

PHILMONT 2007 – TREK 610-B THROUGH THE EYES OF STEVE WEAVER

The Beginning

Troop 81, Richardson, Texas was able to obtain a trek to Philmont in 2007. Troops are only eligible to do this every other year. Even when they are eligible, they often are unable to get a slot. I was told by prior leaders in Troop 81 that we have always been able to secure a slot if we remained open to attend at any time during the summer.

And thus, Troop 81, with the help of Rick Montgomery, our legacy leader guide, was able to draw Trek 610-B. “610” means that our trek started on June 10, 2007. It so happened that this was only the 3rd day of the entire year that treks started.

Our crew consisted of 8 Scouts and 2 adults. The Scouts were: Thomas Morgan (voted crew leader), Ben Weaver (my son), Brad Marvin (Asst Senior Patrol Leader of Camping for Troop 81), Michael Leners (just turned 18; this is his second trip), Mark Leners (Michael’s brother), Jack Benavides (also Jack’s second trip), Mitchell Homan (official “spokesman” for Troop 81), and Nick Leibold (official “boot burner” for Troop 81). The adults were Charlie Rachuig (Assistant Scout Master for Recruiting) and myself, Steve Weaver (who never plays dominoes on campouts because I’m asleep before the game starts). Roger Morgan also attended, though he was not an official part of the trek. He followed the trek while snapping photos and putting together a story for BSA. If you didn’t know, Roger’s day job is being a photographer for the National office of the Boy Scouts of America. This seems very cool to me and I’m looking forward to seeing it!

Oh, by the way, the disclaimer in this chronicle is that the views expressed are strictly my own. No one individual should be offended because I have tried to say something “interesting” about everyone on the trek. CONTINUE TO READ AT YOUR OWN RISK.

PREPARATION FOR PHILMONT

In case you don’t know, preparation for Philmont is very important! The most important part of this preparation is physical conditioning...the second is being sure everyone has the right gear, but not too much gear.

We received help from former adult trekkers at Philmont. John Benavides was gracious enough to attend most of our conditioning hikes around town. This included several 7 mile hikes in the neighborhood and several 10 mile hikes around White Rock Lake. He created our conditioning schedule, urging us to also climb stairs at a football stadium, wearing 40-50 pound back packs. Unfortunately, we were never able to identify a location we could use for this stair

conditioning....A BIG MISTAKE. Some of the Scouts were not able to attend all the conditioning hikes we took. Some Scouts were not able to attend any of them. As for the adults, we tried our best, or so I thought, to get into shape.

John Benavides also helped us take a final shake down hike in Oklahoma. There, we were able to really simulate conditions, having to hike about 6-7 miles in one day, through real trails, on big rocks, for a climb that seemed like 5,000 feet, though I suspect it was more like 1,000 feet. I darn near didn't make it. The only thing that was not characteristic of this hike was the poison ivy. I think that everyone that attended got into poison ivy; some worse than others. When we left for Philmont, some were still using some type of cream or medication to treat the end of the poison ivy exposure. What a way to start out a 67 mile trek!

Saturday, June 9, 2007

We were scheduled to meet at the Richland Bible Fellowship (RBF) Church at 7:00 a.m. Everyone showed up on time. Parents are jubilant to get rid of their son but anxious about the trip. We're ready to go, look around, and cannot find Mitchell Homan or Nick Leibold. I hope this is not a harbinger of the trip. Actually, they are performing a last minute restroom stop before starting. All the packs are loaded into Mr. Rachuig's pickup, covered with a tarp and net, strapped down. Our "bags of cleanliness" are in the back of my van. Luckily, Roger Morgan is going with us in an official BSA capacity, but to also be a parent. It's always good to have an extra adult around. His vehicle is available to carry cargo as well. We take off at 7:50 a.m. from RBF.

