

Mt. Princeton, a 14er in the Collegiates *Second time: A birthday climb*

Difficulty: Class 2 Exposure: 

Summit Elevation: 14,197 feet

Elevation Gain: 3,400'

Round-trip Length: 7 miles

Climbers: Rick Crandall; Laura Welch; Shari Applebaum

A few years ago I solo-climbed Mt. Princeton with my dog Emme. While we did summit, there was no one there to take a picture, so this year (summer, 2014) as a prep for bigger climbs and with two friends wanting to check off this mountain, I decided to go again and get the summit photo. As it turns out, the best weather day in the forecast was my birthday, July 20th, so Laura and Shari got into making this a birthday climb!

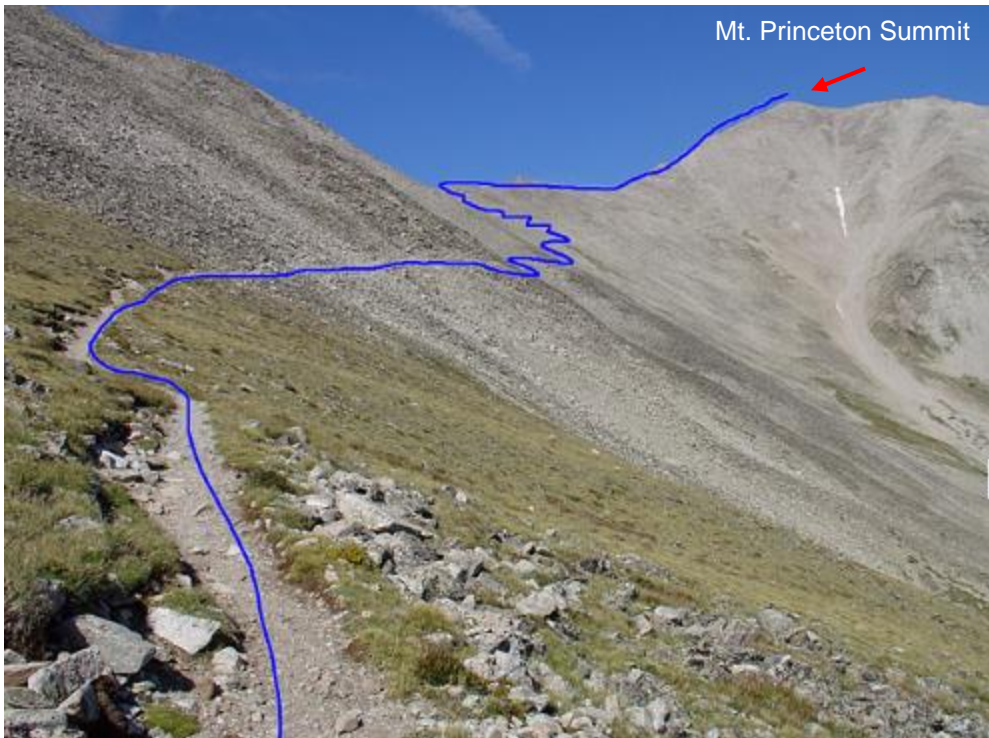
The Start: We drove from Aspen over Independence Pass and over-nighted at Buena Vista to get an early start the next morning. The first thing I noticed was a cluster of three large helium-filled balloons in the back of the 4Runner. Hmmm.

We were up and in the car at 5:30 am and made our way to the start of the off-roading, which is the narrow CR 322 (Mt. Princeton) road. This is 3 ½ miles of significant off-roading requiring a good 4WD vehicle. We found a pull-out to park just past the radio towers at about 10,900'



View of much of the route from the summit of Mt. Princeton.

There is a newer route that reaches up to a saddle at an earlier point on the ridge than the old route which has been closed due to loose rock fall and erosion partially caused by climbers in prior years. The new route involves miles and thousands of feet vertical of very rocky hiking.



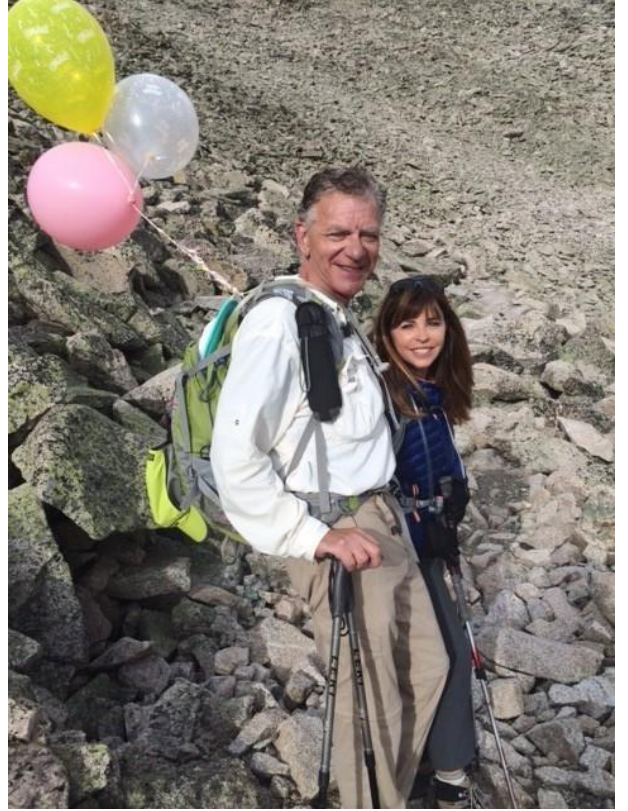
The nice path ends pretty quickly after the start of the climb.

