



Return of the Ranger axe

Mark Cordeiro
PhilNews Writer

During the first years of Philmont's Ranger department, Rangers were issued hand axes for maintaining trails and making fires. Now, over 50 years later, Rangers will be able to carry on that tradition once again.

Standing in the early morning heat outside the Ranger Office, a half dozen Rangers waited to enter the axe yard and conduct their first training session. Their instructor, Luke Boone, took them one by one to the practice log, handed them an axe, and gave them personal guidance on technique and safety.

The morning axe trainings that interested Rangers had to attend were just one of the stepping stones between them and reclaiming their legacy. Associate Chief Ranger Kyle Knoll has been at the forefront of

the campaign to revive the longstanding tradition.

"The Ranger Axe is a big symbol of tradition in our department." Knoll said. "At the beginning of every year, our leadership takes the sheath off our Axe to symbolize the start of the summer. And just how Rangers used to maintain their axes, we do the same

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BELOW: To receive a Ranger Axe, Rangers must go through extra training, like the one pictured here. Photographed by Ryan Soldanels.



ABOVE: A Ranger stands in a meadow with his new Ranger Axe on his shoulder. Photographed by Jack Rodgers.

Philmont by the numbers

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Summer 2019 has been a record-breaking year for Philmont in terms of numbers.

In order to show just how massive the Summer 2019 season has been, several departments around Base Camp have shared their numbers. Through the raw data, it's possible to finally put the season into perspective.

First, the participants. While the numbers won't be final until the last Crews have left

Philmont, the estimated number of participants that took to the Backcountry this summer was just over 24,000. That's roughly 480 Greyhound buses worth of youth and adults over the course of approximately two months.

Those 24,000 participants, between 7-day and 12-day treks, hiked over 1,630,000 miles combined. That's more than 3 trips to the moon and back. Or, to keep things terrestrial, Philmont participants walked the circumference of the Earth 65.5 times over.

Inside the borders of Philmont, participants saw nearly every inch of the Backcountry. As far as numbers for staff camps go, Ponil saw the most campers this summer with 8,305 visitors coming from 828 crews. As part of their Chuckwagon Dinner program,

7,963 of those participants were served dinner.

Speaking of meals, around 385,800 meal bags were prepared and distributed to

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BELOW: Crews pick up meals for the next few days of their trek at Philips Junction. Photographed by Monica Dunn.



Ranger Mile: Ponil Park

Jenny Washburne
Associate Chief Ranger

If you're looking to explore and visit friends up in the Valle Vidal before you leave for the season, don't leave out Ponil Park. It's not often in life that while taking a hike up a canyon you find yourself in the middle of a ghost town, but that's the case just east of Seally Canyon camp where the remains of Ponil Park lie. And they're very worth checking out.

For people without cars, options for getting up into the Valle are limited. You can either catch a ride at the Backcountry Warehouse (if available), or take a bus to the Ponil or 6-Mile Trailheads and hike north through Metcalf. It's a long hike, close to eleven miles no matter which Trailhead you start from, but the way is easy to find.

If you've got a car, the hike to Ponil Park is much shorter. Take the Valle Vidal (or "Cerresoso") road north off of Highway 25 (watch for the brown sign) up through the Vermejo Park and into the Carson National Forest. The Whiteman Vega Parking lot will appear to the right about a mile before the road passes McCrystal Campground. From Whiteman's lot, it's only about a two mile hike to the site of Ponil Park. The old road is easy to follow and relatively flat the whole way; just head south.

The hike is a pretty one, with plenty of wide open spaces and a great view of Little Costilla. As you approach the site of Ponil Park, you might notice that the trees are a little scarce from all the logging. Even so, looking at the three or four disintegrating cabins, you'd never guess that around the year 1900 this was the site of an entire logging town complete with two railroad bridges. Yet that was indeed the case, and you can still see the railroad ties left over from the workers who removed the rails sometime in the 1920s. It is uncertain what structures inhabited the town back in its heyday: really only one cabin with standing walls has remained.