The first pit stop is Wichita Falls at about 10:00 a.m. We stop at the Dairy Queen in Childress for lunch at about 11:45 or so. In the DQ, we see a grand parent of one of the new Troop 81 Scouts. What a coincidence! On the road again. At around 3:00pm or so, we have to have another pit stop. We finally get to our first day's destination at about 5:30 p.m., Texas time, in Clayton, New Mexico. Check-in is slow. The Best Western is nicer than I had expected, and included a hot breakfast. We unpack the vehicles and go eat at Eckland's Restaurant. Most of the crew eats Mexican food or burgers. The boys walk back from the restaurant, only 3 blocks. The adults look for gas for a quick fill-up. We all choked at \$3.29/gallon, but there's no other choice within 100 miles. We have to hurry to beat a storm that is rolling in. The adults are beat and hit the rack quickly. Who knows how late the boys stayed up. I guess we'll know tomorrow.

Sunday, June 10, 2007

The room at the Best Western was better than expected, as I said earlier. We all met outside our rooms at 8:00 a.m. to eat a hot breakfast. We had scrambled eggs, sausage, pancakes, and French toast. It seems as though everyone ate their share. Roger Morgan was up at 5:00 a.m., having trouble sleeping any later. It sounded like most of the boys stayed up until either 11:30 (Ben and Brad) or until about 2-3 a.m. (most of the rest). The drive from here on was across the flat and bare prairie of New Mexico. We saw a number of prong

horned antelope. We arrived at Philmont at 11:30, just in time for lunch. We ate lunch and started the check-in process. We were assigned to Matthew as our Ranger. He's from Frisco. WOW! He is goes to Texas Tech (we won't hold that against him) and has aspirations of going to Georgetown and becoming a lawyer. He seems to have the right mentality and make-up for that...he's a real talker. We had our individual shake-down inspection, got our physicals, and were issued the group gear for the trek. Mitchell let the medic know he has had an ear ache since Saturday morning, much to the surprise of any adults. They gave him some drops for his ear and a pat on the butt. He seems to be feeling bad based upon the reduction in his talking. By 10pm, he seems to be feeling better based upon the increase in his talking. The crew was told to meet by the snack bar to go to the church service. However, only 4 of the 8 showed up, making Mr. Rachuig and I none too happy. After that we went to the campfire and back to the tents. Tomorrow, we take pictures early, so it is to bed by about 10:30 or 11:00.

Monday, June 11, 2007 – TREK DAY 1

Lover's Leap Camp – 2 Mile Hike

We had to wait around until 2:30 p.m. to catch the bus to take us to the starting point trail head. We got up at 5:50 and met for breakfast at 6:30am. After breakfast, some of us went to the museum, then the home of Waite Phillips. Most of our guys wanted to play hackie-sack before going to the museum and the Phillips house. They will probably regret not going to those later, but it may be years before that regret pops up. Chow in the dining hall is consistently pretty good. We go to the welcome center and check the stoves. We discover that there is trouble with one so Roger Morgan ran down to the trading post to buy one at the last minute. The bus and the rain both arrived at about 2:30. We get on the trail and have some "teachable moments". The first teachable moment was that we missed the first trail sign and walked past it about 100 yards. Then Ranger Matthew called us back to inspect the sign. The hike today is short but fun. The ascent is constant, with an 800 foot increase in altitude, followed by a 200 foot decent. We had a pack-off rest at Lover's Leap, where everyone climbed out on the rocks at the leap. It is very nice, with a fantastic view of the meadow and valley below. We arrive at the camp site. It rains off and on until about 2:00 a.m. We eat a dinner of beef stroganoff. Matthew brings a surprise for the crew, a pound cake and icing. We end the evening with all 10 people plus 2 Rangers inside the Red Roof Inn, receiving more training about using Red Roof Inns, bear procedures, and several other things. "Toilet paper and poop down the hole. Pee on a rock, not at the Red Roof Inn. Cluster together for a bear, stand your ground, hit 'em in the nose if he charges and doesn't stop. 90% stop the charge after a bluff charge. Fight back with all you have from a mountain lion attack or a bear attack." We turned in about 10p.m. Everyone was pretty tired.

