

Trek 17 2011 Crew 704-I-02

Day -2

After months of preparation, paperwork, hiking and meetings, we were finally ready to leave. We met at Orchard Hill church parking lot. We put all of the gear and carry-ons in the vehicles. We had pictures of all 3 crews together and separately as well as any photos the parents wanted. Any final questions were addressed. We had 3 crews loaded into 6 vehicles. There was a fair amount of traffic on the way to Fort Madison. We arrived in about 3 hours. While there were many options for supper, most chose the Subway. They were very professional and didn't appear shaken to have 27 people show up to eat. The owner was still there and he let all of the adult leaders eat for free! After supper, the train station was only 2 minutes away. We arrived to find the train station ticket window closed! I called the 1-800 number to see what to do. The person checked with their supervisor (as I only had 1 stub for a group ticket). He told us to just get on the train. The train arrived on time; we loaded our gear into the baggage car. Our seats were in the back half of the last car (not sure if this was a hint or not). The scouts had fun in the back of the train playing cards as well as in the lounge car. It didn't take them long to know the entire train. The seats were not too bad for sleeping. By midnight, most were sleeping while a few thought they would try and stay up all night.

Day -1

We arrived in Raton at 11:00 – right on time. Got our gear off the train and the buses arrived within a few minutes. Our packs and bags were on the train within a few minutes and we were off to an area of Raton with multiple fast food options for lunch. We arrived at Philmont at 1:00. Check in at the welcome center was very fast and we received out tent assignments.

We attempted to get a time to see Villa Philmonte that afternoon, but they were full. We did get a time for the next day. Instead, we browsed through the museum and visited the Tooth of Time traders (the first of several visits).

After supper, went to the Protestant Church service.

Bed at 10 as the next morning, things start for real.

Day 0

Today, the Philmont trek starts to become real. Up at 5:30a quick shower, get cleaned up and breakfast for trailbound crews is 6:30.

At 8:30 we met our ranger, Jason at the welcome center. There are about 13 stations that you MUST go through. We started at registration where our Lead Advisor went in to get us registered and be sure all bills were paid. Then, he and our SPL were off to Logistics to get more information about the trek. This is very important as they tell you about where you can do your conservation project, what camps have water, where you need to purify water and what programs you are signed up to do. Then off to security, lost and found, pictures. It was lunch time already. After lunch, we got our crew gear, and 5 days of food (that is a lot of food to pack!) as well as a locker for gear we were not taking on the trail. The final thing was gear shake down. We had done this before leaving, so this went smoothly.

After supper, it was time for the Advisors, SPI, Chaplains Aid and Wilderness Ghia meetings. At 7, went to the Catholic Mass. Met Father Ray there for the first of many times during the trek.

At 8:15, everyone met at the welcome center for the Opening Campfire. Our ranger knew where he wanted to sit and rushed us up to the first row. Great seats for a really fun show! After the campfire, the staff called us up to get pictures with them and blow out the campfire. A great end to a long day. Then back to the tents and get almost everything packed up for the next day when we hit the trail. Jason told us our bus was departing at 8 am.

Day 1

Up at 5:30. Cleanup, shower. Got everything packed up in the backpack that is going on the trek and the rest packed up to go in the lockers. Breakfast was at 6:30 for Trailbound. Had the packs at the welcome center by 7:30 am. Our bus arrived at 8 am to take us to Lovers' Leap turnaround. About a 15 minute bus ride to get there. Started with about 30 minutes of Ranger training, then packs on and the real trek started. A short hike of about 30 minutes to get to Lovers' Leap. Dropped the packs, and climbed out to Lovers' Leap. What a view and not a difficult climb out to it.

We stayed there about 20 minutes, then packs on and hiked to camp. Had a Rayado "Rowdy Girls" crew there to teach us how to set up camp. They were on day 17 of 20 and covered with dirt, but they were having fun! Taught us how to set up camp correctly, purify water, put up bear bags, etc.

Supper was "veggie lasagna" and was very good. Jason then taught the scouts how to clean up.

Thorns, roses and buds followed by devotions, then more ranger training. We had 2 Rangers come by to inspect our camp. They didn't find any problems, so that was good.

Looking forward to Urraca!

It's only day one, but the crew seemed to work well together. Lots of laughing and fun, but also got the work done. I think all being from the same troop can have its positives and negatives. Today, it was positives. The years of camping together showed its benefits.

I think the crew is realizing that all of the training will pay off.

