

Our Mission

The Philmont Staff Association (PSA) unites the Philmont staff—past, present, and future—for the purpose of serving the adventure, heritage and experience of Philmont Scout Ranch and the Boy Scouts of America.



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On the Cover: *Starlit skies above: the Milky Way over Base Camp. Photo by High Country Art Director Mark Dierker.*

On the Back Cover: *Jupiter and the Beehive Cluster in the night sky over the Tooth of Time. Photo by Mark Dierker.*

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Different Kind of Busy

Do you remember your first day at Philmont? Many of us waited months for that day. Before I even arrived at Philmont, I remember thumbing through the Time-Life Collection of the Old West books to put together the perfect period-specific cowboy outfit to wear during my time as a wrangler. The big day finally came, and I showed up at Cattle Headquarters and was told to pick my equipment. I chose from a pile of chaps and horse blankets. A few days later the other wranglers and I were picking items from piles of shoeing hammers and boxes of horseshoe nails. Everything we needed just magically appeared – or so it seemed.

These thoughts pop into my head when I hear PSA Executive Director Bob Mosher or Director of Camping Steve Nelson describe a flurry of activity at Philmont in the winter months, a time period you might think would be a quiet time at the ranch. It has become a running joke with PSA office staff when I refer to this being "the quiet time," and Bob says, "It's just a different kind of busy!" Even though winter may not

seem as busy as the summer months, our staff and volunteers are hard at work getting everything ready for another great summer.

One of the many exciting things that has been going on this winter is the planning for the PSA's 50th anniversary celebration, under the leadership of Tom Giugni and his committee. The HOmEcoming Reunion is going to be a great event, with many choices for different program activities. The toughest part might just be having to pick from all the great options! I hope you are able to join us during the first week of July.

As the days grow longer, summer is quickly approaching, and Philmont will be bustling with activity from seasonal staff and campers before too long. I hope to see you at the ranch this summer in the middle of all the excitement and activity!



Matt Lindsey
President



It won't be long before the staff gathers again for another busy summer. Join your fellow former staffers at the PSA HOmEcoming as we celebrate 50 years of the PSA, July 2-8. Philmont MPS photo.

New PSA Award

The Board of Directors has adopted a proposal from the Awards and Recognition Committee for the creation of a new PSA award. The “Beaubien & Miranda Award” will recognize “dedicated and consistently excellent job performance and service to Philmont over a substantial period of years by a full-time Philmont employee.” The concept of an award like this has been discussed by the PSA and ranch managers for several years, and now it’s a reality!

The new award may be presented annually to no more than two current or former employees, and need not be given every year. BSA professionals are eligible to be considered, and no specific number of years of service is required. As with the other PSA awards, nominations for the recognition must be made to the Board of Directors by an affirmative two-thirds vote of the Awards & Recognition Committee, and recipients must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the board. The award may not be presented posthumously other than for an individual selected prior to his/her death.

Named for the originators of the land grant of which Philmont is a part, and also for two of Philmont’s most beautiful camps, the award will recognize ranch employees for long and dedicated service to the land and people of Philmont. The specific design and nature of the award have not yet been determined, but per the committee, it will likely be an object that recipients will be proud to display. The inaugural award will be presented at our reunion opening program on July 2.

Around the PSA

The association is working with an accounting team to reconcile our books before moving to a cloud-based accounting system later this year . . . the board has approved membership fee increases to take effect in 2024 (details in our next issue).

PSA CALENDAR

PSA Homecoming

*50th Anniversary Reunion
Week-Long Event at PTC
Registration now open
July 2-8, 2023*

PSA Summer Treks

July 9-16, 2023

Fall Board Meeting

September 15-17, 2023

PSA Volunteer Vacation

September 16-24, 2023

President’s Circle Weekend

October 6-8, 2023

PSA Autumn Adventure

October 14-20, 2023

All events at Philmont Scout Ranch

*Register for all events at
www.philstaff.org*

*For more info on any event,
contact the PSA office at
575-376-1138 or
psadirector@philstaff.org*

PTC Youth Campership

The impact the Philmont Training Center (PTC) had on our family is immeasurable. When our son and daughter were 7 and 5 years old, we made our first trip to Philmont. We could never have realized what a positive effect that trip would have on the trajectory of our family. When we were leaving after a busy week, our kids begged us to return to PTC.

We did return to PTC about every two years for the next eight years. Debbie and I have had an opportunity to reflect on experiences that were pivotal to our family legacy. We talked about things that our kids, now in their 20s and 30s, still talk about. PTC always seems to be one of those.

PTC gave our children a lifelong foundation that led to the genuine adults they are today. Our son is an Eagle Scout and our daughter is a Venturing Silver Award and Girl Scout Gold Award recipient.

We wanted to be able to offer a life-changing experience for other families, so we created the PTC Youth Campership Endowment. This fund will pay 50% of the cost for a youth of Cub Scout age to attend PTC with their parent(s) or guardian. Ten camperships are offered each year.

Here are two opportunities:

- If you are attending PTC with your family and have Cub Scout age youth, ask for an application. We have not used all the funds every year for the past three years.
- If PTC has been as integral to your family as it has to ours and you have the heart to donate, please consider contributing to the PTC Youth Campership. This is an endowment. Your donation will be used to generate camperships – it will not be spent.

Rick Kagarwa



A PTC youth participant tackling one of the elements at PTC’s COPE Tower near Rocky Mountain Scout Camp. MPS photo by Ryan Ash.

HOMecoming 2023 – July 2-8

Come HOMe to the ranch this summer and join us in a week-long celebration of the PSA's 50th anniversary! The reunion kicks off on July 2 and runs through July 8 at the Philmont Training Center.

Reunion Committee chair Tom Giugni and his team have put together a stellar program of hikes, events, service, and music. Want to get far into the backcountry? This summer's reunion features an all-day Friday Baldy hike, as well as a Tooth hike and a lot of shorter hikes. Want to hear some great music? Some of the great Philmont performers from the past will be on hand to provide it. Want to give back? We'll be engaging one day in "500 Hours of Service" to the ranch with a variety of projects tailored to individual abilities.

And if you want to give your kids the vacation of their lives, bring them along to participate in the full range of PTC family programs. The training center staff is even bringing back mountain man and mountain woman backcountry treks for kids aged 14-18. They won't have a better five days for the price in their lifetimes.

Sunday, July 2, is arrival day, with the opening program, "Celebrating 85 Years of the Philmont Staff," including presentation of our Distinguished Staff Alumni Award and the inaugural Beaubien & Miranda Award honoring a beloved long-time retired Philmont employee. On Monday, you'll hear updates on Philmont from ranch managers, have a variety of

options for programs in "The Philmont Forum," and enjoy an art fair, book signings, and music fest. Tuesday features the 100th Maverick Club Rodeo in Cimarron with all of the associated festivities.

