Gudy Gaskill: Newspapers pay tribute

Newspapers from one end of The Colorado Trail to the other paid tribute to Gudy Gaskill after her passing in July. Here are excerpts from the Denver Post and Durango Herald.

“Hikers along the 567-mile Colorado Trail cross the South Platte River a few miles from metro Denver on a bridge named for Gudy Gaskill, after the spirited woman who spearheaded the creation of our state’s longest foot-and-bike path. ‘A force of nature,’ Gov. John Hickenlooper tweeted after learning that Gaskill had died this month at age 89. But in a sense, Gaskill still lives along the trail connecting Denver and Durango.

“Many hikers know of her even before crossing that first bridge: In The Colorado Trail guidebook, each chapter begins with Gudy’s Tips, such as what turn will lead to an exceptionally great view.

“She could have written tips for life, too, such as the importance of vision: For three decades, she rallied supporters, negotiated with federal agencies and managed an army of volunteers to build the route the U.S. Forest Service calls Trail No. 1776. …

“Just a few miles from the trail’s southern end, weary hikers can sit on a bench overlooking the last views before trekking to Durango. The bench, called Gudy’s Rest, represents a welcomed reprieve after hundreds of miles of sweat and worn boot leather.

“The body that housed Gaskill’s indomitable spirit deserves its well-earned rest, even as thousands of people who love the outdoors still follow — literally — in her footsteps.” — Denver Post editorial

“Gudrun Timmerhaus Gaskill was known as the ‘Mother of the Colorado Trail,’ but that title almost fails to describe the depth of her relationship to the scenic route that connects Denver to Durango, a distance just shy of 500 miles. — Continued on page 6

A Banner Year for Trail Use

How many people use The Colorado Trail?
It’s a good question – with no easy answer.

It’s no great leap to say that hundreds of people begin thru-hikes or rides each year and that thousands more enjoy everything from day outings to multiday trips on the Trail. But with no sign-in procedure for Trail users and no one at the trailheads keeping count, The Colorado Trail Foundation can only estimate the numbers based on anecdotal information.

But all indications are that Trail use is booming.

One of our best gauges is the number of people who apply for completer certificates each year. Based on that, 2016 has been a banner year for the Trail, which has seen a dramatic increase even from 2015, which was a good year itself. — Continued on page 7
Executive Director’s Update

It’s hard to imagine finding anyone with more enthusiasm for the job than Brent, who left a career in civil engineering in Cortez to join the CTF staff. In addition to coordinating all of our trail crews and overseeing some 80 Trail Adopters – individuals and groups who perform annual maintenance on their adopted sections – he also serves as a liaison between the CTF office and federal land managers.

Adams and his wife, Anne Engler, a veteran trail builder herself, have relocated to the Salida area to oversee construction of the FOC on a site near the midpoint of the CT purchased in 2015. A preliminary design of the FOC has been completed. It consists of two buildings: a 1,600-square-foot, heated maintenance shop and office and a 2,000-square-foot, unheated structure to store the organization’s eight trail crew equipment trailers.

When completed, the FOC will enable the CTF for the first time to store all of its equipment in one location out of the weather. That not only will increase efficiency in getting equipment to and from trail crew sites, but it also will protect it from the degrading effects of weather exposure and make it easier to repair and maintain. That, in turn, will save the Foundation money that can go to meet other CTF needs.

The entire facility (land, buildings and fenced-in yard) is expected to cost $400,000. Part of the funding will come from the CTF strategic reserve and other assets. The rest, we hope, will be covered by our recently launched FOC funding campaign.

Keep reading this column, our upcoming mailings, and Facebook posts to follow our progress.

WooHoo!

Bill Manning

CTF Welcomes New Office Manager

Boston’s loss has become The Colorado Trail Foundation’s gain. Amy Nelson, who moved to Colorado from Massachusetts in March, has joined Executive Director Bill Manning in our Golden office as office manager. She takes over for Victoria Klinger, who moved with her husband to Grand Junction in May.