It was soon after the start of the day that I learned the purpose of the helium balloons.



Laura tying the balloons, one of which has Happy Birthday on it. I get it – the helium was supposed to “help” me up the mountain, now that I’m one year older.

I got comments from other climbers: “we could see you all over the mountain!”



Oh yeah, they helped a lot – NOT! The wind caught them and I was pummeled by them bouncing around as we went up the path ... and into the rocks. But I was determined to climb with them all the way to summit. I actually got pretty far up – and then the constant wind action undid the knots – and up they went!



Laura and Shari looking happy as we headed up the rocks. Coming down would be a different story.

Princeton summit is the highpoint in the distance.



As we worked our way up, I kept recalling back to the time when I did this mountain with Emme, our Australian Terrier – quite amazing – most of these boulders were bigger than Emme but she just leapt from one to the next ... all the way to summit and back down.





Back to the present – Shari at about 13,500’ pointing up to summit still 700 vertical feet of rocks to go.



**Summit Mt. Princeton
14,197’ July 21, 2014**

**10:25 am, 4 hours from
the car.**

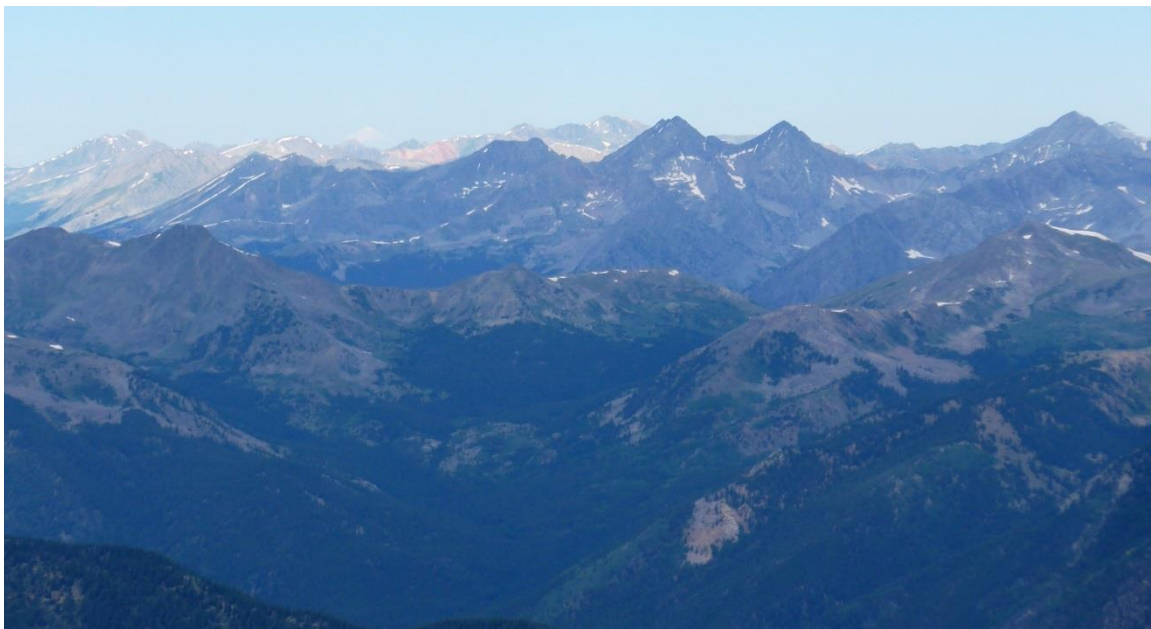
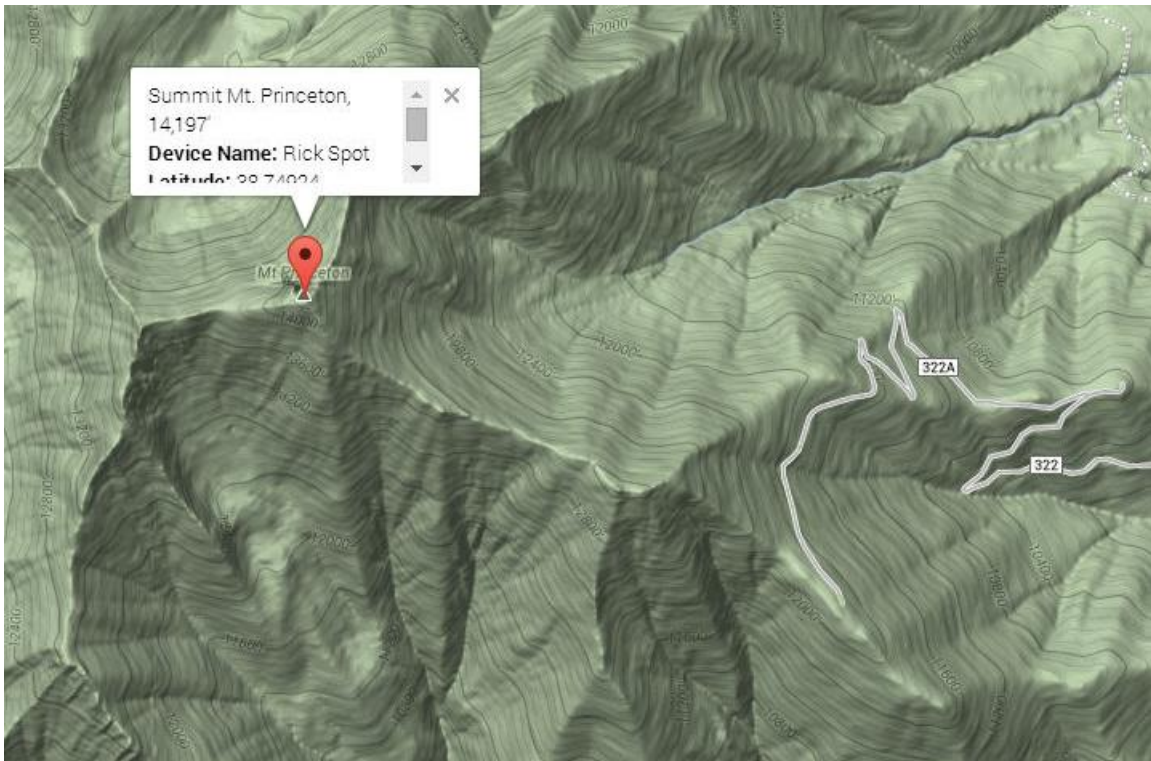
**Rick feeling strong,
despite no balloons ☺**