Hope the other crews are doing as well . . .

Day 2

Up at 6 am. Packed up the sleeping bag, pad and all of the gear in the tent. Got the bear bags down and we were ready for breakfast at 7 am. Packed and out of camp by 7:30. Not bad for the first day. Went to the well at Lovers' Leap and used micropur to sterilize the water as it is available, but sterilized. Hiked to Urraca. We had some nice shady areas at times, other times was steep and sunny. On the steep areas, we used the "caterpillar or leap-frog" approach. What a difference it makes! Everyone gets a chance to look around, catch their breath and then hike. The view from the top of Urraca Mesa is great! Going up the back side, there is a great view to the side – don't miss it! Hiked down to camp, arrived at 10:30. The Mesa is at 8500 ft, the camp at 8040. The porch talk was one of the best ever – it was a guitar and song by 4 of the staff! All of the information was there (and it was hilarious).

We started the Challenge Events as it was early and the weather was good. Our staff person was Doug, and he was great! We started with some Hula Hoop games – balancing the hula hoop using 2 fingers per person (done this before, but still fun). Then it was the "human knot" – always fun to watch. However, he showed us a way to be sure it could be solved – very cool.

Next was a tire suspended by 4 ropes. You had to get everyone through the tire without knocking off the Nalgene bottle on the tire. Took a lot of teamwork. If you couldn't do this safely, then you could not do some of the bigger events coming up.

High Noon – circle with the ranger in the middle. Everyone "holsters" their guns. The ranger "shoots" someone, they duck and the 2 people on either side of that person have a shootout. Winner stays, loser is out. This continues until there are only 2 people left. Final one is an "acting" of some silly event. Ours was a drunk pterodactyl. The group decides on the winner.

Balance beam – ½ the people are blind and half are mute. You must arrange the people by height without breaking your "handicap". Then everyone is back to normal and stand on a balance beam about 8 feet long (7 participants on it). You must invert the order without falling off the beam or touching the ground. Again, takes lots of talking and teamwork to pull it off. If one falls off or touches the ground, must start over.

Tanks – one person is blindfolded and is the tank, the other on their team is the commander. To start, they are on opposite side of a 30x30 field. The tank walks across the field and tags their commander. Then they are "activated". They get on their hands and knees, pick up pinecones that are in the field and throw them underhand at other tanks. Their commander must tell them where to throw as they are still blindfolded. If a tank is hit by a pinecone, they are out. After a winner, the tank and commander switch places and play the game again. After 2 winners have emerged, they get in the field facing each other and need 3 hits to win.

12 ft wall. The final challenge was the 12 foot wall. The team must get everyone up over the wall. You cannot use any ropes, or other appliances to help, only your crew. You may not use shoelaces, belts etc.

You can only have 2 members on top of the wall at a time. When a third one is on the wall, one must climb down the ladder and cannot help lift any other person up. This was more difficult than it seemed and took strategy to decide what order you would put team members up. In the end, we got everyone up using a pyramid to get the first 2 up, then lifting and pulling them up.

We met up with crew 704_I-03 at Urraca and had fun talking with them. Their crew is coming together as a team and having fun.

After the games, we ate lunch, then were taken to our camp to set up. The weather looked like it might rain, so got camp set up in a hurry. Only a few sprinkles. The boys went exploring, the adults thought this was a good time for a nap.

After supper was advisors coffee. There were only 3 crews at Urraca that night.

While waiting for the campfire show, it started to rain, so it was moved to the porch. A little tight there, but it worked. A really good show – don't miss it!

Had a long Thorns, Roses and Buds. It was a good time to clear the air about some of the scouts doing stupid, immature things and irritating other scouts. Some were not showing the maturity and teamwork they displayed that afternoon at the Challenge Events. Good discussion and chance to clear the air. I expect things will be better in morning and see positive changes.

