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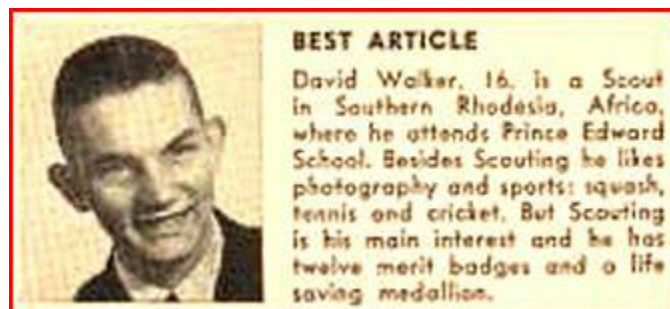
Kilimanjaro

On the Roof of Africa

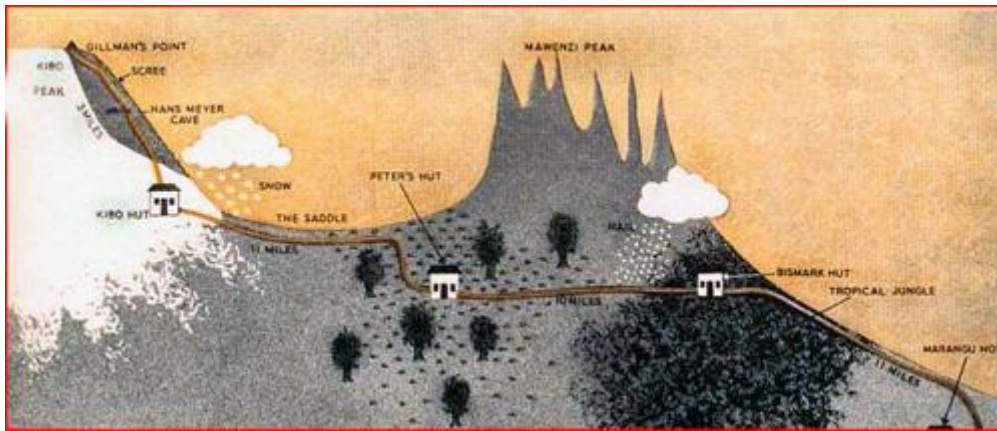
Rising from the plains of Tanzania to a height of more than 19,300 feet, Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa. That's nearly 1½ miles taller than Baldy, the loftiest point on Philmont Scout Ranch.

This summer, the Philmont Staff Association and Friends Expedition set off from a trailhead in the rain forest surrounding Kilimanjaro's lower elevations, eager to climb the famous mountain. A week later they were camped above 16,000 feet and ready for the push to the summit. With only half the oxygen as at sea level, the last 3,000 feet of elevation gain would be a tough challenge for everyone on the team.

Scout groups have been going to Kilimanjaro for a long time. In the 1957 Boys' Life magazine article *Climb to the Roof of Africa*, sixteen-year-old David Walker reported that members of his Scout troop had driven 1,700 miles over rough roads from their homes in Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia) for a try at the top.



At the time, the main route up the mountain led to a saddle between two of Kilimanjaro's volcanic summits - Mawenzi and the higher Kibo. Climbers slept in huts a day's hike apart, as shown on the map that accompanied the Boys' Life story.



Trying to climb Kilimanjaro in just over three days gave those 1950s Scouts little chance to acclimate to high elevations. Only two managed to reach the crater rim where they turned back short of the true summit, more than a mile of additional hiking above 19,000 feet.

The Philmont Staff Association and Friends Expedition set out to do it differently. Their trip had its roots in the early 1970s when two young men, Wally Berg and Rick Touchette, worked as rangers at Philmont Scout Ranch. Rick went on to become a successful businessman. Wally's path led to a career as a mountaineer, climbing Mt. Everest four times and establishing Berg Adventures International, an adventure travel company offering expeditions to the remote corners of the globe.



Rick Touchette and Wally Berg on Kilimanjaro

Four decades after becoming friends at Philmont, Rick asked Wally to organize the logistics for a group of staff alumni, family members, and friends to tackle Kilimanjaro. Wally had already climbed the mountain 45 times, often while leading climbers new to high altitude travel, and was happy to lay the groundwork for the team to explore new territory, meet personal challenges, and strengthen friendships old and new.