Prior to her move, Amy had worked for eight years at The Bostonian Society, a nonprofit organization focused on historic preservation in the city. Most recently, she was the society’s administration manager and finance assistant, honing skills that mesh well with her new role at the CTF.

Also serving her well in new job is her experience at being “the first smiling face greeting all visitors, including board members, donors, politicians, and researchers, to our administrative offices.”

“I really like the people I’ve met so far,” Amy said of her first few weeks on the job, “as well as the great variety of tasks in the CTF office.”
Eighteen crews took to the field this summer, building new trail and rehabbing old up and down The Colorado Trail. Crews included seven ranging from one to three days in addition to the traditional seven- and eight-day crews. Field Operations Manager Brent Adams said the CTF will continue to offer the shorter volunteer opportunities for those who want to pitch in but are unable to commit to the longer multiday crews.

The entire Colorado Trail family mourned the loss this spring of John Sylvester, who was scheduled to lead a crew with his wife, Betsy, at Molas Pass in August. John died tragically in an accident at their home in Sedalia in April. Betsy went ahead and led the crew in his memory.

Here is a roundup of the work accomplished this year:

**Crew 0116, May 21-22, Morrison Creek (Segment 3).** Leader Cindy Johnson and 26 crew members completed preparations for a half-mile reroute in the Buffalo Creek Recreation Area. Work included removing trees along the corridor and dispersing debris from around the new route.

**Crew 0216, June 4-11, Morrison Creek (Segment 3).** Glenn Kepler and his crew picked up where Crew 0116 left off, completing the half-mile reroute to replace a heavily rutted stretch with poor drainage.

**Crew 0316, June 11-18, Junction Creek (Segment 28).** Tom Brookshier and 23 crew members renovated a highly eroded switchback and rehabbed a second. In addition, a half-mile of tread was rehabbed, including back sloping, removing hazards, and building new rolling dips.

**Crew 0416, June 18-25, Middle Fork (Collegiate West CW05).** Scott Smith and Laura Brieser-Smith and 15 crew members completed 900 feet of new trail. Work included building five climbing turns. The last 40 feet or so of trail was built in a rocky slope, requiring a 7-foot wall and a set of three stone steps.

**Crew 0516, June 18, Horseshoe Gulch (Segment 6).** Brent Adams and 27 crew members built or cleaned approximately 90 drainage structures, filled in 20 feet of rutted tread, and reset a sign along a two-mile section.

**Crew 0616, June 24-26, Winfield (Collegiate West CW02).** Cindy Johnson’s all-woman crew cut back encroaching plants alongside 3 miles and reestablished 300 yards of tread on one of the newer Collegiate West single-tracks.

**Crew 0716, June 25-July 2, Middle Fork (Collegiate West CW05).** Bill Carpenter and 13 crew members continued building new trail, moving it off road near the Boss Lake Trailhead.

**Crew 0816, June 26-July 2, South Clear Creek (Collegiate West CW02).** Cindy Johnson, leader, and 19 crew members eliminated braiding, established a short reroute around a bog, and built 3 rock-and-earth turnpikes to keep users out of the muck.

**Crew 0916, July 2-8, La Garita (Segment 21).** Crew participant Dan Cohen took over as leader when Loren Woods hurt his back and had to exit. Dan and seven crew members cleared more than five miles of trail corridor near San Luis Pass. They also repaired trail braiding and erosion, cleared two trees, built 17 check dams and diversions, and filled in abandoned trail with rip-rap.

“I HAD A WONDERFUL TIME helping out on (Crew 0116). It sure was an eye-opener to the reality of how much work it actually takes to build and maintain the CT. I thru-hiked last summer and it never crossed my mind during those five weeks about how many hours and volunteers it took to allow me the pleasure of a long, stress-free vacation. That why I’m glad I joined this trail crew and I can guarantee you’ll see me back on another trail crew soon.” — Randy Dalton Oklahoma

“Continued on page 7"
Mention the name “Gudy” in Colorado outdoor circles and people immediately knew who you were talking about. There was only one Gudy, and the impact she had on her adopted state can be measured by the thousands of people from around the world who have followed in her footsteps on The Colorado Trail and elsewhere in Colorado’s backcountry.