Day 3

Up at 5 am, hiked up to Inspiration Point to see the sun rise. Smoke from the recent fires caused some haze, but still an amazing view. Beautiful sunrise. We gave Jason a signed trek t-shirt. He is one great Ranger. Any other crew who has him as a ranger is very fortunate! Hiked back to camp, had breakfast, packed up and got ready to leave. This was the third day, so Jason stayed behind to go back to basecamp and we were on our own. Left camp by 7:30 and hiked up to Urraca Mesa. We took a short detour to the south side (about ¼ mile) and saw a great view. Hiked back to our route and hiked down the other side and down to the meadow. After the meadow, we found ourselves at a confusing intersection. After studying the map, we continued on through many switchbacks and many great views. We found a picturesque view of Tooth of Time and took pictures there. We stopped for lunch at Bear Cave Camp around noon. It was only another 1 ½ miles to Crater Lake where arrived at 1:15. The map said it was a 6 mile hike, but the GPS showed 9.1 miles with no navigation errors (this would be a continuing trend). Porch talk was fun, with lots of energy. We were taken to our camp. At 3 pm, we showed up for spar climbing. While the instruction could have been boring, 9 pound made it really fun. Almost everyone climbed. Having injured my ankle 2 years ago at Philmont, I was concerned about trying. I got about ½ way up the pole when my ankle started to hurt with a bad kick to the pole. I decided it was time to quit. It still was fun! Do not miss your opportunity to climb!

After supper was advisors coffee. Tom from logistics was there (he helped fill in more blanks about upcoming camps).

The campfire show was the best we saw! Lots of energy, great music and jokes. A do not miss!

We looked over the map for the next day and decided to hike over Trail Peak with our packs instead of doing it as a side hike. With any luck, we will be on the peak at noon and have lunch at the B-24 crash site. Then off to Beaubien.

The crew worked together today like a team! A 180 from the previous day. For those who don't believe in the benefit of Thorns, Roses and Buds, I offer this as an example.

Tonight thorns and roses was much more positive with very positive comments and looking forward to even more fun in the coming days.

We heard there was a 25 acre fire 2 days ago that required the evacuation of several camps including Beaubien. Everyone was returned the next day when the fire was contained.

Day 4

Up at 5:30, packed up, breakfast and left camp at 7:30. Easy hike starting out of Crater Lake then started our ascent. The first 900 feet had lots of switchbacks then leveled off. We used the caterpillar several times. Then the real ascent started. We had a 900 foot ascent over about 1 ½ miles. This was a near constant caterpillar. With this, we have few stops and made continual progress. This was a brutal hike. We reached the peak by 11:00, descended a little and found the crashed B-24. The wing was amazing and mostly still intact. There were pieces of the plane scattered over the mountainside. We had devotions near the plane, photos and then lunch.

The hike down the other side of the mountain was easy. The hike to Beaubien was longer than expected. Even when we saw the camp map, it still was at least another mile before we found the cabin. This was one of our favorites last time and it didn't disappoint this time.

Due to fire danger, the wood fired showers were cold, but still felt great. Laundry could be done with cold water. All of the clothes had lots of dust, but the socks were by far the worst, the water looked like coffee.

Advisors coffee was good. We watched the scouts practice roping. A nice flag ceremony.

The only disappointment was the campfire. The talent seems to be there, but just no energy. A cowboy program just doesn't work when it starts with the reading of a Dr. Seuss book. My final straw was the reading of "cowboy poetry". I don't know how the campfire ended as we left. In fairness, the campfire may not have been that bad, but clearly was not close to Urraca or Crater Lake.

Thorns and roses was very good.

Day 5

Slept in until 6:45, got dressed, ate breakfast. At 8 am headed to the corral for horseback riding. The instruction was very good. For those who do a lot of riding, this would be boring, but for those of us who don't ride, it was fun. Apache is a great horse, I got lucky. It was about a 90 minute ride through beautiful countryside. We were back on the porch at 10:30 for the conservation project. Every crew must do a 3 hour conservation project to get their arrowhead. Our conservation project was cutting down trees in their forest to help the other trees. The saws were sharp and this was fun! Most trees were under 8 inches in diameter and about 30 feet tall. We trimmed the branches and cut up and stacked the trunk. We got to where we could drop a tree almost exactly where we wanted it to drop. I lost a bet on where a tree would drop by 10 inches – it cost me a diet coke (for a diet pepsi drinker, that was a painful one to buy). We were almost done when the weather changed. It started to rain and then the hail came. We got everything put away and ran to the porch. We had lunch in the chuckwagon building. The rain stopped and the scouts went to branding. Some branded hats, bandanas, boots and wood slices. Unfortunately, we still had clothes on the line from the night before and they were soaked from the rain, but not wet enough to wring out water.

The chuckwagon dinner was excellent. They couldn't do dutch ovens because of the fire concern so no cobbler. The beef stew, crackers, juice, pound cake and peaches was a great meal.

After dinner, we sat around and did the next Wilderness pledge piece and then devotions. On the way back to camp, we walked by 2 terrible bear lines. One looked like a smiley face and the other you could touch without even jumping! These were just begging for a bear to find them.

