

Jeeping the Colorado River II

By Jerry Smith

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During August, the Grand Mesa Jeep Club held it's 3rd annual "Jeepin the River" event. This is a day on the Colorado River floating in whatever you bring from Grand Junction down to Loma, CO.

This year, we had everything from a large inflatable (party) raft to kayaks and canoes, right down to tire inner tubes displacing water. Approximately 25 different water crafts carrying in the neighborhood of 40 people braved the chilly waters of the mighty Colorado River.

For some of us, this was our first adventure out on the river. Rented and borrowed inflatable kayaks, canoes, and other stalwart steeds graced us with a remarkably great day of fun and frolic. For at least three of us, there was so much fun we could hardly wait to get home... to get to our computers to find a new or new-to-us water craft.

Chuck and Mary had rented an inflatable tandem kayak for the trip and had thoroughly enjoyed their day so much that they ended up with new sit-on-top kayaks and a trailer for transporting them. This was their 45th anniversary gift to each other. Congratulations to two super people.

Jerry had borrowed a canoe and had such a wonderful day that he began an earnest search for a used kayak and trailer to haul it on.

In less than a week, all three were talking of new adventures

on the waters which led to Jeeping the River II. To become familiar with the new watercraft, Chuck and Mary unwrapped their presents and immediately headed for Connected Lakes for their maiden voyage.

Chuck jumped on and set sail for the other side and attempted an advanced maneuver that resulted in a swimming lesson.

The next night, Jerry joined them on the lake for his first kayak experience which proved to be a complete “sale”.

So word was put out over the digital air waves that a repeat trip was in order.

September 6th found ten members of the Jeep club doing a repeat of the trip 2-weeks prior. This time, we had one raft and the rest were in kayaks.

Mr. Weatherman fully cooperated with one spectacular day. Mostly sunny and a light breeze with 82 beautiful degrees greeted us. After the vehicle shuttle ceremony, we launched around 10-AM into the silty red waters of the Colorado River.

Soon everyone was in a relaxed, warm and fuzzy state that remained for the entire day... except for a few mishaps of extra curricular swimming exploits.

Jerry did the honors of breaking the mood while floating backwards taking a video from under a bald eagle perched in a tree above him. That video is being admired by Davy Jones somewhere at the bottom of the river. Seems like the anticipated stop at a snag protruding from the river bank turned into a quick overturn of the kayak.

One or two good things came from that dunking. First, Jerry

found that exiting a sit-in kayak is not all that difficult. The other lesson learned was to tether cameras and other gear to the boat or your body. As for the camera and all its precious video... use your imagination.

Many birds like the super graceful blue heron and some wild turkeys were seen on this trip. New-to-us observations of other riverside oddities kept the senses awake along the way as well.

One of the more “serious” rapids capsized Chuck and Harley received the “automatic reject feature” while mounting his kayak at two of the stops along the way. Hey, it’s all part of the adventure of people who refuse to “get on the bus”... a humorous reference to “old folks” who give up on living and relegate themselves to riding tour busses while discussing their medications and maladies.

We of the Grand Mesa Jeep Club refuse to “get on the bus”. There are too many trails, rivers, and lakes to be experienced to allow that syndrome to set in. Next weekend, a three-day trip to the Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming is on the agenda.

One last observation if I may. While on this river trip, Jerry was observed living what he preaches. When you come to a fork in the road (or river)... take it!!