The year was 1974. Richard Nixon resigned the presidency in the wake of the Watergate scandal; Congress reduced the highway speed limit to 55 mph in response to a Middle East oil embargo; Hank Aaron beat Babe Ruth’s longstanding home run record; Barbra Streisand’s *The Way We Were* topped the pops charts; and the seed of an idea to create a long trail spanning the heart of Colorado’s Rocky Mountains took root.

Bringing the vision to fruition wasn’t easy. It took more than a dozen roller-coaster years and the perseverance of a hearty band of dreamers before The Colorado Trail was officially completed. Thanks to them and a small army of volunteers, this year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of one of the premier long-distance trails in the world.

An overblown description? Not if you ask the multitude of hikers, backpackers, mountain bikers, and trail riders who have come from all over the country, and globe, to enjoy the CT.


“Everybody knows the Appalachian Trail, and many people know the Pacific Crest Trail and Continental Divide Trail,” notes writer/photographer Steve Casimiro... “Lesser known, but equally spectacular is The Colorado Trail.”

Bill Lucas, then regional forester for the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service, and Merrill Hastings of Colorado Magazine are credited for first envisioning a “Rocky Mountain Trail” stretching between Denver and Durango. But the idea really gained its footing in 1974 when Gudy Gaskill, then chairwoman of the Colorado Mountain Club’s Huts and Trails Committee, was asked to lead the organizing effort.

Two years later, the Forest Service and Colorado Mountain Trails Foundation, predecessor of The Colorado Trail Foundation, signed a partnership agreement to build The Colorado Trail. By then, a route had been roughed out, connecting existing trail and forest roads with new trail to be built mostly by volunteer and Forest Service crews.

— continued on pp.7
Executive Director’s Update

On this 40th year anniversary of The Colorado Trail, I find it heartwarming to reflect on what has been accomplished by those who envisioned the Trail and by the hundreds of volunteers who labored to make the vision real. The results of all that hard work, "Miles for mile, the most beautiful Trail in America." We owe a tremendous thank you to everyone involved over these past four decades.

But 40 years is just a milestone, a time to look back with gratitude and forward to what comes next. It is this looking ahead— to the next 40 years and beyond—that most occupies the attention of The Colorado Trail Foundation. We’re always mindful of sustaining our mission to improve and maintain the Trail and of enlisting the support needed for success.

At the same time, the CTF is facing similar challenges as other nonprofits. With nonprofit organizations becoming more numerous, there is more competition for donor dollars, volunteers, and exposure in an increasingly electronic world. In other words, our Foundation life is getting more complex. To compete successfully, the CTF needs to maintain its focus on problem management and strategic decision-making. Continued vitality is not a given, as we saw a couple of years ago close to home, when a partner trail organization is not a given, as we saw a couple of years ago.

Part and parcel with this effort is our continued collaboration with the Forest Service and other agencies that oversee the public lands through which the CT passes. This requires maintaining good relations with regional foresters in Golden and rangers in 11 semi-autonomous districts across Colorado. In addition, at a time of tightening federal budgets, when work by groups like the CTF is needed more than ever, increased regulations make the job more difficult.

Keeping Trail users, donors, volunteers and other supporters informed has led us to change the way we communicate. An occasional Tread Lines newsletter is no longer enough. Now there is a website to maintain, e-mail blasts to send, and alerts and updates to post on social media, such as Facebook. That shift from print-and-ink communications will continue as we identify effective ways to save money and keep in step with our commitment to the environment.

Getting more young people involved in the CTF is a continual struggle. We know that thousands use, enjoy, love and praise the Trail. We hear from many of them. More than anything, their involvement will ensure the vitality of the Foundation.

That goes hand in hand with sustaining the level of volunteerism and donor support we’ve been so fortunate to have these past decades. We are dependent on all of you— those who turn the dirt, attend the mailing parties, dig into their pockets, help out in the office, and spread the word to others. Thanks to you all.

WooHoo!!
Bill Manning
Smartphone App Shows the Way

Now, Colorado Trail users, there’s an app for you. Colorado Trail Hiker is available for download on iTunes for iPhones and iPads and Google Play for Android phones and tablets. A demo of the app featuring Segment 1 of the CT (mile 0 at the Waterton Canyon Trailhead to mile 36.6) comes with the free download.

