

A THANK YOU FROM TOM BYRNES

by Tom Byrnes

This is a special thank you to the T.R.P.C. members who contributed to the Pike's Peak hike, and a special thanks to Jeannie Bailey.

My wife, Lynn, and I began our cross-country drive to Colorado Springs, Colorado on June 23. First, we drove to Nashville, Tennessee to visit a friend. On the way there the "kids in us" wanted to drive some go-carts, so we did and they were very fun.

One fellow boater told us about a few rivers like the Ocoee. Of course he was a friendly guy. The people did seem to be happy, friendly, and stress free, as we drove further south and west. A man who Lynn encountered at a rest stop in Kansas said, "Most people from the East worry too much and don't know how to take it easy."

While in Nashville we heard about Opryland and Dollywood. We saw the First Grand Ole Opry and drove down "music row." This was where Elvis made some recordings and wrote his name in the cement. There are also many famous recording studios there.

From Nashville we drove through Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas to Colorado Springs, Colorado. The scenery was beautiful, especially when we came upon "Old Majestic," Pike's Peak. We couldn't believe we'd actually be at the top of it in a few days.

The day we arrived was June 26th at approximately 6:00 p.m. We then came upon "The Garden of the Gods," which are very big and tall red rocks that many people enjoy viewing and also climbing. For the next three nights we stayed at a campground and saw some sights.

On June 29th Lynn and I started hiking up Barr Trail at 8:30 a.m. It leads up to Pike's Peak. Six miles from the top we stopped

at Barr camp. Lynn had a mild case of altitude sickness, so she decided to stop hiking for the day. We unloaded our backpacks and set up our camp. I loaded up my pack with just some filtered water and a flannel jacket and left for the peak, while Lynn rested in the cabin at Barr Camp. There is one big cabin there that is maintained by two volunteers. I made it to the top and came back down and we camped in our tent outside of Barr Camp that night. We had a visitor that night, a raccoon named Sylvia, who we thought was a bear. Needless to say the night was mostly sleepless, but very humorous (looking back on it now.)

The next day we hiked back down, got into the car, and then checked into a hotel. As the "Walk Through the Clouds" event began, we met many wonderful professionals and traumatic brain injured survivors. We'll never forget those people and I'm sure we'll see many of them again. Lynn commented about how much these people smile and enjoy the moment. Most survivors really enjoy life's moments, because they know how precious life really is.

Well before the July fourth hike up the peak, the Walk Through the Clouds Foundation had two altitude adjustment hikes, each of about six to eight miles. They would help your body acclimate to the altitude. On July third the hikers went to support other hikers who were walking six miles around the Air Force Academy. It was wonderful to see people reaching a goal, whether it was 6,200 feet or 14,110 feet.

It was an enriching experience and we were lucky to have such wonderful people involved in the event. Lynn made it to the top the second time and we now have some fantastic photos. It was chilly above the tree line and some snow fell at the top. It was fascinating to see snow on the Fourth of July.

I met a courageous young lady during the event. Her name was Lara. She had tried to hike Pike's Peak to the top two times before, but wasn't able to make it. But this year, Lara brought her ski poles, and determination, and made it to the top. The hike was filled with many stories similar to that.