



CELEBRATING THE ROLLER DAM'S 100TH BIRTHDAY IN STYLE!

The birthday party to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the official Congressional dedication of the Grand River Diversion Dam in DeBeque Canyon was a rousing success!

An overflow crowd filled the Palisade Memorial Community Center on Saturday, June 27th to see a “Dam Art Show” exhibits, videos, documentaries, listen to speakers, live music, and much more!

Nearly 500 people attended the event held 100 years after the official dedication of what locals now call the “Roller Dam” on June 29, 1915 with members of the Congressional Appropriations Committee. A July 1915 article in The Palisade Tribune noted the congressional delegation enjoyed Palisade cherries. As part of the 2015 celebration, the Palisade Historical Society made sure U. S. Representative Scott Tipton was presented with Palisade cherries, courtesy of Kokopelli Farm and Market.

Besides Congressman Tipton, speakers included Bill Fitzgerald, a great grandnephew of Palisade’s Congressman Wayne Aspinall who eloquently spoke about his family connections to Palisade, water, and agriculture. He said, “it is important to realize that water projects like the roller dam are not just ancient history. The dam is living history. It is up to all of us to keep water flowing.”

Congressman Tipton, as well as Mark Harris, General

Manager of the Grand Valley Water Users’ Association which currently operates the Roller Dam, and Max Schmidt, General Manager of the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District, spoke about the importance of collaboratively working together and continuing to value and protect the Western Slope’s most precious resource.

Another highlight was Dorothy Carver Hines cutting the first of three cakes created by Slice o’ Life Bakery specifically for the birthday party. Three different flavored and decorated cakes were intended to serve 300 people and quickly disappeared to the appreciative crowd.



Bill Fitzgerald, great grand nephew of Palisade’s long-time Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall who served in the U.S. House from 1949-1973, was a featured speaker.

(Unless otherwise noted, photos by Darlene Jordan Holmes.)



Master of Ceremonies Mark Harris, general manager of Grand Valley Water Users’ Association, presents Congressman Scott Tipton with Palisade cherries from Kokopelli Farm and Market



Gary Hines helps his mother, Dorothy Carver Hines, cut and serve the first of three birthday cakes. Dorothy grew up at the Roller Dam as her father, Earl Carver, was resident caretaker for 33 of the Dam’s 100 years.

Before and after the speeches, guests enjoyed a variety of interesting displays, including historic photos and information about the roller dam. There were continuous showings of documentaries about the roller dam and water on the western slope, and a “dam art show,” with 43 entries of water and dam-themed art. For children, there was a reprint of artist Melanie Kerrigan’s “Roller Dam” line drawing from the Historic Palisade Coloring Book, and activities at information booths, including the Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program, Tamarisk Coalition, and Noxious Weeds.

Live music in the morning was pianist Jeanie Thomas, with a concert by the Bookcliff Harmony Barbershop Chorus in the early afternoon. Toe-tapping music from the bluegrass band, Way Down Yonder, closed out the day-long event.

A short documentary was created for the Roller Dam’s 100th birthday with video from the Mesa County Libraries. The longest documentary, “Water in the West,” is about the Colorado River and its many uses and was created by the Water Center at Colorado Mesa University and Gen 9 Productions. The featured documentary, “How the West was Watered” by InFilms & Design with assistance for the narrative and photos from the Palisade Historical Society focused on the Roller Dam and irrigation history. It was financially underwritten by presenting sponsors Colorado National Bank and Western Slope Auto Co. The music video, “That Dam Water Keeps US Green,” released earlier this year by part-time Palisade resident Maggy Fellman, was also an audience pleaser.

Party-goers also viewed videos and documentaries about the Roller Dam, Colorado River, and irrigation history from 9 a.m. until after 5 p.m. downstairs at the Community Center.

“It was a wonderful celebration,” said Palisade Historical Society Chairman Priscilla Walker. “The turnout truly exceeded our expectations.” Mesa County Sheriff volunteers helped ensure parking and traffic flow went smoothly as Main Street was blocked off due to construction.

The 100th birthday party garnered an unprecedented amount of positive publicity, including a series of articles in Grand Valley Magazine. The June issue had the cover photo and six-page article by Gary Hines with family photos of his mother and the Roller Dam. The Senior Beacon also ran a two page article in its June issue on the Roller Dam and 100th birthday party. Three radio stations aired interviews and promotional spots about the party.

The Roller Dam’s 100th birthday was covered by Grand Junction TV stations for three nights, starting with the June 16th special “media tour” of the Roller Dam where Historical Society members and volunteers recreated a photo taken during the 1915 dedication. Additional TV coverage included lead stories the night before and the day of the party. KREX

was instrumental in reaching viewers through interviews with anchor/reporter Emily Fredrick on early and noon news programs, and by creating and airing a number of promotional spots.

“We more than met our goal of shining a light on this historically amazing structure,” Walker continued. “We heard from people all over the Grand Valley who are amazed to learn about the interesting history of the 100 year old Roller Dam and how it supplies necessary irrigation water for five canals in the Valley,” she said. “This event was made possible by dozens of volunteers and donors. We are grateful to all of them for this successful, Valley-wide celebration,” she added.



Palisade Historical Society Chair Priscilla Walker, left, thanked everyone for attending. Board member Charlene Weidner, right, led the group singing of “Happy Birthday” to the Roller Dam. Charlene also introduced Dorothy Carver Hines for the official cake cutting.



Greeters at the Historical Society table included Doris Butler, right, Barb Hampton, and Jodi Buchan.