If you like what you see, you can purchase the entire route, including the five mountain bike detours around wilderness areas and the 92-mile Collegiate West alternative route, for $9.99. A standalone version of the Collegiate Loop is a 169 4-mile loop comprising the 82.3-mile Collegiate West alternative route and 78.1-mile Collegiate East portion of the trail, is available for $4.99.

The app was created through a partnership, including Paul Bodnar and Alize Bodnar at HighSierraAttitude.com who offer apps for most of America’s long-distance trails. Other partners are Ryan Linn of Guthook Hikes as well as longtime Colorado Trail Foundation board member Jerry Brown of Bear Creek Survey Service in Durango, who also is the author of The Colorado Trail and Collegiate Loop Map Books. A portion of sales of the app go to The Colorado Trail Foundation to help fund its mission of building and maintaining the Trail.

Snowpack Slows Early Starters

Every summer can be dicey for those with an itch to hit the Colorado Trail early. With a snowpack well above average across much of the state, hikers and bikers found the going rough along significant portions of the Trail in June and early July.

“As much as we warn thru-hikers to wait until late June at the earliest to start, there are always those eager to hit the trail well before then,” said Colorado Trail Foundation Executive Director Bill Manning. “Those who did run into heavier-than-normal snow depths that greatly slowed, if not halted, their progress.”

Some had to abandon or reroute around sections with deep snowpack. In late May, the CTF’s website and Facebook page noted that “Good Springtime condition updates can be found on early Summer,” Manning said, “but the dates vary as to when portions of the Trail become passable. Springtime condition updates can be found on the CTF Facebook page. Users with inflexible schedules should plan to start no earlier than July 1st.”

Colorado Trail Hiker uses a combination of your phone’s GPS and downloaded topo maps including The Colorado Trail Map Book to accurately locate your position on the trail. No phone service? No problem – your phone’s GPS pinpoints your position.

Waypoints from the Colorado Trail Map Book are presented on the Colorado Trail Hiker app, and each waypoint is clickable, opening to the waypoint’s detail page. Those details include: the waypoint’s mileage and elevation, photographs, distance to the next water source, and a Trail Register where you can post comments and read other users’ comments.

The types of waypoints include:
- Trailheads and parking areas
- Water sources
- Resupply towns and services
- Trail junctions
- Road crossings
- Power lines, fences, gates, and cables
- Other landmarks and points of interest

Through user input and a demo in Segments 20 and 21 they were forced to make “lengthy detours around hillside traverses covered in snow too deep for safe passage.”

Reports such as these enabled the CTF staff to warn others of the conditions potential users would face in those areas.

Fortunately, for the majority of thru-hikers and other users Segments 1-28 were declared open on July 1. “In the next couple of weeks you may still encounter some snow in Segments 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26,” a Facebook posting noted that day, “but CT users have characterized the snow sections as ‘passable,’ meaning not brutally exhausting or dangerous.”

It was different story along the new Collegiate West route, however, which was not declared completely passable until 10 days later. “Snowpack conditions impact CT users every year in late Spring and early Summer,” Manning said, “but the dates vary as to when portions of the Trail become passable.”

Springtime condition updates can be found on the CTF Facebook page. Users with inflexible schedules should plan to start no earlier than July 1st.”
In this 40th anniversary year of The Colorado Trail, we asked some longtime supporters to share some of their favorite memories.

GUDY GASKILL
"Mother of The Colorado Trail"

- She remembers sitting back at camp after a long trail crew day with a cup of tea reflecting on the day’s accomplishments while watching the evening shadows and marveling at the beauty of the Colorado high country.
- She laughs when recalling an incident involving an early version of a camp shower familiar now to all trail crew volunteers. A crew participant, a doctor, was showering when a helicopter landed nearby. The wind blast from the rotors obliterated the enclosure leaving the man standing alone – and completely exposed. He scrambled for his clothes, but they were gone as well. Everyone, including the doctor, laughed heartily afterward and the story was retold for years.
- Things were much more primitive for the early trail crews. They cooked over the coals of a campfire instead of propane stoves. Instead of porta-a-potties, crew leaders felled a tree to use as a latrine seat over a pit in the ground. Coolers then weren’t capable of maintaining a chill long enough, so a pit was dug and the cooler stored in the ground.