Tuesday, June 12, 2007 – TREK DAY 2

Crater Lake Camp – 2 1/2 Mile Hike

We got up this morning at the Lover's Leap Camp. The hike to Crater Lake is about 2-3 miles, but uphill almost all the way. Charlie and I learn to watch the map's contour lines carefully to determine if we're going uphill or downhill during the day. We wanted to leave at 8:30 a.m., but ended up leaving at 9:30a.m. We're a new crew and expect to be able to cut the time required for camp breakdown soon. On the trail, Mitchell starts to get a big blister on his heel. Thomas continues to be the "rabbit" while hiking. Of course, Charlie and I are in the rear, preceded by Nick and Mitchell. Oh, by the way, it is clear and beautiful today. We arrive at Crater Lake where the logging camp is. They have a really cool setup. We arrive right at lunch and eat outside their cabin after their "porch briefing". We did pole climbing in the afternoon as part of the program. A few didn't care to climb up the pole, but most participated. Dinner was the usual. We went to the campfire. Although it was really cold, the campfire was quite entertaining. Mostly, they told stories, played instruments like the guitar, banjo, and mandolin, and sang. They had some of the better jokes. There was a good bit of "fart" humor. We understand by now that the Philmont diet is making all of us have more gas than usual...and that's a lot for most of us. After we got back from the campfire, our ranger discovered that we left our "Frisbee" at the sump, a BIG NO-NO and violation of bear protocol. We had to get boys out of the tents to put it into the Oops Bag and re-hang it. The boys weren't happy about that, but suspect they learned a valuable lesson.

Wednesday, June 13, 2007 – TREK DAY 3

Black Mountain Camp – 7 Mile Hike

We got up at about 6:30 a.m. and were able to walk out at about 8:15 a.m., much better than yesterday. We said goodbye to our Ranger and are off on our own. I think all of the boys are happy to see Ranger Matthew go. I was as well, though we learned a lot from him. We all felt like we were ready to be on our own at this point. Leaving Crater Lake, we find a very flat hike and even go downhill for a long way. About 45 minutes out of camp, Thomas looks up and spots a bear! WOW! Very few people get to see a bear at Philmont. It is a honey colored bear with dark brown under-belly, stockings, and part of the head. It is within about 20 yards of us at the closest point, walking farther away at times, crossing the trail, and eventually disappearing. We see it another time below us on the trail and paralleling us as we continue down the trail. It crosses the trail ahead of us and goes on. This was at least the second time we saw it cross the trail. We see it again right as we are entering Miners Park. We report the bear sighting to the Rangers at about 11:00 a.m. By noon, the Philmont officials are broadcasting the sighting on the walkie talkies. Jack rolled his foot as we were walking on a trail after leaving Miners Park. His ankle was not hurt but he seemed to bruise his knee. After about 10 minutes of assessing his injury, we started again, feeling it was bearable. As we move on, the downhill hike turns into an up and downhill walk, paralleling the North Fork Uraca Creek. We parallel the creek only about 3-4 miles, but it seems like forever. We had at least 50 stream crossings according to Mr. Rachug's count. Some crossings had a nice, big log over it with a flattened top, making it easy to walk over. Just as

many were only rocks in the creek that were strategically placed to keep one's feet relatively dry. However, everyone ended up having to walk in the creek, getting wet socks. Mitchell fell off one slick log and landed on his back in some dead branches of that log. He's OK. Let's keep moving on. At our lunch stop, Nick decides to pee in the creek. This is a water source for others. Everyone let him know how stupid this was. As it turns out, we had to depend on filling up with water from creeks and springs about 1/3 of the time. I hope there were not too many "Nicks" that decided they had to pee in the creek as well. I am really worn out today, with aching feet and tired legs. It starts to rain about 3 p.m., just as we are arriving at Black Mountain Camp. Roger Morgan meets us with camera in hand. Also, he brings cookies and jerky for Thomas birthday. Today is Thomas' 16th birthday! We setup camp. Then we go down to the blacksmith program. The boys decide to not do the black powder shooting until tomorrow morning. It stopped raining, but the rain cooled things off considerably. We camp by the creek between 2 mountains so we don't get much sun, making it continue to be cool. In fact, I would call it down right cold. The boys choose to not do the program campfire tonight, which is marching with the 1866 soldiers. I really don't blame them as tired as I am. When Charlie and I go up for adult coffee at about 7:00pm, we find out that no campers wanted to do the marching. Charlie and I have done enough marching at A&M to last us a lifetime. We will be going to Beaubien tomorrow and staying there for an extra day's layover. Several have had their challenges so far, but all are in very good spirits. I'm very pleased of that. As Charlie and I get into our tents and take our boots off, I discover that Charlie's feet really stink. Of course, I have to admit he took his boots off first. I only added to the stink when mine came off. Man, that smell will knock you down. Good night.

