

Friday, June 6, 2008

Duo braves chilly Boulder Creek to tube to work *Putting the “alternative” in alternative transportation*

By Laura Snider

The plan: Meet at Eben G. Fine Park in west Boulder by 7:30 a.m. toting a tube and wearing a suit.

The objective: Take Boulder's Bike and Walk to Work Month to its (least) logical conclusion.

Friends Andy Gruel and Jeff Kagan hatched the idea to tube to work last summer over a couple of brews at the Mountain Sun. The plan evolved over the year, and eventually a date was set, a posting was entered on the Camera's online calendar, and all interested parties were invited to tube along.

“I love the idea of another type of commute that doesn't rely on those dastardly fossil fuels,” said Kagan, who works as a lead instructor at Thorne Ecological Institute, 1466 N. 63rd St.

But Friday morning dawned a bit brisk, and Boulder Creek was swollen from Thursday's rains. At 7:30 a.m., the park was empty, except for an older man with a furrowed brow, who was practicing tossing his rescue throw rope.

“I really just came to try and talk people out of doing this,” he said, not wanting to give his name.

Just when it seemed that even the organizers had come to their senses and decided not to splash into 44-degree water wearing business suits, Kagan rounded the corner on his bike, crossed the bridge over Boulder Creek, and pulled up at the shelter with two tubes in a bike trailer.

A few minutes later Gruel



LOGAN LYLES

Jeff Kagan emerges from a rapid wearing a suit and tie while riding an inner tube down Boulder Creek making his way to work in Boulder, Colorado June 6.

appeared, wearing a double-breasted, pin-striped suit that was clearly not his own. (His ankles and wrists stuck out way beyond the cuffs.)

Unswayed by the older gentleman's appeal to their sense of self-preservation, the duo waded into the swift-moving creek just after 8 a.m.

By Sixth Street, Gruel said he couldn't feel his buttocks. A runner on the Sixth Street bridge asked whether Gruel and Kagan were taking a day off to tube.

“We've got to be in by 9 a.m.,” Kagan replied.

By Ninth Street, the pair took a break to warm up on the sunny bike path that runs along the creek. Gruel's knees were shaking violently, and Kagan did a few jumping jacks.

“Only 40 more streets to go,” said Gruel, who works at Walsh Environmental at Pearl and 49th streets.

Though neither man made it to work by 9 a.m. (or even close), Gruel eventually floated into his office after being warmed by a hot cup of coffee and a scone when they pulled off at the 28th Street bridge.

Kagan, on the other hand, decided 28 blocks was enough -- for this year. He returned home, and worked from there.

“We'll absolutely do it again,” Kagan said. “But next year we'll go the last Friday in June instead of the first.”

Contact Camera Staff Writer Laura Snider at 303-473-1327