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Our Mission: The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust protects Colorado's agricultural land, heritage and families for future generations by conserving working rural landscapes.

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Spotlight On Colorado

The Vernon Summer Story

How one man's life and decisions influenced so many others across Routt County



Vernon Summer

Courtesy of John F. Russell/Steamboat Pilot & Today

Imagine a time when traveling by a team of horses and a wagon with all of your belongings was the only way to reach the valley where you had purchased a homestead, hoping to settle your family into a crude log cabin before winter came in. John Summer arrived in the Yampa Valley just that way in 1889.

Born in 1917, John's grandson Vernon grew up in a community known as Sidney approximately eight miles south of Steamboat Springs.

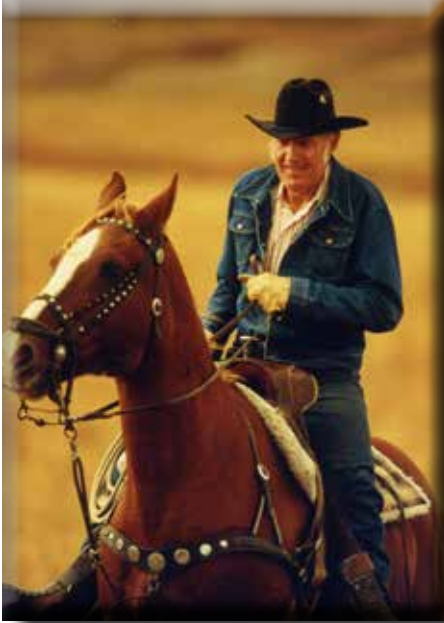
It was here in this quiet valley that he learned how to make a living by working on the ranch. This is a story of how one iconic rancher became a pillar of the community, while making decisions throughout his life that would generously benefit others for generations to come.

Rancher and Steward of the Land

As Vernon grew up learning the tools and trade of the ranching operation, he also learned to love the land. When his grandfather passed away in 1936, his family was at risk of losing the ranch. At age 19, Vernon was determined to keep the ranch in the family and mortgaged everything that his family owned. After almost a decade under Vernon's management and hard work; the ranch

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Spotlight on Colorado *continued*



Vernon Summer

*Photo courtesy of the
Tread of Pioneers Museum, Steamboat Springs, CO*

operation grew and became successful. He eventually owned and operated three different parcels, allowing him to expand his hay and cattle operations.

Known as a steward of the land over the years, he made many improvements to the ranch to maintain its viability. He also participated in many programs, such as partnering with the Soil Conservation Service to utilize 159 acres to test the best grasses for the areas, benefiting all neighboring ranches in the region.

Vernon was also passionate about preserving ranch lands and open spaces. As land values grew, there was a lot of pressure to develop the Valley. Vernon's ranch was chosen as a demonstration project in 1997 to receive funding through the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights program and he was one of the first ranchers in Routt County to place an easement on his land.

Over the subsequent years, his three ranches were protected with easements with Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) and the Yampa Valley Land Trust to ensure that his ranches would never be developed. Little has changed since his grandfather arrived in 1889, and because of his foresight, the Summer Ranches will remain that way forever.

Passion for Ranching and the Routt County Community

As the area around Steamboat Springs began to grow, Vernon and his wife Edythe became leading citizens. They both felt an obligation to their land and community and gave their time, money, and talents to local, regional, and national organizations throughout their lifetimes.

Generous Benefactor

Vernon Summer was a long-time widower with no heirs. His passion for ranching and the community continued on even after his death in 2012. Always a thoughtful individual, Vernon carefully planned for the land in his estate. Vernon respected the past, but was accepting of the future. He left provisions in his will for many local Steamboat Springs' organizations upon his death.

One of the most impactful decisions that Vernon made was that upon his death, he wanted to ensure that the ranches would be sold to a community-minded ranching family. In fact, what made Vernon's last wishes unique was the fact that the land did not have to be sold at market value. He emphasized that his ranch should be sold to a good steward of the land and a ranching family that would be directly involved in the property and make it their home.



As a result, Vernon's ranch headquarters, which includes productive hay meadows along the Yampa River; was sold to the Lee Meyring family in the spring. A dedicated 4-H leader and the local large animal vet, Lee comes from a longtime northwest Colorado ranching family. Lee and his wife Erin have two young boys, Cash and Kyle. They are thrilled to have the chance for the boys to grow up on the ranch.



Vernon Summer
*Courtesy of John F. Russell/
 Steamboat Pilot & Today*

The estate has also been able to make meaningful contributions to agriculture, historical and conservation groups, local health care, Vernon's church, and other local organizations. CCALT also received significant gifts to the operating endowment and Conservation Advancement Loan Fund. These contributions will help to ensure that the land trust can serve other ranchers interested in keeping their land out of development and enable them to pass their ranch on to future generations.

"CCALT is grateful for Vernon's dedication to Colorado's ranching community. Through his contributions during his lifetime and through his estate, his legacy will live on and he will be remembered as one of the legends of days gone by," said Chris West, CCALT Executive Director.

Gone but Never Forgotten

In his 95 years as a quiet rancher who was deeply involved in the community, Vernon Summer was a witness to much of what made Routt County what it is today. A virtual encyclopedia of local history, Vernon was a link between a colorful past and hope for the future. Through his life and the thoughtful decisions that he made, his dedication and service will influence others for untold generations.