The cabin remains, railroad pieces, and beautiful views may be the principal reasons you visit Ponil Park, but while you're there, you should take the time to walk by the cemetery as well. It is located just north of the ruins, by the National Park sign. Please be respectful of the area and leave what you find. There are bits of pottery lying around, and the headstones themselves are quite old and fragile. Most of the engravings are still readable, however, and offer a taste of the dates and sorts of people that lived here as far back as 1880. As you will see, the town may have existed for the loggers, but families with people of all ages lived there, too. Before going to go play at Whiteman Vega, Ring Place, or Seally Canyon Camp, check out this often-overlooked little town in the Valle Vidal and take a moment to think of its residents.

Activities Calendar

August 9

Ping Pong Tournament @ SS-SAC, 8 p.m.

August 10:

Brat Day @ Baldy Pavilion, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Movie Night @ Baldy Pavilion, 8 p.m.

August 11:

S'mores Night @ SSSAC backyard, 8 p.m.



Return of the Ranger axe continued

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PhilNews Writer

Continued from page 1: thing every season by maintaining our skills to make sure that we're fit for use."

The tradition of Ranger Axes has its roots in 1957, the year Rangers made their debut at Philmont. The axes were standard issue to all Rangers, who were charged with maintaining their new equipment and clearing Backcountry trails with their crews. With Philmont's Conservation department still years away from development, all trail maintenance fell on the shoulders of Rangers and their Crews.

Now, even though Philmont has a 200+ person Conservation department charged with maintaining the Backcountry, the time has never been better for Rangers to bring back their axes. With the Ute Park Fire's recovery program occupying more Con-

servationists than in years prior, the Rangers are able to step up and help the Conservation department, allowing them to focus on other work.

"Our hope for the future is that after blow downs and other smaller problems, we can lend a hand to the Conservation department." Knoll said.

As exciting as it is to have the axes back, however, Rangers won't be able to simply walk up asking for an axe and expect to get one. They have to earn it. The minimum requirements for the axe are for Rangers to attend either 15 "Continued Training" classes, where experienced Rangers teach useful skills to newer Rangers, or to attend an advanced axe training with six CT classes.

"Every season, I've said something

about how I'm 'Keeping my skills sharp,' and now, I'll have a physical reminder of that," Assistant Chief Ranger Mary Godwin said.

At the end of the season, Rangers will take their axes home as mementos from their time in the Ranger Department. Until then, Philmont's Rangers will be trained and ready to make use of their axes to clear trail, gather firewood, and keep their skills sharp.

"It's a reminder throughout the year that no matter what I'm doing in life, I have to maintain myself and to maintain my skills and make that a constant priority; not just while I'm at Philmont but for the rest of my life," Godwin said.

Philmont by the numbers continued

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Continued from page 1: campers for their treks. With each meal bag weighing about half a pound, those meals come to a grand total of 192,900 lbs. Altogether, that means that participants carried the equivalent of about 15 African elephants through the Backcountry. The most prepared and distributed meal was Lunch 4, which consisted of bagels, Sun Butter and strips of jerky. The most popular spot for Crews to pick up meals in the Backcountry was Baldy Town, which distributed nearly 60,000 meal bags to 12,335 Participants.

In Base Camp, the number of meals

served at the three dining halls tell a similar story. By the end of the season, food service staff at Philmont estimates that they'll have served around 330,000 meals. Using those numbers, they can calculate that they've served more than 100,000 burritos and 720,000 sausage links, for instance.

As far as the Philmont Staff goes, all 50 states and many U.S. territories were represented during the summer. Texas had the most Philmont Staffers with 173 of the 1,302 that were here this summer. Only one other state had over 100 Staffers: Colorado with 101. New Mexico

came close with 98. Additionally, Philmont saw the inclusion of 29 international staffers throughout the season.

With the end of Philmont's largest season in recent memory coming up quickly, these approximations show just how massive this season has been. Behind each of these numbers was a person, whether they were preparing meal bags, hiking the trails, or cooking Chuckwagon dinners. Each of those people, from participants to Staff, helped make summer 2019 Philmont's best season yet.