Thursday will see us engaged in our 500 Hours of Service in the morning with hikes and tours in the afternoon, followed by a concert that evening at the Colfax Tavern with music by Philmont alumni. Friday features that Baldy hike, other hikes, the PSA annual meeting, and our closing program, "Celebrating 50 Years of the PSA," with presentation of the Silver Sage Awards and a recognition of our founders. Then there's the aftershow – expect some great Philmont music well into the night!

And throughout the week you'll have the opportunity to participate in shooting sports at the Hodgdon Shooting Sports Center, high ropes and climbing at the PTC COPE Tower, Villa tours, all of the usual PTC activities, and other great programs.

Can't come for the whole week? Half-week options are available. Don't want to stay in a tent? PTC offers a variety of housing options suitable for any family size or individual preference. Don't want to have to do everything? You don't – pick and choose the activities and events you and your family will enjoy.

Registration is now open at the PSA website below. Check it out for all the info you need on schedules, housing, hikes, kids' activities, everything!

Register at <https://philstaff.org/2023-homecoming-2023/>



2023 PSA HOMecoming!

July 2nd-8th at the PTC

Register today at: philstaff.org/2023-homecoming-2023/

2023 PSA Trek!

Adventure Endures

July 9th-16th



philstaff.org/events/trek/

- ✓ Design your dream trek
- ✓ Grab your fellow PSA Members and eligible family to form a crew
- ✓ Explore new places in the backcountry
- ✓ Hike as much or as little as you want
- ✓ Reconnect with old friends and make new ones
- ✓ Make memories that will last a lifetime



Philmont as a Place of Peace

By Warren Cole Smith
High Country Contributing Writer

Editor's Note: The following remarks were delivered by the author at the annual Rabbi Zeke Palnick Memorial Porch Talk held in July at the PSA's reunion.

Rabbi Zeke Palnick would not have needed an introduction to an earlier generation of Philmont staffers. He was well known and well-loved during his many years on the Philmont staff. To remember and honor Rabbi Zeke, his family established this Zeke Palnick Porch Talk to carry on Rabbi Zeke's legacy of tolerance and dialogue. I'm honored that the family is allowing me to deliver this year's talk. As I reflected on Rabbi Zeke's life, and on Philmont and why it continues to draw us back year after year, three words kept coming to my mind. Those words are Friend, Peace, and Home.



Rabbi Zeke's gravestone in Iowa City, Iowa.

Friend

I would like to take a few minutes to explain why these words are so important, but to lead us into that discussion, I'd like to share with you some of the words on Zeke Palnick's own gravestone. They include the following:

Husband – Father – Grandfather
Brother – Friend



Above: An evening with friends at the Hunting Lodge. MPS photo by Clay Helfrick. Opposite page: A mountain sunrise heralds another day to make a difference. MPS photo by Madelynne Scales.

That word “friend” jumped out at me. Many of us here tonight have Philmont close friends. Philmont has a way of forging friendships that stand the test of time. It is a beautiful thing to greet with a warm handshake or a hug someone you first met 20, 30, 40, even 50 years ago. I’m fond of the saying “old friends are the best,” because it’s true: they are. There is something about a friendship formed in one’s youth, in the crucible of a shared passion and mission, that never leaves you.

The fact that Zeke had the word “Friend” on his tombstone speaks volumes about him. I also think that word should be both an encouragement and a challenge to us. I think Zeke would have us ask ourselves, “What kind of friend are we?” One way we can honor Zeke Palnick and honor our Philmont experience is to ask that question of ourselves daily and seek to be a better friend to the people in our lives.



“There is something about a friendship formed in one’s youth, in the crucible of a shared passion and mission, that never leaves you.” MPS photo by Steel Brooks.

Peace

The second word I would like for us to consider in relation both to Zeke’s life and to our experience at Philmont is the word “peace.”

I don’t need to tell you that we live in a world that is anything but peaceful. We know of shooting wars going on now at various places in the world, including Ukraine. But even here in this country we talk of “culture wars.” Our political discourse has become crude, polarized, divisive.

Is there an antidote to this division? I think Philmont provides us space to reflect on this question. For many years, I have thought of – and often described – Philmont as a “demilitarized zone.” Are there conservatives and progressives here? Of course. Republicans and Democrats and Libertarians and Socialists and others? Absolutely. Christians and Jews and Mormons and dozens of other



“We are united in a love for this place, Philmont, and the transforming work it has done in our lives, and in the lives of more than a million young people.” MPS photo by Sarah Wettemann.

religions? Yes. All of the above.

But in a very real sense, when we come to Philmont we check our ideological weapons at the door. Whatever our politics or religion, we are united in a love for this place, Philmont, and the transforming work it has done in our lives and in the lives of more than a million young people across many generations. We come here because, despite our differences, we love this place, and we know in our own lives the good it has done, and we want to see that good work continue.

I think Zeke Palnick modeled this idea of Philmont as a demilitarized zone. Make no mistake, Zeke was a progressive who championed progressive causes, but he did so in ways that brought others along, or – when that was not possible – at least allowed a friendship and a spirit of conviviality to continue. To further explain what I mean, consider that at the time of his death, the governor of Arkansas issued a proclamation honoring Zeke, and I’d like to read a portion of it to you now:

Rabbi Zeke joined with his brothers and sisters of all races and religions as a leader in the civil rights movement. His wise counsel to so many progressive groups and individuals changed for the better how we all live together as equal and valued human beings. At a time of great trial and tribulation, he came forward to show the warmth of compassion and the fire of justice. Throughout his life he pursued justice, equality, understanding, cooperation, and amity in his leadership of interfaith endeavors and in his personal interactions.

The words of this proclamation are remarkable enough. But they are made all the more remarkable when you consider that they were penned by the Republican governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee. The fact that a conservative Republican – who was also, I might add, a former Baptist pastor – would say by official proclamation such words about Rabbi Zeke Palnick tells us that not only did Zeke have the respect of friends on both sides of the religious, political, and ideological divide, but he was also what

I like to call – drawing the phrase from Scripture – a “person of peace.” His life was both a model for and a challenge to us, now, to live as a “person of peace” in a divided world.

Home

A few moments ago I shared with you some of the words on Zeke’s tombstone. But there were other words. His tombstone listed all the places he had lived in his life. Let me read to you those places: Montreal, Cincinnati, Miami, Tuscaloosa, Little Rock, Albany, Georgia, Iowa City, Philmont. These were the places that Zeke, at one time or another in his life, called home. And now you know why the governor of Arkansas would write a proclamation honoring Zeke. Arkansas was one of the places.

The fact that he also put Philmont on the list, and placed it last, speaks to his love for the place, and to the fact that in fact he did live at Philmont, off and on, for decades.

Zeke is not alone in thinking of Philmont as home. Many of you, I know, feel the same way. In fact, in the 1980s or 90s, I don’t think anyone knows for sure when, Philmont staffers started referring

to Philmont as “Heaven On Earth,” and shortened that phrase to the acronym HOmE.

While perhaps not intentional, I think associating Philmont both with heaven and with home is actually quite profound. It is aspirational. For most of us, Philmont is neither quite heaven nor quite home, but it contains elements of what we hope and dream heaven, our ultimate and true home, will be. So I think it’s important to note that for us and for Zeke, Philmont is our home.