Advisors coffee was good as usual. We talked to a few advisors who came from the camp we would head to the next day. We got good information about the trail. Found out that the water available was not sterilized, but from a stream.

The scouts were in the roping competition and barely lost in the first round. After the competition, they got to do flags. They did a great job! Looked very precise and executed perfectly.

We skipped the campfire program. One of our adults went to the campfire program and said it was good.

Thorns and roses was good again.

Day 6

Up at 6 am. Packed, ate a snack. James and Jan did a very nice worship service and we left camp by 8 am. Hiked to Phillips Junction to restock food. We had to pick up the mornings breakfast there as well. They have fresh fruit and a trading post, both of which were popular. My Merrell boots were 7 years old, been through multiple summer camps, hiking and a previous Philmont trip. This morning one shoelace almost broke and the upper and lower were starting to separate. Fortunately, they have shoe goo and laces. The new laces were put in, the goo added when we got to camp. Clearly this is the last trek for the boots, but they should hold up until the end.

Hiked to Crooked Creek. They have a nice view and the program is Homesteading. After the porch talk, we were taken to our campsite and got camp set up. Then it was lunch time, and a clothes line was put up for the wet clothes. IT was warm and sunny enough that they dried quickly. For the hike, I had put my socks on the back of my pack through carabineers and they were dry.

We had a tour of the home, got to split wood, then the boys got to chase chickens to put them back in their pen (although they keep getting out).

It rained a little in the afternoon. They have water there, but it is from a very small stream and you have to look to find a clean area to get water before filtering or purifying.

The boys played horseshoes and other games in the afternoon.

Supper was turkey and stuffing, we did it in turkey bags and cleanup was fast and easy. Much easier than the "Philmont way".

After supper, time for some games at the cabin, the boys put the chickens in the pen and put the cows and donkey in their pen.

Advisors coffee was good. They said they used a French Press for coffee, so those who like coffee were happy.

The scouts were taught how to milk a cow and had a chance to try.

Then the highlight of the night – The Poo Flinging contest. This sounds lame, but was really fun. You are judged on accuracy, entertainment value and distance. You must start behind a line and fling the poo into a pit. There were 7 rounds between the 3 crews. We started out simple, and then each crew added in more elaborate themes.

Round 1 plain, just flung the poo.

Round 2 – Used a catapult technique. Good score

Round 3 – Poncho Villa skit – if you've been to Urraca, you know the skit.

Round 4 – Rocky, he trained flinging poo, not boxing on slabs of meet

Round 5 – Narnia – It wasn't the kids who saved Narnia, it was the poo.

Round 6 – Thunder Cat Football Challenge

Round 7 – Blues Brothers – complete with the classic lines. This was the tie-breaker

We won! Everyone got pudding (seems a common trading commodity out here).

Good Thorns and roses again.

Day 7

Up at 6 am, packed up camp, ate breakfast and left by 7:30. Stopped at Porcupine Camp to top off our nalgenes. Used Micropur instead of filtering. We left by 8. Not too bad of a hike with great scenery. We finally got up high enough that we are seeing green instead of the burned out brown at lower levels. Lots of flowers and many were blooming. We even saw many 6" trout in the streams. Two days ago, Ted lost his knife during a hike. Last night Cal had prayed that Ted would find his knife. As we were hiking, what does Ted find in the dirt alongside the trail? A knife similar to the one he lost. It looked like it had been in the dirt for a while. Coincidence or a God thing? Total elevation change today was only 500 feet in a gentle climb on good trails. We arrived at Clear Creek at 11:00. Their water purifier was down, so another camp to filter/purify water. At least their stream was better. After the porch talk, we went over to the "beaver pond" to see a trapping demonstration. It was fun, but had many errors in it. We were then taken to our camp. Setup was under 30 minutes – great job guys! We had lunch and then went to the cabin for a 1:00 tour. The cabin tour was short, but well worth doing.

Had downtime until black powder rifles at 3.

Shortly after lunch, it appeared that another crew had modified a bridge that we had to walk across and Cal fell injuring his hand and leg. Luckily, it wasn't anything serious. The staff asked if we would like to tear apart that bridge and repair the other one. They would pay in donuts or potato chips. The boys were up for that, and it didn't take long to finish both projects. The boys enjoyed the chips. The new bridge looks great, is strong and stable.

