

## Philmont Trek Expedition 729F

January 28 to August 9, 1968



*By Gordon Stone*

### **July 28, 1968**

*Sunday*

Left at 7:00 AM. Ate lunch at Quanah along the road. Kids picked up gourds and sliced them into pieces and threw them like skipping stones. Martin's power steering hose broke just outside of Dumas. Had it fixed and about six miles out, the whole bracket came loose. Back in Dumas at 4 PM. Spent until 5 PM getting it fixed. It lasted 8 miles. Martin stopped the car, cut the belt and we took off. Arrived in Clayton, NM, around 6:20 PM.

Checked with the police department and they escorted us to Air Park. We can stay in the auditorium. Hot showers and bath. How about that? After we ate (New Way Café), we drove out toward Clayton Lake 12 miles out of town. The road became too muddy, so we turned around. Everyone wanted to stop and climb the mountains, but it was getting dark. We finally agreed to stop at the top of the

canyon. Rocks started flying all over. We put up with it until Todd Stone started taking the wall apart and throwing the rocks (large) over the edge.

The trip odometer reads 496 miles from Dallas to Clayton. Town stinks to high heaven of stockyards. Met an alcoholic Mexican who talked an arm off us and got to Greg Stone (no relation) for \$5.00. Larry Erk hit it off with the waitress and left a \$1.00 tip on a \$2.00 meal. No one is tired, but we have to set a curfew of 10 PM.

## **July 29**

*Monday*

Up at 5:15 AM. Slept fairly well. Showered and was the first one packed and ready to go. Beautiful, clean day. Temp around 55 degrees. Ate breakfast at the New Way. Kids chipped in and bought a football for 93 cents. Our car contributed the most, so we have the ball. Martin's watch stopped, but the local jeweler opened his shop early and took a battery out of a watch and put it in Martin's. Left for Philmont around 8:40 AM.

Arrived Philmont at 10:30 AM. Were met by Camp Director. Met our ranger, John Howell, who took us through the first day's activity. Had our group picture taken. Blood pressure checked 120/80, equipment issued, registered the trek, made our itinerary, was issued food and had our shakedown.

The ranger said there would be 18,000 boys through the camp this year. A record. Bears are a problem. One boy had 18 stitches in his head and a ranger was clawed by a cub bear in his tent. Supper at 6 PM. Heard the New Mexico Story at the campfire. Bed at 11:00 PM.

## **July 30**

*Tuesday*

Up at 5:30 AM. Fairly cold, but a clear day. Ate breakfast at 6:15 AM and had an advisor meeting at 7:00 AM. Got all our gear together and left at 9:15 AM. Took a bus to the Stockade jumping off point, where we unloaded. Hike to the Stockade without packs. Then we put our packs on and started hiking to Lover's Leap Camp. Stopped to look at Lover's Leap. There were some Scouts at the top. They threw two canteens off. One empty one wasn't damaged, but the full one landed on the road and exploded.

We at a trail lunch – Spam, crackers, punch, jelly and Fig Newtons. We had map reading and conservation in the afternoon. We camped in a beautiful meadow. Heard a lot of bear stories. One ranger here had been clawed by a cub. The wind through the pines is very soothing. Larry Erk had taken the plastic jugs to get water. On the way to the spring, he stopped off at the Rangers latrine and one of the rangers imitated a bear growl outside the latrine with a hollow aluminum tent pole. Larry was in the middle of going to bathroom. When he heard the bear, he

bolted out of the latrine with his pants down around his ankles and yelling, "Bear! Bear! Get the jugs!" It was one of the funniest things I have seen. Moonlight night. Walked two miles today.

### **July 31**

*Wednesday*

Up at 5:00 AM. We made breakfast and then it started to rain. Broke one tent in the rain. Hiked in the rain. Pitched tents at Miner's Park in the rain. Had a forestry class and geology class. Made supper in the rain. Went to bed in the rain. Heard the Philmont story. Total miles walked – 11. All Scouts took baths. Adults waited to shower in the morning.

### **August 1**

*Thursday*

Up at 5:30 AM. Weather beautiful. Showered in hot shower. Packed up and left about 9:30 am. Walked along a creek for 5 hours. Crossed it 35 times. Arrived at Black Mountain around 1:15 PM. Ate lunch along the way on the creek. Pitched our tents right along the water. We used the stream water for drinking and bathing. Had peanut butter, jelly, crackers, pink lemonade and a chocolate bar. Got into Black Mountain camp around 2:00 PM. Climbed Black Mountain, which is one of the toughest climbs at Philmont. The peak is 10,870 feet and about 2,000 feet above camp. Scott McGuirk couldn't make it.

Everyone has had food stolen by bears here. They even cut the flag pole rope and stole the food on the pole. Put our food in the old cabin. Saw a deer in camp in the AM. Got sick on chicken bullion in evening. Didn't eat supper. Rained in evening.

### **August 2**

*Friday*

Up at 5:00 AM. Pancakes and cereal. Beautiful morning. 12 miles today. Went over a pass and came to Beaubien. Beautiful meadow. Everyone took showers and washed clothes. By 4:45 PM everything was dry. Had pancakes, peaches and cereal for breakfast. For lunch had crackers, Cheese Whiz, and fig bars. Tasted good.