Gudy Timmerhaus Gaskill has been described by many who knew her as a “force of nature.” It was no exaggeration. It was a “force” that continued pushing forward until just days before she died on July 14 at age 89 from stroke complications. Her passing was noted from one end of the state to the other.

Her chief legacy — outside her family, of course — is The Colorado Trail, which she and a small band of supporters rescued and revived after initial efforts to create a cross-state trail languished for years. She simply would not give up, and the moniker she was later given, “Mother of The Colorado Trail,” was well earned.

Gudy was around in 1974 when the idea for The Colorado Trail gained footing. Then chairwoman of the Colorado Mountain Club’s Huts and Trails Committee, she 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 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.

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, interest flagged, progress stalled, money ran out, and the Colorado Mountain Trails Foundation board stopped meeting.

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

Often working on pure grit alone, she and a few others righted the ship, sending out volunteer trail crews over the next three years to complete unfinished sections.

“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, hiking in in the mornings, staying for a day or two, and driving at night to the next crew. We completed 32 miles of trail that summer. The work was hard, but the mind, body and spirit were in top shape.”

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 Gudy as its first president, to oversee the continued improvement and upkeep of the Trail. She continued as an active member of the board of directors until her death.

Today, thanks in no small part to Gudy, The Colorado Trail Foundation is strong, overseeing all aspects of the Trail from maintenance to rerouting to trail crew and trekking programs. Over the years, Gudy received numerous honors. She was recognized by President Ronald Reagan’s Take Pride in America Campaign and President H.W. Bush’s Thousand Points of Light program. She was inducted into the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame in 2002.

Executive Director Bill Manning marvels at the tremendous legacy left by Gudy and the many beneficiaries. “Countless outdoor enthusiasts enjoy The Colorado Trail as they hike, bike or ride horses along it,” he said. “Others volunteer as trail stewards and many contribute to sustain the legacy. Gudy’s bright smile and determined spirit remains with us.”

Gudy is survived by her husband, Dave; children Robin, Steven, Craig and Polly; and eight grandchildren. Her family has requested that donations in her memory be made to The Colorado Trail Foundation to support the Trail maintenance.
When word of Gudy Gaskill’s death got out, scores of people who knew or admired her responded to the news in e-mails and Facebook posts. Here is a sampling of those comments:

“Beyond the shadow of a doubt, Gudy made a difference for us all, and those to follow. I raise a cup of tea to her, her life, her accomplishments, her spirit, her grit, and everything she taught us about giving and giving back. I cherish every moment spent with her, and will miss her, but am confident in the legacy she leaves behind. Happy Trails Gudy, until we meet again.”
— JULIE MEISDALE

“How fortunate we all are to have known Gudy and shared her love of The Colorado Trail! Thanks, Gudy, for being such an inspiration.”
— GLENN KEPLER, longtime trail crew leader

“Some insist they leave a campsite better than they found it. Some come along, see a need, and will not walk around it. Today, consider Gudy’s imprint along The Colorado Trail. We could not have done better, because she would not fail. If indeed ‘we are what we leave behind,’ look at the record and see ‘one of a kind.’”
— KEN E. STAGNER

“A woman of strength, tenacity and vision. I will miss her perspectives and her stories. I feel privileged to have known her.”
— STEVE STADLER, CTF Board Member

“Gudy had a HUGE impact on many people. She certainly was one of kind. She could build trail all day and still have the energy to climb a peak in the evening.”
— MARK SCHMALZ

“After leaving camp one day to pick mushrooms and other wild things, Gudy made mushroom soup and salad from her pickings. Being naive, I asked, “Will this make me sick?” She replied, “Let me know.” Gudy invited me out for an entire summer of crews in 1987 and I was never the same after that. She inspired me and countless others. Thank you for your light, Gudy. It is still so bright in my heart.”
— MARK SANTA-MARIA
GUIDEBOOKS
Get You Where You Want to Go

The Colorado Trail Foundation’s Official Guidebook, Databook and Map Book are all new this year, and for the first time ever they all contain the same updated information. No surprise then that they are flying off the shelves. At the CT Store alone, over 500 Guidebooks have sold in less than 3 months.

