UUTDOORS

Staying alive when a flash flood comes

The summer of 1976 was an interesting time for me. High school was in the rearview mirror as I was in my first year of

college. I



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

would turn 18 this year, which meant I better behave myself, because in the eyes of the law, I was now a keeper.

With all that stress on me, I did the only thing a young man in summer could do; I went fishing. It was the 31st of July and I was working a stretch of Saguache Creek where it winds through a steep and narrow canyon that is full of small rattlesnakes.

The creek is only a dozen feet wide, slow moving and full of small natives and brook trout. To the northwest of me is a very ominous thunderstorm with lots of daggers and claps of thunder. Surely it was raining heavily upstream from me but no matter, I was only a mile from the truck.

Within minutes, the small creek became a muddy, rain swollen, roaring river pushing debris, tree limbs and one young fisherman downstream. I managed to climb higher up the bank and watch most of the proceedings from a safe distance. Later I learned that the upstream thunderstorm dropped 2 and-ahalf inches of rain in less than 45 minutes.

The rain was a leftover from former tropical storms Manuel on the Pacific side, and Ingrid on the Gulf side. Later that day, similar storms hit the Big Thompson River near Estes Park, dropping 12 inches of rain in just three hours.

The resulting flash flood killed 144 people and caused \$35 million in property damage, or \$140 million in today's dollars. The summer of 2013 saw similar flooding disasters, with up to 17 inches of rain in certain areas, killing eight people and costing over \$2 billion in damages.

The flash flood scenario plays out most

summers as the monsoonal shower season arrives in Colorado. Add leftovers from stalled cold fronts and broken up tropical systems, and you have the recipe for flash flooding.

Flash flooding is one of the most common natural hazards in our state. Anyone who recreates near rivers and creeks during the summer months of May through September should be constantly aware of the potential for flooding. The same could be said for folks that live in the valley within the flood plains of streams and rivers.

Thunderstorms that are upstream, out of earshot and sight, are the culprit. Rapid runoff from the mountains can quickly cause the water levels of creeks, rivers and normally dry streambeds, to rise to unsafe levels. These walls of water are fast moving and can easily exceed heights of 20 feet.

Pay attention to the advisories issued by the National Weather Service, and carry a radio that receives bulletins from the weather service. A flash flood watch means that flash flooding is possible and you should be alert and prepared to move to high ground.

A flash flood warning means you better have the disaster insurance paid up, because trouble is coming. A flood is occurring, or about to occur, and you should immediately move to higher ground.

Never attempt to cross an area that is flooded. It only takes 6 inches of fast moving water to send your carcass downstream. ten inches of water can move your car and 18 inches of water will actually float a vehicle. Fast moving water is nothing to fool around with.

Do not pitch your camp along streams or washes, especially at nighttime when you may not be aware of conditions outside. That storm upstream from you can send you on a wild ride when you are asleep.

Look for high ground to make your campsite on. Stay well above the streambeds and drainage channels. Those cutouts of erosion along the banks were made by good old rising water, so stay far above them.

If you notice the water beginning to



It does not take much rain to flood the ground when you have soil like ours here on the Western Slope. (Mark Rackay/ Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

rise, react as if a flash flood is occurring and don't "wait and see." A stream can rise several feet in just two minutes and by then, it is too late. Better safe to move than sorry you waited.

If your recreation involves a water activity, wear a life jacket. Never assume that your swimming skills will keep you afloat in a flood. The waters will be full of debris, adding to the fun.

Keep a close eye on your children, even if they are not near the water. Water safety is paramount for children as they can enter the water and get in trouble quickly when your attention is momentarily diverted. Lifejackets for kids are necessary anytime they are near the water. Take it from a guy who has recovered drowned children before; put lifejackets on those kids.

Always watch the weather upstream from you. The storm may occur out of your sight and earshot of the thunder, and catch you completely by surprise. It does not have to be raining where you are for there to be a flood. Just like anytime you are outdoors, keep one eye on the sky.