The afternoon was raining off and on. We took the opportunity to filter more water when we could. Showed up for rifles at 3 and had to wait a short time due to lightning and rain. The Black Powder rifles are a lot of fun for the scouts and adults. Another don't miss activity.

Supper was beef stroganoff – one of the favorite meals. It didn't last long. The turkey bags made cleanup really easy again. The scouts love them! If you haven't used turkey bags for cooking, I highly recommend it. Boil the water as usual. Put the turkey bag in the other pan and add your dry ingredients. Slowly add water stirring carefully to not puncture the bag. Mix and serve as usual. The only problem can be if you puncture the bag, but even then, cleanup is easier than if everything had been done in the pot. You don't need a "yum-yum" bag as the turkey bag is it.

After supper we finished filling all of the nalgenes and our 6L water bags. Before we started filling, we looked up stream and saw a scout bathing and doing laundry in the stream. This is the one we were going to filter water out of. Now, Philmont has strict rules against swimming, bathing or doing laundry in streams, rivers, ponds, lakes or any body of water. I mentioned this to him and his advisor told him to just go downstream from us. At Advisor Coffee, I brought this to the attention of the staff. They were not pleased and were going to talk to the crew. Went to the advisors coffee. While there, Father Ray showed up and we had a nice talk. He told us a little secret – on the Friday we get back to camp, the Archbishop of Santa Fe will be in camp and speaking at mass that night. This is a don't miss opportunity.

In bed by 9 as tomorrow morning will be any early morning to hike over Mount Phillips.

Day 8

Up at 5am. Dark, cold and a bit damp from light rain last night. The rainfly is just damp, but will dry fast later today when the sun comes out. Have you ever tried to put contacts in when it is cold and dark? Trying to get the correct light reflection off a small mirror is an interesting challenge. Also, be sure to keep the contact container in your sleeping bag. Ice cold contacts will wake you up quickly in the morning, but I don't suggest it.

Everyone was up, dressed, packed, had a snack and left by 7 am. We had a little extra water to take with us (this is a good thing). Everyone had at least 4 liters of water. The next camp with water was our program at Cyphers, no water even at the camp we are staying at. The trail up to Mount Phillips was in good shape. It is strenuous climb we gain about 1500 feet. There are some switchbacks, but most of it is straight uphill. The caterpillar was wonderful again. We had a few 5 minute and one 20 packs off break on the way up. We arrived at the top at 9 am. Incredible views everywhere. You could see Black Mountain and Baldy Mountain. There is a flag mounted at the top and we had a group photo taken there. We also found 2 gold geodesic markers in the rock. One was from 1961, the other had no readable date. Finished breakfast up there along with several other crews, then decided we still had a long hike ahead of us and started the hike down.

The other side of Mount Phillips was a much easier hike. While ours was mainly a straight uphill climb, this side was a gentler slope with switchbacks.

Once we passed through Commanche Peak camp and came to a turn, we heard a noise "everyone huddle now!". We didn't know what to make of this, but kept hiking. As we turned the corner, we saw a group of Rangers making an arch for us to walk under. This was very cool. Then it got better, we saw one of the rangers was Jason – our Jason who had taught us the first 3 days! Clearly, this was another God moment, as we could not have planned for this to happen.

It was an easy hike to ThunderRidge campsite. This is a desolate, small campsite with only 3 spots to camp. We looked at all three, and each was small. There was no way to place the tents 50 feet from the bearward triangle in any of the 3 campsites. We chose the middle one because it was the "largest" and easier for other crews if any showed up later. We had lunch and setup camp. We were done with everything by 11:30 and set off of Cyphers mine.

There are 2 options to get to Cyphers mine, one is a trail that looks to be about 2 miles and a road that is about 1 ½ miles. We chose the road. Very steep with switchbacks and lots of large rocks. I'm not sure what kind of vehicle can make it up this road. It took about 35 minutes to get to Cyphers.

They had a good porch talk. We set up a time for the mine tour. While we were waiting, we were taught how to pan for gold. We had a time for blacksmithing, but this was cancelled.

Earlier in the summer, they couldn't do it because of fire risk. Today it was cancelled because of the rain the last few days had gone down the chimney and soaked the forge and they couldn't get it to light. A little more downtime until our tour.

The mine tour was done extremely well with a good history intro, showing some of the rocks from the mine, and a safety talk.