Thursday, June 14, 2007 – TREK Day 4
Beaubien Mountain Camp – 3 Mile Hike

We shoot black powder rifles at Black Mountain camp before departing. Everyone was really tired from the prior day; we didn't start getting up until 7:10, though we set a target to get up at 6:30 a.m. We're not punching a clock, but this is some indication of the difficulty of the prior day's hike. People are dragging. We shot round balls and mini-balls from a Civil War type black powder rifle. Jack shot a hole in 1-2 hats. The Civil War Captain shot a hole in all the other hats with one shot. Oh, by the way, we were all called "Bob" at this camp by the staff. This camp can only get supplies into it by burro. They travel back and forth to Beaubien every 2-3 days for supplies. The hike from Black Mountain to Beaubien was about a 1,000 feet up and 1,000 feet down over a total of 3 miles. Because of the late start, we missed our 1:00 p.m. horse ride that was scheduled. The boys got to shower. Charlie and I missed the adult shower time by about an hour. We can always get one tomorrow. It seems that everyone did some wash in the afternoon. The adult coffee was at 7:00pm, as usual on the porch of the main camp cabin. We all went to bed by about 9:00 p.m. We discovered a very dirty bowl that either Mitchell or Nick had left for us. That's not funny when bears are in the area and attracted by these things.

Friday, June 15, 2007 – TREK Day 5

Beaubien Mountain Camp – No Hiking Today

This is our lay over day. Charlie wanted everyone to go on a side hike to the B-24 airplane crash site. However, everyone backed out except for Jack and Charlie. It took them about 4 hours to get there and back. In the mean time, the rest of the crew got our hats, boots, and belts branded with either the Philmont horse brand or cow brand. The cow brand is bar-P-S with a reverse “S”. The horse is a bar-S with a reverse “S”. Charlie and Jack barely got back in time to make it to our 3 hour conservation effort, which was to start at 2pm. Oh, I took a shower about 9:30 and it was great. The water was so hot I had to turn on the cold water to not scald myself. Back to the conservation project... we met at 2pm. There were about 40-50 people from a total of 5 crews. We were felling trees, cutting them up, and stacking them. The wood is from dead trees destroyed by the pine bark beetle. At 5pm, we went directly from the cutting area to the chuck wagon dinner. The dinner was very good. It consisted of beef stew, biscuits, and canned peaches. There was about all one could eat. I think everyone had seconds. Our clean up crew just walked off and didn't help. That was one of many trek challenges we have had. When we got back, we found the Oops bag was down, another challenge. I guess these boys think that bears are teddy bears since they seem to not be too concerned about bear protocol. Charlie and I drank coffee on the porch and went to the campfire. By the time we returned, all the boys were in bed.

