up the hill with the Testicle Cutters to cut out some old barbed wire fences. Eric H led a group that used the Rock Multipliers to make gravel out of rocks. Then there was my group that worked on doing some river diversion of the Aqua Fria River. Over time the river washed out and spread it self, making for very shallow areas. It helped to make the river keep its depth so that the trout and other fish could survive better. Bob and I used the Advisor's Leaning tool quite a bit, not only to lean on but also to spread gravel after the wheel barrels got dumped. Overall it was a quick and entertaining three hours of Conservation Project.

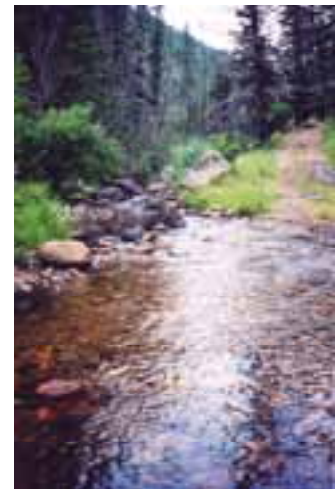
The rest of the program at Fish Camp was fly fishing which did not catch many of our interests. So we ended up going back to camp to hang out and relax. Several of the Crew went down to the corral to eat oats and chase mini bears. Steve and I sat down to work on our journals. The afternoon refreshing mist chased us in our tents where we found more than a tempting notion to take a nap to make up for our many early mornings.

We all had dinner about 6:00. Eric and Mitch came in late after we had already gotten done. But we cooked them up some Ramen Noodles since they were hungry after working the cattle today. It was no day off for them today.

David and I went down for the Advisors Coffee at 7:00. We ran into Ethan down there as he was serving the coffee tonight. We also ran into a former Scout from Troop 714 down there that was out on a trek with a Crew from the Northwest. We knew many of the same people from 714 to show what a small world it is.

Unfortunately we left John and Mr. Harrison at camp alone doing dishes with the bear bags down. So did the rest of the Crew. So Mr. H had a big thorn for the day with this. We all gathered late for Thorns & Roses. Eric joined us as did Ethan as he made his rounds checking campsites.

It was another great day at Philmont.





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July 30, 2003 – Fish Camp to Abreu

We were back on our early morning routine again today. We were up at 4:30 to break camp early. The Crew brought the Pack Horses down to get them loaded up. Unfortunately they did not tie them up and away they wandered. Nibbles went on back to the corral looking for something to eat. But Cloud went on down stream and was almost all of the way to the Lodge before they got him.

Once we got packed up, we rode down by the Lodge where we could get filled with water for the day. In 2000 we crossed the river here and went over the Rayado Trail and over the Notch. But now they did not let the Cavalcades go that way anymore. After doing it back in 2000, I knew why as I still remember Michael Stong and Joker sliding down the rocky trail.



So instead we went over Webster's Pass across Beaubien Meadow to Fowlers Pass. It was a steep climb out of Fish Camp to Webster's Pass, we were sure glad the horses did the climbing on this trip. We stopped along the way to practice Gymkhana on the Barrel Race and the Figure 8. Everyone was doing very well on these; we have come a long way in a few days.

Instead of going straight to Abreu, we went over to Crater Lake to the site of the Continental Tie and Lumber Company. We sat down and had lunch here. It was time to treat some nasty blisters on John's feet as well. After lunch we lined up to do some spar pole climbing. First we had to get the necessary instruction on how to do this and the safety talks. We used gaffs, harnesses, rope and of course the ever present Brain Bucket. We were told emphatically here that mountain chicks really dig men in Brain Buckets.



David and I stayed on the ground taking pictures as the rest of the Crew went up the 40 foot poles. Everyone else made it to the top and kissed Miss Carrie Beaner. Steve doesn't want the fact that he made it to be too well known just in case there is a strike a Bell South again. Eric and Mitch put everyone to shame as they scaled right up the pole like cats.

After we were done we saddled up and rode on to Abreu. We took some rough trails down rocks but the horses did fine on these trails. It was a pretty day and a nice ride across the mountain range. We came out across Stone Wall Pass and down the hill to Abreu.