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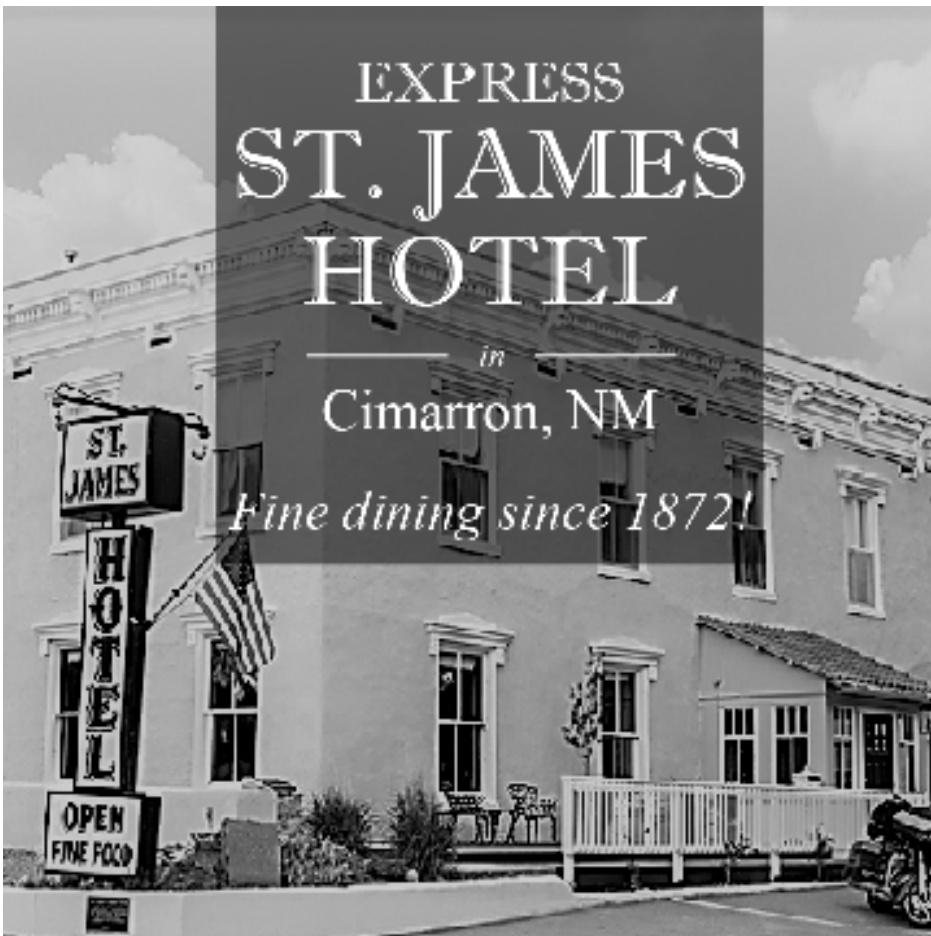
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Chaplain's Corner: Where does God see you?

Pastor Wally Mees
Protestant Chaplain

In the June 28 issue of PhilNews, Father Roger Lopez wrote on the question, "Where Do You See God?" I liked it and suggested to him that I might turn the question around to discuss "Where Does God See You?" He thought that might be interesting, so here goes.


A few years back, while in graduate school, I took a class in logic from a philosophy professor who could not resist showing us how one can "prove" that God does not exist, and furthermore, telling us why he decided not to believe in God. He told us that the idea that God knows everything is what made him reject God's existence. My professor wanted some privacy, so he refused to believe in God in order to have some.

At the time, I wondered if he was joking, or whether he believed that his beliefs controlled how things were. I thought of a little kid playing peek-a-boo, hiding his eyes so I couldn't see him, or an ostrich with its head in the sand. If I can't see you, you don't exist? Really?

I've had quite a few years to think about that professor's claims, and have concluded that it's actually good for me to hold, and thus live as best I can according to, the belief that God knows everything I do... that God sees wherever I am and whatever I do. That belief has saved me from more than one stupid action, more than one hurtful word. Though not all. And for that I'm grateful.


Where does God see you? Certainly, he sees you at Philmont. This is, after all, God's Country. And he also sees you wherever you are; even at home, wherever it is.

Have a great day. And remember, God may be watching.



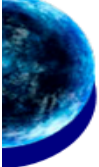
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Philmont Staff Association Scholarship Application

Before you leave Philmont, don't forget to sign up for the PSA and put in an application for its scholarship!