Crews had to dig it out each night to prepare dinner. Before tables became part of the kit, crews would cut or gather trees and branches to make their own tables for meal prep and cleanup.

- "Randy Jacobs, who dedicated 30 years of his life to the CT did many years of route-finding and wrote the first three editions of the guidebook. The publisher printed it for free. It was our biggest money raiser when funds were needed for our many summer crews."

TOM BROOKSHER
longtime trail crew volunteer

- "I first heard about the trail when someone gave me the John Fielder-John Fayhee book, Along the Colorado Trail, shortly after I moved to Colorado. I read every page and marveled at every picture. There was a mention in the forward that the Trail was maintained by volunteer work crews. As soon as my oldest son was old enough, I signed us up to work on one. It was a great father-son experience with both of my boys, and more recently a great father-daughter experience."
- "On our very first work crew there were three women, all from Arkansas and all over 65. They became grandmothers for the week to my then 15-year-old son, Andy. They were bridge players and each night after the campfire they would take Andy with them and move into the cook tent and teach him to play bridge by lantern light. At the end of the week as we were driving home I asked Andy what he enjoyed the most about trail crew work. He smiled and said, ‘the people.’ Sixteen summers of trail crews later I’d have to agree."
STEVE STALEY
Chairman of the CTF Board of Directors
and an Adopter since 1987

“One of my fondest Colorado Trail memories is of thru-hiking south to north, in the opposite direction as most others. Denver-bound, I met many more travelers than I would have otherwise. I talked to some 300 CT users about the Trail and the Foundation. Hearing their stories brought real joy.”

STEVE COMBS
a 27-year Adopter

“In 1987, as a group of us were searching for a peak to name in memory of a friend who passed away while attempting to climb Aconcagua, we happened on a section of The Colorado Trail on the shoulder of Mount Columbia. It just so happens that it was the year that the CT was accepting Adopters. We decided that caring for this section of trail would be a very suitable memorial for our friend Ron Davies. For the past 27 years, it also has been our pleasure to host work experiences with groups such as Save our Youth and Boys Scout troops.

“The biggest challenge we faced was the blow-down of 2012. After a harsh winter of heavy snows and extreme winds, we found portions of our trail not only impassable but unrecognizable due to the massive number of trees that had toppled. The Forest Service was not able to provide work crews or funds to help clear the trail, so we volunteers took the task on ourselves. During three weekend trips, with close to 50 volunteers contributing to the effort, we removed 300 trees, some as big as 3 feet in diameter. In spite of the daunting task and hard work, laughter was always our companion – a gift the trail always seems to afford.”

UTA MCDONALD
who with husband Merle worked on numerous trail crews

“I participated in many crews that Merle led, but one of them is especially unforgettable,” Uta recalls. “The work site was accessible only by four-wheel-drive vehicles, so Forest Service employees took the crew members in and dropped them off. “Our first full day at the work site, a Sunday, started out lovely, but in the afternoon the monsoon rains started and it rained without interruption until Thursday. “We tried to keep our tents and selves dry, which was impossible. The shepherd stove we had was burning at full blast all week, not only to keep us warm but also to dry clothes and boots. “The trip to the loo through high grass kept our boots soaked at all times.” The rain finally stopped on Thursday and a couple of Forest Service vehicles arrived to take the crew back to Durango. “As I helped Larry Johnson (of the Forest Service) collect the boxes we filled with unused canned food a mouse jumped up and tried to escape. I shrieked rather loudly and Larry said, ‘Uta, you disappoint me. I thought you were tougher than that.’”
Improving and moving trail along the 80-mile Collegiate West section of The Colorado Trail was a main focus this summer’s eight weeklong and three weekend trail crews. It’s an effort expected to continue for several years to come on the section of Continental Divide National Scenic Trail officially added to the CT in 2012.

And, as always, both volunteers and Trail users came away with a greater appreciation of what it takes to make the CT the high-country gem it is today.