When all else has failed, and you are caught in a flood, climb to higher ground. Climb higher than you think is necessary because the rushing waters may cause the ground under you to give way from the erosion. You just might

have to sit it out for a while as you wait for the waters to return to a safe level.

Should you find yourself caught in the flood, heading downstream with a full view of the proceedings, try to keep your feet in front of you in a half sit position. If someone is caught in fast moving water, reach out to him/ her or throw a rope to the person, but never go into the water yourself. "Reach or throw, but don't go," is the phrase to remember, lest you join them in a float trip downstream.

That July flood sure ruined an otherwise productive fishing trip. I had to walk out of there along the sides of the cliff with the rattlesnakes. It was a tossup; snakebite or drown. I made it out without incident and a whole lot better off than those poor folks on the Big Thompson. Let's hope we never see anything like that ever again.

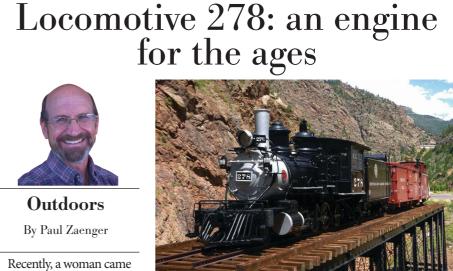
Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@ bresnan.net

Sports on TV this week

Auto Racing **SATURDAY** 1:00 am (FS1) NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck

Basketball FRIDAY 11:00 am (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship Boys



Series Corrigan Oil 200. (Live)

Series UNOH 200. (Live)

THURSDAY

5:00 pm (FS1) NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series UNOH 200, Qualifying. (Same-day Tape) 5:30 pm (FS1) NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck

Baseball

FRIDAY

- >:00 am (ESPN) Little League Baseball Midwest Region, Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 1:00 am (ESPN) Little League Baseball New Eng-land Region, Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live)
- :00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Northwest Region: Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 3:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Great Lakes Region, Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live) 5:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Mid-Atlantic
- Region, Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 7:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball West Region, Second Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live) 3:00 pm (ATTSP) Colorado Rockies at San Diego Padres.
- (Live)

SATURDAY

- 2:00 am (ESPN) Little League Baseball Midwest Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 0:00 am (ATTSP) Baseball PONY World Series: South Zone vs. North Zone. (Live)
- 1:00 am (ESPN) Little League Baseball New England Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 2:30 pm (ATTSP) Baseball PONY World Series: London, UK vs. Washington County, Pa. (Live) 1:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Northwest
- Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live) 2:00 pm (FS1) Philadelphia Phillies at San Francisco Gi-
- ants. (Live)
- 3:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Great Lakes
- Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live) 5:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball Mid-Atlantic Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 5:30 pm (FS1) (ATTSP) Colorado Rockies at San Diego Padres. (Live
- 7:00 pm (ESPN) Little League Baseball West Region, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)

SUNDAY

- 1:00 am (TBS) Los Angeles Angels at Boston Red Sox. (Live)
- :30 pm (ATTSP) Colorado Rockies at San Diego Padres. (Live)
- 5:00 pm (ESPN) Philadelphia Phillies at San Francisco Giants. (Live

MONDAY

- 5:00 pm (ESPN) Boston Red Sox at Cleveland Indians. (Live)
- 5:30 pm (ATTSP) Arizona Diamondbacks at Colorado Rockies. (Live)

TUESDAY

5:30 pm (ATTSP) Arizona Diamondbacks at Colorado Rockies. (Live)

WEDNESDAY

- 1:00 pm (ATTSP) Arizona Diamondbacks at Colorado Rockies. (Live)
- 5:00 pm (ESPN) Chicago Cubs at Philadelphia Phillies (Live)

THURSDAY

- 1:00 am (ESPN) 2019 Little League World Series Game 1: Teams TBA. (Live)
- :00 pm (ESPN) 2019 Little League World Series Game 2: Teams TBA. (Live) 3:00 pm (ESPN) 2019 Little League World Series
- Game 3: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 5:00 pm (ESPN2) 2019 Little League World Series Game 4: Teams TBA. (Live) (ATTSP) Baseball PONY World Series, Champion ship: Teams TBA. (Live)

