

When the crew returned, I asked them what they thought, and they kind of shrugged their shoulders and said it was OK. I got the impression that they were rather indifferent to the view, but when I got the pictures back I saw how beautiful it was. Several weeks later Chris Eddleman told me that the view was probably the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. Now, I'm sorry I missed it.

**The crew returned and we had breakfast. We left and made our way back to base camp. It was a long, dry hike. We made very good time and got back to base camp at 10:30 am.**

**They don't welcome you back with a fanfare or by a big pat on the back – just a lonely signpost in the desert that reads, “Welcome back. You made it.”**

Returning from an experience like this, I found it fitting that there was no one there to welcome you back. This was something that we completed together as a crew, and we stayed beneath the sign post in the hot desert sun for a time, taking pictures and enjoying the last moments of our trip to the backcountry. I think that all those that stood there and read that sign, had a deep sense of pride in their own accomplishment. We had all overcome something within ourselves which enabled us to



complete the trail, whether it be a physical or emotional roadblock. We found it within ourselves to reach out to others in the crew and help them when they were in need, and swallowed hard and accepted the help of our friends when we were in need of help ourselves. We stood side by side and drank in the beauty of the land, attaining an unspoken kinship with those that shared the experience. Yes, I did make it – and even better than that, we *all* made it.

**When we got into camp we immediately checked in our gear and got our tent assignments. We dumped our gear in our tent and made our way to the PX. Someone that worked there said we really should get showers first (i.e. we stink) but we instead went on into the PX. I got an ice cream and James got Nachos. Eddie got Ice Cream, an Icee, and a Snickers.**

The kids had earned a trip to the snack bar, and there was not one adult that was about to stop them from going just because that were a bit odiferous. Instead, we all went to the PX and enjoyed the food with them.

**The adults got a shower then. I couldn't believe the amount of dirt that came off of me!**

**We then got lunch – the boys were still dirty. The big craving for most everyone was milk. Most had 2 or 3 glasses with their meal. I had coffee.**

**It looks like more rain this afternoon. I am surprised how the storms gather so quickly and then dissipate.**

**The afternoon was spent doing laundry and shopping. The goys took a shower and I got our clothes and washed with the other leaders. While we were doing this most of the boys were at the snack bar stuffing themselves.**

Doing the laundry was really foul. This stuff was dirty. If we had brought more clothing with us on the trail though, I imagine that we would have had more clothes that were just as dirty. I have a theory that the clothing reaches a certain saturation point, where no more dirt could adhere to the clothing. We reached that point after 3 days or so and then the dirt fell off instead of collecting on the clothing.

These washing machines were good ones, but I still had to wash each load twice.

**After laundry was done, we went to the store to buy gifts. I got Natalie a cute bear, Andrew a hat, Mom and I got shirts. There are so many things that you can buy there. James got a belt and mug. I also got a mug and book.**

**After that, James and I just hung around together until supper. It was good to spend time together off the trail. We had supper at 5:45 – once again milk was the big hit.**

I think to describe that afternoon in a word, I would use “contentment”. We didn't have anything to do that was pressing. About all we had to do all afternoon was wash clothes and take showers. It was relaxing and fun going shopping and then just bumming around base camp.

Our ranger told us once that he hated base camp because you could die of boredom, and I could see that. It's not boring on the way out to the backcountry because there is plenty

to do to keep busy, but otherwise about all you can do is shop and eat. That was just about the right speed for us then.

**After supper we went to Mass. It just seemed right to everyone that we give thanks for the trip and that everyone made it back safely. After Mass we had a closing ceremony. It was OK. We then called home again and went to bed.**

## Day 12

*Once in a while you find a place on earth that becomes your very own. A place undefined. Waiting for you to bring your color, your self. A place untouched, unspoiled, undeveloped. Raw, honest, and haunting. No one, nothing is telling you how to feel or who to be. Let the mountains have you for a day. . .*

*--Sundance*

**Last day.**

**Breakfast at 6:30 am. We had sausage, eggs, and hash browns.**

**We went back to our tents and packed things. We had a 9:30 tour at Villa Philmonte. This is an amazing house at 16,000 square feet. This was the Phillips' summer home – their other home in Tulsa was larger.**



The tour of the Phillips' home is well worth the time. This is a dream home, and if you remember it was built 70 years ago you realize it was ahead of its time.

**We caught a bus at 11:00 to Cimarron. We met Marc, our ranger and took him to lunch at the Kit Carson Café. James and Chris had steaks and Mr. Eddleman and I had Burritos.**

We were so lucky that Marc was in base camp. He went into town and everyone split up with the understanding we would meet back at the bus at a certain time. That way everyone got to eat what they wanted, and long as they stayed with their buddy.

