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Water, the Story of my Life

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WATER, THE STORY OF MY LIFE

My photo storyboard illustrates the important role and connection I've had to water since my childhood. It begins with my twin sister, Rene, and me and then flows into our father, who was born and raised in Salida. At the young age of 17 he was one of the first three Americans to represent the United States in the World Kayaking Championships in Bergen, Germany in 1957. My grandfather encouraged him to learn how to kayak on the Arkansas River back when the river here was much more big and wild. And as a side note, it was my grandfather, Steve Frazee, who was one of the main forerunners who started FIBARK (First in Boating on the Arkansas) Whitewater Boating Festival. He worked with the American Canoeing Association getting the downriver races on the Arkansas sanctioned where racers could earn points for standings and placement. From there it morphed into both down river and slalom races that brought world class boaters from all over the world to race.

The photos of the cabin, bridge, and river is where my love for water began. As children my sister and I would spend copious amounts of time in Garfield at our grandparent's mountain cabin. Their cabin sat right in front of the north and south forks of the Little Arkansas River and the bridge sat across the north fork of it. My sister and I would sit on that bridge for hours, throwing rocks, playing games, watch the raging water go by under us. In early summer during the run off season, the sound was so loud it was hard to hear each other talk. It was humid and wet and always felt good but the water was COLD! My niece and nephew have also grown up around water like we did and they are in these photographs, as well as my father who also grew up going here.

Growing up, we lived in a passive solar home in the mountains of Bailey. We had many plants in our solar house so my sister and I learned how to water and take care of plants at an early age. It was here in Harris Park Estates that we really had a connection to water. Unfortunately I don't have any photos of this time frame but it was formidable in shaping who we are today in regards to our connection to water. We spent most our time in the summer in the national forest swimming in play holes, catching minnow and salamanders, having boat races with my father. My dad was always creative in coming up with fun games. He would ask us to find a cool piece of wood we could carve a boat from and he would give us each an Exacto knife so we could shape it. We'd then take our handmade wooden carved boats to a running creek in the woods by our house and have boat races. There were rules, make no mistake about it. It wasn't just a free for all! If your boat got stuck on a rock or a feature in the creek you had to remove it and start over at the beginning. Pretty frustrating at times and pretty funny to those winning!

Growing up with these values and connection to water is truly what shaped who I am as a person today. I owe my interest in being an avid gardener to my mother's parents, both full-blooded Italian and had incredible gardens when we were growing up. As an adult now I grow my own food and harvest it thanks my Nana and Papa.

As an art educator I have always enjoyed taking my students to the Snow Sculpture World Championships in Breckenridge every year. The contest brings large sculpture artists from all over the world and my students and I really enjoy seeing what they carve from snow and the processes used. It's a true learning experience for them. Without moisture, water, and COLD temps, this world renowned event would not exist.

In 2019 I was offered the opportunity to raft the Grand Canyon with friends. It was beyond spectacular! As an artist I was deeply drawn to the organic and flowing rock formations the water had formed from millions of years of flow. The formations they are beautiful; organic sculptures jutting from out of the water, smooth as if some machine had formed them and sanded them down to make them silk smooth. I was mesmerized by the beauty of wornness and the deep story of time the walls in the canyon tell. Being

down there, up close and personal, really made it a sacred place to me. I felt I didn't need to go a second or third time adding my footprint again. Once was enough. I understand it and it's beyond special and ultimately needs more protection.

My family and I love Salida due to the quality of life here. Most of the outdoor activities we find ourselves doing are related to water in some way. I kayak Twin Lakes and my brother-in-law is an avid kayaker. My 10 year old nephew is the one jumping in the air with his skis. Yes, he is a bad-ass, but hey, he and his sister grew up learning to ski in the Austrian Alps! I Nordic ski, fat tire bike, snowboard, and ice climb during the cold months when it snows. This is who my family and I are. We are all connected to water. We are blessed and are richer for it.