“A couple of things I learned are that trail work is hard work, and that good and long-lasting trails are made, not found,” reported Sandra Butler after her crew week in late July. “But the most important lesson I learned from my experience was how easy it is to work in a team that is motivated and enthusiastic.”

Here’s what our wonderful crews did this year:

**Crew 0114, June 21-28, Sargents Mesa.** Leaders John and Betsy Sylvester and 15 crew members rehabbed about 6,600 feet of trail, including removing several trees and installing 10 2-foot-wide water bars and 15 3-foot-wide water diversions.

**Crew 0214, July 12-19, Tincup Pass Road.** Bill Carpenter and a crew of 19 “hardened” more than 8,500 feet of the Collegiate West. Work included cleaning out and improving 13 switchbacks and installing 30 drains, graded dips and knicks.

**Crew 0314, July 19-26, Clear Creek.** Steve Stadler and his crew of 15 worked on three-quarters of a mile of tread in Segment 12 up the hill south of Clear Creek on the CT Collegiate East, building 14 drains, 16 knicks, and 56 rolling dips. They also relocated 600 feet of tread in areas where water diversion was not possible.

**Crew 0414, July 19-26, Tunred Gulch.** Loren Woods led this backpack crew of 10 in rehabbing 1.7 miles of single-track along the Collegiate West. Work included installing 40 check steps, building 39 rolling dips, improving nine creek crossings, removing trees, and widening nearly 2,100 feet of tread.

**Crew 0514, July 26-Aug. 2, Clear Creek.** Bill Carpenter and a team of 16 upgraded trail south of the Clear Creek bridge on the Collegiate East route. Some 4,800 feet of trail was improved and 23 rolling grade dips and three knicks installed. Nine large trees were also removed from across the Trail.

**Crew 0614, Aug. 2-9, Middle Fork.** Leaders Tom Brooksher and Scott Smith and Laura Brzezinski-Smith and a crew of 25 finished building 775 feet of new trail and tough-cut 560 feet more near the Boss Lake Trailhead to move more of the Collegiate West trail off road.

**Crew 0714, Aug. 9-16, Middle Fork.** Glenn Kepler and his crew of 25 built 500 feet of new trail near the Boss Lake Trailhead. The construction was part of a project started by Crew 0614 to move more of the Collegiate West trail off road.

**Crew WE1, June 15, South Platte River.** This one-day crew of 23 led by Loren Woods cut in drains above and below six switchbacks just west of the Gudy Gaskill Bridge. They also installed five other drainage features and repaired 70 feet of tread through a slide area.

**Crew WE2, June 20-23, Winfield.** Cindy Johnson and her all-woman crew of 19 repaired a water-damaged section on the “New 80” near the historic ghost town of Winfield.

**Crew WE3, July 11-13, Arapaho Trailhead.** Led by Paul Smith, this weekend crew of seven refurbished the Trail in and near the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness where it approaches the saddle of Mount Yale and removed obstructions to resuscitate the natural stream flow and trail crossing.

As they have for the past several years, a crew from Douglas County’s Daniel C. Oakes High School spent a week in June working on the CT. Teacher and crew leader Kelley Garth and her crew of 14 students accomplished more than 9,000 feet of trail, cleaning out overgrowth, removing rocks, installing 20 water bars, and rerouting 160 feet of tread.

“We met bikers and bikers every day we were working and every one of them was super appreciative of our effort,” said Butler, who thru-hiked the CT in 2007. “That’s what makes trail building so satisfying: knowing that more people can use the trail as a result of our work since it is accessible to all, including beginners.”

**LIMERICK FROM THE LADIES**

There once were some ladies from Colorado
Who ate salad with tomatoes and avocado
They worked without fail
On The Colorado Trail
After you see it you can only say ‘Bravo!’

— Suzy Burger
member of Cindy Johnson’s 2014 all-woman trail crew
FOUR DECADES — continued from front page

In the beginning, enthusiasm for the project was high. The Gates Foundation provided $100,000 to seed money and other foundations and groups pitched in as well. The Colorado Mountain Trails Foundation was established, an office was opened, staff was hired, and volunteers recruited — many, like Gaskill, from the Colorado Mountain Club rolls.