Palisade Historical Society members and volunteers recreating the dedication photo from 100 years ago at the media tour of the Roller Dam earlier in June.



The non-traditional guestbooks were photos of the Grand Valley Project which guests could sign or add memories in the “dam important” notebook. Volunteer Marsha Kosteva signs one of the “guestbook” photos. (photo by Curtis Martin)



Historical Society volunteers Nancy Eighmy, Linda Quarles, Kathi Roy, and Marsha Kosteva enthusiastically eye the three specially designed Slice ‘O Life cakes before the cake cutting ceremony with Palisade Town Board Member Thea Chase, center.



Guests enjoying music by keyboard musician Jeanie Thomas.



Nancy Lewis announced art show winners. Cash prizes for the “Dam Art Show” were made possible by Steve Ammentorp and the ANB Bank. Award recipients were:

- 1st Place - Susan Metzger’s “Water Toll Booths”
- 2nd Place - Penny Pallister’s “The Roller Dam Gears”
- 3rd Place - Bev O’Neil’s “East Orchard Mesa”
- People’s Choice - Kay Crane’s “Centennial Sentinels”
- Honorable Mention - Gayle Madden’s “Tunnel Vision”
- Honorable Mention - Sylvia Emery Wilhelm’s “Gears”
- Palisade Art Lover’s Special Award - Brooks Powell’s “The Roller Dam”



(Above) A view of some of the 43 dam-themed artwork entries displayed in the Dam Art Show which filled the middle of the Community Center. PALS Co-chair Nancy Lewis writes a note at the “people’s choice” entry table. (photo by Curtis Martin)



Dam Art!



(Above) 1st Place winner in the “Dam Art Show,” Susan Metzger, with her award-winning painting, “Water Toll Booths.”

(Right) Artists Susan Metzger, Sylvia Wilhelm, Lorin Merriam, Art Show co-chair Nancy Lewis from PALS (Palisade Art Lovers), Gary Hines, and Gayle Madden.



(Above) PALS co-chairs Nancy Lewis and Arden Blatter count votes for the “People’s Choice” winner at the end of the day. Arden also coined an appropriate comment for the day, “Frankly my dear, we do give a dam.” (photo by Curtis Martin)



The Bookcliff Barbershop Harmony Chorus sang in the afternoon to an appreciative audience. (Curtis Martin photo)



Talented pianist Jeanie Thomas provided vintage music for the morning, including accompaniment for everyone to sing "Happy Birthday" to the 100 year old Roller Dam.

Dam Music!



Members of the Bluegrass band, Way Down Yonder, ended the day with fun, toe-tapping music. Carroll Quarles, right, was the lead guitarist in the music video, "That Dam Water Keeps US Green."(photo by Bruce Walker)



Justyn Hock from the Bureau of Reclamation, seated at the Bureau's information booth, was very supportive and involved in the planning for the media tour and 100th birthday party.



Author and Historical Society member Jodi Buchan, above, was at the Historical Society's information table. Her newest book, A Bountiful History, includes Palisade Historical Society photos, and will be published in July. (Curtis Martin photo)



Luke Gingerich, water engineer with Olsson Associates, showed interesting drone camera footage of the Roller Dam at his information booth.

Dam Information!



Melanie Fischer from the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program came from Denver with her interesting display.



The Historical Society's "mobile museum" drew a lot of interest and comments during the birthday party. It was sponsored by a donation from Community Hospital.



Teresa Nees, far left, with the Mesa County Noxious Weed department and Cara Kukuralitis, right, from the Tamarisk Coalition talked with guests about invasive weeds and their organizations' efforts to contain them. (Curtis Martin photo)



Community Hospital Director of Marketing/ Communications Karen Martsolf with Bill Beckwith and Charlene Weidner in front of the "mobile museum" with historical photos and information about the Roller Dam and Government Highline Canal.



Dr. Hugo Madden created a digitized book from a collection of newspaper clippings stored at the Grand Valley Water Users' Association (the original shown left). He ran articles through an OCR application to create searchable text and is making the book available in print or on DVD.



(Above) Party-goers also viewed videos and documentaries about the Roller Dam, Colorado River, and irrigation history from 9 a.m. until after 5 p.m. downstairs at the Community Center.

A Dam Good Crowd!



A standing-room-only audience gathered to hear the speakers. The Dam Art Show paintings -- 43 in all -- displayed on the panels on the left side of this photo. (photo by Bruce Walker)



Dam Notable!

Historical Society Member and volunteer Brent Kerr, right. His grandfather, Wilford M. Kerr, Sr., was the first caretaker of the Roller Dam.



Max Schmidt, Orchard Mesa Irrigation District Manager was also a speaker at the 100th birthday party. The Government Highline Canal also supplies the OMID power plant and two canals on East Orchard Mesa with irrigation water.



Historical Society Member and volunteer Dave Cecuga dressed as "Colonel Bower" for the party.



Alfonso Gallegos, currently the resident caretaker at the Roller Dam, was able to break away from his important work to attend the party.



(Above) Marsha Kosteva and Charlene Weidner with pieces from the quickly-disappearing 100th birthday cakes from Slice O' Life Bakery. Talbott's Mountain Gold provided delicious apple cider for the event. (Curtis Martin photo)

(Below) Founding Historical Society board member Doris Butler wore a vintage dress created by dressmaker Diane Atchison who made many of the dresses worn for the media tour earlier in the month.



In his speech, Ed Warner from the Bureau of Reclamation praised the Historical Society's History of Irrigation booklet.



Long time Historical Society board member Ralph Branch was key to making the celebration run smoothly.