

Taking in the Mountains of Colorado

- "It doesn't have to cost a fortune"

by Jeannette Ward

Have you ever been kissed by the wings of a hummingbird? Stood on the porch in July, wrapped in a blanket? Or taken a walk with the camera in your own back yard and never ran out of things to pho-

player's grandparents, the Larson's, have a "summer house" in Texas Creek. Adjacent to their home is a neighbor that allowed us to use her home for the week. (The neighbor rarely stays there and often opens her home to the



The humming birds at the Larson home in Texas Creek, Colorado have no fear of humans. Some were more interested in the camera, than in the nectar provided.

I work with Lynn when covering the BHS volleyball team, but never knew I would be spending the week with her in-laws. What a small world we live in.

After breakfast, the basketball team was allowed to practice at one of the local high schools. Immediately following, they decided to go white water rafting. Usually, I would be game for such an adventure, but it was 56 degrees. Too cold for me. Besides, who would take the pictures if I was on the raft?

Following the kids by roadside, I captured several good pictures of the scenery as well as the Arkansas River rapids. Again, the beauty of this place made me lose track of time, and the real purpose we were there. BASKETBALL.

The next day, another practice, then the team split up and went sightseeing. We chose to go to the Royal Gorge.

The Royal Gorge Bridge is the highest suspension bridge in the world. It hangs 1,053 feet above the winding Arkansas



Humming birds swarm the feeders at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

tograph?

Last week, I had the opportunity to do that. In a remote place called Texas Creek Colorado, where there is no cell phone service, no public internet access, and no limit to the beauty that surrounds you.

The goal of this trip was to join the rest of the North Texas

Larson's overflow company.)

The next morning, we all went over to the Larsons for a huge breakfast and a tour of their hill. It was breath-taking! Majestic mountains, a cool breeze and humming birds - EVERYWHERE!

Of course, my camera and I navigated to the humming-



The Royal Gorge Bridge over the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas River is the highest suspension bridge in the world.

Dreams basketball team for their final tournament of the summer. After all the camps, tournaments and summer expenses, we didn't have much money to spend. So we packed light, ate in as much as we could and looked for the "free stuff."

We left Wise County at about 11:30 a.m. and arrived at

Texas Creek at about 11:00 p.m. (Yes, with three ladies in the car, we only stopped once for gas and one meal. All other meals and snacks were consumed from the cooler in the car.)

The only reason we were able to afford this trip was because one of the basketball

birds, where I was instantly greeted by the "grand-daddy ruby throated" master of the feeder. Since the Larsons fill the feeders on a daily basis, these majestic little creatures have no fear of humans. They land on your fingers, the camera lens, or your shoulder. They also "squawk" at you, if you are blocking their food supply.

Honestly, feeling the wings of a hummingbird brush my face was almost a spiritual thing. Sometimes the simple things make you remember why you're alive.

After talking to the Larson's, I found out that we have something more in common than loving the outdoors

and basketball. Their daughter-in-law, Lynn, is the volleyball coach right here in Bridgeport.

River. (And yes, in the wind, it sways.) The bridge was built in 1929 for a whopping \$350,000.00. Today, the same structure would cost over \$15 million to build.



The North Texas Dreams basketball team did a little "team building" while coming down the rapids of the Arkansas River near Canon City, Colorado.

The Royal Gorge Park also offered gondola rides across the Gorge, incline railway rides to the banks of the river and sky coaster rides. Obviously, I didn't do the sky coaster ride. This ride sends two people at a time over the Gorge, face down on a small cable. I'm an adventurer, not a death seeker! Of course, my youngest daughter wanted to do it, but we swayed her toward the gondola ride instead.

In addition, the park offered trail rides, a train ride, a wildlife park and educational entertainment, all of which was worth the \$24.00 admission fee. (This was the only admission fee we paid throughout the trip.)

The following day, the team headed to Colorado Springs to take part in the basketball tournament. We passed through Manitou Springs where you can take in Pikes Peak and the cliff dwellings that rest at the foot of the Peak. These dwellings are the housing remains of the ancient Anasazi Indians. Next to the cliff dwellings, there is a three-story Pueblo style museum that houses artifacts and interesting educational exhibits.



Taking in the beauty of the majestic Arkansas River.



The world's longest Aerial Tram across the Royal Gorge and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.



What a view to wake up to. The San de Cristo Mountains.