But only for a while. We come to Philmont, but we also leave Philmont, and we go back to other homes, homes where we have family and friends with whom we have made a life and participate in community and, hopefully, do good in the world.

But I think we miss the lesson of the list of cities on Zeke Palnick’s tombstone if we think of Philmont as our final destination. Philmont is a place to which we are drawn over and over again, but it is a place from which we also, most of us, must depart over and over again. We cannot stay here in the mountains.

So I think one of the lessons of Zeke Palnick’s life is that we can depart refreshed, renewed, inspired. We can leave



“Philmont is a place to which we are drawn over and over again.” MPS photo by Tyler Sanders.



“We come here because we love this place, and we know in our own lives the good it has done, and we want to see that good work continue.” MPS photo by Chase Ensz.

equipped to be better friends, people of peace, in our true homes scattered around the country and around the world.

I hope these few words appropriately honor Rabbi Zeke’s memory and life’s work. More than that, I hope they encourage us to follow Zeke Palnick’s example: to take the lessons of our Philmont HOmE back to our other homes, so that we might make them more compassionate and just places.

About the author: Author, radio host, and past PSA president Warren Cole Smith (75-79 and 84-85) served on the Philmont staff as a PC at Ponil, ranger, training ranger, Rayado coordinator, CD at Crater Lake, and PTC family programs coordinator. He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. E-mail: wsmith@ministrywatch.com



Words from Waite

“Some of the most important principles of all religions, that have endured throughout the ages, are based on humbleness, self-denial, confession, and service to our fellow man.”

-- Waite Phillips

Backcountry EMS

The Philmont Infirmary's pilot program last summer to station trained first responders in the backcountry proved to be a huge success. The infirmary drivers, who are often paramedics or EMTs, took on regular 48-hour rotations at Beaubien to respond from there to medical calls throughout the South Country. The team on duty operated as "Unit 151" from a backcountry Suburban ambulance equipped with emergency medical gear and medications.

Director of Medical Services Nate Lay said, "It cuts off an hour of our response time to have trained medical people with medical equipment that much closer to someone in an emergency." Lay had hoped to expand the program this summer to station a crew in the North Country as well, but those plans have been put on hold for now while Philmont works on increasing the number of participants on the ranch.



EMT Christian Sanders (left) and paramedic Ashton Callahan on a backcountry medical call as Unit 151. MPS photo by Monica Dunn.

50-Miler Itineraries

Philmont is adding new itineraries in 2023 to allow crews to completely earn a BSA 50-Miler Award while at the ranch. Although all Philmont treks cover a minimum of 50 miles, thus meeting the award's mileage requirement, the recognition also requires ten hours of conservation work, only three of which are typically completed at Philmont. Two "super strenuous" itineraries, "50 Miler North" and "50 Miler South," now route crews through three different conservation sites, thus allowing them the ability to complete all of their required ten hours on their trek.



Jicarilla Donation

The National Scouting Museum conducted a ceremony on April 5, 2022, to welcome new additions to the museum donated by the Velarde family of the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Following a visit and tour of the ranch in April 2021, the family wanted to donate to the museum traditional items made by their family

and used for ceremonial and domestic purposes.

Donated items included an intricately beaded buckskin dress, moccasins, and beadwork made by Bob Velarde's mother and worn by his daughter, Blair, at her Casta, a four-day ceremony held on Jicarilla tribal lands for young girls as they enter womanhood. The family also donated a traditional willow basket made by Velarde's grandmother in the 1930s, and an intricately beaded belt.

The ceremonial items are treasured by Jicarilla families, often passed down through generations and seldom donated. Philmont is situated on the original homeland of the Jicarilla Apache. "Philmont and the Jicarilla Apache have a common interest," said Bette Velarde. "Preserve the land, preserve the beauty, preserve what it is."

*By Jack Rodgers, Philmont MPS
Reprinted from the Philmont Blog*



The intricate Jicarilla dress donated by the Velarde family. MPS photo by Jack Rodgers.

Notes From All Over

Philmont and the Kansas University School of Medicine have signed a new memorandum of understanding to continue their decades-long partnership for another five-year period . . . Philmont is working to convert lighting around

the ranch to LEDs . . . the water level in Webster Lake is being drawn down in anticipation of dam maintenance work this fall . . . when it is refilled, the Ranch Department hopes to establish a viable fishery there to support family adventure and sportsman programs . . . the Philmont Trail Race will return on August 12 . . . new fencing in the Cooks Peak Fire burn area includes elk crossings to help eliminate fence damage and wildlife getting hung up . . . OA Trail Crews completed 2,578 feet of the new trail up Mt. Phillips from Clear Creek in 2022 . . . 10.9 percent of participants from 1,007 different crews in 2022 had special food requirements that necessitated deliveries to the backcountry . . . rising fuel prices are impacting the ranch not only in increased costs for gasoline and diesel fuel for its own vehicles, but in increased charges from third parties for items such as contractor travel fees and trash hauling . . . Tooth of Time Traders has become the order fulfillment center for the Order of the Arrow and other Scouting groups . . . PTC is now using an online forum to assist guests in registering for specific activities . . . the Backcountry Warehouse shipped 226 rat and mouse traps to staff camps last summer.

Staff Still Needed!

Ranch operations were significantly impacted last summer by staff shortages in many areas, including food service, Tooth of Time Traders, Welcome Center, and maintenance. If you know any qualified individuals, please encourage them to apply! As we all know, any summer job at Philmont is an opportunity for adventure and experiences that will last a lifetime.



From Bison to Bison Sticks

By David Liebmann

As a first-time camper in 1984, I arrived at Philmont in the rain. I remember someone urging us to look out the bus window for buffalo as we drove the road from Cimarron to Base Camp, but there were no buffalo to be seen. Over the next two summers, I returned as a camper to the ranch, but still no buffalo. In fact, buffalo are European animals, whereas bison are indigenous to North America. Who knew? I guess I never would have seen buffalo at Philmont, technically speaking.

It wasn't until the summer of 1988 that I encountered some of these amazing beasts, but they weren't in the Buffalo Pasture. Instead, I found myself driving the Ponil Road past the Chase Ranch. Two bison were wandering the road, and when I came tooling along in a friend's blue Suburban (not a yellow Philmont vehicle), they just trotted along in front of me. No horn blowing would speed them up. I dared not hit the accelerator for fear of them turning on me and one or the other of us becoming roadkill. Eventually, the pair peeled off across Ponil Creek. It was a memorable enough interaction that I wrote a bad poem about it, "Bison bison," the scientific name for our national mammal. At least I got the title right.

I recall some bison steaks that made their way to Crooked Creek when I was on the staff there in 1991. Lean as they were, we had a fine repast, hot from the Dutch oven, as soon as our comm run came. No refrigeration there. And a buffalo blanket that we used on the cabin bed. The sum of my buffalo encounters



MPS photos (these pages) by Chase Enszt.

to date.

