Dear Friends,

The purpose of this Holiday Letter is to offer Friends of The Colorado Trail a special thanks and recognition for their part in helping maintain and improve The Trail. Without the continuing help of all of the Friends and Volunteers, The Colorado Trail soon would fall into disrepair and soon cease to exist. I thank each and every one of you for your support that makes The CT possible.

This past summer we fielded 17 week-long crews and two weekend crews. One crew week was essentially lost as a result of the Hi Meadows forest fire. But the remaining two South Platte reroute crews plus the hastily organized weekend crews got within 660 feet of completing the two miles of reroute. The five Copper Mountain crews completed the first half of the four-mile long reroute there. The Tiger Run crew completed the reroute around the Tiger Run resort except for the two bridges that the county will supply. The Cache Creek reroute was finally opened between Twin Lakes and clear Creek after 14 years of effort. Phil Smith's crew's provided three of Trail maintenance in the Leadville and Saguache Ranger Districts. Ted LaMay and Ken Marshall each lead a week on trail maintenance in the Bolam Pass area. Gudy's crew increased the length of the bridge across an ever-growing beaver pond near Tennessee Pass. Finally our GPS mapping crew finished mapping The CT and a CD of that data is being produced. A rewrite of The CT guidebook was completed and is now at the printers. As you can see we had a busy summer.

For the summer of 2001 we are planning for 18 week-long crews and three weekend crews. In addition we are doubling the number of Trek spaces available, which will include the possibility of a complete Denver to Durango trek in one summer. We will also be offering four education weeks, under Gudy's supervision, at our education facility between 14ers Handies and Redcloud. So as you can see we have plenty of work lined out. Now we need you to come out and spend a week having fun in the mountains with a great group of people!

Have a happy holiday and thank all of you again for all of your effort on behalf of The Colorado Trail Foundation. I hope to see you on The Trail next summer.

Merle McDonald, President
The Colorado Trail Foundation
A letter from Gudy

Merry Christmas!
One day as I was walking near Hermosa Peak, I encountered a group of Native Americans driving towards me in an overloaded pick-up. When they came abreast of me, they stopped and asked me if I knew the countryside. I asked them what particular area they were looking for and they answered Hermosa Peak. It's straight ahead of you, but you'll have to park and walk the next half mile or so. And the lake? They asked. I knew nothing about a lake and told them that as far as I knew, there was no lake close by. It was late and in the course of the conversation I invited them into our camp for a cup of coffee while they set up camp. They came over after we had finished supper and relaxed by the firelight. The lake they were looking for came out of an old Ute tale about a brave who got lost and ended up camping on the shore of the lake. The brave claimed to have seen a herd of white ghost elk swimming under the waters of the lake at night. He also heard the sound of a bell, a bell that was around the neck of a huge bull elk that was leading the herd. The brave was so terrified by the spectacle, that he lost his mind. Others must have believed this story, because according to legend, a superstition grew up among the Indians and they avoided Hermosa Peak, which had been one of their sacred peaks. There was a special magic in the story and the lake. Years later I heard a song by Gary Smith that told the tale of the ghost herd. It went like this:

If you hear the bell a ringin'  
Before the full moon breaks,  
Then you'll know that they are comin'  
The Ghost Herd of Spirit Lake.

Beneath the snow capped San Juan peaks,  
There rode an Indian alone.  
He came to the shore of a lonely lake  
Far from his lodge at home.

Well he made his under sheltering pines  
And built afire so bright.  
Then the fire went out with a flicker and a hiss'  
And up rolled the ragged brown night.

Well the moon came creeping behind the trees'  
And a cold wind started to moan.  
Then he heard the sound of a ghostly bell  
With a soft and muffled tone.

The bell grew louder and the wind grew still,  
And a wolf screaming into the night.  
He whirled and stared into the lake  
And then he saw a light.

A moving herd of pale white elk  
Was beneath the waters swell.  
They were led in front by a mighty bull  
And around his neck hung a bell.

They moved through the water without a sound  
Save for a ghostly bell.  
He was frozen with fear as the herd drew near  
Then to the ground he fell.

As the sun hit high on the San Juan Peaks  
He awoke from a fitful dream.  
Then he fled from the place on bleeding feet  
And as he ran he screamed.

When his tribesmen found him runnin' wild  
He was like a man half crazed  
And to this day they skirt that place  
Known as Spirit Lake at Hermosa Peak.
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GUDY GASKELL
ENDOWMENT FUND

MARCI & VERNON BRETT
ROBERT J. FRIEUF
CLAIR B. GAMBLE
GUDY GASKELL
ROBT. & RUTH HESS
DORIS HUTSON
ALICE L. KRUSE
MARIYNN MALITO
JIM MYTON
LAVERNE & LORANELL NELSON
DAVID NEVIN
PAUL & HARRIET ROSEN
DAVID & MAXINE TRIPP

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS
(Education Facility, Computer, Signage, S.P. River Bridge)

MARGE BURGESS
GUDY GASKELL
LINDSAY MACMILLAN
RICHARD NOLDE
GENE RUSH
ROBERT & JANE WILLIAMS
MATCHING FUNDS

BP AMOCO FOUNDATION
OPPENHEIMER FUNDS INC.
US WEST FOUNDATION

WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY OMISSION OR ERROR. PLEASE CONTACT THE CTF OFFICE IF WE MISSED YOUR NAME.
THE COLORADO TRAIL

How can I explain such beauty to you....
A place that opens your heart and touches your soul.
This is a beauty that takes a lifetime to grow.