



A group of Madison Troop 25 Boy Scouts and adult leaders said goodbye to civilization this past summer and headed into a range of the Rocky Mountains at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. In the midst of their challenging trek of nearly 90 miles over 10 days, from left, are John Hoover, John Guiheen, Thomas Hoover, Matt Portas, Ryan Hoover, Robbie D'Addario, Jack D'Addario, Chris Driscoll, Tyler Driscoll, Matthew Driscoll, Jim Guiheen and Robert D'Addario.

Madison Troop 25 conquers the Rockies

MADISON - On June 30, nine Boy Scouts and three adult leaders from Madison's Troop 25 took off from Newark Liberty Airport for Scouting's ultimate "High Adventure" - a backpacking trip through the rugged, mountainous terrain of the Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, N.M.

They were excited to be headed for the great outdoors and the Rocky Mountains with their friends - but had no idea how much the adventure would test them mentally and physically.

The Scouts and leaders landed in Denver, Colo., made their way to the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs and spent the next three days participating in tours and hikes so they could acclimate to the high altitude before hitting the trail.

First up was the "Garden of the Gods" and its breathtaking natural red

rock formations, designated a National Natural Landmark in 1971, and then the U.S. Air Force Academy, both in Colorado Springs. The next day the crew took a cog railway up to Pikes Peak, 14,110 feet above sea level. Later that day, wetsuits were donned and the group rafted the Arkansas River, where the Scouts and leaders were challenged by Class 3 rapids - with medium waves requiring significant maneuvering skills - and longer Class 4 rapids, featuring whitewater, large waves and rocks, requiring sharper maneuvers - guided by a recent Yale University graduate from Australia who was also captain of the Yale rugby team.

Last Night In A Bed

That night the Scouts laid down their tired bodies on beds for the last time be-

fore heading to base camp. From then on, there would be no beds, no refrigerator, no tables, no plumbing for 10 days.

The crew members carried everything they needed for the next 10 days in 45-pound packs. Along the way, they met other young men from all walks of life. Some were Marines training to become officers; others, seminarians studying to become ministers; still others, university students aimed at becoming nuclear, mechanical or chemical engineers.

The troop chose leadership roles for its crew. Robbie D'Addario was the crew leader, Chris Driscoll and Jack D'Addario were cooks, Matt Portas was the chaplain's aide, Ryan Hoover and Matthew Driscoll were navigators, Tyler Driscoll was the wilderness guide, Thomas Hoover was responsible for wilderness first aid and was the

crew's reporter, and John Guiheen assumed the role of "bear safety engineer."

Taking On The Rockies

At base camp, a ranger with the crew performed a "shakedown" - a final inspection of their equipment. Then a bus dropped off the Scouts and leaders for their last view of civilization before they started their 10-day trek through 214 square miles of wilderness. Those days were filled with hiking, pole climbing, mountain climbing, rock climbing, horseback riding, shotgun shooting, team-building, playing "mountain ball" and card games, and caring for a burro that the trekkers nicknamed "Woody."

Every night, after they arrived at their destination to make camp, they pitched tents, hung their food supplies in trees to discourage bears, purified

their water, cooked meals - and kept on the lookout for mountain lions.

One highlight of the trek was reaching the peak of "the Tooth of Time," a challenging rock and mountain climb, overlooking a prairie and the base camp where the group had started, miles away.

Another challenge was hiking 12 miles in a single day, starting at 4 a.m. and reaching the top of Baldy Mountain, elevation 12,441 feet - only to be faced with gale-force winds and near-freezing temperatures.

Crew reporter Thomas Hoover summed up, "This trip was truly a physically and mentally challenging adventure for all. With little more than the packs on their backs and maps in their hands, the Madison crew hiked nearly 90 miles in the Rocky Mountains - and lived to tell about it."