Thirty years later, I was nostalgically surfing the Tooth of Time Traders (TOTT) website when I came across Bison Snack Sticks, two bucks a pop. I have been a vegetarian for 25 years. I immediately ordered fifty. Bulk discount. No second thoughts.

I began doling them out to myself over the next weeks and months, and as I masticated with guilty pleasure, I started to wonder about Philmont's herd. It's a working ranch, right? What was the story of my Sangre de Cristo snack?

I called Dave Kenneke, Director of Ranching and Conservation. I was Dave's ranger for his crew in 1987. He and I hadn't talked for nearly thirty years, but we picked right up where we had left off. Dave, by the way, has retained his hirsute ways, the benefits of clean New Mexican mountain living. Residing in big eastern cities has left me pretty bald, not unlike a certain 12,441 foot peak.

Dave shared that Philmont's bison are the direct descendants of stock purchased by Waite Phillips in the 1920s, animals that have recently undergone genetic testing to reveal that they came from federal herds in Montana, South Dakota, and Oklahoma, with a few animals with North Dakota lineage. Researchers at

Texas A&M did genetic analysis of the animals for Bob Ricklefs in 2010 and found that they are pure and true, with no bovine admixtures. Philmont bison are the real deal, 100 percent wild grazers of America's vast interior.

Today, there are some 30,000 wild bison in the US, and some 300,000 commercial herds, Philmont's among them. Those animals are descendants from 20th century survivors of the decimating 19th century massacres that cleared the plains and mountains of these shaggy creatures.

The ranch's herd numbers between 100-130 animals at any given time, a headcount that's been steady for some forty or fifty years, according to Ken-

neke. They're grass-fed grazers, ranging over about 40 acres per animal. Ranch staff supplement them in the winter and before calving with a 20 percent protein feed pellet, and feed a little hay when there is heavy snow cover on the prairie. Today's herd sustainably nibbles its way across some 4,000 acres of native blue grama grass in the traditional Buffalo Pasture area of the ranch.

A recent exception was a group of bison spooked by a passing Osprey tiltrotor aircraft that headed off to Ute Park where they were recaptured or culled, perhaps itinerant relations of the two I met up with in 1988. The culls fed Philmont staff and neighbors, who did not complain



Tooth of Time Traders sells Philmont Bison sticks (and now Philmont beef sticks as well) in a variety of flavors. Photo courtesy Tooth of Time Traders.



Philmont's bison herd is one of the few in the country that is genetically pure, without cattle genes mixed in. The Interior Department recently created a Bison Working Group tasked with developing a plan for restoring wide-ranging herds on federal and tribal lands. Photo by Jack Rodgers.

that their freezers were full for a while. Waste not, want not.

It wasn't until the fire of 2018 and the pandemic closure of 2020 that the idea for selling bison sticks came to mind. "We had extra trail meals and needed to move what we could," Kenneke told me. Thus was born the TOTT's snack item. It's been a smart business move for the ranch, generating income with a whole line of Rocky Mountain meat items in different flavors. There's also a line of beef sticks from Philmont's cattle herd.

Today, the TOTT sends bison sticks far and near, both to become snack items and to be enjoyed by those of us who still pine for trail food. Before they become bison sticks, the animals are culled from Philmont's herd, then sent to a USDA-approved slaughterhouse in Colorado before the lean cuts make their way to a Sheboygan, Wisconsin meat stick maker, and then back to Philmont. In Wisconsin, they mix with spices and flavorings and some pork from "the pig-getting place," Kenneke told me with a laugh. The meat

mix adds fat, a critical component for the desired flavor and texture profile. "Plain bison sticks would be pretty dry," reported Kenneke.

When it comes to "fondest memories that a ranger can't forget," trail food may not top my list. But bison sticks are pretty fine. Every time I chew one, I'm reminded of days when I hiked with ease, scaled peaks from dawn to dusk, and hoped that the biggest creature I'd run across was a minibear. I'll take my bison sticks with a smile on my face and the happy awareness that a little bit of Philmont fuels me up for my next walk.

About the author: David Liebmman (87-91) served on staff as a ranger, training ranger, Rayado trek coordinator, and CD at Crooked Creek. He's now the assistant head of school at Kingsley Montessori School in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Night Sky at the Station



MPS photo by Chase Ens.



The 1976 Clear Creek staff. Standing, L-R: Daniel Stewart, Stephen Storm, "The Reverend" Bob Burns, and George Ainslee. Seated: Kevin Thompson (a/k/a "Tobin Pardee"). Philmont photo.

The Legend and Legacy of Bob Burns

By James Harnar
High Country Staff Writer

"He's a walking contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction." – Kris Kristofferson, "The Pilgrim"

When news spread in September that Philmont legend Bob Burns had passed away, computers and cell phones across the country lit up with texts, e-mails, and photos shared among dozens if not hundreds of former staff. Everyone was stunned to learn that a man who had been such a memorable and enduring presence in so many of our lives was gone.

For nearly six decades, Bob was a familiar figure at Philmont and across Colfax County. Wearing his trademark bib overalls, his mischievous eyes peering out over a long and unruly beard, he looked as though he could have just stepped out of a dusty sepia-tone photo hanging in Cimarron's Old Aztec Mill Museum. "Simply put," wrote Roger Smith in a *Colfax Gazette* tribute, "Bob was a presence. One did not have to spend much time with him before he became unforgettable."

Bob's love affair with Philmont began in 1965 when he arrived as a camper and then returned the next summer to be on the Indian Writings staff. After serving two combat tours in Vietnam as a United States Marine, he showed up at the Philmont gate in the middle of the summer of 1972, looking for a job. Roger Sunde, who headed Philmont's newly-formed Conservation Department, brought him in as a conservationist to

work on the Flume Canyon trail. Bob later described that assignment as a welcome refuge for a young man just back from war where, as he sometimes shared, he had "seen hard things" and "done hard things" in the heat of battle.

Bob returned in 1974 to be the Ponil ranger. Next came iconic summers as camp director at Black Mountain ('75) and Clear Creek ('76). Clad in buckskins and a stovepipe hat, a cigar clenched in his teeth, Bob was never confused for a college kid pretending to be a mountain man at a Scout camp. His slow-as-molasses East Texas drawl, combined with his deep knowledge of western history, familiarity with the tools, hand-forged knives and firearms of the nineteenth century, and mastery of blacksmithing created a wholly realistic picture of a real-life character living far off the grid in the high mountains of the American West. Whether he was teaching campers to load and fire black powder rifles or instructing them to name the major components of a



Marine Bob Burns in Vietnam in 1968 around the time of the Tet offensive.



Bob engaging campers at Black Mountain Camp in 1975. "Bob was never confused for a college kid pretending to be a mountain man." Photo courtesy Buddy Ray.

cast-iron cook stove, Bob brought a fierce authenticity to his role by simply being himself, a man arguably born 200 years too late. Campers and staff in his presence felt transported to another time.