Had riding demonstration and roping in PM. Looks like rain, but none so far. Picked up another film and some candy. Had advanced Dutch oven cooking in evening and campfire. Bed around 11:00 PM. Cold but clear. Beautiful clear night.

### **August 3**

*Saturday*

Up at 5:45 AM. Cold but clear. Western omelet, cereal, toast, and hot chocolate for breakfast. Very good. Walked 6.5 miles to Porcupine Camp. We are camped

right along a mountain stream full of trout. In 1965, they had 10 inches of rain in two days. At this camp, they had a wind that knocked over thousands of trees. To help prevent forest fires and start new growth, they are cutting all the fallen ones out. It's a mess. It started to rain at 1:30 PM and rained for about three hours. Not hard though. Some of the kids fished with flowers, grasshoppers, but no one caught any. Beautiful moonlit night. Bed around 10:30 PM.

## **August 4**

*Sunday*

Up at 5:15 AM. Another clear day. Not even too cold. Everything is fairly wet though. Quick breakfast this morning. Left at 9:30 AM. Hiked about six miles to Clear Creek. Elevation 10,400 feet. Highest staffed camp at Philmont. Rained .75 inches from 3 PM to 6 PM. Had a hard time to get the fire going. The staff ranger is from Oak Cliff. Served us watermelon at night. Plus gave us fried eggs for breakfast. Didn't get up until 5:30 AM. Froze all night. Another beautiful day.

## **August 5**

*Monday*

Up at 5:30 AM. Clear day. Everything is wet from yesterday though. Got a late start. Didn't leave until 10:10 AM. Arrived at Cypher's Mine at 4:10 PM. About six miles. Went over Mt. Phillips, 11,800 feet and Commanche Peak, 11,400 feet. Mt. Phillips is the highest pack trail at Philmont. Beautiful view from the top of Phillips, even into Colorado. There was snow on top until about two weeks before we arrived. Elmer Kunnemann doesn't feel too well. Has to stop and rest every few minutes. Slows us down. Has infected hand and is running a fever.

Cypher's Mine is in a valley. Had shelters but Todd and I both pitched tents. The staff gave us wieners, Polish sausage, luncheon meat. Baked biscuits until we couldn't eat any more. Best meal we've had. The mine is an abandoned gold mine.

## **August 6**

*Tuesday*

Up at 4:30 AM. Slept like a log. Still didn't get going until 10 AM. Toured the gold mine. Started in 1862 and worked until 1921. Named after Charlie Cypher. His house is still standing. He managed the mine from 1903 until 1921. Went 500 feet into the mine and 300 feet underground.

After leaving Cyphers, it took five hours to walk to Sawmill, our next camp. Camped right on the stream about 200 feet straight down. Had competition in the evening. Sawing, match lighting, log throwing and log hitching. Got first in log throwing, tied for first in match lighting and sawing. Todd threw log, not too well. Had chuck wagon dinner in evening. Cooked in Dutch oven. Very good. Rained off and on for about five hours. Hikes five miles in four hours. Lost once.

## **August 7**

*Wednesday*

Up at 4:30 AM. Slept well. Everything very wet. Left at 8:10 AM. Arrived at Cimmaroncito at 10 AM. Rained hard in PM. Took Todd skeet shooting. Shot 21 times, missed them all. Mountaineering called off. Beautiful camp. Hot showers. Went to campfire in evening. Got the Philmont story again. Moon so bright could hardly look at it. Bears all over. Ate the cobbler next door to us. Bed at 10:30 PM. Rained slightly during night.

## **August 8**

*Thursday*

Up at 4:30 AM. Went mountaineering. Climbed up and rappelled down. Beautiful view of the camp. Will get pin for Beginner's Mountaineering. Hiked out of camp and ate lunch at Clark's Fork. Cooked our dinner for lunch because of the lack of water at the next camp.

Elmer, Larry Erk, Cliff Cone and I went ahead with four gallons of water. The climb up Schaeffer's Pass is very steep. Those carrying water will need more time. We left at 1:40 PM. We hiked up Schaeffer's Pass and Peak and along the Tooth of Time Ridge.

We reached the campsite around 6:20 PM. Very tired. Some of the boys went to bed at 7:30 PM. Saw Todd across the valley on a tall clump of rocks. They found bear caves. Martin and I climbed almost to the top of the Tooth of Time. Lit a match for the boys at camp to see. They said it looked as big as a football. Kind of raining, but not too much. Had a roaring campfire. Perfect ending for a trek. Camped right at the base of the Tooth. Bed at 10:30 PM. Tomorrow we hike into Base Camp.

## **August 9**

*Friday*

Up at 5:30 AM. Watched the sun come up. Ate a cold breakfast, but had several cups of hot coffee. Climbed up the Tooth of Time. Climbed by the rock face. Fabulous view from the top. Missed the trail on the way in. Came in down a very steep valley and hiked in across the meadow. Arrived in camp around 11:15 AM. A cooked lunch sure tasted good.

Overall, the actual trails we hiked were 65 miles. However, we hiked 141 miles in all.

Hope this write-up brings back fond memories.