Wally charted a longer route than the 1957 Scouts had followed, and planned on six days to ascend the mountain at a slower pace. He hoped that would allow the team to adjust the increasingly thin air, and give them plenty of time to enjoy the spectacular terrain.



The team nears the top of Kilimanjaro's Great Barranco Wall

The plan worked perfectly. Late on a sunny afternoon, everyone on the team reached their goal. After photographs and celebrations, the climbers descended to the floor of Kilimanjaro's summit crater to spend a night beneath a star-filled sky in the highest campsite on the continent of Africa.



Success! A Philmont flag unfurled atop Kilimanjaro.

Big Tents

"We had four porters, two to carry forty pounds of our kit each, and the other two to carry the kit of the porters and guide," wrote Kilimanjaro climber David Walker in 1957. "We were each carrying twenty-five pounds."



A porter carries a load up Kilimanjaro.

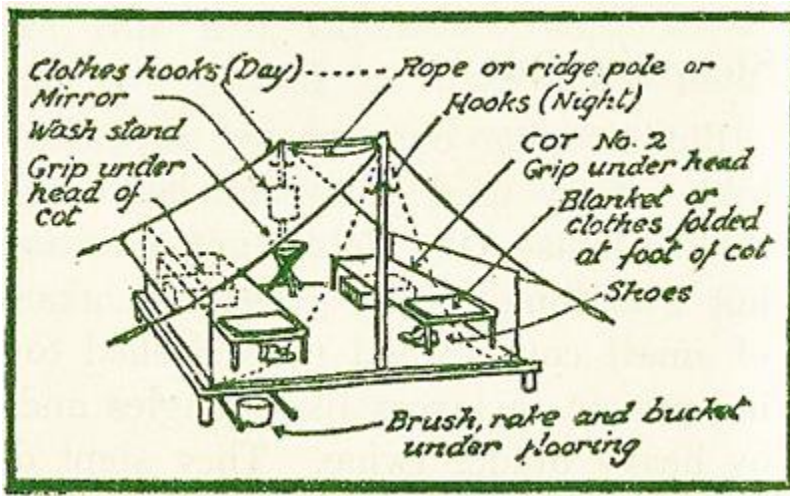
Local guides and porters support nearly all Kilimanjaro expeditions, giving climbers opportunities to get to know the Tanzanians who work on the mountain. Porters helping carry loads make it possible for groups to have gear and provisions to establish comfortable camps at high elevations.

The camps of the Philmont Staff Association and Friends group included several large dining tents. Sheltered from the wind and cold, climbers could relax while enjoying tasty meals and good conversation even in Kilimanjaro's summit crater.



Hand washing station outside of a dining tent.

Big tents aren't just for mountain journeys. Perhaps you've slept in one at your council summer camp. Wall tents often have room for two Scouts with their cots and gear.



Wall Tent Organized for a Council Camp Stay
1939 Boy Scout Handbook

Check out these big tents, available from www.scoutstuff.org. With room to stretch out-and up-they might be just what your troop needs for its own big adventures.



Eureka® Tents - Equinox 6 and Grand Manan 9

Shelter from the Sun

From sea level to the world's highest mountains, sun protection is a Scout Basic Essential for every outdoor adventure. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants can be vital where sunlight reflects off snow fields and glaciers. Sunscreen is important, too, and so are good hats.

The BSA Safari Hat has a wide brim for shade and plenty of ventilation to keep you cool. The Expedition Hat adds an attached sun screen for terrific protection of your neck and ears, areas too often overlooked when the sun is beating down. Find both hats at www.scoutstuff.org.



BSA Safari and Expedition Hats

High Adventure Staff Associations

If you have served on the staff of one of the BSA's high adventure bases, check out its alumni association. Each offers exciting ways to stay connected with the base, to renew friendships, and to find opportunities for continued service.



Not yet a veteran staffer? Perhaps it's time to look into summer staff positions at the BSA's high adventure bases for Scouting at its best. You never know where a season working at a high adventure base might lead, but it might open the path all the way to the summit of Africa's Kilimanjaro.

(This edition of the *Be Prepared* Newsletter was developed and written by Robert Birkby, author of the current editions of the *Boy Scout Handbook* and the *Scout Fieldbook*.)