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The corral was way up the hill from the rest of the camp. Then we stayed on the other side of the main camp along the side of the Rayado River. It was the same campsite that we stayed at in 2000. It was just a long way from the corrals but there was nothing really any closer.

Dinner at Abreu was a Cantina Southwestern dinner with burritos and churros for dessert. There were only three crews in camp so it was a pretty close group. It started raining about as we said the Philmont Grace, some of those big rain drops that hurt you when they hit. We moved dinner under cover and served quickly.



We finished dinner and clean up by 6:00 tonight which was a nice treat. When we wandered back to camp, who do you think we would see but Ethan. He was hiking across from Fish Camp on his night off. He said he was on his way in to Cimarron to meet some folks for dinner. But he stopped to talk and challenge our guys in a water chugging contest again. He beat our guys again soundly.

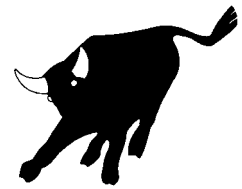
By 7:00 Mr. Stong and I went down for the Advisors Coffee. We got a nice tour of the cabin and how it was done in period style for the Southwestern Mexicans. The old stove and kitchen were right up my alley. Some of the Scouts went chasing by the porch chasing chickens. Eric Daiber, John Nuttall and Thomas were in hot pursuit but the lead chaser was Eric Harrison. There were several that also tried their hand at milking goats. Meanwhile in the Cantina, we had several Scouts that had set up shop playing cards and drinking Root Beers. It was close to 9:00 and Ethan still had not left Abreu as he was having a grand time with our guys again.



We all returned back to camp for Thorns and Roses. Eric and Mitch joined us tonight. Eric explained how he wanted to get going early so we could get back to LHQ by about 9:30 AM. This meant another 4:00 AM morning. As we hung the bear bags we could see the vastness of the stars in the Philmont sky. What a sight, you just don't see this many in Georgia. We fell asleep to the sound of the Rayado River rushing by.



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July 31, 2003 – Abreu to Base Camp

Four o'clock does come early in the morning. Today was no exception. I had pack Horse duty today so I had to get moving early just to pack my personal gear before I made the hike to the corral and back. When we got back with the pack horses, there was some gear ready to load but the Scouts were still getting themselves together. But by now we had gotten really good at this, just in time for the last morning.



We all went to the corral and saddled up for the ride back to LHQ. We went back up the hill over Stonewall Pass again. As we were going through the low brush there was a cry for help along the way. It seemed that John did not cinch his saddle up tight enough this morning and he was at a 90° sideways angle to the horse until he fell to the ground. Fortunately he was not hurt but unfortunately no one caught the moment on film for the historians report.



From Stonewall Pass we followed the road down past Lovers Leap and the Tooth of Time. What a great way to end a trek by passing by the most famous of all Philmont landmarks, the Tooth. We made it back into LHQ at 9:25 AM. What timing!

We unloaded our personal gear, unbridled the horses and helped Eric to check our Crew gear back in. After that we were able to load our personal gear into our vans and head back to Base Camp. We were assigned our tents for the night and had a chance to have some pizza for lunch. A shower was tempting but we still had to go back to ride in the Gymkhana. So we did not want the horses to not recognize us so we skipped the shower for now.

The Crew we were competing against was from Peoria Illinois. They were out on the trail the same time as us, just moving in a different direction through the South country. We had not run into them at all during our trek since we left base camp.

There were five events to the Gymkhana – Barrel Race, the Figure Eight, Flag Race, Flag Relay and Steer Penning. Andrew and Red Wing placed 1st in the first three events. We are sure Andrew's equestrian abilities had something to do about it but Red Wing was one fast horse. Michael came in 2nd Place in the Barrel Race & the Figure 8 and Matt came in 2nd in the Flag race. Overall we came in first on the first four events. On the steer penning, we let a steer get loose around the back and ended up letting the Peoria boys get an event on us.





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We won two watermelons for our efforts. We gave one of the watermelons to the Crew from Peoria to enjoy and took ours back to Base Camp with us. We fed our horses and said a last goodbye to our steeds. It was amazing how attached you could come in such a short period.