"Everyone at Philmont knew Bob, or knew of him," remembers Eugene Montgomery. "When Bob came in from the backcountry, he'd still be in his buckskins and moccasins, a Hawken rifle cradled in his arms as he made his way through Base Camp and into Cimarron. He cut a figure no one could forget."

After Bob's last Philmont staff season, he put down roots in Colfax County and worked as a plumber and electrician. He had a place in Miami, and while driving the road from there to Cimarron, he liked to stop by Rayado to share a little of his storehouse of knowledge about blacksmithing and homesteading skills. Montgomery, who was hired as the Rayado blacksmith despite having little experience working a forge, welcomed Bob's mentoring. Bob would sometimes join staff for meals and wide-ranging conversations lasting deep into the night. When he was in a reflective mood, he might

share harrowing stories of his combat experience in Vietnam where he earned a Purple Heart after being wounded in a mortar attack. He sometimes spoke of his role in rescuing victims during a huge apartment fire in Texas, where he worked for a time as a firefighter, heroism that was recognized with the Texas Award of Valor.

In the decades that followed, Bob lived winters in Paris, Texas, his hometown, in a large loft filled with antiques and curiosities. An old dentist's chair dominated the living room. Each spring he headed west to Colfax County. He delighted in telling people that he was dividing his time between Paris and Miami and then, after a pause, revealing with a wink that he meant Paris, Texas, and Miami, New Mexico.

Despite his appearance as what some might call a "colorful old coot," Bob was educated and worldly. A voracious reader with a degree in history and government, he was elected Lamar County Judge in Texas and later served as a magistrate judge in Cimarron. "Bob was a master of the 'aw-shucks' country boy

persona," Roger Smith wrote in his *Colfax Gazette* remembrance. "He could scratch his head, spit out some tobacco juice, and then exaggerate his Texas drawl so the unsuspecting would think they were talking to a backwoods rube."

Few people knew Bob better than Stephen Zimmer, historian and former director of the Philmont Museum. "I was always amazed at Bob's depth of knowledge on a limitless range of issues," Steve says. "Oftentimes, when Bob would go on and on about some obscure topic, I'd say 'Bob, how in hell do you know about that?'" In the 1980s Bob and Steve traveled with their wives to Europe, deepening a friendship that lasted decades. In his own deep West Texas drawl, Steve described Bob as a "true BONE vee VONT" and nothing less than a "world class rack-CON-TWO-er." Steve featured a portrait of Bob and his 1976 Clear Creek

staff in *Philmont, An Illustrated History*, the 1988 book he published with Larry Walker and Jeff Segler.

Burns' Hardware in downtown Cimarron was Bob's base of operations where anyone was welcome to pull up a chair and join in a conversation. Always curious, Bob would inevitably ask people where they were from and what had brought them to Colfax County. The visits often established friendships that might last for a summer or for years. "Visiting with Bob on a day off was like a direct link to the past," says Charley Walton, a Cons staff member who met him at his Cimarron store in 2015 and maintained close ties until Bob's death. "Bob's immense knowledge of the region's lore, both experienced and heard, was enchanting to me and many others."

Mountaineer Wally Berg, the first recipient of the Philmont Staff Associa-



The 1975 Black Mountain staff. L-R: Bob Burns, Curt Rom, Duane Burcher, and Blair Erb. Philmont photo.



Bob (right) holding court at Black Mountain with PC Duane Burcher (left) and visiting ranger Simeon Dreyfuss. Photo by fellow Black Mountain staffer Blair Erb.

tion's Distinguished Staff Alumni Award, spent a good deal of time with Bob in the 1970s. "My favorite Bob Burns characteristic was his attention to people," Wally recalls. "He had a way of remembering everyone and just not by name or face. Bob could grasp something genuine and unique about everyone he met and remember it for many years. He was an astute observer and appreciator of people. It was never about ego for Bob. He was genuine and truly loved people. All of this combined to make him one of the most interesting people many of us have ever met."

A fact not everyone knew about Bob was that he spoke fluent Vietnamese. His Marine Corps enlistment exams had scored him off the charts for the ability to learn languages. He mastered several dialects while interacting with Vietnamese villagers during his time in Southeast Asia, and used that skill while helping refugees resettling in Texas following the war. "Bob would sometimes slip into Vietnamese as we were talking around a table at Joe's in Cimarron," remembers Rick Touchette, another friend who, like

countless other staff, always looked forward to connecting with Bob whenever he returned to Philmont.

Bob was also a steady hand when things went south. Along with Bill Shriver, he was among the first on the scene in 1975 when a Philmont vehicle accidentally backed off the Beaubien road and rolled down a steep hillside, killing Health Lodge physician Paula McKenzie and injuring other passengers. Bob called on his firefighting and combat experience to care for and help evacuate the victims. "I have always been glad that Bob was with me," Bill said. "He was the best man I knew in a crisis." Blair Erb worked for Bob that summer at Black Mountain. "When Bob came back to camp after the Beaubien road tragedy he was shaken," Blair recalls. "Here was a man who had served two combat tours in Vietnam, and he found it tough to tell us the story about what happened that day. His soul was soft and his heart was endless."

Almost a half century later, Blair still reflects on Bob's leadership. "Before we scattered in '75, Bob and I were talking about what I wanted to get done that

summer. I told him I wanted to build a rocking chair. He paused, looked me square in the eye, and said 'that might be a little tough with the provisions we'll have, but if that is what you want to do, then we will give it a go.' I did not recognize it then, but that was one huge lesson in leadership. I knew right then that a rocking chair was not likely to happen, but Bob did not crush that dream for me. Leadership is about steering, letting people walk their own paths to accomplish a goal, watching over them and steering them back on course when they wander. His impact on me was huge."

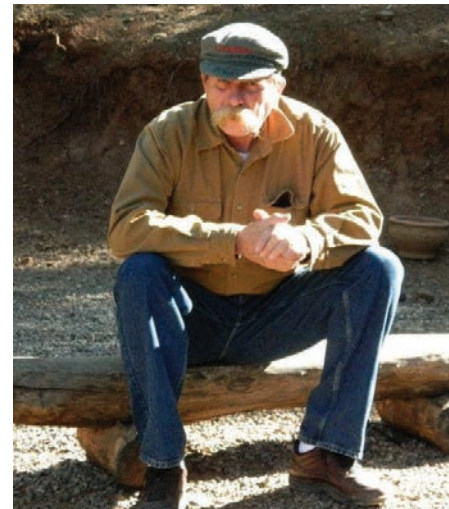
Bob's quiet generosity was well known in Cimarron, where he often helped low-income neighbors with plumbing and electrical services at no charge. He donated his collection of rare first edition history books to the library at the National Scouting Museum. His willingness to help was evident in the 1980s when Bob and his then-wife Katie Bryant (a long-time teacher in the Cimarron school system) took a young boy from a troubled Texas family under their

wings and raised him as they would have their own son (Bob and Katie didn't have children during their 35-year marriage). Under Bob's mentorship and constant encouragement, Brad Newberry grew up to become a plumber and electrician, a Philmont wrangler, an Eagle Scout (like Bob), a U.S. Coast Guardsman, a lawyer, a Navy JAG officer, and the father of three Eagle Scouts. He later accompanied Bob on a memorable trip to Vietnam where they toured the region where, thirty years earlier, Bob had seen combat. In a remote village, a Vietnamese woman recognized Bob's drawl and ran to embrace him, yelling, "Bobby, Bobby!"