There were two crews going into the mine.. Be sure to bring your headlamp, you will need it as there are no lights. "Shorty" from the mine had us turn off our lights and it got pitch black in a

hurry. Then she showed us how to get out of the mine in the dark. A few other surprises along the way, but you need to be there to appreciate them. The mine tour lived up to the hype! One nice thing about Cyphers Mine is every campsite has an Adirondack to sleep in. The ground is so rocky, I don't know if you could put tent stakes. We used one of the at campsites and had dinner at 6. We attended advisors coffee at 7. Talked with a few crews. A ranger supervisor was there and said we had to move our tents as they were too close to the campfire ring. We said the sites were too small to meet Philmont suggestions. She said to move the tents to another campsite, leave our bearbags and food at the current campsite. Apparently there is a mother bear and 2 cubs who wander into that campsite and there have been problems in the recent past. This didn't make much sense to us, but we didn't really have much choice. We notice Cyphers and several open campsites and asked twice if we could move down to Cyphers. At ThunderRidge, we were the only crew there. At Cyphers, there were other crews around. So if both camps had bear issues, we felt safer at the camp with more crews. "We were told absolutely we could not move. We were really looking forward to seeing "The Stomp", but realized it was more important to get our tents moved to a "safer" area and do it in the light. It took 35 minutes to get back up the trail and by 8:15, the tents were moved into a different campsite. Our tents were now 30 feet from a different campfire ring than the one we were using. It still didn't really make sense to us, but it made the rangers happy. We missed "The Stomp", but our tents were "safe". Had a good thorns and roses, followed by devotions and the next Wilderness Ghia talk. Everyone go to sleep earlier than if we had stayed at Cyphers. If we had stayed for the stomp, we would have arrived at camp around 9:30 and had to move things in the dark – not a good option.

Tomorrow is a really long hike, so it will be another early day. Hard to believe that we are over ½ way done!

In bed by 9.

Day 9

We woke up at 5 am (again). Everyone was relieved to see there had been no bear activity through the night. We packed up quickly; everyone had a snack and left camp by 6:15. With packs, we decided to take the trail instead of the road. It was a downhill trail with many switchbacks. While the road was about 1 ½ miles, this was 2.3 by the GPS, but much easier. We arrived at Cyphers around 7:15 and topped off everyone's water and finished breakfast while waiting. We left at 7:30.

It looked to be about 4 miles to Cimmaroncito, but it was 7.3 miles. The map showed a few stream crossings – we counted 55! This did not include dry crossings. (2 years ago we had a day with 49, and we thought that was extreme).

We ate at Cimmaroncito at 11:15. Once again, another good porch talk telling us about everything they have to offer. We wanted to get showers, do laundry and rock climb. We had 2 times available to climb. We chose 2:45. This would give some time to clean up now. We had lunch under large shady trees. After lunch, 5 of us headed off for Ute Gulch to get our last restocking of food. We arrived at 12:15. They were closed for lunch from 12-1, but the trading post was open. A little downtime was appreciated. We were first in line at 1:00. Didn't take long to get our food. We traded a cooked breakfast for one that didn't need water (as we would be at a dry camp) and swapped the last dinner for another lunch (again because of the dry camp). Then he asked if we wanted a special treat – he said to say yes, so we did. 2 bags of chocolate donuts! SCORE!

We left at 1:15 and arrived at 'Cito at 1:45. We still had time to shower and do laundry. They have new showers and they were hot. Each shower is an individual stall with its own door and sink. Very nice! They also have a new covered laundry area with 6 big sinks. The clothes were not as dirty as last time, but the socks were still nasty. Hung the clothes on some trees to dry. Those climbing, left at 2:30 for a hike up the mountain. They have a nice climbing area with some challenging areas to "free climb" while attached to a safety rope and then rapel down. Everyone was back by 4:15.

One other feature they have is a "magic mailbox". If you put in a stamped, addressed, blank postcard, it will be sent as a love letter to whomever it is addressed. We'll see how it works. The hike from 'Cito to Cathedral Rock camp was a nice downhill trail. Very scenic. We stopped at the Philmont Reservoir for a few minutes. This is where you see Cathedral Rock. Great views. Then we hiked to Cathedra Rock camp. It is a nice camp, but be prepared. We descended 300 feet DOWN to the camp with switchbacks. We found a great campsite near the back of the camp, by a meadow. Nice view of Cathedral Rock outside our tent. Once again, we were the only crew in the camp as we have no sister crew.

After camp was set up, had another great meal. The scouts love using the turkey bags and the adults really appreciate them as well. After eating, we wandered out to the meadow to get a great view of Cathedral Rock as the sun was setting.