Saturday, June 16, 2007 – TREK Day 6

Wild Horse – 6 Mile Hike

We don't have any breakfast until we pick it up at Phillips Junction, the commissary. That should be motivation to get moving early. We walk out of camp at about 7:30 or 8am, the earliest departure yet. We hike out by the meadow and get to the trail. Within 45 minutes we are at the Phillips Junction to pick up food for the next 4 days. Then we paralleled the Rayado most of the way to Crooked Creek Camp. We stop at Crooked Creek Camp, made candles, and listened to the talk about homesteading. The boys helped to tear down a fence around a new garden that the homesteaders were preparing to plant. The homesteaders also had a 6 foot deep cold hole to keep their food in. That worked really well. They also had 3 chickens, of which one had layed its first egg only yesterday. They also had a milk cow. There was an irrigation ditch that went down the middle of the garden plot to water it. The ditch is fed by natural water flow through the meadow. We left there about 1:15 and arrived at Wild Horse by about 3:45pm. It was an 1100 foot climb in elevation, topping at 10,200 feet. It rained and really made things cool at that altitude. While climbing up from Crooked Creek, Mitchell was the navigator. He lost the map and compass that was passed to each new day's navigator. He's really trying to kill us. While trying to cook, we discover that the green stove is not working, leaving us only 1 working stove. I'm hoping they don't break the 3rd stove or we will be eating cold supper the rest of the trip. The rain didn't last more than 20 minutes but it left

things quite cold. We filled up with water from a stream and purified it to be ready for tomorrow's hike.

Sunday, June 17, 2007 – TREK Day 7

Phillips Peak – 5 1/2 Mile Hike

Today is our hike from Wild Horse to the top of Mount Phillips. It is only about 6 miles (maybe 8) but an elevation increase of about 1400 feet. We start out by 6:25, the earliest yet. Everyone knows it will be really tough climbing today. By 7:30, we arrive at Clear Creek to do the program. The program was the mountain man experience. They showed us how to set traps for beavers and talked about the beaver fur trade. We also got to throw tomahawks. Charlie was the best, sticking 2 of 3 throws. Then we started the unbearable hike up Phillips Peak. There were very few switchbacks. The rocks we had to walk over were large. My feet were killing me by the time we got to the top. The trek didn't stay together very well, splitting into the rabbits, the middle of the pack, and the turtles. Of course, the turtles were Charlie and I. Towards the end, it was almost impossible to get our breaths. The peak is at 11,736 feet elevation. We passed mounds of snow while going up. We camped in the midst of a lot of snow drifts. The boys had their required snow ball fight. One drift was probably 10-12 feet high. The boys were "skiing" down it on their big #12 shoe-skis. The sun was bright. We had no rain but a good constant wind. Just below the peak about 75 feet, people had made rock chairs by stacking rocks in the shape of a lawn chair. The boys just sat there for at least an hour, watching the view. I suspect they were also being a bit prideful that they made the climb, though I heard no boasting. Charlie took about an hour nap...mine was 2.5 hours. That nap really helped to revive me. Everyone was exhausted, though you couldn't believe it by the snow ball fights that ensued. Charlie and I hit the hay by 7:30 or 8pm, with the boys going to bed by 8 to 8:30.

Monday, June 18, 2007 – TREK Day 8

Cimmeroncito – 11 Mile Hike

We got up early because we had a long way to go, even if most of it was downhill. Of course, starting at almost 12,000 feet, everything is down hill. We first went to Ciphers Mine Camp. We had a short walk on a dirt road that was very steep, with a loose surface. Despite our harping on keeping together, the rabbits had taken off and were way out of sight. Charlie and Jack were in the rear. Charlie slipped and skinned his knee pretty good. We had a very stern talk about why we have to stay together. I sent 4 boys back up the hill with the first aid kit since the rabbits had it. Actually, we waited until we arrived at Ciphers Mine before cleaning Charlie's knee. At Ciphers Mine we took a 45 minute tour of a real gold mine, obviously not in current production. At the end of the tour, we were about 400 feet from the entrance. We had to turn out our lights and walk out of the mine without lights. Some really didn't like it, but we all made it. Then back to the trail we went. We tried to keep a good pace to make Cimmeroncito before it was too late. We stopped and toured the Hunting Lodge, one of 3 original lodges of Waite Phillips. It was not plush, containing only 4

rooms: a kitchen, breezeway, den, and bedroom. Then we made it on up to our camp, arriving at about 3:30pm. We set up camp. Everyone got to take showers. Charlie and I washed clothes. I'm not sure the boys care about having clean clothes. We had a good dinner of Raman noodles, with other miscellaneous stuff mixed into it. Just a side note about the food: most of it is relatively dry. It tends to give almost everyone more gas than they normally have. In fact, the methane got to be unbelievable! Back to the day...everyone was pretty beat with the hike. We think it was somewhere between 8-11 miles.