For Brad, Bob had become the father he needed and a lifelong friend, teacher, and confidante. And in 2021, Bob learned for the first time that he also had a biological son, Matt Talley. Bob and Matt became close during the last year of Bob's life. In a remarkable coincidence, Matt, like Bob, is an accomplished blacksmith who holds a degree in history and, like the father he only recently met, shared an intense interest in history, storytelling, a love of books – and bib overalls!

"Bob did a hell of a good job in whatever he focused on," Brad Newberry says. "His moral compass always pointed to true north. He could always 'talk the talk' because he had truly 'walked the walk.' Bob took me on this great adventure we call life, but that life ended way too abruptly."

Everyone, it seems, has a Bob Burns story. Echoing the sentiment of so many others, Dennis Gilpin remembers that "Bob was perhaps the most unique personality I ever came across, and he was the protagonist in so many of the stories all who knew him love to tell." As the Ponil ranger in '74, Bob often was called on to do repairs at other camps. Dennis



A beardless Bob. Photo courtesy Brad Newberry.

enjoys sharing a story of when Bob was summoned to Indian Writings to investigate a strange smell in some shower heads. It turned out the maintenance crew at the end of the previous season hadn't closed an intake pipe from the water tank, allowing rats to nest inside the tank. When the incoming staff arrived and turned on the showers, the water current transported drowned rats into the shower heads. Bob solved the mystery, fixed the problem and had a frequently-embellished tale he would spin for years.

Greg "Doc" Walker remembers Bob leading his Clear Creek staff on unannounced middle-of-the night forays to Black Mountain, where the distant sounds of black powder rifle shots would awaken Walker and his staff and lead to rambling pre-dawn story telling sessions and other Burns-inspired hijinks. Walker, who succeeded Bob as camp director at Black Mountain and then at Clear Creek, had a hard act to follow. He credits his own experience as one of the decade's most realistic living-history pioneers and mountain men to Bob's mentorship. "Bob wanted to see me succeed," he recalls. "Bob taught me so much. But his most important lesson was teaching me to be entirely 'in the moment,' establishing my own authenticity. Thanks to Bob, I wasn't portraying a mountain man. I WAS a mountain man."

Jim Schlegel, yet another of Bob's long-time friends, describes an hours-long visit he shared with Bob three weeks before he died. "The most memorable aspect of the visit was that Bob just didn't want the conversation to end. He valued time talking with friends. When a conversation got going, nothing in the world was more important to Bob."

In his *Colfax Gazette* tribute, Roger Smith described a complex man who



At the St. James, his home away from home.

was "highly educated, well read, a lover of words and good books who liked thoughtful discussion as much as he liked his chewing tobacco." Roger concluded that "the one facet of his personality that held no contradiction was Bob's deep-seated love for Philmont and all of the Cimarron country. He was a man of many stories. My regret is that I didn't get to hear all of them."

Bob Birkby sums up the Bob Burns legend this way: "He was an early Philmont conservationist, a legendary camp director, a buckskin character with a black powder rifle, a Texan, a Vietnam veteran, a Cimarron merchant and so much more. But most of all, Bob was a loyal friend who remembered people and cared deeply for them and was eager to connect and hear the latest news. Although his slow drawl and his wry smile are gone, we will remember always that he made our world better and way, way more interesting."

Two One of a Kinds

On July 7, one lucky raffle entrant will go home from the PSA reunion with two "one of a kind" creations by former staff artisans. Gunsmith Lee "Bear" Hadaway of Trinidad, Colorado, and craftsman Steve Rick of Cimarron showcase their full talents in a magnificently crafted Philmont program rifle and accompanying custom knife.

The rifle, an Italian copy of the famous Winchester 73, the "Gun That Won the West," saw use in Ponil Camp's cowboy action shooting program. When Hadaway learned that it was to be retired, he offered to convert it to a collector's piece if the ranch donated it to the PSA. Rick, who is famous for his custom knives, agreed to donate one of his creations as well.

Hadaway turned the rifle into a "takedown," a long gun designed to be taken apart for ease of storage and travel, making this a truly unique firearm. "Winchester never made the 73 in a takedown," Hadaway said. "I decided to turn this into one." He refashioned the stock with quilted maple, known for its wavy "quilted" pattern similar to ripples on water, to give the rifle a special look. Rick used the same wood for the haft of his knife.

To complete this masterpiece, Hadaway had a friend in Trinidad laser engrave the stock. One side depicts the Tooth of Time with the inscription "Philmont Staff Association 50th Anniversary 1973-2023." The other features a pair of hiking boots with the words "HOME" and "87714." Jay Cusimano, a Trinidad saddle maker, crafted and donated the special leather carrying case featuring the

Philmont brands. Rick's knife also features the Philmont cattle brand engraved on the blade.

The rifle has a value now of \$7,500, but raffle tickets are only \$100 each. The rifle is on display until the reunion at Flat Mountain Trading Company in Raton. You don't have to be present to win!



Buy your ticket at
<https://philstaff.org/store>
 "Anniversary Collection"

At Home at Harlan

By David L. Caffey
High Country Contributing Writer

Of all the mountain camps, Harlan is a special one to me. I loved that place, both for its beauty and for its aloneness. Harlan was set high up on the side of Deer Lake Mesa, tucked into one of the meadow terraces along the north face of the mesa. Against the slope were a rectangular board cabin and a low cook shack behind it. A flag flew from its lone pinnacle in the meadow, and at the far side of the terrace ran a low ridge rimming the camp area. Harlan, with its back to the mesa, looked out over all of the country to the other three sides. From our place we could look down the meadow and straight out into space toward a horizon of distant peaks.

The little ridge across the meadow gave a wide panorama of the north country. Whenever there was something I wanted to think over or I just wanted the feeling that I got from looking out

over the mountain country, I would amble over and walk along the length of the rim ridge and look far up into the north, out across Cimarron Canyon and over the tiers of ridges and canyons that went to the far skyline. On the other side was Harlan, laid out in its brief mountain clearing – the tent-dotted campsites with smoke rising from them and the sounds of campers, the burro pens, the cabin and paths where we hurried so much of the time. The low-crested ridge sat above it all and was an unfailing quencher for frustration or boredom. There was one more place, an eastern bluff at the very end of the string of campsites, where we could look to the east across the plains beyond Philmont and down upon the village of Cimarron. We were situated in a high perch where we saw and felt and breathed the mountains. At Harlan, you knew you were in the backcountry.