International Quarterfinal, Game 1: Teams TBA. (Live 12:30 pm (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S. Girls Quarterfinal, Game 2: Teams TBA. (Live)
 5:00 pm (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S. Girls Quarterfinal, Game 3: Teams TBA. (Live)
 6:30 pm (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S. Girls Quarterfinal, Game 3: Teams TBA. (Live)

Boys Quarterfinal, Game 2: Teams TBA. (Live)

SATURDAY

- 10:00 am (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S. Boys, First Semifinal: Teams TBA. (Live) 11:30 am (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship Boys International, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)
- 1:00 pm (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S Girls, Final: Teams TBA. (Live) 2:30 pm (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S
 - Boys, Final: Teams TBA. (Live)

SUNDAY

- 6:00 am (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S Girls, Final: Teams TBA. (Taped) 7:00 am (FS1) Jr. NBA Global Championship U.S
- Boys, Find: Teams TBA. (Taped)
 Do pm (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship Girls World Championship: Teams TBA. (Live)
 2:30 pm (FOX) Jr. NBA Global Championship Drug V(Add Championship: Teams TBA. (Live)
- Boys World Championship: Teams TBA. (Live) 4:00 pm (ESPN2) WNBA Connecticut Sun at Las Vegas
- Aces. (Live)

WEDNESDAY 8:00 pm (ESPN2) WNBA Connecticut Sun at Phoenix Mercury. (Live)

Equestrian

SATURDAY 3:00 pm (KKCO) Breeders' Cup Challenge Series. (Live)

Football

FRIDAY 8:00 pm (ESPN2) Ottawa Redblacks at Edmonton Eski-mos. (Live)

SUNDAY

6:00 pm (ESPN2) Arena rooman Philadelphia Soul at Albany Empire. (Live) (ESPN2) Arena Football ArenaBowl XXXII -**THURSDAY**

6:00 pm (ESPN) Oakland Raiders at Arizona Cardinals. (Live)

Golf

FRIDAY 2:00 pm (FS1) Women's Golf U.S. Amateur: Quarter-finals. (Live)

SATURDAY

- 7:30 am (FS1) Women's Golf U.S. Amateur: Semifinals. (Live
- 1:00 pm (KREY) The Northern Trust, Third Round. (Live) **SUNDAY**

12:00 pm (KREY) The Northern Trust, Final Round. (Live) (FS1) Women's Golf U.S. Amateur: Championship Match. (Live)

WEDNESDAY

2:00 pm (FS1) U.S. Amateur Championship, Round of 64 Matches. (Live)

THURSDAY

2:00 pm (FS1) U.S. Amateur Championship, Round of 16 Matches. (Live)

Gymnastics

SUNDAY (KKCO) U.S. Championships. (Taped) (KKCO) U.S. Championships. (Same-day Tape) 2:00 pm 7:00 pm

Motorcycling **SATURDAY** 2:00 pm (KKCO) AMA Pro: Unadilla National. (Live)

up to me saying, "We just stopped at Cimarron and saw the engine and train on the bridge there. It looks like a shiny new penny. You know, when the copper is so clean and fresh, the light just springs right off of it." She said Engine 278 has that gleam which emanates straight out to you. You can

Engine 278 appears to leap from the tracks as it points the way to Montrose. The exhibit is a partnership between the City of Montrose and the National Park Service to reflect the relationship between Black Canyon and people who lived decades ago. (Photo courtesy of National Park Service.)

call 278 was forged specifically for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in 1882 intending to pull trains on the rails that extended from Crested Butte to Montrose. It's been around for almost

140 years.

Recently restored, it returned to the bridge in the canyon last fall. The locomotive underwent moderate changes over its lifetime,

See ENGINE 278 page 10



The locomotive that we

just feel it.