Tuesday, June 19, 2007 – TREK Day 9

Cimmeroncito – No Hiking Today

Today is our layover day at Cimmeroncito. The boys are going to do rock climbing in the morning and 4 will be going about 1 mile to the commissary to pick up our remaining grub. We sleep late...until about 8am. We all end up going to rock climbing at 9:45am. The rock climbing is on real rocks that are about 75 feet high. Each person wore a hard hat and had a safety rope. After reaching the top, the person has to rappel down. Mr. Morgan met us at Cimmeroncito and was at rock climbing for photos. Everyone did the climbing, though Jack blistered his fingers with the climb. Then we went back to cook lunch. Thomas and Michael went to the commissary about 2 miles away to get our last 5 meals of food. It took them 2 hours to get there, pick up the food, and return. Mark knocked over the water that was almost heated, so we had to start over again, delaying lunch until 3pm. Two of the boys were convinced that we were having the Mexican dinner. They had read on the side of a red roof inn that someone had eaten a Mexican dinner and sat on the head for 23 minutes! Therefore, they readily "gave" their portion of the lunch to Charlie and me. The only catch was that we didn't have Mexican dinner that night. But they were convinced that we were having it because "someone" told them that was what we were having. So, in a nutshell, they gave away their meal based upon the hearsay of the writing on the crapper wall and the rumor of what we were eating for dinner! There must be a lesson here, somewhere.

The boys cleaned up the lunch dishes by about 5:30, being totally unmotivated. I don't think people took naps, but everyone took it easy all day. There is some anticipation of tomorrow's hike. It is expected to be somewhere between 8-11 miles again. However, only about 3-4 miles of that is uphill. The rest is relatively level or downhill (or so we think). We discovered a trick that another crew does when cooking, moving me to write another section about "tricks at Philmont that can be found at the end of the day to day portion of the log.

Wednesday June 20, 2007 – TREK Day 10

Tooth Ridge – 11 Mile Hike

We left Cimmeroncito at about 7:15 a.m. By now, we're pretty good at getting started early. We have a very long day, covering about 11 miles. The first third of the day is down hill and is covered fairly quickly. We arrive at Clark's Fork. After that, we go up over Shaffer's pass and to Tooth Ridge. Shaffer's pass has

switchbacks but is consistently uphill. The Tooth Ridge is up and down hill but very rocky, with large boulders. The rocks and boulders on the trail range in size from the size of your fist, the size of a loaf of bread, the size of a foot locker, the size of a Volkswagen. There are some boulders beside the trail that are larger than that. It is very hot by the time we get to Shaffer's Pass. There is a small spring at Shaffer's Pass that is our last place to get water until Base Camp. We filled up 26 Nalgens (or equivalents) at the Shaffer's Pass spring. Even after talking to the crew and crew leader about not having the rabbits go and leave everyone else in the dust, they did it again. Yes, they decided it was more important to meet their personal desires and get to the camp early rather than keeping together as a crew. After they arrived at the base of the trail peeling off to the Tooth of Time, they sent 4 Scouts back with a first aid kit in case we had been hurt. I hope that this act helped them to understand the strength of the whole crew sticking together. We had a "final" Thorns and Roses session that seemed really special for Charlie and me. We hope it meant a lot for the crew as well. We went to the top of the Tooth of Time at this point. The view is unbelievable. Everyone really seemed to like this. Unfortunately, Michael was going up the backside of the Tooth very quickly and had a rock dislodge, landing on his big tow. We later learned that it probably broke his big toe. However, he kept on going. Everyone seems to be anticipating rolling into base camp in the morning. We have even had suggestions we should get up as early as 4:00am. I think we have convinced everyone to get up about 5:30 and leave by 7:00. That will get us into base camp in plenty of time. After we ate dinner, the crew next to us spotted a small bear on a slope immediately behind our camp. We figured it was a cub by the size they were telling us. We all looked but didn't see it. The other crew was looking within 30 yards of our camp so it must have been close.

