

The Armstrong Family

By Lani Carroll Hinkle '83

Most of us know Armstrong Hall -- it's been around for almost 35 years. But what we may not know is that the man it's named for left a family whose impact on CC will probably outlive the building. When CC President Louis Benezet presented Willis R. Armstrong 1899 with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1957, he commented on the "loyal involvement over the years of a leading Colorado Springs family in the work and play of our school." For the better part of a century, that family has been a pillar of support, community mindedness, intellectual vigor, and creativity on campus.

Willis R. Armstrong 1899, a college football star, probably would have said the most memorable game he played was the one between CC and DU in 1898 -- it was interrupted so the players could put out the fire that destroyed the Antlers Hotel. Armstrong, who helped organized the Colorado Springs National Bank in 1907, guided a fledgling bank in a young city through a great depression and two world wars, winning customer confidence in times of tight money and no deposit insurance.



A charter member of the college's trustees, he served on the board until 1956. His six children, five of whom have CC degrees, established the Willis R. and Dell Heizer Memorial Book Fund in honor of their parents. The Willis Armstrong President's Discretionary Fund was established in 1956 by the bank.

(Addie) Dell Heizer Armstrong 1899 was the daughter of a noted Kansas pioneer and Civil War veteran who founded the resort community of Cascade, Colo. She attended Cutler Academy (the college preparatory school), earned her B.A. in Latin, and went through graduation ceremonies with her dog "Jack" -- who also wore a cap and gown. Dell taught English and Latin at CC, then left to study Impressionism with Robert Henri at William Henry Chase's New York School of Art. Invited back by CC's president to instruct painting, she maintained an open art studio for students and exhibited locally for many years. She was a charter member of the League of Women Voters, a WES member, the first woman on the city's District 11 school board (an early advocate of equal pay for women teachers), and a sponsor for local Girl Scout troops in disadvantaged areas.

David William Armstrong '29, graduating on the eve of the Great Depression, went to work for the Dollar Steamship Line, circling the globe three times as a refrigeration engineer and engine "wiper." Later, he moved to New York City, where he was a photographer and filled in as a Macy's Santa Claus. He married Ann Becker in 1937 and they lived in Greenwich Village. David earned his MSW in 1939 and became the director of the Probation Department in Cumberland County (Maine), where he served for almost 30 years. Upon retirement, he traveled Europe and became a chef before returning to Colorado Springs.

Frances Ruth Armstrong '31 received a master's in child development from Mills College in Oakland and taught there until retirement. Her interest in photography led her to experiment with the use of film in teaching long before it was considered a viable educational tool.

Patricia Smith Armstrong '42, a business major at CC, met her future husband, John Willis Armstrong, at CSNB, where they were both employed. While raising their five children, Patricia continued to be active in the banking community, as well as the symphony, Junior League, and the Colorado Springs Day Nursery. John started out as a bookkeeper and retired as chairman of the board in 1984.

Willis Edward Armstrong '37, who once worked in the CC physics lab for 33 cents an hour, received a masters' in physics at Northwestern University. When WWII broke out, he joined a team of physicists to develop the radio proximity fuse, first used in the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, he graduated from the Wisconsin School of Banking and returned to CSNB, retiring as its executive vice president in 1983. An avid skier, Bill is a member of the Pikes Peak Ski Club, which installed the first rope tow west of the Mississippi. He has served as president of the CC Alumni Association, and he and his wife Betty are past officers in the Fifty Year Club, supporters of WES, and members of the President's Council. In 1997, they were presented with the Lloyd E. Worner Award for outstanding loyalty, service, and generosity to the college.

Elizabeth Douglass Adams Armstrong '40 and her sister, **Roberta Adams Otis '41**, remember spending hours in the "Bat Cave" (Cogswell Theatre in the basement of Bemis), sewing costumes for Arthur Sharpe's Koshare drama group. Betty also remembers "fine classes with professors Lewis Abbott and Albert Daehler, skiing on Pikes Peak, and listening to the Phi Gams serenade outside McGregor Hall."



