Arriving at base camp was a phenomenal moment. But regarding Crew 42, it was not our first good experience during our stay. It started with a lazy plane ride, but when we got to Albuquerque it turned into so much more. It turned into an adventure that everyone enjoyed. We saw things like the longest tram in the world, which to me had the largest downward drop in the world. We toured historic "old town", which held the rattlesnake museum. And we saw the amazing potential of Science in The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History (http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/). And after seeing what we could see in Albuquerque, we headed out to Bandolier National Park and spent a nice relaxing afternoon among the various caves and ruins. All the while knowing full well of our task ahead.

The morning of departure to Philmont, members of our Crew slinked out of their beds. And as the sudden realization of our upcoming days dawned, we slowly grew more and more excited. Then, after loading the bus and we approached what was to be our haven for the next few weeks, the excitement faded and we relaxed as much as we could before arriving at Philmont. And as we got to our destination of Base Camp and checked in, we realized exactly how great the Philmont experience was going to be. But we soon found out exactly how much of an understatement our first impressions were.

At Base Camp much of our time was spent preparing for the trail. And after meeting our ranger, we double checked all the gear

sprawled on the cots inside of our wondrous platform tents. Then we ate a seemingly pitiful little dinner and broke into our numerous church services. I went to the church of the grass field to play Frisbee, but for the real record, I believe everyone went to a real church at least once during the Philmont trek. Then after showers, we went straight to bed as excited as a small child is on Christmas Eve; and twice as nervous.

The next morning, we got up in high spirits. And after our last meal, we hit the trail. Over the next few days the Philmont experience really set in, and we had a blast as we traveled from camp to camp. Our awesome Ranger guide, who was there to ensure we were truly ready to hit

the trails left when we arrived at Ponil. Lucky for him, this was when the soft undertone of annoyance towards one another also wiggled into our lives. But thankfully during the most of the trek, we didn't have very many outbursts from any of our members. Unlike groups of people that we crossed paths with that were well within the definition of the storming phase.

Another differentiation from our early perspective of Philmont was that some of the activities were not as guided as we first imagined. Some were very unstructured. One like this was gold panning, where the individual was given a pan and pointed to the river. On the other side of the spectrum, possibly the most guided was the artifact dig. In this activity we were told exactly where and when to dig. No freedom whatsoever.

Note: Past this quick explanation over two of the Philmont activities, I won't cover any staffed sites or what we did there. What I can say to help you understand why is that without going to Philmont, even with an in depth explanation from someone like me, you just wouldn't understand the excitement of what happened. The best you can do is follow this link to the official Philmont website (click here), and see what we did during our itinerary. If you really want to, you can also match up pictures (click to see our Photo Album) of the daily activities to the intended program and see our "daily life".

Throughout our trek together, we were inarguably a team that was outperforming many other groups on and off the trail. This may have partially been due to the fact that we had cards, which gave us something to do other than complaining and moaning about how bad it was. We also had a nightly "Thorns and Roses" to remind us of our daily activities and the fun that we had with one another. The real combined effect wasn't what I believe to be an average crew.

We hiked with vigor every day, and when some individuals lost the capability to carry some of their weight, others stepped in to kindly help. The sun beat down, but we retaliated with water that we shared in desperate times. Everyone had low self esteem at one time or another, but the group always helped the most desperate individuals in times of need. The dangers were extreme and we stuck with our training intently. Nasty bushes pierced the hand of a distinguished scout, but with the help of various crew members, the sliver was easily removed with experience that could only have come from veteran training. Judging by how much people cared about each other it was almost, going along with current cheesy phrases, a family.

Possibly the closest moments on the journey for everyone was when we neared the end of the hike. After spending so much time and being so connected with one another, we almost dreaded our return in a few ways. The excitement of civilization balanced with the despair caused by separation. But we were happy, we were still craving adventure, and every moment of time together was savored.

The last few days on the trail were spent on, around, or just below the Tooth of Time. We hiked in towards the tooth during a rainstorm, and after many hours we had the chance to climb the Tooth itself. After many very weird photos we realized that we were just in time for the sunset. That night, it was agreed that a group of people would venture up the next morning to see the sunrise.

The picture directly to the left was the previous evening when we stood triumphant atop the Tooth of Time for the first interim. The picture above was the next morning with the sun on our faces, which generated high spirits as we hoped to get to base camp fast.

The last few days after we made the trek down to base camp and before we trudged home were spent marveling at the flushing toilets, shaving our bodily hair, and realizing all the things that regular people take for granted. Philmont was an eye opening experience for everyone who went, and the things that happened when we were there will stay in our memories forever. There is no doubt of the great magnitude in what our crew will accomplish in the future now that we have completed the Philmont Trek. We are Venturers; we have embraced adventure as a part of our world, as a part of our crew, and as a part of ourselves.