We were hardly aware of the Scout ranch. Harlan was an easily forgotten camp, and we liked being forgotten. It



was out of the way and not very accessible. It was hardly worth the trouble to take a vehicle with four-wheel drive and come around by the highway, then maneuver up the mountain trail to visit one small camp, when most of the other camps were along more logical and better-traveled routes, so the sanitation officer, the sector director, and the other extensions of administrative structure seldom reached us. We had no radio or telephone in camp either, so we escaped a lot of the trivial concerns we would otherwise have been vulnerable to. We drank coffee with the leaders each night by the yellow light of kerosene lanterns, and were glad that we had no generator that would be breaking down. We had no neighbor camps to speak of and had little contact with anybody except the daily camping groups and the occasional staff men who drifted through, so we were glad to see the people who did come our way and we found friends among them almost every day.

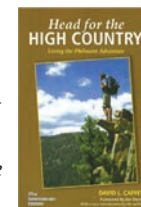
At Harlan we could feel the mountain country and we became part of it. Within the first couple of weeks we had taken on new senses. The tents and open-air cook shack that we lived out of left us pretty much out in the summer's weather, and we began to know its every shade and change. The raw mountain weather had

many moods that became part of how we felt. We breathed in the dry air of clean, sunny mornings, the fresh-chilled pine scent after hailstorms had bruised the trees, and all of the breezes that drifted our way between them. After-supper excursions and late chores were paced to be finished by nightfall. We knew some of the deer who came down regularly to graze in our meadow and to browse on the shrubs up by our tents, and the few bears who made night visits from time to time; sometimes they acted as if they knew us. No one had tamed this country, or imposed insulting barricades to protect the civilized places from the unbroken wilds. We were just part of the life that grew on Deer Lake Mesa.

About the Author: Dave Caffey spent twelve summers on the Philmont staff and served as camp director at Harlan in 1968. E-mail: caffeyme@suddenlink.net



Editor's Note: Reprinted from the author's book, Head for the High Country, the iconic account of life on the Philmont staff. The PSA is publishing a 50th anniversary edition of the book in time for the reunion.



Above: Looking north at Harlan Camp in 1992. The small cook shack is just visible to the left of the cabin. Opposite page: The opposite view in 2004. Note the addition of the reloading cabin for the shotgun program at left. Both photos courtesy Troop 68, Melrose, Minnesota.

SHORT STUFF

Editor's Note: In our last issue, we reported on the 50th anniversary of Philmont's academy ranger program. Our story featured photos of a military-style challenge coin struck for the event and presented to current academy rangers and each former academy ranger attending the reunion. Here are the stories behind the coin.

Challenge Coins

There are many different stories about the history of the challenge coin. One of the most popular stories claims that the tradition began in the United States Army Air Service, the forerunner of United States Air Force, during the First World War. When the Army created the first flying units, volunteer fliers came from all walks of life, including a large number of wealthy Ivy Leaguers. According to the story, a wealthy Ivy League lieutenant had a set of bronze coins minted, and gave them to all the members of his squadron. These coins were both distinctive and valuable.

One pilot drilled a hole in his coin, and began wearing it on a chain around his neck when he went off on missions. Sometime later, the same pilot was shot down behind enemy lines and taken prisoner by German troops, who stripped him of his uniform and all his personal possessions except for the medallion around his neck. The Germans held him as a POW until an Allied bombing raid provided him with the opportunity to escape. Evading capture, he made his way back to Allied lines, where he was apprehended by some French soldiers.



Former academy ranger Dave Goldfein's challenge coin as Air Force Chief of Staff.

In the absence of any uniform or identification, the French troops suspected that the escaping American was actually a German saboteur, and began planning his execution. Desperate to prove he was an American pilot, he produced the medallion his squadron mate had given him. Examining the coin, the French recognized the American squadron insignia and the American pilot was spared.

After he returned to his unit, the story of his medallion quickly spread through his squadron, and it soon became a tradition for all members to carry the medallion on them when they flew. Pilots were often "challenged" by their officers to see if they were carrying their medallion. If they did not have it on them, they had to buy their officer a drink. If the pilot had his coin with him, the officer bought the drink.

While this is the most popular story behind the origins of the challenge coin, other origin stories exist. Some say that a "coin challenge" had its roots in

post-World War II occupied Germany. Americans on occupation duty after the war began carrying a small denomination German coin known as a pfennig. As a joke, the GIs began conducting "pfennig checks," to see if their comrades were carrying what was valued at less than a penny. If a soldier could not produce a pfennig when someone challenged him, he had to buy everyone a drink. Over time, this pfennig check evolved into a unit medallion check, with unit members challenging one another by slamming specially made unit medallions down on a bar. Any member who lacked his medallion had to purchase drinks for everyone else who had their medallion. Meanwhile, if everyone could present a medallion, the challenger became the one responsible for buying the drinks.

Today, a host of military units, federal agencies, and police and fire departments have challenge coins available to their members. They often present them to individuals who they would like to honor.

Bob Wettemann (92), Associate Professor of History, U.S. Air Force Academy

Meaning of the Coin

Three former academy rangers, Ben Davis (USAF Ranger 88-90), Rick Newton (USAF Ranger 75), and Paige Youngerman (USMA Ranger 10), designed the Philmont Academy Ranger 50th Anniversary challenge coin. The symbolism in the design incorporates both the ethos of the four participating service academies and the verses of the Philmont Hymn:

- gold border and lettering, the traditional 50th anniversary color;
- silver tones for the Tooth of Time and mountain sagebrush ("Silver on



the sage");

- colored stars in the shape of Ursa Minor (Little Dipper) represent each academy ("Starlit skies above"). As part of this fabled constellation, Polaris provides a guiding light for the ideals held dear by both Scouts and service academy graduates (integrity, service, character, leadership, and citizenship);
- Rocky Mountain landscape of dark green and gray ("Wind in whispering pines");
- bald eagle with outstretched wings ("Eagles soaring high") symbolizes the USA and duty to country ("Country that I love") that is inherent in the academies and Scouting;
- purple outer background ("Purple mountains rise") represents the close cooperation (i.e. jointness) between the six military services that source officers from the four academies;
- light blue inner border ("Against an azure sky");
- black cattle brand on the Tooth ("Philmont, here's to thee");
- BSA fleur-de-lis on border ("Scouting paradise");
- black sky ("Out in God's Country, tonight").

The design committee says, "To our knowledge, there is no other program that crosses all four academies that has one patch that can be used at each."

The Adventures of Young Waite Phillips: Recovery

By Michael Wallis

Continuation of an ongoing series.

A return to life in Iowa, encircled by loved ones and the cornfields, nurtured Waite Phillips. Like his elders, dating to even before the venturesome Captain Standish splashed ashore at Plymouth, Waite put a great deal of stock in the curative powers that resulted from a combination of hard work and play. The daily dose of labor and sport among his familiars was just the healing tonic Waite required to balm his profound grief.