Thursday June 21, 2007 – TREK Day 11

Base Camp – 7 Mile Hike

We got up very early. Most of the boys and Charlie got up to see the sun rise from Tooth Ridge. I stayed asleep for another hour. We left by about 6:45am with high hopes of getting down in 2-3 hours. It was a good thing we left early because it got hot quickly. Charlie called Roger Morgan on the cell to let him know we were coming. Roger saw us up on the side of the mountain and shot a few pictures while we were about 15 minutes out. We walked into camp in 2 hours and 20 minutes! It took a while to turn in all the gear. Then everyone went straight to a HOT shower. The shower was great. Then we were off to the Trading Post to get the Philmont souvenirs. Then lunch for the adults; none of the boys wanted to eat lunch since we had promised them steak in Cimmaron. We ate at the St. James Hotel in Cimmaron. Many of us ate sirloin steak. Then we went to an ice cream shop that caters to scouts finishing their trek. In all, we probably dropped about \$300 in the ice cream shop. Then we went home for our closing camp fire.

Tricks and Tips for Future Philmont Treks

1. Turkey Bag – Cooking is easy at Philmont. It always involves boiling water and adding something to it that is dehydrated. The hard part is the cleanup. We saw another crew use a technique involving a turkey bag. They would boil the water in a pot. Then they would line a second pot with a turkey baking bag. Then they would pour the contents into the bag, then the boiling water. Stir with a plastic spoon (not metal or you will break the bag). When you let it set for 8-10 minutes to let the contents hydrate, use the bag tie to close the bag. Dip dinner directly from the turkey bag while in the pot. Wala! NO CLEAN UP.
2. 1 Gallon Zip-lock Bags – Pack all your clothes in many 1 gallon zip-lock plastic bags. This makes it easy to keep clothes separated and relatively clean.
3. Cotton – NO! – Avoid carrying anything that is cotton. Once it gets wet, it takes forever to dry out. Consider taking 3 pair of quick drying non-cotton underwear, non-cotton T-shirts, quick drying pants. I personally think that the quick drying non-cotton underwear is worth it. The boys may not care but it would have been easier for me.
4. Liner socks – Liner socks are optional for wearing under your hiking socks. However they are nice to use on layovers while your hiking socks are drying out from being washed.
5. Camp Suds – The maximum amount of camp suds that the whole crew would want to take is 3 bottles. Anything beyond that is unnecessary weight.
6. Sun screen – You may be tempted to skip the sunscreen. However, don't forget it. Your neck and forearms will get very sunburned without it. Take a very small tube to share between 2 people. One of those large tubes is too much.
7. Bandana – You MUST have 1 or 2 bandanas. One to strain water into a water bottle and another to use as a hot pot holder, around your neck after you are sunburned to prevent further agony, or to blow your nose. (You can always wash it out in a stream.)
8. Camera batteries – Be sure you know how long your camera will go with the batteries it has. Carry plenty of extras. I thought I had enough but ran out of juice with about 3 days left.
9. At least 3 maps – Our crew lost 1 map on the trail. You don't want to lose a map and not know where you're going.
10. Plenty of Moleskin – Everyone should have some moleskin. If a scout is in sports, they seldom need it because their feet are tough. Most others will develop a blister, whether they admit it or not. For adults, YOU WILL develop a few blisters unless you're a runner.
11. 3 stove minimum – We started with 3 working stoves and ended up with 1 working stove. Take care of your stove. If possible use the same type of stoves and fuel bottles so that they may be interchangeable if something dies on the trek.