By building on existing trail systems, organizers believed they could complete the Trail as early as 1978. 1980 at the latest. It was not to be. Due to a variety of factors, intense budget, program stalled, money ran out, and the Colorado Mountain Trails Foundation board stepped down.

By 1984, an article by Ed Quillen in the Denver Post’s Explorer Magazine, referred to the project as “The Trail to Nowhere.” After describing the problems that had dogged trail builders, he noted that “If ever in a Colorado Trail, it will likely be because Gudy Gaskill hasn’t given up.”

Often working on pure guts alone, she and a group of loyal associates righted the ship, uniting volunteer trail crews over the next three years to complete unfinished sections.

“In the ’70s the Forest Service was a man’s world,” Gudy recalled those many years later. “There were no women employees except for office workers. Several of the many district foresters wanted nothing to do with a woman let alone have her intrude on their territory. It was the cause of many tears. But I am focused and know what I stand.”

“One year, pushing to connect the trail, we had 32 weeklong trail crews,” she said. “We received free food from a number of wholesale companies. I visited each camp every week, linking in the mornings, staying for a day or two, and driving at night to the next crew. We completed 12 miles of trail that summer. The work was hard, but the mind, body and spirit were in top shape.”

For her tireless work to make The Trail a reality, Gaskill has been deservedly dubbed “The Mother of The Colorado Trail.”

On Sept. 4, 1987, “golden spike” ceremonies were held at Molas Pass, Camp Hale and Mount Princeton to commemorate the linking of The Colorado Trail from Denver to Durango. That same year, the nonprofit Colorado Trail Foundation was established, with Gaskill as its first president, to oversee the continued improvement and upkeep of The Trail.

In 1988, Gaskill led the first supported trek along the new trail, which ended on July 23 with a dedications ceremony in Durango. A day later, a similar ceremony was held at Waterton Canyon, the Trail’s eastern terminus south of Denver.

A decade later, when Gaskill served as CTF president, the Foundation established the Gudy Gaskill Endowment Fund to ensure the Trail would be maintained in perpetuity.

Today, The Colorado Trail Foundation is in strong financial shape to ensure The Trail was maintained in perpetuity. Today, The Colorado Trail Foundation is in strong financial shape with an active board of directors that oversee all aspects of The Trail from maintenance to rerouting to trail crew and trekking programs.

A full-time staff of two – Executive Director Bill Manning and Director of Administrative Operations Alma O’Malley – handle the daily operations, interacting with hundreds of volunteers and Trail users each year from their office at the American MountainCLub tent as if it was a deluxe motel.”

Manning marvels at the group’s 40-year history and says, “We’re grateful to everyone who has helped shape this wonderful trail. Mindful of the challenges ahead in the next 40 years, including meeting the trail off of roads and monetized zones, we hope our CT Friends will continue volunteering, donating and enlisting others to preserve, “Mile for mile the most beautiful Trail in America.”

Notes and Quotes:

“The Colorado Trail provided much more than a physical and mental challenge that taxed my ability to push through pain and sometimes loneliness and boredom; it also gave me a chance to explore some of the most remote places in the state and get to know Colorado a little more intimately. I also came across some of the most generous people I have ever met traveling. I have never been given so much assistance, gifts, and hookups in such a short amount of time without ever really looking for them. Whenever I turned, there was a hand there to help me in a variety of forms and fashions. It makes me proud to call this beautiful state my home.”

– Rori “Quinna” Hannah, Fort Collins, Colo.

Crew & Traveler Serendipity

Common on trail crews but always fresh and fun, leaders John and Betsy Sylvester report that’s long distance hikers joined them on their crew in June. “They were northbound CDT hikers traveling light,” according to John. “We all had fun eating dinner together and they stayed overnight in the community tent as if it was a deli site meal.”

“We had a slew of visitors,” reports trail crew leader Steve Stadler, who led a crew in late July at Clear Creek. “We must have had at least 60 thru and segment hikers stop by the camp over the week. We fed them and some stayed the night with us, having both dinner and breakfast. We even had a couple spend the night with us who were honeymooning on the Trail.”

“We encouraged everyone to come join us in crew work after they finished the trail,” Stadler says. “What better way to recruit new friends of the CT?”
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We hope you think of the CTF when you do.