

Gudy Gaskill, "Mother of the Colorado Trail,"

*Fear less, hope more; eat less, chew more;
Whine less, breathe more; talk less, say more;
Love more and all good things will be yours.*

Swedish proverb sent by Gudy to her great friend Nora

It is with great sadness we must tell you that Gudy Gaskill died peacefully Thursday, July 14 at age 89, following a stroke about a week ago. Though Gudy had some health issues during the past two years, she most certainly never let them get in the way of the life style and activities she loved, embraced, and shared with so many of us. Our loss is immense, as will be that of the wide community she embraced.

She remained alive and vibrant, living independently and fully to the end of her days. Just two weeks before her death from a stroke she had driven with family to Flagstaff, Arizona to attend the wedding of one of her granddaughters.

Gudy Gaskill was outstanding in every way. She was the best mother we children could have ever had, who along with Dave, taught us to love wandering in the mountains, the beauty of wildflowers, the chill of a waterfall shower. She was a painter, sculpture, artist and always a leader. She was a leader who we all followed because she inspired everyone she met. As we were growing up she kept us continually engaged. She started a 4-H program in the Lookout area and taught many of the classes, started a ski program at Mt. Vernon after getting a ski hill built and she was the adult sponsor for many CMC Denver Junior trips, leading large groups of youth around the Colorado and North American mountains.

Born Gudrun E. Timmerhaus in 1927 in Palatine, IL, to Elsa and Paul Timmerhaus, Gudy's love for the Rocky Mountains began in the early 1930s when her father started working in Rocky Mountain National Park as a summer ranger, bringing the family to Colorado each year. Gudy attended Western State College in Gunnison, CO, where she taught German to help finance her education. In one of her classes she met Dave Gaskill. The two married and became parents to four children: Steve, Robin, Polly and Craig. Dave went on to become a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and Gudy completed a master's degree in industrial recreation from the University of New Mexico.

Gudy and Dave herded sheep together during winters in Kansas and they ran a Colorado backcountry youth summer program for a number of years to get by. They then spent a few years in Albuquerque to finish graduate school, then moving to Los Angeles for Dave's first geology job with the USGS before finally returning to Colorado. Gudy worked in real estate and eventually opened her own business.

For Gudy any challenge was simply an opportunity. Son Steve remembers finishing the 120+ foot free rappel off of the Maiden, a rock pinnacle near Boulder, onto a narrow rock rib worried that Gudy would be intimidated. Not to worry, she took her time and stopped frequently to view the 360 degree horizons as she slowly spun around

Avid mountaineers, skiers and hikers, the Gaskills joined the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) in 1952. By the 1970s, Gudy was one of the club's most active participants, leading trips

throughout the world for the CMC and chairing multiple committees including outings and trails. In 1977 she became the first woman president of the organization, then 5,000 members strong. But it was a planning meeting that Gudy attended in 1973 for a fledgling concept that changed her life and the state's landscape as well.

Gudy really found her passion, showing her gentle but visionary and indomitable leadership, with the concept of the Colorado Trail. She became the state's premiere trail builder, volunteer organizer and female mountaineer. Gudy devoted over 30 years to taking the Colorado Trail from an idea to one of the leading hiking, biking and equestrian trails in the world. In the early years the Fledgling organization and movement faced many obstacles and as Executive Director, Gudy refused to allow the initiative to die. She drew a detailed route through the Forest Service Districts linking up with early trails and existing mining and logging roads. She single-handedly persuaded the powerful Directors of the Districts to allow and support the project. She then recruited volunteers and led the trail-building effort. Years of effort and many trails crews later the trail was dedicated on July 23, 1988. In the words of Colorado Trail Foundation past President Merle McDonald, *"It's an understatement to say that there would be no Colorado Trail if it weren't for Gudy. No person, man or woman, has ever single-handedly had a greater impact on the successful completion of a national treasure as Gudy has with the creation of the Colorado Trail."*

Once the trail was built and the foundation secure with professional leadership, Gudy remained active on the board and then as an advisor focusing most of her efforts on educational programs along the trail and at the Colorado Trail Cabin near American Basin in the San Juan Mountains where she spent many summers.

Somehow while guiding the creation of the Trail, raising four children, and developing a successful real estate business, Gaskill found time to ascend all 54 of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks as well as many international mountains up to 23,000 feet high, Longs Peak over 35 times, and thousands of lesser summits.

She has been recognized by President Ronald Reagan with the Take Pride in America Campaign award and was honored by President George Bush through the Points of Light program. She appeared on The Today Show and countless television and radio programs. Judy Collins dedicated a song to Gudy and her efforts. Michael Martin Murphey was inspired by Gudy and the Trail to write "Along, Along the Colorado Trail." Gudy Gaskill, was also recognized as one of Colorado's most influential contemporary and historical women with her induction into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame, March 14, 2002.

Gudy is survived by her husband Dave, children Robin (and Berti), Steven (and Kathy), Craig (and Martha) and Polly and eight grand children (Patricia, Nicole, Megan, Heidi, Jesse, Asha, Wesley and Stacy). In memory of Gudy her family requests, rather than family gifts, that donations be made to the Colorado Trail to the Gudy Gaskill Endowment Fund (GGEF) which supports trail maintenance (<http://www.coloradotrail.org/contribute.html>) or to the Colorado Mountain Club (<http://www.cmc.org/Donate.aspx>).

The family has a private memorial planned. A larger public celebration of Gudy's life, in cooperation with the Colorado trail Foundation and the Colorado Mountain Club will be held as a future date yet to be determined.