

## Pre-Camp Training for Living History Staff Members

## Chapter 3

**"Looking the Part" -- Costumes and Props****"Interps" Speak as Loudly as Words.**

Your costumes -- or "interps" as they are often called at Philmont -- give an instant visual picture of who your character is and what he/she does. We are working very hard to provide period and character correct costumes for all interpretative staff. This is a big challenge since there are about eight very specific looks among the camps, and you the staff come in every conceivable size and shape. We are constantly seeking suppliers for the clothing that we need so that everyone looks the part we are asking you to play.

As for your sizes and shapes, attached with this chapter is a size survey. Please read the instructions carefully, fill it out and send it back to David O'Neill or to our Wardrobe Specialist, David Froman at [david.froman@scouting.org](mailto:david.froman@scouting.org). It will be used during the issuing of your interpretive clothing during training, and also is used through the season if items need to be replaced while you are still in the backcountry. Thank you for your help with this important task!

You can help in other ways to perfect the visual image of your camp's characters. One is to be keenly aware of what is appropriate and inappropriate about your appearance -- clothing, accessories and props. The first will enhance your image and the latter can destroy it. Look at your profiles for guidance. AND, look at the photo images attached to this email for looks that are appropriate for your camp. (Mountain men and men in general note that shirts would be worn closed at the neckline not open as modeled in some photos. Sorry, that those photos are misleading.)

Here are some examples of what works and doesn't work in terms of interps. Purple plastic framed eyeglasses do not look right for a frontierswoman at Crooked Creek; whereas, small wire frames would look perfect for the period. So, heighten your awareness of these kinds of details. Buzzed hairstyles do not work for any of the camps. Wear a hat that is appropriate at all times. Don't wear personal jewelry of any kind that does not support the period and economical status of your character. However, pocket watches for men at all of the camps are a great accessory. Look for one and bring it, gentlemen. Philmont does not supply these. Women might carry a pocket watch, too, or a small pocket-like watch on a pin or chain around her neck. A giant Mickey Mouse wrist watch could really spoil the reality that you want to create. In general, be aware. Consult your profiles and **ask now**. Every item that you wear or use must reflect the period of time as well as the character's work, status, and personality.

As with the pocket watch suggestion above, there are many things that you can bring with you to add to your authentic appearance. Some staff people like to bring most of their own costumes. That way the “interps” fit, they are there ready to wear, and they are in colors that you prefer. The fitting part can be especially true if you are a particularly large, small, tall or short person; have long arms, short torso, broad shoulders, or very large feet. Again, consult your profiles, the photo attachments and online source list. To get a clear visual image in your mind research the period and the type of person that you'll be portraying. Photos and drawings in books or online of similar characters doing similar things are also sources for this. Bear in mind that all of our camp sites have people who are wearing work or recreational clothing... not ballgowns or "town clothes". Many of the costume suppliers focus on the dress up styles.

Consult with David before you buy a lot or big costume pieces. This way you can make sure that you are getting the right thing. For instance, we want loggers, miners, and homesteaders to look different from one another even in things like union suits. Not everyone in the same camp will dress alike either. Again, David can give you those specifics. Keep in mind purchasing your own items is optional, as we keep a well stocked interpretive clothing closet to outfit our staff. (Suggested items to bring/purchase would be boots and hats, as these items are sometimes difficult to keep in stock.)

Consider bringing smaller accoutrements and props; things like handkerchiefs, watches, glasses, etc. You are required to bring undergarments, socks, and stockings for the women (all women should consider one pair each of white and black tights to wear under their costumes). Other items such as large square scarves in solid colors, Henley shirts, long underwear and gloves are not required, but can be brought if you have them. Hats are available for check out from our wardrobe; however, you may desire to have your own. If you decide to **bring your own hats**, examples are shown in the photos or described in profiles. **Every camp's characters wear hats.** Hats were just worn more in former days than they are now and it really completes your look. Women -- sunbonnets, straw hats; for some working women -- men's hats. See photos. For comfort and fit, it is really best to bring your own footwear. Warm clothing and rain gear are needed for most locations. **Search thrift stores** for men's blazers, loose fitting trousers, long skirts, split skirts, cardigan sweaters, roll neck sweaters, tailored shirts and blouses. Thrift stores are especially good sources for 20<sup>th</sup> century clothing.

Do **not** bring weapons of any kind including knives. Check those profiles and photos to see what's appropriate. Email David for confirmation.

## **Your Costume and Props are Your Character's Best Friend.**

In the theatre an actor always checks to make sure his/her props are placed exactly where they are needed and that they are in proper condition. Your props and costumes are truly your helpmates. Treat them with respect and care. Know where they are at all times.

Keep them clean, tidy and in good repair to the best of your ability. Bring a stick of stain remover and pack it in your personal gear. Bring a little sewing repair kit. Even the toughest logger sewed on his own buttons. It's part of the reality that we are creating. (More on that in the next chapter.)

You will be able to use the washing machine, dryer, iron, and ironing board in the “costume room” in the back country warehouse. It has been put there to make upkeep of your “interps” faster and more convenient on your days off from the back country. Check out where these are when you pick up your “interps” during staff training.

Another wonderful resource for our interpretive clothing is our Wardrobe Specialist. This person has been hired due to their experience with textiles, historical clothing, wardrobe management, as well as their sewing skills. They will issue your clothing at the beginning of the season and will be a resource to help with repairs, replacement, or reissuing of items through the season. (They are not, however, there to do your laundry; that will be up to you!)

If you bring props, learn how to use your props naturally and skillfully. If you are portraying a woman who knits, know how to do it with ease. The same goes for homesteading tools, mountain man paraphernalia, and fishing equipment. It takes practice. You can start now on some things. For sure start giving all this some thought and attention.

## **Practice Assignment.**

- Make a list of items that you can bring to Philmont that will enhance your appearance and character portrayal this summer.
- Consult the photos and sources attached as well as your camp's profile.
- Consult with David or Tim if you have questions. If you desire, you may do some shopping online and/or in thrift stores. (Not required by any means, but helpful if you want certain items to keep.)
- Think about how your look at the Philmont this summer fits into number 5 of the principles of interpretation given in Chapter 1.
- **Go for it!! Start seeing yourself as your character at Philmont this summer.**