

Funnel Falls Fireworks

By Ava Fuqua & Anne Olsen (stories merged)

Photos contributed by Patti Meyer

Edited by Christina King

[Westwater Canyon on the Colorado River](#) in Utah, July 5-6, 2014

[Flows ~10,000 cfs](#)

Participants: 14

- Nick & Anne Olsen (permit holder) -1 raft (The watermelon)
- Keith & Ava Fuqua -1 raft (The cookie monster)
- Dave & Judy Christensen -1 grey raft
- Patti Meyer -1 cat (Big Red – Rojo Grande)
- Anne Pierce -1 “little itty bitty” blue cat
- Ken Jones– 1 yellow “catapult” cat – i.e. boatman launcher
- Ken Khren & Mary Egan – 1 orange cat
- Randy & Paul – Dave’s friends – 1 orange raft

[Map of Westwater Canyon](#)

[River Summary](#)- American Whitewater Org



July 4, 2014 (Drive over): Excitement started right at the get go when Anne asked Nick if he had the Westwater River permit paperwork right as they were leaving their driveway in Palmer Lake, Colorado. “Oh no...” was the response, and he rushed trip back into the house. Keith’s truck was packed to the hilt with his boat and gear, and Nick’s trailer loaded high with both Nick and Patti’s boats and gear. We rolled out of town about 1:30 PM, not bad. We had been watching the flows carefully this past week and are glad to see that the dreaded “Terrible

Teens" (13,000 cfs is the worst we think) have sunk below that level nicely. You can read about our [Snap, Crackle & Pop Terrible Teens river trip](#) from a previous Westwater July 4 trip. On the drive over we were able to listen to the Brazil vs. Columbia world cup soccer game. Though Brazil won and played well, there was silence when Neymar was badly injured with a knee to the back. We arrived at Dave and Judy's home in Grand Junction just in time for drinks and dinner. We had a wonderful dinner and conversation on their back porch. Judy brought out sparklers, great fun! However, the really treat was the almost professional fireworks show put on by Dave. Dave set up the fireworks in the field behind their house while we played with the sparklers.

Ava: I have to admit my expectations were not high because I've never seen a spectacular home show. All I can say is "HOLY MOLY". They were incredible, just like you would see at the big firework shows. We all sat in awe saying things like "wow, oo, ah".

July 5, 2014 (Launch/permit & Funnel Falls Fireworks day): Today starts with a nice leisurely breakfast with Judy showing us pictures of her cabin in Wisconsin. Learned that Neymar has a fractured vertebra and will not be playing for the rest of the world cup. Very sad news. The put -in is hot with lots of boaters. Most of our group is already there and ready to launch. Shuttle is run while Patti and Nick finish rigging. To start the trip off right we see two bald eagles and a black bear getting a drink at the river's edge, Patti only caught a glimpse of his "caramel bum".

Stopped for a wonderful lunch at Miners Cabin of chips...oh wait no food menus needed.... Nick did make his specialty "cool refreshing limeades" at lunch. After lunch Dave goes over what he knows about the rapids at this level ~10,200 cfs. In my mind I quietly dub it the "Terror Safety Talk". Turns out we now have our own terror tales to share later in this river trip!



Mary & Ken

The big rapids fireworks start at Funnel Falls rapid where Nick and Anne flip their new green raft (the watermelon). Christiansen's and Fuqua's (us) were in front. There are many takes on what happened. There will be lots of discussion about this event I'm sure. Nick pops up beside the boat, there is no sign of Anne yet. Finally Anne moves out from under the boat so Nick can pull her up. There is no time to flip the boat over before the next series of rapids. We need to get Nick and Anne in a boat before Skull. Must say Nick's boat had a nice run down Skull. Ken Jones looks through okay until all of a sudden he is catapulted off his seat when the back end of his cat pops up and shoots him forward into the river at Skull Rapid. He pops up fairly quickly for a breath but then is sucked under as he goes towards the pointy "Rock of Shock" wall. Anne Pierce literally flies over for Ken, when after a very LONG time he does pop back up she is there. Ken said "it's very dark and cold down there, but then a school of fish swam me to the top." All kidding aside, this was a very scary experience for us all. Paul is able to jump in Ken's boat and keeps it upright using his passenger skills rowing, good job Paul! Once we run Last Chance Rapid (the final rapid) we are finally able to corral the Olsen's raft and get some guys on the boat to flip it over. Nothing is lost!

Anne Olsen's direct account: after lunch Nick and I flip in Funnel Falls rapid, OOPS. Then, Ken Jones gets thrown out at Skull Rapid and we worry for a minute that he might get swept into the Room of Doom just below but he avoided that catastrophe. ACTION PACKED!!!! We get up on the bottom of our overturned raft and Dave and Judy get us on their boat as ours goes down through some more rapids. They get Ken's cat and Anne Pierce gets Ken Jones. Then we take a wild trip down until we get a spot to flip our raft back over and on we go whew !!!!!!! When we get to our Big Horn campsite, I ask for a shot HA HA....





We camped at Big Horn camp that night and dissected the day's wild events. Patti treated us with cool fresh mint water. She also had "hose water" which she did not want us to have to drink unless necessary. Mary's story of being mistakenly arrested for prostitution at her own apartment complex, well actually "disturbing the peace" was hilarious. Anne and Nick provided glow in the dark sticks & fun glow balloons which provided hours of entertainment, especially for Ken Krehn, who wasn't even drinking. Randy is an excellent "veggie chopper" hate to see him and Keith square off in the same kitchen and compete like the show "Top Chef", not sure who would win. Patti was very creative taking pictures with her ipad, some are included in this trip report. There were some pesky mosquitoes but less than we anticipated considering the dropping water flows but Ava still only ended up with 11 bites. We stayed up until we saw 10 stars in the night sky and quickly retired to bed. Several of us slept on boats.



July 6, 2014 (Easy float to the Cisco Takeout): Today starts with a nice leisurely float to the takeout but it is HOT! We enjoyed lunch under the pavilion shade at the takeout and then head off for a long drive home. Overall, it was a great trip, everyone pitched in with meals and delicious on-river cooking/chores as usual. Only wish Nick and Anne had not flipped and Ken J. had not had a long dark scary submersion swim with the fishy's.

P.S. You can [read/view more Pikes Peak River Runner trips stories and videos](#) at our website.