

Dear Taylor,

You will always have a special place in my heart because you were my first – the first cold, clear Colorado river I kayaked. What a day when love is born. It was decades ago yet sharper than last week.

A Bald Eagle perched on an overhanging snag, peering into the same pool as a fly fisherman in waders, the intensity of their stare equal. Climbers on sheer rock routes were so close above that I heard “belay off” above the sound of the water. Then I saw the Bighorns river right, scrambling up the steep terrain of the Almont Triangle. My paddling and climbing passions converged – true love at first sight.

I came back. I moved to the Gunnison Valley and lived near you for 15 years. I explored your headwaters on foot and horseback. I took my puppy up her first peak in your watershed. I shared you with my mom who, in her 90’s, delighted how you reminded her of the cascading creeks of her Appalachian youth. We often picnicked with you on Sundays, some of the best memories ever.

I moved away, but I come back every summer and share you with new boating buddies who smile as I did, the first time.

Love always,

Melanie

Sincerely,

Melanie Rees

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