We went back to Base Camp and the showers at last. The hot water felt good. What we thought was a nice trail tan, peeled of in layers with some soap and elbow grease. Clean clothes felt especially nice after a week on the trail.

We had a chance to visit the Trading Post before dinner. They were having a sale on some shirts that we got a chance to take advantage of. I also picked up the Duty to God patches that we earned while we were on the Trail. This was the new award that Stephen as our Chaplain's Aide kept us on focus for. It is a really cool patch that only a few Crews actually earned.



After dinner, we went on to the evening services. The evening refreshing mists fell just in time so we moved under cover for the Catholic Mass. We had the Bishop from Santa Fe say the Mass for us tonight, what a nice treat.



After Mass we gathered back at the tents to get ready for the Closing Campfire. It was a really nice campfire with skits, songs and a nice slide show of the history and beauty to Philmont. Michael and I got called down with the rest of the Crew Leaders and Advisors to get our Arrowheads and "We Made It" plaque. When the campfire ended, we gathered one last time with Eric and Mitch. Eric presented us with our Gymkhana patches, which are like the Arrowheads, only earned not purchased. We said our goodbyes to Eric and Mitch and thanked them for their help over the past week.

We split up for a bit afterwards before we gathered again at the pavilion to have our watermelon and our last Thorns & Roses session. I passed out the Philmont Arrowheads and the Duty to God patches to everyone. I told them I was going to hold the Crew Photos until we hit Atlanta so they would survive the trip. We agreed to rise by 5:45 to be on the road by 6:30. This was our last night at Philmont.





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August 1, 2003 – Back to Atlanta

We got up on time. After all getting up at 5:45 seemed like sleeping in after this week. We got the continental breakfast from the Dining Hall and brought it over to the tents to divide up. Juice and a Danish, not much to get us down the road.

Everything seemed to be on schedule, and then it wasn't. I couldn't find my camera, so I ended up down by the Closing Campfire ring. Fortunately I found it packed safely away in my backpack. Thomas couldn't find his flashlight, so Steve drove him over to the LHQ to look for it. Before we knew it the time was 6:55 as we were pulling out of Base Camp 25 minutes late.



Our plans were to stop in Las Vegas again for a bite of real food on the way to Albuquerque. But as we were driving through Cimarron I look at the airline tickets and realized we had an 11:05 flight and a better than 3 hour drive ahead of us. So I set a pace to get us there as quickly as possible. The others followed dutifully when I sped past Las Vegas. We rolled into the Car Rental return at 10:00 and caught the vans to the airport. The Delta agent saw us coming and opened up a special counter for us, little did he know that we really needed the special help. As Scouts got through, I sent them on in buddy pairs to get through security, which had quite a line. Doug and I brought up the rear and swept the way through.



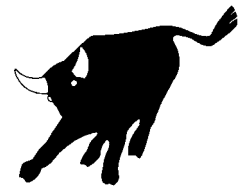
We made it to the gate by 10:40 and everyone was pretty hungry. That Danish was wearing thin. But we were so close to boarding we made everyone stay right there. Now was not the time to lose a Scout. We didn't end up boarding until 11:00 but we didn't know and couldn't take a chance.

So once we were on the plane, we could have eaten most anything but had to settle for pretzels and a Coke. The flight attendants felt sorry for us and gave us extra pretzels. John also was prepared and had his own personal stash of goodies that he shared a bit around.

We landed a few minutes early, which was amazing considering we took off late. So we stopped at the food courts on the Concourse to get some lunch before we went to baggage claim. It didn't take long for everyone to devour their food. I didn't want to deliver them back to their parents complaining about being hungry, it would have put a damper on an otherwise perfect trip.



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In Baggage Claim our rides were waiting for us. We loaded up and drove back to LaSalette Hall. As we all said goodbye, I handed out the Crew pictures and the 2003 Cavalcade came to an end. But it will live in the minds of the fifteen on the Crew for the rest of our lives as we remember the magic of Philmont in the years to come. Thanks to everyone on the Crew for sharing this special time with me. I will never forget it.

Yours in Scouting,

Tom Morin
Scoutmaster
Troop 1776

