

# THE WORTH RANCH GRACE

*For food, for raiment,  
For life, for opportunities,  
For friends and this fellowship,  
We thank thee, O Lord. Amen.*

—by Jerry Fulkerson  
WR Camp Director, 1928

*The Worth Ranch Grace* was first used at Worth Ranch in the summer of 1929. First time visitors to Worth Ranch often remark at the simple beauty of *The Worth Ranch Grace*. For years, its authorship and origin was a mystery to Worth Ranch Scouts and Fort Worth area Scouters.

Over the years, many who have heard it have taken it with them to other Scout camps where I have heard it called "The Wilderness Grace," although there is nothing in the words of the Grace to give it any kind of outdoors or "wilderness" character. It is simply a prayer of thanksgiving. At Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico it has been used since the early 1940's and called "The Philmont Grace," and I am sure that it has been given other new names as it has been taken to other places.

**JIM FITCH:** Back in the late 1970's, I discovered an early copy of the Worth Ranch Grace while browsing through the library of the late James P. Fitch. In 1919, Jim Fitch was the man responsible for the establishment of the three state area of Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico into what was then called "Region Nine" of the Boy Scouts of America. He was the first Region Nine Scout Executive, a capacity in which he served from the creation of the Region until 1946, when he became the General Manager of the Phillips Properties of the B.S.A. This placed him as manager over both Philmont Scout Ranch and the Philtower Building in Tulsa. He had offices in both locations, but he lived at Philmont during the late 1940's.

Among the many books on Scouting that were in his library I found an old Scout songbook from 1935. Tucked inside the songbook, and written in Jim Fitch's distinctive handwriting, was the little prayer we all know so well. Across the top of the paper was written "The Worth Ranch Grace." He must have heard the Grace on a trip to Worth Ranch during the late 1930's. He undoubtedly liked it and wrote it down, saving it in his Scout songbook. And there it stayed for forty years until I came across it.

That solved the mystery for me. If Jim Fitch, the man who had presided over the establishment of Scouting in Region Nine during the quarter-century from 1919 to 1946, had called it "The Worth Ranch Grace," then that was good enough for me.

**CLARENCE DUNN:** So how did *The Worth Ranch Grace* get from Worth Ranch to Philmont? During the late 1930's and early 1940's, Jim Fitch had developed a good friendship with Waite Phillips, a wealthy Oklahoma oilman. In 1941, Phillips donated his New Mexico ranch, Philmont, to Region Nine.

In the spring of 1980, while researching

the history of Worth Ranch, I had the opportunity to interview Clarence Dunn, a Scouter from Arlington. Dunn had been the Director of Rangers at Philmont during the 1940's.

Dunn recounted how, in the summer of 1945, Minor Huffman, the first General Manager at Philmont, asked his staff to come up with a simple but appropriate prayer to say at meals. Dunn suggested they adopt *The Worth Ranch Grace*. His Scouts from Worth Ranch had already been using it on the trail at Philmont. Everyone at Philmont that heard it liked it, and it was decided that no other prayer could serve Philmont as well as the prayer that had already served thousands of Worth Ranch Scouts over the previous decade.

**THIS FELLOWSHIP!** It is probably important to note here what so many others have noticed, and that is that *The Worth Ranch Grace* is different from the Grace as it is used at Philmont and by other Scouts nationwide. In the third line, *The Worth Ranch Grace* gives thanks for "friends and this fellowship," an obvious reference to the Worth Ranch fellowship — the fellowship of Worth Ranch Scouts. In doing so, it logically singles out the Worth Ranch fellowship as something special. In contrast, the other, later version of the Grace, as it used at Philmont, only makes a broad reference to the more general aspects of "friendship and fellowship."

**JERRY FULKERSON:** In the spring of 1980, during the final preparations for the publishing of *Palo Pinto Campfires*, a book on the history of Worth Ranch and Palo Pinto County, I had the good fortune to meet and visit with W. Faust Nobles. He had been one of the original members of the 1929 Worth Ranch Staff. During that interview he told me that the author of the Worth Ranch Grace was Jerry Fulkerson, former Camp Director and Council Scout Executive from 1926 to 1947. Fulkerson was not the kind of

man to seek credit for the composition of a simple prayer of thanksgiving, and so, until then, its author had remained anonymous.

**MINOR HUFFMAN:** As a postscript to this story about *The Worth Ranch Grace*, I should add that during the late 1980's I had the occasion to obtain a copy of the book *High Adventure Among the Magic Mountains: Philmont, the First 50 Years*, by Minor Huffman. As the first General Manager at Philmont Scout Ranch, and a life-long friend of Jim Fitch, Minor Huffman was able to assemble a fascinating historical record of Philmont's early years.

At the end of his chapter 17, Huffman devoted a couple of pages verifying what I had discovered about the origins of the prayer. He settled the question once and for all with these words: "This beautiful Grace was first used by the Boy Scouts at Worth Ranch near Palo Pinto, Texas." He added, "Worth Ranch was definitely the earliest camp to use the Grace."

**AMEN:** Huffman closed the chapter with a quote from my book *Palo Pinto Campfires*, "Ultimately, we must all realize that the origins of the prayer are not as important as remembering the reason for reciting it, but to those of us who know the whole story it will always remain '*The Worth Ranch Grace*'."

--by Pete Normand  
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