Sunset BBQ Raises Funds for Land Conservation

The Board and Staff of CCALT would like to thank everyone who attended or donated to our 2014 Sunset BBQ at the Hutchinson Ranch in Salida on August 21st. It was another successful event!

The BBQ was hosted by the Hutchinson family, who have protected their ranch with a conservation easement. The annual fundraiser is held at different ranches across Colorado every summer. This is the first time that the Sunset BBQ has been held in Chaffee County. The proceeds from the event will go toward the protection of Colorado's beautiful agricultural lands. Photos from the event can be seen online at www.ccalt.org.

2014 Summer BBQ Sponsors

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Rivers and Ranching

Ranchers find new partners to improve our most precious river resources

Water...

one of the most precious resources that many of us take for granted. Ranchers take care of not only the land across Colorado, but also the water that flows through it. Some Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) landowners in southwestern Colorado are taking steps to improve significantly the water quality of the rivers and streams flowing through their property. They are partnering with several organizations and local volunteers to provide their communities with restored water resources.

In July, Betty Shahan of Shahan Ranch, Bonnie Kelly of Kruger Farms; and their families, offered children and adult volunteers a unique opportunity near Chromo, Colorado, to help restore a small section of the Navajo River which flows through the two ranches. Participants attended a workshop on understanding river resources and then spent the day planting willows and cottonwoods.



Sora DiGiorgio Pearson & Carey Bare at the Navajo River Restoration Event in July

The Gallegos Family

The Gallegos family has been ranching in the Arboles area since 1910. Recently, the family partnered with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the San Juan Conservation District to restore the Piedra River and Stollsteimer Creek. The Piedra River was wearing down its banks and their meadow was being lost to severe erosion. As a solution to the problem, the family built a series of rock structures to slow the river's flow and create pools for aquatic habitat.

When asked if the project was successful, Junior Gallegos, who owns the ranch with his siblings stated, "It saved our ranch. There are also fish now in the river, but I don't catch them. I have to share them with my new friends," referring to the family of river otters that recently moved in.

The event on the river included several partners who provided funding or educational outreach materials including Great Outdoors Colorado, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, San Juan Conservation District, the Chama Peak Land Alliance, and the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

This exciting project through the two ranches is part of a larger effort to restore a seven-mile stretch of the Navajo River led by the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the San Juan Conservation District. The Shahan and Kelly families hope their efforts will improve the fishery and show how working ranches and agricultural families can help promote natural areas and the stewardship of water resources.

Partnering to Improve Rivers

The Gallegos and Hare families have also partnered with local and federal organizations in order to restore native grasses and trees along Archuleta County's rivers and streams. They have been doing amazing work and have seen some significant results in just a few years.



The Hare Ranch

The Hare Family

The Hare Ranch has been in the family since 1940 . Since 2009 , landowners Bob and Kathy David and Ken and Helen Hare, have partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.They have been slowly fencing out lengths of Spring Run Creek as it flows through the property, allowing the willows to grow and to slow down the flow of the water.The stream restoration work keeps the water cleaner and provides the cattle with a fresh drinking source for longer into the summer months. Bob also plans on reintroducing native trout to the creek.

As ranchers and farmers continue to improve the rivers and streams that flow through their properties, the rest of Colorado will benefit. CCALT hopes to offer many more educational workshops in the future and encourages our partners to continue to fund these high-priority projects.

Leaving Your Legacy

Have you been thinking about the legacy you would like to leave your children or grandchildren? Charitable bequests are a common method of giving where an individual can name the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), or any other charity, as the heir to a portion of his or her estate in their will.

Naming CCALT in your will allows you to make a significant contribution toward the protection of Colorado’s working farms and ranches for future generations, while reducing the impact of estate taxes on your heirs.

If you plan to make a gift through your will, CCALT has language that may be useful to you during your estate planning. For more information, or if you would like to talk with someone about making a planned gift, contact your financial advisor or contact our Development Director Alyssa Street at alysa@ccalt.org or 303-225-8677.



In Memory

CCALT would like to recognize several of our landowners and friends of the Land Trust who have passed away in the past year. Their legacies will live on forever through their contributions to Colorado’s rich agricultural heritage.

Tom Berg
John Ehmke

Fran Heid
Wendell Hutchinson

Joan Kontny
Jack Redmond

Paul Snyder
Michael Strang



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CCALT Receives National Accreditation Renewal by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) has achieved renewed accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

"Our accreditation renewal is a reflection on all of the high-quality conservation work that we do," said Chris West, CCALT Executive Director. "When we were founded, this was the expectation that was placed on CCALT by the agricultural community in Colorado.

Each land trust that achieved renewed accreditation submitted extensive documentation and underwent a rigorous review. "Through accreditation renewal land trusts are part of an important evaluation and improvement process that verifies their operations continue to be effective, strategic and in accordance with strict requirements," said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn.

CCALT is proud to display the accreditation seal. We are honored to be one of the first land trusts to receive renewed accreditation. We would not be where we are today without our partners and donors. Thank you!



The accreditation seal recognizes land trusts that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.