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500 Miles

Denver to Durango



Paula Guerrein,

**Sad News
Gudy Gaskill,
Mother of The Colorado Trail,
has died at age 89.**



PHOTO BY ERIC WUNROW

The Gaskill Family
is planning
a private memorial.

**Gudy
Encouraged
Donating
to
The Colorado Trail
Foundation**

Continue her giving spirit
and honor her legacy.

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Gudy Timmerhaus Gaskill died on July 14, 2016 from stroke complications. Until her stroke just days before she passed, she was very active including with The Colorado Trail Foundation as President Emeritus.

Gudy is credited with being the Mother of The Colorado Trail, now 567 miles between Denver and Durango.

The idea for The Colorado Trail 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.

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."

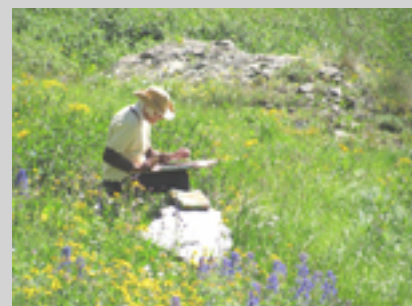
Often working on pure grit alone, she and a group of loyal associates righted the ship, sending out volunteer trail crews over the next three years to complete unfinished sections.

"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." 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 dedication ceremony in Durango. A day later, a similar ceremony was held at Waterton Canyon, the Trail's eastern terminus south of Denver.

Today, thanks in no small part to Gudy, the Colorado Trail Foundation is strong with an active board of directors that oversees all aspects of the Trail from maintenance to rerouting to trail crew and trekking programs. A full-time staff of three – Executive Director Bill Manning, Office Manager Amy Nelson and Field Operations Manager Brent



Adams – handle the daily operations, interacting with hundreds of volunteers and Trail users each year from their office at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden.

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

Gudy encouraged making a donation to The Colorado Trail Foundation, www.ColoradoTrail.org.

[Obituary in The Denver Post](#)



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