

Notes From Treks Gone By

We hope our 2021 crews find some useful tips in the feedback below. We especially hope all will review the "Hiking is a Team Sport" Watchu Gram. We are reminded of this ethereal thought from Bob Dylan's beautiful song poem, *My Back Pages*, which certainly applies to those who have trekked the Philmont High Country:

"Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now."

We, the Watchu team, accomplish our mission only if all our advisors return younger in spirit, younger in step, and young at heart. The spirit does live on!

Sent: Wednesday, November 06, 2013 8:04 PM
To: Chiefwatchu@watchu.org
Subject: Philmont video

[Dave & the Watchu gang.](#)

[Just wanted to let you know that a couple of the guys from Crew 702-G2 from 2012 made it into the new Philmont promo video. They're the 2 guys laughing at 37 seconds into the piece. The tall one in the green rain gear is my son, Tom Philip \(Eagle Scout, December 2012\) and the Scout in the Watchu T-Shirt is Matt Capone. Both are from Troop 80 in Cranford.](#)

[We had an awesome time at Philmont, and part of the reason these guys were so happy is that we were well prepared for our trek. Thanks to all of you for all your hard work making sure our boys had an experience they will always remember.](#)

[Here's a link to the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_-DEn32Vx4&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_-DEn32Vx4&sns=em)

[Steve Philip](#)

Past advisor feedback: I was talking with a neighbor who is part of the 2013 contingent, and he told me Watchu Mountain is this weekend. It brought back fond memories from our prep for Philmont. Watchu did a great job preparing our gang, especially since our troop had never sent a crew to Philmont, and we had little to no idea what to expect.

Our crew still meets regularly, and we have a pretty good bond. Since Philmont, one of the guys has earned his Eagle, two more have completed their projects and are finishing up their merit badges, and several others have ramped up their efforts towards the rank. I think Philmont was instrumental in "pushing" our younger crew members towards this goal.

Thanks to you and your crew at Watchu for getting us ready, getting us there and back, and helping us to experience Scouting's ultimate High Adventure in a way that not only gave us a deep appreciation for the beauty that is Philmont, but has inspired us to go further, and do more.

Past advisor feedback: "We had an awesome trip! Thank you so much for everything you did to help us get prepared. The whole Watchu Experience was top shelf. We had two crews from Roxbury Township travel together and do the same trek as sister crews. Every day was spectacular! On the way down to Base Camp we were commenting that hindsight being 20/20, we would not have done ANYTHING different - from equipment, to training, trek selection and the trip itself. That's a major compliment to you and your team - the adult advisors on our two crews are always looking for ways to improve, that's how we are programmed. The Scouts experienced one of the best trips of their lifetimes."

Past advisor feedback: "I wanted to mention that the scouts look great in their class A uniforms. Everyone has belts and socks. We took a contingent photo today on top of Pikes Peak. I should add it wasn't just the socks and belts. There were no sneakers, only hiking boots. Shirts and pants were clean and well fitted. PPC Philmont patches on every sleeve. I only had to ask one scout to tuck in his shirt."

"The boys presented themselves with an esprit de corps (this may have been emboldened by the crispness of their uniforms). They were very polite -- lots of 'please's and 'thank you's to everyone we encountered. Throughout our travels and Colorado tour, many strangers asked us where we were from and where we were going. A number of former scouts and parents and grandparents of scouts introduced themselves and told us their Philmont stories."

"All in all a great contingent; I am happy to be a part of this group."

Past advisor feedback: "I want to thank the entire Watchu team for all your hard work. Having never been a true scout in my youth, I was nervous to say the least about what my Philmont experience would be. I have not stopped talking about my life-changing experience since my return to the real world. If not for your Watchu team the experience would not have been half of what it was. Philmont is all that scouting should be. It really has had a profound impact on my life. If you ever need someone to come in and talk to a group about the experience please feel free to contact me. Thanks again."

Past advisor feedback: "I want to personally let you know what a great trek we had. It was my first Philmont experience, and as a 53-year-old advisor, I don't mind saying I had some

fears going into it. But, it was everything promised and more. It was truly the experience of a lifetime.

"Your training plan was right on, and although I might have done better and more, the 4 miles per day walking was sufficient. The Watchu Mountain Adventure in May, when viewed after Philmont, was even better in preparing us than I originally thought. We had some real challenges - up Wilson Mesa, then down; followed by Pueblano to Copper Park via the 'Wall'; then up the north slope of Baldy, down the south slope; back to Copper Park, then up and over 'Ridiculous Ridge' on to Greenwood Canyon in Valle Vidal, one of the nicest trail camps in Philmont. Each challenge stretched the boys and advisors and gave each a real sense of accomplishment - your admonition that hiking at Philmont is a team sport is so true. We saw crews who obviously did not understand this."

"I highly recommend the Philmont supplied tents. They are fabulous and easier to set up than any I've seen. Our 12-man crew was able to set up in 10 minutes, when pressed by rain. We were able to takedown/ pack up in slightly more time. '

"For those going into the Valle, I highly recommend serious practice with a compass. It is a perfect place to bushwhack - lots of fun. I also recommend a GPS unit. Philmont has most sites identified by GPS coordinates, down to the sumps! Seally Canyon even gives instruction on use of GPS. The mountain biking program at Whiteman Vega was terrific; they've done a great job, and the equipment is outstanding. I personally liked the half-pipe."

"Thanks for everything you did to help us get ready. It worked and because we were prepared the experience was better than I ever expected."

Former advisor reports: "I saw the Philmont fossil on the Discovery Channel a couple of weeks ago. It was on one of the 'Ultimate Guide' shows. They wouldn't give the location, just said a secret location in the southwest. The video only showed a close-up of the fenced in enclosure, no shots of the surroundings outside the fence. It was quite a thrill to see Philmont and the beginning of our trek on TV. It certainly brought back a flood of wonderful memories!"