Before thorns and roses, Ryan did his last Wilderness Gha talk. They have all been really good. I don't know how many other crews really do the Wilderness talks, devotions and thorns and roses, but I highly recommend all of them.

Everyone seems to be having a great time on this trek. James did his next to last devotion. He has done a great job as Chaplains Aid, adding insight to the devotions and closing with inspiring prayers.

In bed by 8:45 as tomorrow is another long day. . .

Day 10

Up at 5 am, packed up, a quick breakfast (the rest went into pockets to eat on the way) and out of camp by 6:20. The nice downhill switchbacks yesterday are now much steeper uphill climbs this morning. Quite the way to get the blood pumping first thing in the morning. Once back on the trail, we hiked back to the Philmont Reservoir to see the sun coming up by Cathedral Rock. A very pretty scene.

.years. It was about a 3 mile hike to Clarks Fork. This is a very important stop as it is our LAST chance to get water before we get to basecamp. Everyone filled all of their camelbacks, nalgens and the 2 6L water bags. We also made sure everyone drank at least 1-2 liters of water while waiting

It seemed like a longer hike to Shaefers Pass this time. The trail had changed some and was now routed into Shaefers camp. Not what the map showed! We hiked to an intersection of trails that did not show up on the map. We spent 10-15 minutes trying to decide which trail was correct. We decided on the trail that looked in a little better shape and hiked on. This twisted around the mountain and eventually we found the other trail we had looked at joining in with this one. The one we took was longer and had more switchbacks, but was the easier. The other was a straight line up the mountain. We continued on and went past the trail up to Shaefers Peak. They have done a lot of work on the trail near and around Shaefers Pass as it has more switchbacks and is not as steep as previous years.

The hike around Tooth Ridge also is much different. In the past, once you finished the top bolder area, you descended to a smooth trail. Now you slowly descended through switchbacks but continue on a very rocky trail. We hiked past the sign for Tooth of Time to get to our camp. We arrived at Trail Ridge camp at 1 pm. What looked to be a 6 mile hike was 10.1 with no mistakes! We were able to get our favorite campsite. It still had the rock furniture around the fire ring. An the latrine has been replaced by a plastic one. Still has the great view of basecamp. During the day and evening, many scouts from other crews came over wanting to see this "famous latrine". Other crews had heard about this from rangers and camp staff at other camps. It just seems funny to have scouts come over and ask if they can see "your latrine".

It started raining, and we raced to get camp set up. The tents went up and the bear bags in place. Then it poured. We found some large rocks to put packs under and ate lunch behind and under the rocks. The rain finally stopped and we finished setting up camp.

We saw the other crew from our council was in camp and talked with them for a bit. They also were having a great time.

As the weather appeared to be clearing, we decided this was the time to make a try for the Tooth of Time.

We left at 3:45 with water and a day pack. There is a trail at the base of Tooth of Time, but it disappears quickly and the rest is just boulder climbing. Some of the rocks move, others hide large crevasses. It took about 30 minutes to get to the top, but it seemed much longer. We met the other crew at the top. Incredible views all around. There are 2 large areas on top. Took lots of photos and found both markers at the top. The climb down is actually more difficult than the way up. It also is easy to get disoriented coming down and end up on the other side of the base than where you started. Knowing this, we still ended up 200 feet from where we started. Not

bad, as the boys ended up on the other side and had to hike back around the trail to get to us. We were down by 5:45.

We had supper at 6:30 and ate on the rocks by our camp. The other crew joined us. As we were eating, we saw one of the most vibrant rainbows I have ever seen. We could see the entire rainbow and all colors. Then it turned into a double rainbow. Breathtaking!

We ended the night with a combined devotion with James and Spencer (from the other crew) doing our last devotion. A great way to end the trek. We went back to our separate camps for thorns and roses.

While we are having fun, everyone is looking forward to basecamp tomorrow.

Bed at 9. We will be up at 5am to climb the rocks and see the sunrise before hiking to basecamp.

Day 11

Up at 5 am. Got part of the gear packed up. We hiked up to the rocks to see the sunrise. A little cloudy, but still a nice sunrise.

