



We might be somewhat partial, but we like to think that our origin story is as singular as the state we work to serve. With that in mind, we asked the incomparable Dr. Richard L. Knight, professor emeritus at Colorado State University and vice president of conservation for the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust to connect the dots from our humble beginning to the organization we've become today.

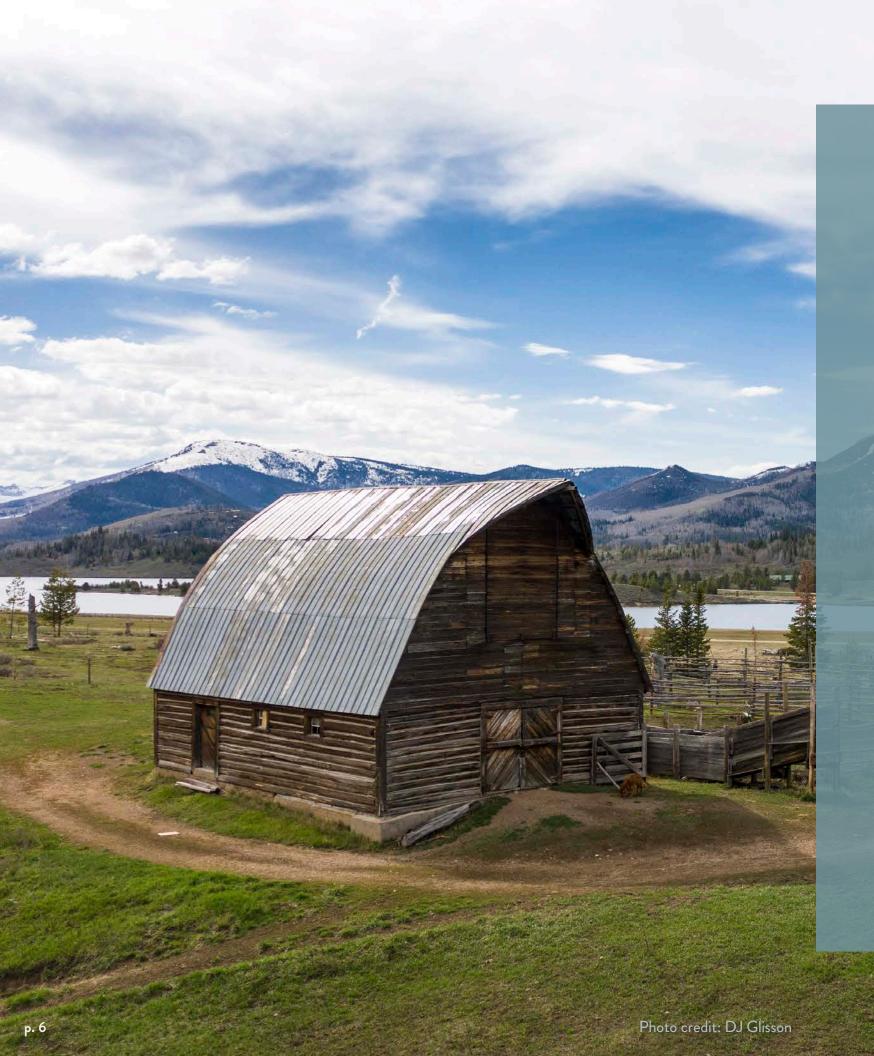
He did just that in our upcoming book, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust: Twenty-Five Years of Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands. A selection of that history follows:

The story of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is a story of people who care about agriculture – its culture, economies, and ecology, and an idea that helped transform the American West. If this sounds a bit hyperbolic, please read on.

It all began in 1867, nine years before Colorado became a state. On November 30 of that year, ranchers from across the Colorado Territory met at the Planter House in Denver. With ever-increasing problems from cattle rustlers and the onslaught of homesteaders occupying historic grazing lands, ranchers felt the need to coordinate a response.

When the dust had settled, the Colorado Stock Growers Association was formed. It would change names many times over the intervening years, just as the Colorado cattlemen themselves would respond to the demands of changing times. Were it not for the progressive and willing-to-innovate approach of the group that would come to be known as the Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA), our story might very well end here.





Thankfully, for agriculture and for all the people of Colorado, the group would once more embrace innovation and serve a leadership role in forming our nation's first statewide agricultural land trust.