(Emily) Suzanne Armstrong Starr MAT '46 graduated from Mills College in 1939. During WW II, she held an interesting assortment of jobs: driving two-ton trucks at Peterson AFB, the first librarian at the Fine Arts Center, binocular repair-woman at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and editor for several magazines, including the *Ladies Home Companion*. While reading for *Ellery Queen Mystery* magazine, legend has it that she recommended a submission from a precocious 15-year-old, James Yaffe. After receiving her MAT, Suzanne taught English at CC.

Jean McCaughan Armstrong Jones '44 remembers the Victory garden in the CC quad and men disappearing from campus because of the draft. When the Navy V-12 and Marine V-5 units landed on campus, they brought Jean's future husband -- whom she met over soup that was heated in the same bucket as the glue they used to build theater sets. Jean has served on the boards of many groups, including WES, the League of Women Voters, and the Pikes Peak Library District. She was co-founder of the Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School. She received the Alumni Spirit Award from the CC Center for Community Service in 1995.

Gerald Lucius Jones '44 was sent to CC as part of the Navy V-12 unit after serving on troop and supply ships, primarily in the South Pacific. At CC, he lived in the old Phi Delt house and ate his meals in Cossitt Hall (women students ate in Bemis). After the war, he began as errand boy at CSNB, retiring as vice president in 1987. He has been involved in many civic activities, including treasurer of the local Democratic party, and has worked with Willis in maintaining the Pikes Peak Ski Area.

Suzanne Armstrong Smith '64, a political science major, went to Afghanistan with the Peace Corps after graduation, then followed the career path of her father, receiving an MSW from the University of Michigan in 1971. Now retired, she was a social worker at the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison.

Lawrence Eaton Armstrong '69, an accomplished sitarist, flamenco guitarist, and artist, studied Indian music under Ali Akbar Khan. In the words of his teacher, he demonstrated a “knowledge of the [sitar] considered unusual in a person of Western background.” Lawrence died in a car accident in 1971. The Lawrence Eaton Armstrong Memorial fund, set up by his parents, has contributed to the CC art and music departments.

John W. Armstrong Jr. became a bank examiner on the advice of his godfather, **Armin Barney '21**. He joined CSNB in 1976, holding several positions, including senior vice president for lending. He is currently executive vice president of lending at Western National Bank in Colorado Springs. John served as chairman for the CC Business and Community Alliance in 1986-87.

David William Armstrong II (special) took his first class at CC before he even entered college, through the summer German program. He graduated from Yale in 1967, but returned to CC for his teaching credential. He is currently a self-employed architect, traveling between Colorado Springs and Germany, where most of his projects are located.

Holly Armstrong Bates MAT '78 did her undergraduate work at CSU. She is now an elementary school teacher in Lancaster, Calif.

Ann Douglass Armstrong Scarboro '63 received a master's degree in French from Arizona State University and a Ph.D. in French literature from CU Boulder. In 1992, she was awarded the J. Fred Bischof Alumni Scholarship Award from the CC alumni association to do translation work and research on French Caribbean writers. In 1993, she taught French as an adjunct professor at CC. Ann married classmate **James E. Scarboro '63**, a lawyer who has clerked for judges on both the U.S. District Court and the Supreme Court in the early 70s, taught at the University of Colorado Law School for five years, and is the co-author of *Constitutional Criminal Procedure* (1977).

Frances Adams Armstrong Kruse '75, says one of her favorite memories of CC was “Professor Jim Enderson's enthusiasm for biology. One morning, our anatomy and physiology class found a fragrant, road-killed deer lying on his desk -- our work for the day.” After graduation, Frances worked as a helicopter EMT at St. Anthony's Hospital in Denver. She received a master's degree from Denver Seminary in 1984, and currently teaches elementary school science.

William P. Starr III '86 got hooked on photography shortly after he inherited a vintage photojournalist's camera from his aunt, Frances-Ruth. Diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis at age nine, his photographs explore movement and the human form. He often finishes the photographs with chemicals to give them added effect. William is closely connected to the CC arts and drama community.

Emily Frances Jones Snyder (special) attended summer school at CC in 1970, taking German and art classes.

Marjory McCaughan Jones Webster '82, an art history major, graduated with honors. Her family roots in banking led to work at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago while earning an MBA from the University of Chicago. Since returning to Colorado Springs in 1993, she has been a consultant for small businesses. She supports many local groups, including the Friends of Tutt Library, WES, Citizen's Project, and the Pioneer's Museum.