12. Spoon composition – Be sure your spoon is not an easily breakable spoon. It needs to be a hard, stiff nylon spoon that won't break. Take 2 extras for the crew since someone will lose theirs, not bring the right kind, or somehow break it anyway.
13. Foldable bowl – Consider taking a foldable bowl. They are light, they pack easy, and they can be easily cleaned. Other plastic bowls often crack.
14. 2 pair of glasses – If you wear glasses and have 2 pair, bring both. If you don't have 2 pair, consider getting another pair. At least 2 pair of glasses have been broken on treks over the last 4-5 years in Troop 81.
15. Shake down – Be sure to have a good equipment shakedown about 2 weeks before leaving town. Too many people brought things they didn't need.
16. Trekking poles – These seem to be the most helpful for adults. If you use them, practice with them. Charlie used them and thought they were a big benefit. I'm not sure I would use them, but should probably try them out during a shakedown hike.
17. Packs – Inspect the pack and be sure it works well before going. I would recommend hiking with a pack at least 3 months in advance to allow you to become familiar with it.
18. Dining fly – Only take 1 as a maximum. We often didn't use it.
19. 2 cooking pots – Only take 2 cooking pots for cooking. They should be the large pots.
20. Adult coffee – If you like coffee, take "tea bag" style coffee. It's not great but better than nothing.
21. Ditty bag – Everyone needs a ditty bag to put all their smellables in. It needs to be a dedicated ditty bag with only that purpose in mind. It should be about 6-8 inches in diameter by 12-16 inches long.
22. DON'T TAKE THINGS YOU THINK YOU MIGHT NEED. THERE IS A 95% PROBABILITY THAT YOU WON'T USE IT, CREATING USELESS WEIGHT. EVERY OUNCE COUNTS.
23. 3 adults – It would be helpful to have 3 adults. The trip is do-able with 2 adults. However, if one should get sick or have to miss the trek at the last minute, then you have to "rent a Ranger" to have 2 deep leadership.
24. Stair training – The crew MUST practice stair training WITH a pack 3 times/week, 45-60 minutes/day, at least 2 months prior to the trip. Walking on level ground is not the same as going up and down stairs. You won't be as ready as you should be unless you do stair training.

Reflections

I am writing this section in August, a full 2 months after we began the trek. As I look back, there are many special things that I want to relate to you. Philmont is a wonderful high adventure opportunity that everyone should go to if they are afforded the opportunity. It is a MUST for Scouts to attend. It is a "DO IT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE" for parents.

For adults, you will become closer to this group of Scouts than any others in your troop. You will have a special relationship that could easily last into their adult years. I have already had one to ask me to be a job reference. I suspect that I will be asked to write college admission reference letters or to be a job reference for others that were on the trek.

The scouts actually transform tremendously on this 12 day trip. Some parents wanted to know what we had done with their sons after being back for only 1-2 weeks. The parent revealed that their Scout was talking more to them, engaging in more meaningful conversations, performing more chores around the house with less prompting, and acting more mature in general. This is a transformation that is OFTEN noted by parents of Scouts who are returning from Philmont.

The Scouts show more maturity after returning from Philmont. They are able to relate to adults better. It is my belief that most of this is due to more self confidence. They have completed something that they had no idea they could do. None have ever been challenged like this before. They know that they faced a bear with no weapon and survived. They know that they hiked for 11-12 miles with a 50 pound pack and survived. They know that they ate food for 11 days that was not mama's cooking and survived. They know that they made 50 stream crossings on a 4 mile stretch of trail. They know that they can depend upon themselves and survive in difficult situations.

Before the trek, as well as while I was on the trek, I told several people that this would be the last trek for me. I'm 55 years old. My thought was that I may not be able to do the physical side of another trek. Since those bold declarations, I have changed my mind. This is an experience that cannot be duplicated. This is an experience that cannot be bought for any amount of money. I would gladly go to another high adventure trek to Philmont, Northern Tier, or Sea Base. (However, I will be more diligent in the physical preparation before I go.)

My recommendation to anyone reading this is to go with your troop to Philmont the next time a trek comes available. **You'll never regret it.**