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Linda Bjorklund: A remarkable character in Park County

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Linda Bjorklund, long time, multi-talented and active community member of Park County, passed away July 11, leaving a hole in the hearts of friends and family, as well as many organizations in which she served.



Seen here, Linda Bjorklund poses with her two dogs at her Hartsel home. Bjorklund loved dogs and Park County history. She authored several historical books, including "Burros!" "A brief history of Fairplay," and "Over Boreas Pass." She also gave many presentations on history and audience members would be enthralled because she was so enthused about the topic. (Photo courtesy of Felicia Trujillo, daughter)

Bjorklund was not an ordinary volunteer. She frequently stepped into a role and quickly became the backbone of an

agency, serving as a leader, filling in gaps and solving problems.

She was a prolific author who penned several books about the history of Park County. She also contributed content for several publications, including the book, "Extraordinary Women of the Rocky Mountain West." In this book, Bjorklund brings to life the story of Marie Antoinette Guiraud.

Guiraud, a young widow who had immigrated from France and caring for her ten children, built her ranch into one of the most prosperous and respected in Park County.

She was known for having a sharp business mind and was not afraid to advocate for herself and her family in court.

Guiraud persevered in a water rights court case that lasted several years and finally won. This was in 1867 and is one of the oldest water rights determinations in South Park.

While Bjorklund describes Guiraud as a remarkable character who was strong-willed, worked hard despite setbacks and was a shrewd businesswoman, one cannot help but see Bjorklund as one of these "remarkable characters" that she wrote about in Park County history.

For example, Bjorklund, though fighting cancer, marched as part of the Color

Guard in the Fourth of July parade in Fairplay, just seven days before she passed away.

While raising her children and working a variety of jobs, Bjorklund went to night school for 14 years, taking one class at a time, to obtain her accounting degree at Metro State College in Denver. She then helped many businesses as a certified public accountant.

“There is hardly a nonprofit organization that Linda was not involved in. She was not one to sugarcoat things. She saw a problem and acted to solve it,” Hartsel resident and friend, Susie Jones said.



Bjorklund salutes and we salute her

Seen here, Linda Bjorklund dons her U.S. Army uniform while she smiles and salutes at her mother's home in Sioux City, Iowa. Bjorklund spent the last twenty years living in Hartsel. During her time in Park County, Bjorklund served the community through a variety of organizations, including the Hartsel Fire Protection District, Hartsel Community Center, American Legion, Republican Party, and many more. Bjorklund was

a retired veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve. (Photo courtesy of Felicia Trujillo, daughter)

Bjorklund served as the chairman of the board of the Hartsel Fire Protection District from 2008 through 2016. She was also the treasurer during the same period and then in 2011, she joined the Hartsel firefighter reserves.

The firefighter reserves have regular training and Bjorklund had perfect attendance.

“She was dedicated to the fire department and always treated it like it was a privilege to be here. The community lost a great one,” Jay Hutcheson, former HFPD chief said.

“Jay always looked forward to his Monday morning call with Linda to review what is going on with the station and the volunteers,” Linda Iverson, administrative assistant for the HFPD said.

Linda Watson, president of the Park County Historical Society, said, “Linda spoke about the history of Hartsel at a recent fundraiser and her excitement about the topic mesmerized the audience.”

“Linda volunteered for approximately 15 years. She researched, wrote and edited our quarterly newsletter,” Christie Wright, president of the Park County Local Historical Archives, said.

Bjorklund's books about Park County include “Burros!” “Gold in the Gravel,” “Over Boreas Pass,” “Hartsel: History of a Town,” “The Stagecoach,” “Doin' Time in Fairplay,” “A Brief History of Fairplay” and “Richard Sopris in Denver: Captain, Mayor and Fifty-Niner.”

Bjorklund also wrote for the Ute Mountain News, contributed to the Fairplay Flume, and gave in numerous other ways, such

as writing chapters in books and smaller historical pamphlets.

Bjorklund was president of the Hartsel Community Center Board, involved in the Hartsel Day planning, a food bank supporter, served on the Republican election committee, did the payroll for the Highline Café and was active in the Buena Vista American Legion Post 55.

“I told Linda, I don’t want to retire like you, I would be too tired,” Hutcheson, former HFPD chief, said.

Bjorklund also had a soft spot for children. At Christmastime, she would read “Twas the Night Before Christmas” at the Hartsel Community Center and at Easter, she read “Peter Cottontail” and orchestrated the Easter pageant, which soon became almost as popular with adults as it was with children.

In addition to serving Park County, Bjorklund was a wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend to many.

Words used to describe Bjorklund include, generous, strong-willed, hard-working, budget conscious, economical, dog lover and good friend.

“She was a special person, and she could also be bull-headed.” Hutcheson said.

“I admire his perseverance. Some people call it obstinacy, but they took a narrow view of the burro’s character. I worship the intellect of the burro. He cannot be humbugged” Bjorklund quoted from an article written in the Denver News and reprinted in the Fairplay Flume in 1882 in her book, “Burros!”

She added from John L. Cowan, published in the Overland Monthly, “The ass is abstemious, strong, self-contained,

forgiving, industrious, willing and content.”

Could it be that Bjorklund understood the burro’s perseverance, because she too could surmount obstacles and not be humbugged? a