We had breakfast up on the rocks during sunrise. Then went back to camp, finished packing up our gear and left by 6:40. The trail to basecamp is a 6 mile winding trail with many switchbacks and a 2% grade. It takes a long time to get anywhere. We arrived at the welcome sign at 8:45. The water spigot near the sign is now working. We took multiple photos of the group, families, individuals, and the “mountain men” at the welcome sign. Then a short hike to the welcome center to get our tent assignments. We put our gear in the tents and then off to the check-in stations. You must go to each station in order, even if you have nothing from that station. When we go to the crew gear check-in, we made it easy for him. Everything was already washed, tied or hung up and ready to check.

Finally, back to the tents and out of the smelly clothes. Everything, including the clothes for the train went in the laundry. While they were being cleaned, I took what may be the greatest shower ever. Lots of warm water and soap. Felt great after. Laundry was finished at 12. Just enough time to put the laundry in the tent and then to lunch.

Real, hot cooked food that was not freeze-dried. What a treat! The favorite was the cold milk. There were lines at the milk machine. After lunch, the clouds started to roll in and looked like a storm was brewing.

After lunch, went to Tooth of Time Traders and picked up 32 Duty to God and 32 Wilderness Trek patches and a few assorted items for myself.

After supper, they had a team game in the cafeteria. Lots of fun to watch. We also donated a signed trek t-shirt to hang up in the mess hall. We had pictures of the crew taken with the t-shirt on the wall.

I had planned to go to the Jewish service tonight, but with the ArchBishop of Sante Fe, Michael Sheehan presiding over the Catholic service, this was a don't miss opportunity. One of our scouts was selected to do the responsive readings. Very cool! Since I am not Catholic, I could not take the sacrament, but did receive a blessing from the Arch Bishop.

After the service, we lined up to go to the closing campfire. Unfortunately, it started to rain and we were moved inside to the area behind the staff activity center. They had all sorts of problems with the AV system and ended up not being able to show any videos. The Mcee acted like he didn't have a clue what to do. Some of this may be because the videos he was to introduce and act off of, were never shown. In the end, this was a really BIG disappointment. I thought Boy Scouts were supposed to “be prepared”, but clearly they were not! Having seen the show 2 years ago, and hearing part of it the night before from the mountain top made this even worse.

We went back to our tents and had a full trip thorns and roses. A very good closure to a great trip.

Our plan for the morning is to go to Cimmaron , but it looks like the bus may start running too late for us as it starts at 11:00 and we have to be at the welcome center by 2:30 to leave.

Day 12

Up at 5:30. I didn't plan on getting up that early, but crews around us were getting up and not being considerate of those trying to sleep. Finally out of bed at 5:40 as I gave up. Packed up most of my gear and headed for one more great shower. Breakfast was at 7:15, then finished packing. We were able to get 3 tents to stow our gear(one for each crew), until we left. This was better than leaving all of our gear outside by the welcome station.

We decided to go to the Kit Carson museum. We had a bad experience there in the past because of another crew disrupting the tour. We had hopes of it being better this time. We left on the bus at 9:30. We were met at the bus by a man in costume. He was a retired science teacher who loved history and it showed! The tour was excellent with lots of history trivia added. The museum has been redone and a blacksmith shop added. The store also has been improved with one side retail and one side historic. They still have the tomahawk throwing area. I wish we had more time to explore as it was that good. This is a definite see next time.

We got back to basecamp at 11:30. Just enough time for a little shopping and then lunch.

I got the pizza orders from all 3 crews and ordered them at 1:00. They will be delivered by Pizza Hut to the train station at 4:15. There is little food available by the train station and the bus drivers rarely will stop for food before dropping you off at the train station.

The bus came to pick us up at 2:30 and a quick drive to the train station. We arrived about 3:15 and found the train will be about 40 minutes late. Pizzas arrived at 4:15. The train delay worked well as we have almost 90 minutes to eat. Anything left will be taken on the train. This time we were able to stow our gear below our seats.

Nice relaxing train ride to Fort Madison. We arrived about 30 minutes late.

Day 13

Arrived about 30 minutes late. Got our gear unpacked and moved the vehicles to be easier to load. One car battery was dead. Everyone had removed jumper cables to make more room for gear. We found a set of cables and got the car running.

One of the scouts had a great surprise. His dad had been serving in Afghanistan with the National Guard. His son didn't know he would be back. His dad hid behind a wall, quietly followed his son to the car and tapped him on the shoulder. The look on his sons face was priceless!

We left by noon. Everyone stopped different places for lunch. We arrived back in Waterloo around 4 after dropping everyone off at their homes.

Now comes unpacking, real laundry and a long shower.

Until the next trek . . .