

By Mike McKibbin

Before retiring to the Vail Valley in 1994, Doris Dewton worked 11 years for the U.S. Department of Energy, 10 years for Ashland Oil and three years for the National Petroleum Refiners' Association in Washington, D.C. For many years, she has used that experience to benefit Colorado Mountain College.

After helping CMC pass a measure to help provide stable revenue for the college district, Doris was encouraged in 2001 to run for the Eagle County seat by her predecessor Don Salanty.



“He said, ‘You have free time on your hands. You’re retired. Why don’t you get involved with CMC?’” Doris recalls.

Each trustee seat is decided by voters across the CMC district, “which means almost nobody knows you ... I actually lost in my home county,” she remembers. “And then I won in all of the other counties....”

Doris was re-elected to a second term in 2005. She was board president from 2003 to 2009, and now serves on the CMC Foundation Board. Her time on the board of trustees included three presidents and a building improvement program that provided CMC with new campuses and a healthy bottom line.

Her years as a trustee saw the college headed by three presidents: Cynthia Heelan was succeeded by Bob Spuhler, who was the vice president for several years. “... Bob was quite an excellent caretaker of resources,” says Doris. “Thrifty, I think, is the polite term. He was a great steward of the college resources.” Within Doris’ terms, Bob Spuhler was followed by Stan Jensen.

Doris recalls an extensive building program across the CMC district, “under a 10-year facilities master plan, tearing down a number of buildings which were soon to fall down under their own weight.”

For example, the building in Leadville “had so many leaks that basically the people who worked in that building had designed an interior plumbing system which had buckets at the bottom of a number of pipes that were used to capture the water that just poured into that building.”

The campus in Edwards was established when CMC relocated from the Vail Cascade building, which was a hotel facility.

“It was a difficult location because students would come in the evening,” Doris says. “If the hotel was busy, which in ski season happens to be during a good part of the academic year, the students ... were unable to park anywhere. That doesn’t work too well for a facility that’s very commuter-focused.”

Other projects included the new campus in Breckenridge, rebuilding and remodeling the Steamboat Springs main building and a new Rifle campus.

Also during Doris’ two terms on the board, the CMC Foundation became “quite successful, quite professional, looked around a lot for opportunities for grants, for philanthropic donations from major players,” she said.

It also marked the first time CMC made a concerted effort to raise money from and get local residents involved in

the college. “And I think we found, in a shockingly universal fact, that a lot of people didn’t know CMC existed ...,” Doris recalls. “...that we really had failed, especially in Summit County and (Eagle County), to some extent, in Leadville, definitely in Steamboat Springs. The population just didn’t really understand that there was this wonderful community college in their midst.”

Doris’ own academic background prepared her to enhance the opportunities offered by CMC to the local region. She received a bachelor’s degree cum laude in political science from Bryn Mar College in Pennsylvania. With a National Defense Education Act fellowship in foreign area studies, she earned a master’s degree in Latin American studies from the University of Texas at Austin.

Today, Doris continues to spend much of her time and energy to provide resources for local students to pursue the same educational opportunities that she enjoyed.

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