

## Pikes Peak River Runners

### **Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July July 2006 Ruby Horsethief/Westwater Canyons (Colorado River)**



*By Christina King  
Photo Credits: Christina King*

**Trip Participants: Bill & Irene Cooke, Pete & Christina King, Keith Fuqua, and Ava Marshall, Jennifer Strange, Gary Killinger, Dale & Belinda Wiist, Patti Meyer, Ralph Hoffman, Jack Schneider & Wendy Rombold, Bryan Dold & girlfriend, Ken Fisher & girlfriend, Glen Roberts.**

#### **Day 1: Sunday, July 2, 2006- Black Rocks (Ruby/Horsethief Canyons)**

Our trip started with a fire ban in Colorado, but we were lucky to have cooling monsoon clouds all weekend. The temperatures stayed in the 80's°F. This weekend's Ruby/Horsethief/Westwater Colorado River trip is all about Bill Cooke. Bill's birthday is July 4th and this year he turns the big 60! Hard to believe and we are all excited to share the river with a fun group of boaters (some new and some old friends). I have set up a game where people must ask Bill about 1946, July 4th, Westwater info and personal questions during the next few days. Bill's a good sport and we all have fun asking him questions for clues.

Gary and Delma Killinger hosted a BBQ Saturday night at their home in Grand Junction- nice to have them back in Colorado. We boated with them years ago, they moved to WA and now they are back. I know we will be sure to visit them more often now that they are back in Colorado. Gary joins us on the river this weekend.

The flows range from 4,700 to 5,100 cfs throughout the weekend. We floated easily to Black Rocks and tried to camp in the campsite we signed up for at the put-in, but it was taken. We stayed at Black Rocks #7 instead of #9. Black Rocks #7 camp has a nice swimming eddy and before dinner we enjoy a long



swim playing water polo football and frisbee. Chigger the dog joins us and loves to chase the football. We enjoyed an active game of dominoes after dinner and explored the camp's varied rock formations after a delicious cool dinner of Thai/curry chicken, noodles, and salad, finished off with lemon parfaits for dessert. Ralph and Gary do all the dishes with big smiles on their faces.

*Note: It really helps to stick with the campsite plan you settle on at the Loma put-in (and write in the campsite register) because other floaters in the Ruby/Horsethief sections count on the plans you make (and write down) when they choose their campsites. BLM has helped floaters to locate camps by placing campsite posts on the designated campsites (which really helps in the Black Rocks section).*

## **Day 2: Monday July 3, 2006- Bald Eagle**

Last night I noticed 3 trains go by after we went to bed. The rest of the group only heard one train. Wow, our group slept hard last night. Dale and Belinda have an interesting inflatable raft bed, so they sleep well. We break camp early (by 8:15 am).



We see numerous bald eagles and wild turkeys today. We stop at the Westwater Ranger station for a quick check-in/out and meet the rest of our group finishing up their shuttle. We float leisurely to lunch at Miner's Cabin. We are assigned Bald Eagle camp because all upper camps were taken by other groups.



The rapids are easy today. Bill runs the hole in Little Dee and gets stalled out. Bill also runs the hole backwards in Skull. The rest of us ran Skull easily on the left and do not follow Bill's lead. The corkscrew wave at Sock-it-to-Me is BIG but most of us run it on the right with no problems. I see my usual sneak run on the left but ran right today. At this level, Sock is the most difficult rapid. Commercial outfitters were running their motors above the rapids today- strange- usually only see them do this below. Everyone swims below

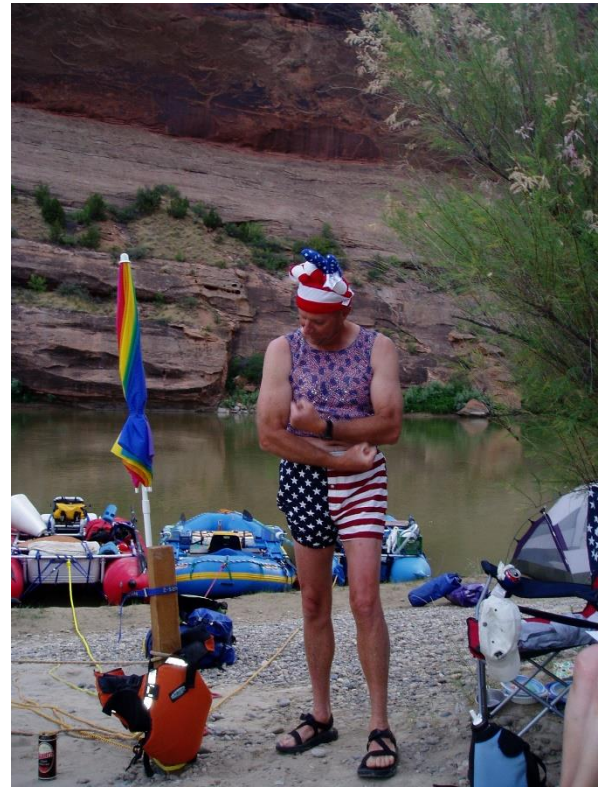
the rapids for several miles below Last Chance. The water temperature is perfect. Our assigned camp, Bald Eagle, has been improved and is an okay camp. Big Horn is nice but only sets up easily for three boats to tie up to shore. Ken tempted our palates with a beautiful tomato, basil, mozzarella cheese appetizer while Bryan prepared a delicious Basque stew.



After dinner we compete for a semi-valuable prize on completing Bill's Born of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July life crossword game. You would think that Irene Cooke would have the advantage, but even she stumbled on a few Bill Cooke life facts.



Everyone splits into teams and believe it or not - no one gets 100% correct. Semi-valuable prizes are awarded for the most correct and incorrect answers and we have a good laugh in the process.



Bill is a great sport and enjoys his prizes and small birthday gifts. I think he loves his 38-item survival kit the most! Those 4<sup>th</sup> of July shorts keep riding up higher and higher. Pete swears that if they touch the ground at any point on this trip, we will have to burn them. Keith prepares beautiful red/white/blue & German Choc birthday cakes after dinner.



### Day 3: Tuesday July 4, 2006- Independence Day

It was quiet last night, and we sleep peacefully in our tent cots. We awoke with the sun and floated to the Cisco takeout. We loaded up gear by 10 am with only one scary close call. One of the dogs choose to rest in the shade under a trailer tire and was not noticed when the trailer started to pull out. The dog yelped causing Keith to stop immediately. Fortunately, the trailer tire did not run over the dog's leg, but it sure gave us a scare. Our safety trend at takeouts this year has not been great. Glen Roberts got his finger smashed loading up gear after the Yampa. From here on out, we plan to do trailer spotter checks before pulling out. Thankfully, Ollie (the dog) was fine and had no injuries. On the other hand, we sustained mental anxiety over incident. Ken is calling Ollie his fluffy lucky wheel chock.

We stopped at James M Robb Colorado River State Park for a quick shower and headed home via Independence Pass for an easy ride home. The traffic on the ride home was almost non-existent, it seems like everyone was already where they wanted to be on their 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