**Cimarron is a dry, dusty little town that exists because of the scout ranch. We saw faces of real cowboys in there, as well as some of the staff members from Philmont. After dinner we bummed around a bit and then returned to camp for a final shower and to finish up last minute business. The bus left a few minutes early and the afternoon thunderstorms were already beginning.**

I was very sorry to leave, and from the silence in the bus I would say that most everyone else felt the same. I was very interested in getting home and seeing my family, but we were leaving a special place, taking with us only memories.

They say that when you leave Philmont, look over your left shoulder – if you see an arrowhead on the side of a mountain then you will return someday. I noticed a lot of boys straining to find the key to the doorway that leads back to Philmont.

## Day 13

*You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it, however.*

*--Richard Bach, from Illusions*

**Got breakfast in Joplin, Mo. Almost home! The bus driver we had earlier in the night got confused in Tulsa and we went the wrong way on a one way street for some time. It was about 2 am and Bill and I were the only ones that noticed it.**

People learned from the earlier trip and were better prepared for “The Bus” on the way home. Many had fashioned pillows or brought their sleeping bags and were much more comfortable.

That was about the end of the trip, except for the following synopsis. I thought long and hard about what the most important lesson was from this trip – what did I learn myself and what did I hope would be passed on to the boys. I wrote the following conclusion:

**Kids today are faced with a great many temptations and challenges, and the Boy Scout program is there to help make good men. Philmont is the ultimate in high adventure and presses a young man to perform beyond what is in his own self interest, but rather what is in the best interest of the crew. That is the most important lesson to be learned in the life of a young man and a young Christian.**

**Even when the details of this adventure have faded from the minds of those who attended, the feeling of accomplishment, self-worth, and fraternity will remain with these young men for life.**

**11:39 – Almost home. Dropped off the St. Louis bunch and made our way home.**

**Very anxious to see my family.**

## Glossary

*Advisors Coffee – For advisors only, staffed camps have coffee at 7:00 PM. Very Welcome.*

*Bear Bag – Bag that is used to hold any “smellable” and is hung high so that a bear (or mini-bear) cannot get it.*

*Bear – Black Bear. About 200 live in Philmont. Normally this is 1 per square mile, but due to fires it is 2 per square mile.*

*Bearmuda Triangle – Triangle formed by the sump, bear bags, and fire pit. This was enforced at all camping areas and created an area where you could safely sleep that is outside of the triangle.*

*CCC – Copious, Clear, Consistent. Acronym referring to urine to make sure you’re not dehydrated.*

*Mini-Bear – This is a small furry animal that steals food, but is not a Maxi-Bear.*

*Pilot-Bombardier – Outdoor latrine. Participants sit out in the open, back to back. After several days at high altitude, some of the boys enjoyed going on “bombing runs”.*

*Pilot-Copilot – Covered latrine. Sit beside each other, very close, with no barrier between each other. Be sure and use a stick first to make sure no spiders or snakes are under there. Also know as “Red Roof Inn”.*

*Smellable – Food, deodorant, medication, clothing that had food on it – it is anything a bear can smell.*

*Sump – Place used to put smellable liquids. Whatever won't fit through a very fine screen goes into the “yum-yum” bag.*

*Yum-Yum Bag – Bag you carry with you that has all uneaten food. By the end of the trek you would swear something died in there.*

## Random Thoughts

These were little things I wrote in the margin of my journal as we went along:

*The boys who went on this trek are forever changed. On this trip they have seen the evidence of God, and they'll never forget it.*

*On the trail, for a crew to do well they have to put self aside and do things for the good of the crew. This is not something the average teenager has to do.*

*The beauty of the land and sky are indescribable and must be experienced. We watched a slideshow at closing campfire and the pictures were flat, lifeless, and meaningless. They showed Philmont, but not the beauty we experienced.*

*On this trek water was everything. It was hot and dry and everything needed water. We each had 8 pounds of water that we carried personally. If we were going to a dry camp we would carry another four pounds per person, for a combined weight of 120 pounds over 10 people.*

*We were able to shower only twice in 10 days—not for lack of facilities but for lack of water.*

*Roughly 3,800 hikers are at Philmont at any given time. There are over 900 staff members.*

*The Priest at Mass stated that it takes 5 or 6 days on the trail for the internal “noise” to cessate. That is true.*

*The generosity of Waite Phillips is amazing. The land that he loved so much he gave away to others.*