In the past, the books have been updated in different years and often contained different information as trail sections were rerouted and the mapping refined. With this year’s publication of the Sixth Edition of the Databook and the Ninth Edition of the Official Guidebook those discrepancies have been resolved. Executive Director Bill Manning spearheaded the effort which took several months of intensive work.

Of particular interest to Official Guidebook buyers is the inclusion of the 80-mile Collegiate West section of the Trail, which was added in 2012. Prior to this year, hikers had to rely on the Databook and Map Book for information on that part of the CT.

Surveyor Jerry Brown of Durango, a longtime CTF volunteer and member of the Board of Directors, is the editor of the Map Book and the more recently published Collegiate Loop Map Book, which focuses on the 160-mile loop trail created by the Collegiate East and Collegiate West segments of The Colorado Trail.

Manning offered special praise for Brown, who has donated the proceeds from the Map Books, amounting to thousands of dollars, to the Foundation. Approximately 350 of the Map Books and 135 of the Collegiate Loop books were sold in the first six months of 2016. “It has been a huge help to the CTF,” Manning said.

All of the books are available at the CTF’s online store at ColoradoTrail.org. They can be purchased individually or in combination with the other guidebooks.

Gudy Gaskill: Newspapers pay tribute (continued from pp.1)

An active member of the Colorado Mountain Club, she was at the meeting held in 1973 when the trail was proposed. It was an ambitious plan; conceived as part of the state’s bicentennial celebrations. The organizers thought the project could be completed by 1978. But red tape and lack of funds nearly killed it before the first miles of trail had been built.

“Gaskill refused to let the idea die. She drew the route, linking existing trails and old mining and logging roads with sections of new trail. She nursed it along, recruiting support for the project and volunteers despite flagging interest and funding, in effect, performing CPR on the project when it looked like it might fail. …

“The completed trail was dedicated on July 23, 1988, thanks to an army of volunteers and the hands-on, full-time efforts of Gaskill, who, by the way, was raising four children and running a real estate business in addition to guiding her wayward, adoptive ward. …

Until 2009, Gaskill spent many summers close to Durango, conducting classes for adults and children and leading hikes from The Colorado Trail Foundation’s rustic cabin on the Lake City side of Cinnamon Pass. On a typical day, she was up before dawn preparing food and organizing class supplies. It was no summer vacation: She hauled water from the nearby stream. She seemed to draw her energy – and longevity – directly from the mountains themselves.” — Durango Herald
A Banner Year ... (continued from pp.1)

By the end of August, the CTF office had received 230 completer applications. That’s the same number it received for all of 2015. If this trend continues, “we might see somewhere around 350 completers for the entire year, a jump of about 50 percent over the previous Trail season,” said Executive Director Bill Manning.

By comparison, there were 13 known completers in 1988, the year after the CT was officially connected end-to-end.

Other long trails in the U.S., such as the Appalachian, Pacific Crest and Continental Divide trails, are experiencing the same kind of growth in user numbers. Part of the increase is likely due to two recent movies, “Wild” and “A Walk in the Woods” (based on books of the same name), that have built awareness about long-distance hiking.

Another driving force is social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, where people share their fun times and photos from the CT and other trails. Prominent among those are Facebook pages established by Colorado Trail thru-hikers, who trade tips, information and experiences.

“Postings this year have been wildly complimentary of the Trail,” Manning reported. “It’s a real tribute to all the work our volunteers do.”

18 Crews Fan Out ... (continued from pp.3)

Crew 1016, July 9, Flume Creek (Collegiate West CW01). Laura Brieser-Smith and Scott Smith and 26 crew members replaced planks on a bridge crossing of Flume Creek, added approaches to both sides of the bridge, created several drainages in a spring flow area, reconditioned about 30 feet of a turnpike, and installed a directional sign.

