

SUMMIT DAILY NEWS

Theron Welch: Learning to explore the Gore Range

Richard Chittick
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Sometime back in 1997, Theron Welch decided he needed to better organize his writings on his trips into the Gore Range.

That's when the software developer decided to use the World Wide Web.

Little did he know that six years later, his Web site would be the premier resource for the dramatic and beautiful mountain range that forms the western border between Summit and Eagle counties.

Welch works for the Microsoft Corporation in Bellevue, Wash., but he still has Colorado and Summit County in his heart.



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"I started documenting all of my trips into the Gore Range and eventually it just grew," Welch said.

Now living in a Seattle suburb, Welch misses the Gore Range and makes annual trips back to Colorado to continue exploring the range and Eagle's Nest Wilderness.

This summer he put together a four-day backpacking trip into the range, where he managed to hike the entire crest of the range, starting in Vail and heading north to the Pebble Creek drainage.

"I discovered these three sets of really big waterfalls," he said. "(They were) the largest I've found in the Gore, in an area which I don't think anybody ever goes to."

His favorite hike in the range is Dora Lake. Dora Lake sits on a high mountain plateau just a few miles from Green Mountain Reservoir. It was on this plateau that Welch finally found a vista he had been searching for for years.

"There was a view on a John Fielder calendar," Welch said. "That image was in the back of my head for three or four years. When I got to that lake, I found it and I just stood and stared in awe."

Welch has been actively mountaineering since his college days in Charleston, S.C., when a friend introduced him to hiking in the Appalachian Mountains.

After school, he moved around a bit and found himself in Westminster, a small suburb located halfway between Denver and Boulder. It was from there that he made his first trips to Summit County.

"Ninety-nine percent of my activity in Summit County was exploring the Gore Range," he said. He noted that he never had a strong interest in skiing or snowboarding.

"Once I got into the Gore Range, I knew I was hooked," he said.

Welch also is an avid musician, having played guitar for many years. Over the last three years, his growing passion has been to transcribe classical violin pieces to guitar. Several of these pieces are available on his web site.

His passion for mountains has continued to grow living in the Pacific Northwest, where he spends a great deal of time in the North Cascades, a mountain range that at first glance looks remarkably like the Gore Range, with jagged spires and long, narrow ridges. He has also climbed Mount Rainier, the most heavily glaciated mountain in the lower 48.

As far as Welch can figure, there are only two or three valleys left in the range he has never visited, and he hopes to be back to visit them soon.

"I like Seattle better than Denver," he said. "But I really do miss the Gore Range."

If you know of anyone who you think should be featured in Sports People, please contact Richard Chittick.

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