In the 1980s, rural counties in the Mountain West began growing faster than the nation as a whole, and more quickly than regional metropolitan areas. Because Colorado is 60 percent private land, we were watching the demise of agriculture and the emergence of rural sprawl. The cold facts of agricultural land loss were sobering: between 1987 and 2002, Colorado lost more than 2.5 million acres of agricultural land, with an average loss of 460 acres a day.

Within the membership of CCA, there were individuals whose intellectual curiosity and commitment to ranching forged a response to the loss of agricultural lands that would ensure the continuance of ranching into the next century. Suddenly, suburbanites could be seen driving on Colorado's highways with bumper stickers that read, "Cows, Not Condos!"

In a move that would transform the conservation of working lands, Jay Fetcher approached CCA and its executive director Reeves Brown. Through their leadership and initiative, a new era in Colorado, one of conservation and agriculture, was born.

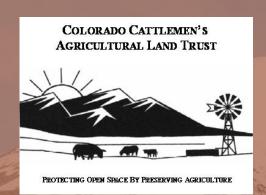
The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust was formally incorporated by the Colorado secretary of state in March of 1995. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Read the full text in CCALT's 25th Anniversary book, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust: Twenty-Five Years of Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands, coming August 2020.

# FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO CONSERVATION LEADER: CCALT THROUGH THE YEARS

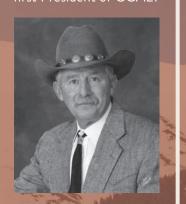
#### March 12, 1994

At a CCA Board meeting, Joe Kasza, the CCA president of the day, moves that CCA proceed with the formation and development of a land trust. The motion is seconded by Miles Davies. A few days later, a Land Trust Task Force is formed — chaired by Jay Fetcher, with Penny Lewis, Bill Fales, and Tom Compton as members.



Tom Compton becomes the first President of CCALT

1995



1994 1995

## August 1997

Lynne Sherrod becomes the first full-time Executive Director



Jay Fetcher becomes **CCALT** Board President

### O 1998

Kenny Rogers, Lynne Sherrod, Kirk Hanna, Jay Fetcher, Jack Orr and others attend the National Cattlemen's Association (now NCBA) meeting in Denver in an attempt to reverse NCA's opposition to conservation easements, and they succeed!

# November 14, 1994

Will Shafroth awards CCA its first grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) for \$40,000 to establish the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT).

#### 1998

California Rangeland Trust forms

Like California, in the next twenty years, five other states would form land trusts connected to their state livestock associations, modeled after CCALT.

### March 1995

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust is formally incorporated by • the secretary of state.

#### O 2001

CCALT receives Land Conservation Excellence Award from the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts (now Keep it Colorado).

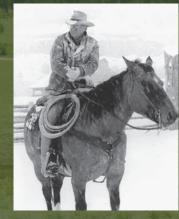
2001 1996 1997 2000 1998

#### 1996

Tim Wohlgenant becomes the first parttime Executive Director

#### November 30, 1997

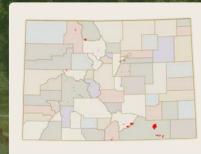
First Easement: CCALT completes and holds its first conservation easement on the Centennial Ranch in Ouray County.

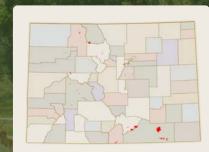


Vince Kontny owner of Centennial Ranch

#### 2000

Map of CCALT's first 5 years of conservation





The first-ever CCALT Sunset BBQ (known today as the Forever Colorado BBQ)

> Bill and Joanne Sinclaire host the BBQ at the Dakan Ranch near Sedalia, Colo.

# CCALT THROUGH THE YEARS

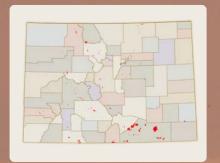
#### **Q** 2003

First-ever Leopold Conservation Award

CCALT partners with CCA and Sand County
Foundation to present the inaugural award to the
Capps Ranch of Walsenburg, Colo. The award is
created to honor ranch families with a commitment
to improving overall land and wildlife health
alongside their agricultural operations. Today, the
award is given annually in more than 20 states!

#### 2005

Map of CCALT's first 10 years of conservation



# 2006

Sue Anschutz-Rodgers hosts

first NWSS Cocktail Supper

to honor CCALT landowners.