Crew 1116, July 15-17, South Cottonwood Creek (Segment 13). John and Elayna Lipe and 31 crew members rebuilt approaches to bridges on Middle and South Cottonwood creeks, replaced a kiosk and two posts at the Avalanche Trailhead, and rebuilt a horse crossing and rerouted 380 feet of trail along South Cottonwood Creek.

Crew 1216, July 16-22, Hancock (Collegiate West CW04). Glenn Kepler and his crew built new trail above the old railroad grade near the ghost town of Hancock, moving the trail off of a 4-wheel-drive road.

Crew 1316, July 23-30, Searle Pass (Segment 8). Paul Smith and nine crew members performed maintenance on about two miles of trail from Searle Pass toward Kokomo Pass, primarily addressing trenching and trail braiding. It was a continuation of work started last year from Kokomo Pass.

Crew 1416, July 31-Aug. 6, Hancock (Collegiate West CW04). Bill Carpenter and his crew constructed 845 feet of new trail, built a stream crossing and removed a rock outcropping that extended onto the Trail.

Crew 1516, Aug. 6, Morrison Creek (Segment 3). Laura Brieser-Smith and Scott Smith and 20 crew members added two 30-foot segments to complete a half-mile of new trail built by previous crews. They also added new drainage features and closed the old section of trail.

Crew 1616, Aug. 13-20, Molas Pass (Segment 25). Betsy Sylvester and her crew realigned about 0.7 mile of trail to replace an eroding section above Molas Pass.

Crew 1716, Aug. 25-28, Maxwell Creek (Segment 13). Paul Smith and his crew rebuilt two failing retaining walls and repaired two primitive bridges.

Crew 1816, Sept. 24, Kenosha Pass (Segment 5). Brent Adams, Cindy Johnson and crew marked National Public Lands Day by building new drainage features and cleaned existing ones on the Trail east of Kenosha Pass.
With plans moving forward on construction of a Field Operations Center in Poncha Springs, fund-raising efforts also have been stepped up to cover the expected $400,000 in costs. (See Executive Director Bill Manning’s column on Page 2.) The CTF thanks all those who already have contributed to this special drive.

At the same time, the Foundation is encouraging supporters to continue contributing in any way possible to help us carry on our ongoing mission of maintaining and improving the Trail.

There are many ways to do that in addition to responding to our mailings. Here are the most popular:

**DONATE ONLINE:** Donate online: You can donate online on the ColoradoTrail.org website. Simply click the “Donate Now” button on the left side of the home page to give via a credit card or PayPal. Better yet . . .

**MAKE A RECURRING GIFT:** You can do this by checking the box on the donation page to “Make This Recurring (Monthly).” Many donors find that giving $10, $15, $20, or more in a regular monthly withdrawal is a much more convenient way to give.

**COLORADO GIVES DAY:** A program of the Community First Foundation, Colorado Gives Day, held in December each year, is aimed at increasing contributions to more than 1,600 nonprofit organizations in the state. Watch for CTF e-mails or check on Facebook for the date of this year’s event. For more information, go to ColoradoGives.org.

**AMAZONSMILE:** Through its AmazonSmile philanthropic program, Amazon contributes a half percent of eligible purchases to the buyer’s designated charity. Go to Smile.Amazon.com when buying through Amazon and select The Colorado Trail Foundation as your designated charity.

**CT STORE:** Purchase any of the Trail-related items — maps, guidebooks, clothing, tools and commemoratives — from the CTF’s online store and the profits from the sale goes to the Foundation. You can access the store through the ColoradoTrail.org home page.

**LEGACY GIVING:** Help ensure that the Trail will be here for future generations by including The Colorado Trail Foundation in your will or living trust. Your financial advisor, attorney or accountant can help you set up a charitable gift to the Foundation in the form of cash, stocks, bonds, or from proceeds of insurance policies or the sale of property. You can also designate the CTF as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA or pension plan.