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Scholarship awards of \$1,000 will be made for the Fall of 2019-Spring of 2020 academic year. Payment of the Scholarship will be directly to the recipient's school. Scholarship recipients will also receive a free renewal of their next year's PSA membership.
2. Philmont Staff Association Seasonal Staff Scholarship recipients must be currently enrolled in or accepted by an accredited educational institution as a full-time student (at least 12 credit hours) in a program leading to an academic degree (including associate's), professional certificate, or skilled trade program certificate.
3. Scholarship funds must be used for tuition, fees related to degreed course work, books, or housing at any accredited institution of higher learning. Funds used for off-campus housing are fully taxable. Funds will be paid directly to the institution or recognized trade school. All invoices and requests are subject to review and approval. Scholarships are void if not used for the stated purposes or in the allotted time frame.
4. The Philmont Staff Association Seasonal Staff Scholarship is non-taxable according to the Internal Revenue Code. If they are however deemed taxable by any taxing entity, any and all taxes due are the responsibility of the recipient.
5. The Philmont Staff Association Scholarship Committee has the right to change or modify this program in any manner, effective immediately and without notice.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Applicant must be a current member of the Philmont Staff Association.
2. Applicant must have completed the 2019 Philmont camping season as a staff member.
3. Applicant must have submitted an application for work at Philmont for the 2020 season.
4. Applicant must complete the scholarship application in full. The applicant's final evaluation from their staff supervisor will be added to the scholarship application.
5. The application deadline is August 31, 2019. Applications may be turned in at the box provided at the Silver Sage Staff Activity Center or mailed to:
Philmont Staff Association
17 Deer Run Rd
Cimarron, NM 87714
Applications may also be obtained electronically from the PSA website at www.philstaff.org. These may be completed, printed, and turned in as above.
6. Recipients will register and maintain status as a full-time student in good standing during the 2019-2020 school year at the institution you attend.
7. All funds will be paid directly to your institution covering your tuition, room, board, and books for only so long as you remain a full-time student during the life of the scholarship, which is the 2019-2020 school year.
8. The scholarship is limited to use at a post- secondary school that is recognized by the Department of Education as a qualified recipient for federal student loans. These include institutions of higher education, proprietary institutions of higher education, and postsecondary vocational institutions.
9. The scholarship is not available to students attending any of the United States of America military academies because, at these academies, the United States Government already pays expenses.
10. The scholarship is paid in a single installment. Payment will be made by the Philmont Staff Association for expenses for Fall 2019, Spring 2020, or Summer 2020. Funds will be paid directly to the institution on the recipient's behalf.

Photo Contest Winners

Staff Activity



1st Place
2nd Place Overall
"Tranquility," Rayado
Eric Smallwood



2nd Place
"Logger Isaac," Pueblano
Brady Richards



3rd Place
"Steamboat Training," Cimarroncito
Jack Rodgers



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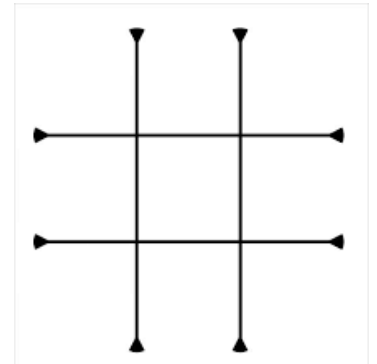
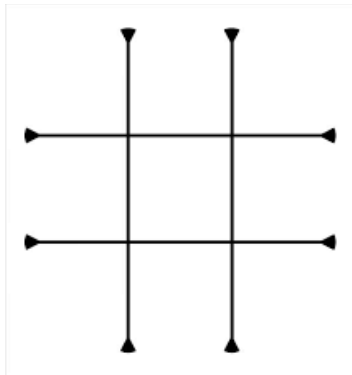
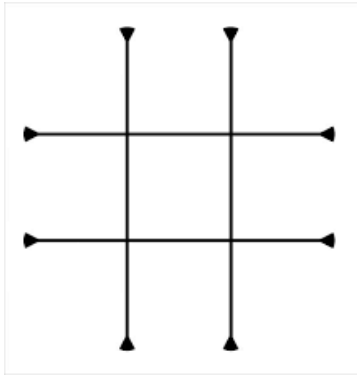
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