He approved of the newest family home that his father had acquired during the twins' long absence. It was built on a 120-acre farm one mile west of Gravity. Breathing fresh country air saturated with the aroma of manure, freshly mowed hay, and wild blossoms did not do Waite any harm. Josie Phillips and the family were rock solid and steadfast. They were always there for Waite, particularly through those first few difficult months after Waite's death. And even though he knew that he never would mend fully from the deep wound, Waite was able to gain new strength and go on with his life.

Last half of July with family on farm and renewed acquaintanceship with old friends. Considerable emotional adjustments necessary as a result of loss of brother.

– Waite Phillips Diary, 1902



Brother Frank Phillips, seller of hair tonic!

In early August, Waite tried to get his mind on other matters and at the same time better himself. Braced with encouragement from his older brothers, Waite landed a position as a grocery clerk in Gravity. He went to work for Roy W. Coan, the store owner and the man who had married Waite's oldest sister, Jennie. Waite took his new job quite seriously. He left his parents' farm and boarded in a spare room at his sister and brother-in-law's home in town.

Much later in his life, Waite learned the truth about that job. He found out that his brothers Frank and Lee Eldas had paid all of his earnings, and not Coan. Anxious for his little brother to garner practical experience in the world of business, Frank earnestly believed that



An early 20th century grocery like Coan's where Waite worked. Peter Jordan NE / Alamy.

every dollar forked over to Coan to cover Waite's wages was worth it.

During the years, Frank began to take more interest in Waite. For his part, Waite always had looked up to L.E. and held him in high regard. Yet it was also true that Waite especially thought of the paternalistic Frank, the oldest Phillips brother, as the ideal role model.

Far beyond his instinctive talent for deal-making, everyone could see that Frank possessed a genuine entrepreneurial style. Waite told his pals that his big brother was not afraid to take chances. That gutsy behavior made the difference when it came to success, thought Waite. But besides having the steel nerves of a jewel thief, Frank also had the good luck of a high-stakes gambler – the sort who was undaunted by the occasional bad cut of the cards or roll of the dice.

Frank's luck seemed to be holding well. Almost a decade older than Waite, Frank had been very busy – and very successful – while the twins made their extended jaunt around the country. Frank quickly parlayed his Creston barber shops into popular tonsorial parlors. A skilled salesman, Frank even came up with a hair restorative which could help prevent baldness, he bragged.

Perfumed rainwater was the principal ingredient in the hair tonic. Frank dubbed it Mountain Sage, and peddled the concoction as fast as he could get it into bottles. Young Waite and the rest of the family always marveled at the popularity of Mountain Sage, because even in his early twenties, Frank was already as bald as a newborn's behind. Frank's sales ability gave genuine meaning to the cliché about being able to sell ice to Eskimos.

For the rest of the year, Waite continued to work as a grocery clerk and delivery boy for his brother-in-law's store in Gravity. But he was once again feeling restless. As the Christmas holidays approached, Waite knew that despite what he had told Frank about wanting to remain in the mercantile business, he was ready to try something new.

By January 1903, Waite had quit working for Coan at the grocery and had relocated to Shenandoah, in Page County, just west of Taylor County. Waite moved there to improve himself by attending the Shenandoah Commercial Institute and School of Penmanship, departments of Western Normal College. The six-month course of study he enrolled in would be the last of his formal education.

Waite worked hard at his courses in business and bookkeeping, commercial law, grammar and rhetoric, penmanship, and mathematics. He liked most of his instructors, but his favorite was Laviece Chambliss, the English teacher. Waite carried on a correspondence with Miss Chambliss and regularly sent her gifts of money until her death in September 1956.

Lew Phillips was glad that Waite, then twenty years old, wanted to return to school, and he told his son not to worry about expenses. Besides the tuition, Waite needed money for room and board, to get some teeth filled, and for covering a few incidentals. "Am getting along very well so far so don't worry about me," Waite wrote on February 21, 1903, to his parents – with a new flair and flourish, thanks to his penmanship course. "I think I am getting my money's worth, and as soon as I see that I am not, I will quit."

That never happened. Waite did not quit. He lasted the entire session, and on July 13, 1903, he was awarded a diploma.

The impressive document certified that "Waite Phillips has completed the regular business course of study and practice as prescribed by this institution. And upon a proper examination, is found worthy of graduation. We therefore by his presence declare him an intelligent and competent accountant, and as such cheerfully commend him to the favor of the business community."

Also found later in life that the older two brothers paid my tuition and living expenses there. My father later reimbursed them and I reimbursed him.

– Waite Phillips Diary, 1903

Editor's Note: Excerpted from Beyond the Hills: The Journey of Waite Phillips, ©1995 by Michael Wallis and the Oklahoma Heritage Association, available at store@philmontscoutranch.org. Reprinted with permission of the author and the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Visit their websites at <https://oklahomahof.com> and <https://michael-wallis.com>.



Western Normal College, home of the Shenandoah Commercial Institute and School of Penmanship where Waite studied. A "normal college" initially described a school for education of teachers.

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TRAIL TALK

1970s

Anthony Kip Grosshans
(Wrangler 70-71) retired

in 2019 after serving more than 20 years as associate director of student housing at the University of Kansas. He previously worked in the Kansas Dept. of Administration and Office of the Governor. On recommending young people for Philmont staff positions, he writes: "The most important qualities/attributes for a young woman or man who's considered for staff are a sense of wonder, a willingness to share the excitement he/she sees, and a confident and patient spirit. Everything else you can pretty much buy by the yard!"

Residence: Lawrence, KS

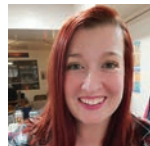
E-mail: anthonykip@gmail.com



PC Crooked Creek 13) lived in Florida until 2020, when she moved to Arizona to work with ACE, the American Conservation Experience. In 2021, she joined the National Park Service and worked on trail crews at Bryce Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. She writes, "Working in Cons opened my eyes to the conservation world. Now I am working with my dream agency doing the work I love with the best views."

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

E-mail: mary.rosa017@gmail.com



Phil-Fact

Philmont wranglers led 5,143 participants on horse rides in 2022.

2010s

Mary Rosa (ToTT Clerk 11, Cons Work Crew 12,



**SECURITY SETS UP SURVEILLANCE
TO CATCH THE OUTHOUSE BANDIT**

POEMS OF PHILMONT

Mules That Would Be Eagles

Tramping over dips and turns
to the foothills was easy trekking
meadows and ridges rang
with the rhythm of our hiking boots
and voices sang: "I love to go
a wandering along the mountain track
and as I go I love to sing
my knapsack on my back."

By afternoon all the tunes
and other hankerings
had turned tiresome and the labor
of the breathing and the "Why?" set in
as way wore on to junction way
by sweat and heat
our ranks were thinned.

Then the storm came crashing in
hail, rain, and lightning strokes
down the muddy chutes
slick waters poured
as up and up we chugged and snorted
like beasts without a master
cleared the trees and broke
for the pass.

When on a starry night
the globe of earth
is captured in wonder of the universe
and each brighter world aloft
stands forth unique
upon the larger firmament
the mules that would be eagles
take to wing.

Greg Hobbs

MPS photo by Chris Miller.