But the birthday thing wasn't over yet ... Oh yeah, a Happy Birthday hat from Shari. Complete with candles on top.



Oh well – here's the evidence I sought that I'd actually checked off Mt. Princeton.



The views of other 14ers in the distance were all around us.



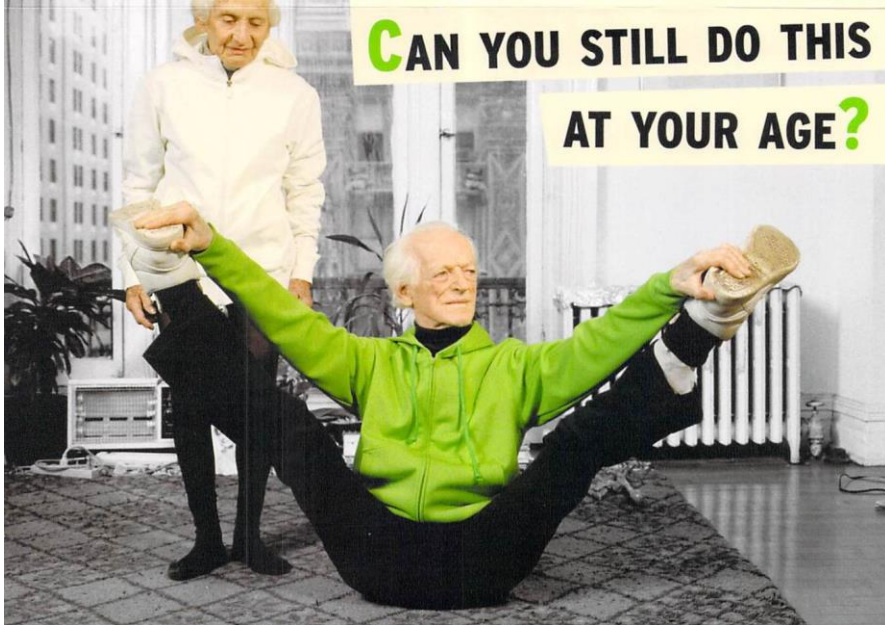
At 11 am we headed down. Weather was no problem – beautiful all day which was unusual among the daily electrical storms characterizing the summer monsoonal weather pattern that has already begun in Colorado.

The way down was obviously as rocky as the way up – but it always seems much longer on the descent with lots of leg action. Laura was having no problem after having summited Mt. Rainier a week earlier in a guided adventure. Shari, however, REALLY didn't like the rocks – which we had to listen to all the way down. But I turned a camera on her and got an immediate rare smile 😊



We got back to the car at 1:30 pm a 7 ½ hour climb with ½ hour at summit.

And for me, one of the most fun things to do on a birthday! Thank you Laura and Shari.
Card from Laura:



WITHOUT FARTING?

*- Not for sure about the farting but
I know you can climb a
mountain! Here is to many more
summits*