Watchu team comment: And to all of you passing through Anasazi, you too can see Philmont's dinosaur track about half way between Six Mile Gate and Anasazi in the North Ponil Canyon. By the way we understand Anasazi is a Navajo word meaning, "ancient people who are not us". And so the great Anasazi people of Philmont and the Southwest were not Navajo.

Past advisor feedback: "Now that I've had a week at work and a weekend at home I'm on the downhill side of catching up and things are really starting to sink in. I must say that I went to Philmont with very high expectations but incredibly far exceeded them. It truly was

an experience of a life time and doing it for the first time with my son was a wonderful bonus."

"I can very honestly say that your Watchu preparation program and the tour added significantly to our experience. All of my crew members agree. Once on the trail, we were very pleasantly surprised (once we allowed ourselves to believe it) at how well prepared we were. Our Ranger, who was terrific and quickly became a member of our crew, commented several times on our level of preparation. He was very interested to hear about the Watchu program. Our preparedness and the efficiency and confidence that came from it were huge contributors to a tremendous experience. Our one advisor, who went 11-years ago as a Scout, attested to this many times."

"We are planning our next high adventure trip and will work closely with our future crews to help them prepare. This year's crew appears to have formed a life-long bond. We have already had our first reunion."

"I would like to sincerely thank the Watchu team for all the work and the years of experience you shared with us. It was a pleasure being members of your contingent and honorary members of your Council. Hopefully this is the beginning of a long lasting Philmont friendship. By the way, I saw the Arrowhead over my shoulder as we were leaving."

Past Crew Leader feedback: "The high points for me on the Colorado tour were the summit of Pikes Peak, the hike in the Garden of the Gods, and the Western music show. When I was at Philmont I learned about the legend that if you look over your shoulder and see the arrowhead on the back of the Tooth of Time Ridge you are destined to go back to Philmont. I was lucky enough to staff the JLTC course held this year at camp Winnebago and I am signed up to go to the National Junior Leader Instructor Camp (NJLIC) at Philmont next summer. The spirit will live on!!"

Watchu team comment: Patriots' Path and neighboring Councils were represented each year with both staff and participants at the Philmont's no-longer-offered NJLIC course. Philmont currently offers the [NAYLE \(National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience\)](#) course, which youth members of the crew may want to consider for the future.

Past advisor feedback: "We all had a great time. We are talking about doing it again in two years. All I can say this morning, back at work, is "I WANT TO GO BACK TO PHILMONT!!!!!!!"

Past advisor feedback: "I just wanted to let you know that our expedition has returned safely. It was a physically and mentally challenging trek with unspeakable rewards for all.

What an experience!! All completed the trek and the team worked through several issues successfully in the back country. We were an excellent team."

"Our crew, particularly the advisors, want to thank the entire Watchu team for preparing us so well for this unique experience. Even our Ranger said we had been well prepared. Your training was so complete that there were no surprises ... before or on the trail. We felt well prepared and confident....thanks to you. Please pass on our sincere thanks to the Watchu team."

Watchu team comment: We hope all crews recognize the power of teamwork. If all members of the crew are committed to the success of their crewmates, a wonderful time will be had by all.

Past advisor feedback: "We had a great time. Thank you for all your assistance in preparation. The most valuable thing you taught us was hiking as a "team sport". The idea never occurred to me before our training, and it turned out to be the best thing we did. Our crew's training and attention to detail became a source of pride for all of us."

Feedback from the mother of a crew member: My son's Philmont experience was fantastic! He saw how prepared, trained and well run his trip was in comparison to other contingents on the trail. From the boy's perspective -he was very thankful to the Patriots' Path Council!

Dear Chief Watchu

Great to have you share all these bits of information and of course they're right on target, except you CAN go into the Holy Child Chapel at Rayado. Or at least in past years you could. It is actually still owned by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe but maintained by Philmont. If you're down there, it's worth a look if you and the staff have time to open it up. Incidentally, I've been privileged to baptize a baby there - Bill Spice's grandson! You may recall Bill is the immediate past Philmont General Manager. There have also been a number of Phil-weddings there. I officiated at one a few summers ago. The Archbishop does allow other than Catholic denominations to use it for weddings. It's been granted a status like a military chapel.

With longing for the old Santa Fe Trail ... especially in God's Country!
Your Watchu and Philmont Padre,
Father Don Hummel"

Watchu team comment: Father Donald Hummel is a Distinguished Eagle, Silver Buffalo, Philmont Chaplain, Watchu Chaplain, Past National BSA Catholic Chaplain, and a Registered

Patriots' Path Scouter. When necessary he hijacks extra copies of *Eagles Soaring High* for us. He points out there is something in the bible which justifies this. Don't ask.

Super tip from the padre: "Check out the Muslim section of your trail worship booklet *Eagles Soaring High* for sunrise and sunset times (pages M5 through M8). This information is very helpful when planning your camp departure and arrival times."

Watchu Reminder: All crew members should wear their Watchu Mountain Adventure patch on the right pocket of their travel uniform while on tour. Crew Chiefs, Chaplain Aides, Wilderness Pledge *Guias*, and Crew Reporters should wear their badge of office below that pocket.

Phil Fact: While a camper at Hunting Lodge in 1945, John Westfall wrote *The Philmont Hymn*. Returning in 1947 as a Ranger at Bench camp (now Visto Grande and a trail camp), he popularized the song he wrote two years earlier. He died in 2009 in Bartlesville Oklahoma, after a career as a professional Scouter and later in sales with Waite's brothers Frank and L.E.'s Phillips Petroleum Company.

The spirit does live on!

John Westfall

Bench Camp, Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico