

## Pikes Peak River Runners

### **The Girls Want A House May 2011 Yampa River**



*By Christina King*

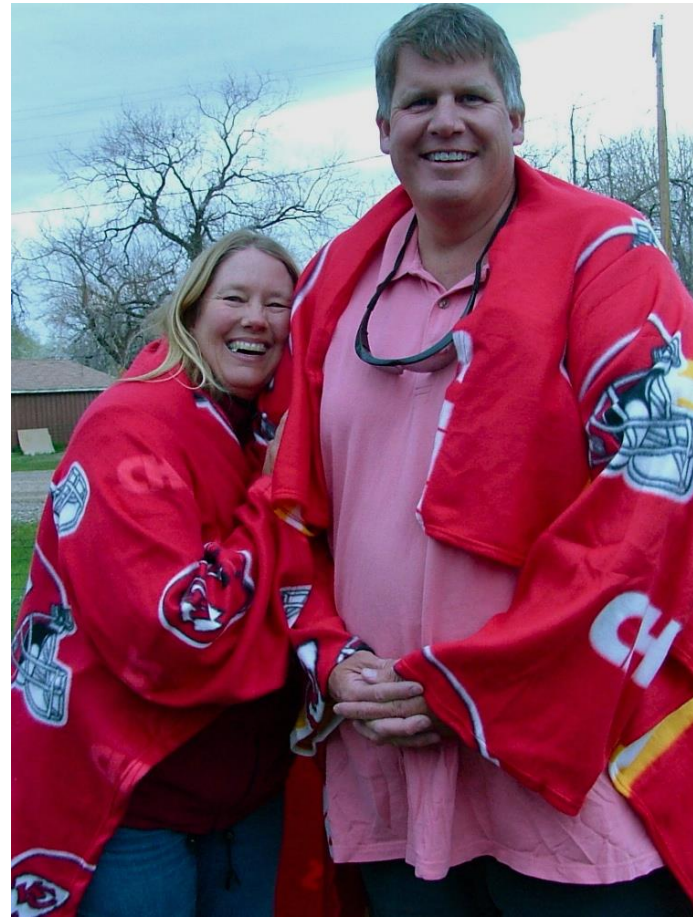
*Photo Credits: Christina King, Patti Meyer, Beth Roren & Mike Sims*

**Trip Participants: Pete & Christina King, Dave Wimmer & Patti Meyer, Keith & Ava Fuqua, Pat Campanello, Margery Lazarus (permit holder) & David Adler, Beth & Eric Roren, Mike Sims, Melissa Broch, Andrea & Jeff Collins, and Jon Whitaker**



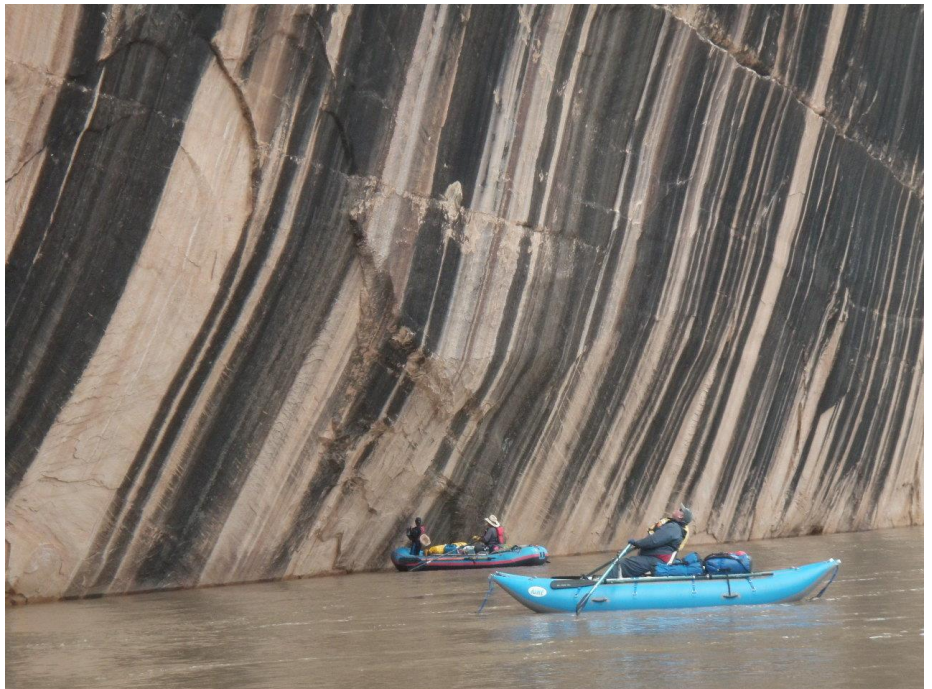


Early winter snowpack looked promising for the northern Colorado mountains. Therefore, we targeted a Yampa permit date for Memorial weekend. It kept snowing and snowing. It turns out to be a record-breaking snowpack and an extremely late Spring. As a result, our group of 25 dwindled down to a hearty 17 participants by launch day on May 27, 2011. Fellow club members got another Yampa permit on May 28, 2011 (Saturday launch) and filled their permit to ~20 people and ran the river in four days. Margery Lazarus remained our steadfast May 27 Yampa permit holder and Beth Roren our patient trip leader.



The flows on our trip fluctuated between 16000-18,000 cfs – moderately high considering the soon-to-be melted snowpack.

The snowpack on Rabbit Ears Pass near Steamboat Springs astonished us as we drove through on our way to Maybell. The National Park Service (NPS) called Beth to let her know that Deerlodge Park (our camp spot and launch point) was closed for camping due to the river overflowing its banks. NPS anticipated flows to skyrocket to 30,000 but the cold weather slowed down the snowpack melt and kept our trip on an even keel. Everyone met in Maybell and we camped at the delightful town park and drove into Deerlodge Park the next morning after a hot burrito breakfast. Our group consisted mainly of Colorado boaters with a sprinkling of California and Montana friends mixed in.







### **Day 1- Friday, May 27, 2011 Anderson Hole camp**

Our day started early at the Maybell town park. Our drive into the Deerlodge Park put-in was muddy and wet. We arrived to the put-in with the turnaround already filled with several other trips rigging their boats and gear scattered everywhere. We patiently waited for some room which gradually came open and we began to unload. The river had overflowed into the campground, but the cold weather had shrunk the river back to the top of the high-water embankment which made for muddy and slippery footing at the river's edge. Because of the congestion we got off to a late start. We ate lunch at the put-in and then sent a portion of our group to take all the vehicles Split Mountain (our takeout). Three hours later, the rest of our group returned in two cars (to be re-shuttled by River Runners Transport) while we launched on the river at the crack of 4:30 pm. Not an early start but our first assigned camp was Anderson Hole (only 4 short miles downriver). It only took us an hour to float to our assigned river camp. Anderson Hole is a great camp (both low and high water) because it allows for a short day after running shuttle most of the day. The air temp is cold, and the weather seems unsettled (a precursor of poor weather for our entire trip). Everyone wore warm fleece and pants in camp. Even though we only floated about an hour- between rigging and shuttling it seemed like a long day. Early to bed for most of us.

### **Day 2- Saturday, May 28 Harding #1 camp**

Today is our longest planned day (22 miles) and we float down to Teepee rapid (scout) and run it well. The waves were big (& wet) but it was an easy run down the right side. We stopped for lunch at Big Joe camp (underwater so we stayed on the boats) and then ran the rapid afterwards. We reached our camp early at Harding #1 (fast landing at these high flows) and enjoyed some sun, but the air temp kept dropping. Some hiked up the canyon and others went down to Harding cave (at #4). Margery (& Mike) led us in Ukulele songs for the evening entertainment. Yes, we had traditional camp songs AND Ukulele Beatles sing-a-longs. Harding #2 camp had a really nice beach and would have nicer for the boats. Either way, both camps are good choices at these flows. There were no other groups at Harding Hole. Many of the camps on our entire trip were underwater at these high flows. All of us put up tents and it rained during the night. The snowline was uncomfortably low in the morning up on the hillsides upriver.



### **Day 3- Sunday, May 29 Box Elder #3 camp**

We packed up our damp tents in the morning sun then floated across the river to Signature cave for a trek up to the cave and pictographs (and a fair amount of graffiti). A lunch stop at Mantle Ranch and petroglyphs gave us energy for the cold afternoon. Tiger Wall was as magnificent as ever with its iron oxide strips running down the vertical walls. Almost dizzying when you float directly underneath the towering undercut walls and lean back on your raft looking up to the wall. Warm Springs rapid is our big event today. Monstrous at these levels with a maytag hole feature in the middle and long runout below. Our group split into two teams to run the rapid and take photos. I led the first group with a precise run down the right side and swung into the eddy



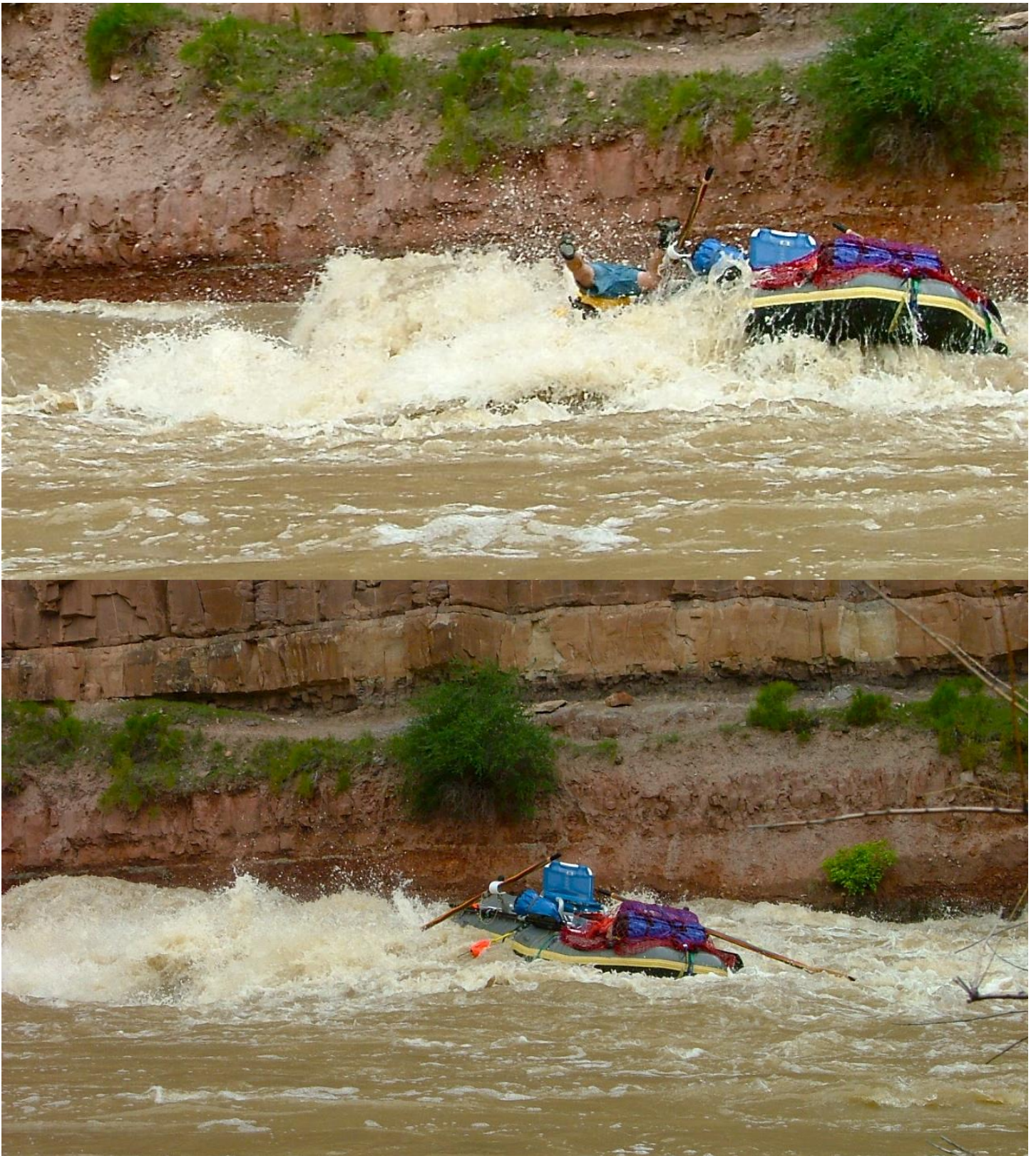
below to wait for the second pod. The first team all ran well. The second team mostly ran the rapid well – i.e., no flips. However, Eric popped an oar in the rapid and managed to hit the maytag hole sideways (but not flipping). Eric was bucked out his raft (feet in the air) BUT managed a spectacular self-recovery by clambering back into his unmanned raft in the second half of the rapid safely finishing out the rapid back on his oars. Quite an acrobatic feat! We heard later that another group we have been leapfrogging with downriver had camped at Warm Springs camp and one boatman ran all their 7 boats through the rapid one after another. That must have taken him hours because the walk (or should I say boulder scramble) back up to the boats probably takes at minimum 15 minutes per run. The scout path back up to the eddy where the boats are parked above the rapid is full of large tippy boulders.













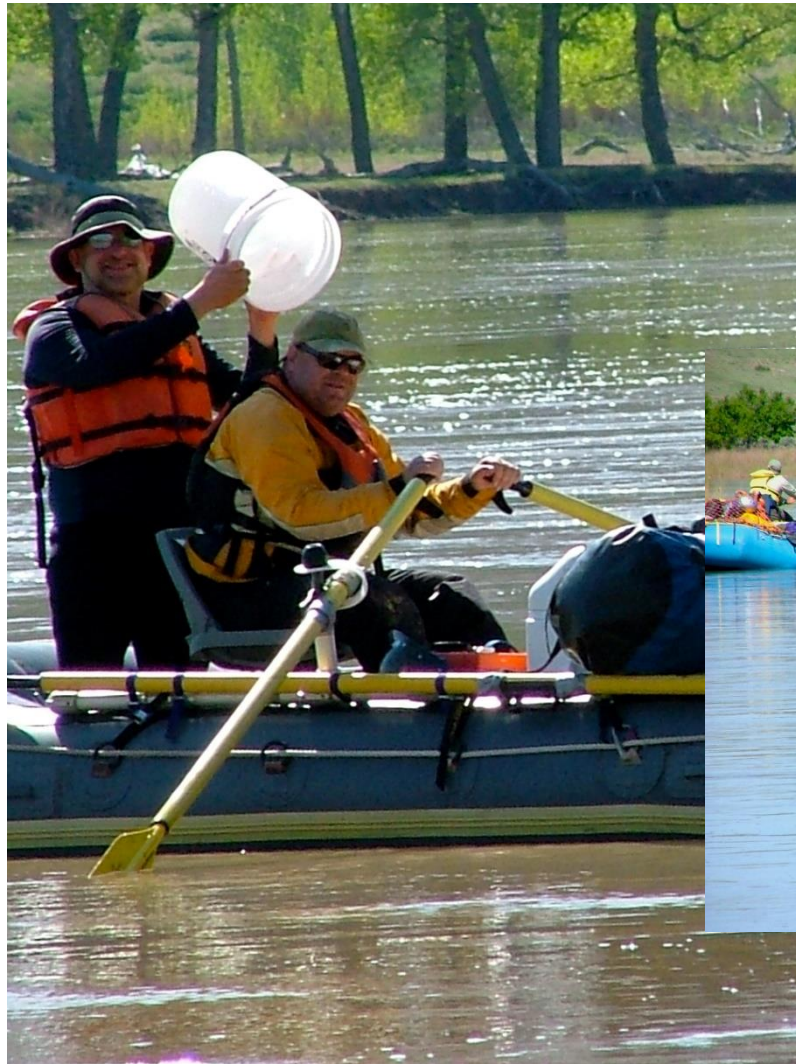
That night we camped at Box Elder #3 and celebrated all our successful Warm Springs rapid runs. You could feel the relief in camp that despite the higher flows, everyone had run the river well so far. About half of our group would be considered “rookie” rowers and this shakedown trip did wonders for a good test of their rowing skills and confidence. The celebratory mood carried over into margaritas for all, birthday cake for Jon and then more drinking far into the night. As Eric was slicing limes, I warned him to be careful with the knife and no sooner did I say that when the knife sliced right into the meat of his finger. Boy, did I feel guilty for even mentioning safety. He was feeling no pain, so he cleaned it and put tape on it, and it was okay. The weather kept getting colder and windier with a few spits of raindrops. I noticed that the light drinkers all set up tents well in advance of the coming storms whereas the celebratory folks put their faith in no storms (or denial) and were determined to sleep out under the stars like “peas in a pod”. About 9:30 pm the skies opened up in a downpour of rain and I could hear Patti’s plaintive voice telling the boys in camp that “the girls want a house, the girls want a house”. They scrambled to put up tents as we listened – warmly tucked up in our dry tents. The girls got their “house”!





#### Day 4- Monday, May 30 Island Park camp

It rained hard ALL last night- never letting up. The worst part was the wind and cold temps in the morning. Our tents got packed up wet and we put all our warm clothes on while rigging the boats. We have only had one worse weather trip up at Dinosaur (where we had snow), but this trip was almost that bad. I guess the one redeeming part of our weather was that we never had actual rain while rowing downriver – but we did have cold wind! A few of the group stopped to hike at Echo Park and we ate lunch at Jones 1, but it was too cold to hike there as well. Karen won for the most layers of clothes (7) on at one time and could not bend over to put on her shoes because she had so many layers on her body. I personally had 4 layers under my lifejacket and considered putting on a fifth and last layer. My hands and feet stayed very cold, and we all struggled to keep warm. That is rare for me since rowing usually keeps me warm enough. I can only imagine how cold the passengers must have felt. The weather remained windy and cold, but the sun finally popped out as we set up our tents at the Island Park Camp. It was



nice to dry out tents and wet river gear. A nice dinner and evening in camp.





## Day 5, Tuesday, May 31, 2011 Split Mountain takeout

The day gave way to sunshine and the first day of more typical warmer weather but lots of rapids, so we bundled up. The river temp is frigid. The Green river contributed another ~4,000 cfs but remains dwarfed by the Yampa flows. Our first rapid (Moonshine) earned a scout. Good runs by all but Beth's boat floor has a hole in it (since beginning of the trip) and she is having trouble moving it quickly in bigger rapids. All the other rapids down to Split Mountain were big and splashy but obvious where to avoid the big holes. The ramp was wide open, so we backed down the trailers and loaded up relatively quickly right as our next Pikes Peak River Runners group (the 4-day trip group) came in. We had lunch at the campground sending everyone away with road trip snacks a plenty. Great trip, cold weather and lovely friends. We drove home via newly opened Independence Pass (near Aspen) and were astonished at the amount of snowpack remaining (2 feet above our Suburban). It will be a great runoff year for Colorado (Utah, Idaho & Montana) rivers.