2006

Chris West becomes Executive Director of CCALT Around 2006 CCALT makes the first update to its logo.

Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

2003 2005 2006



2015 2017 2019

## 2015

CCALT rebrands our logo and website

 The updates are made possible by a generous gift from long-time CCALT board member, Penny Lewis.



#### 2017

CCALT receives the Land Trust Alliance's Land Trust Excellence Award

 The award is given in recognition of tremendous conservation success over the previous two decades. It also recognizes the foresight of CCA in the creation of a conservation organization dedicated to farmers and ranchers and the commitment of CCALT's many landowning family partners.



#### October 1, 2019

CCALT merges with Yampa Valley Land Trust and forms the Yampa Valley Conservation Partnership to better serve the conservation needs of the landowners and communities in NW Colorado.



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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR PASSION.

Each year we are stunned by the generosity of those who support us and deeply grateful for the trust of the families who work with us to conserve Colorado's working lands and legacy. This year as part of our 25th anniversary celebration we're looking back at what you've helped us accomplish in the past 25 years.



# IMPACT TO-DATE 25 YEARS OF CCALT

25th
ANNIVERSARY



346

454

WORKING FAMILIES ENGAGED

**CONSERVATION EASEMENTS** 

637,132
ACRES OF LAND CONSERVED

1,141

TOTAL MILES OF RIVERS/STREAMS PROTECTED

MILES OF SCENIC BYWAY

33

GOLD MEDAL STREAMS (MILES)

13

# HABITAT CONSERVED

(IN ACRES)

MOOSE

106,957

MULE DEER

634,769

PRONGHORN

361,109

**GREATER SAGE GROUSE** 

80,856

418,015



# THANKYOUFOR THE MEMORIES. CCALT's successes have always been the result of a lot of hardworking people coming together to make a difference. As we look back at our first quarter century, we asked some of the movers and shakers who helped us get to this point to share their stories of the past and a few hopes for what's to come. p. 16

# Reflections on CCALT's Early Days TIM WOHLGENANT

When I think of the land trust's early days, I remember conversations at a ranch kitchen table or on a hill overlooking a meadow. I remember the collection of stirrups decorating the walls of a ranch house, the beat-up 1975 Lincoln town car one rancher used to feed his cows, and the delight on the faces of my young daughters when they joined me on a site visit and got to bottle feed a baby calf.

I first met Jay Fetcher, Bill Fales, Tom Compton, and Reeves Brown through a series of serendipitous connections; when they explained their shared vision, I knew I wanted to work with them to make it real. And I was amazed they trusted me enough, a city-raised greenhorn, to give me a chance.

In 1997, Lynne Sherrod and I were asked to attend a gathering of families in Saguache, Colorado. They had come together as a community to talk about what they loved about that landscape and their community of multigenerational ranches, and their fears this magical place might not be there for their kids. They asked us to share with them information about conservation easements and how that tool could be helpful in protecting their legacy. We met on a hot, late summer's evening. Townspeople and ranchers crowded the stuffy room, and a number of children wove among the chairs, finally settling in the lap of a parent or sibling.

I remember Annie and Ed Nielsen and the Hill family – Gary and Alice and all their kids and grandkids – the Colemans, the Alexanders, and many others. I'll never forget when Jim Coleman stood up, and in his unassuming way, said, by golly, he sure didn't want to be the generation that gave up on the place, and if we could raise the money to buy his easement, he would be happy to be the first to try this conservation easement thing out. Jim's courage and the faith the community placed in CCALT over the subsequent two decades resulted in one of the largest contiguous, privately protected landscapes in Colorado (more than 17,000 acres).

I never ceased to be amazed by the ranchers with whom we worked. No two were alike; each contradicted the rancher stereotype in some way. But they shared a few things in common: a love of land and wildlife that didn't require many words to express and often would simply bring tears to their eyes as they looked out over their land, a grounded sense of knowing what was right, a humility that comes from working in nature every day, and, of course, strong and well-worn working hands.

# Looking Back, Looking Forward CHRIS WEST

It is a rare and beautiful thing when a mission, the people, and the opportunity align as they have for the land trust. I can only hope that I get to experience that again in my professional life.

My story with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust started in 1997, and what happened in those early years was nothing short of amazing. CCALT helped change the outlook of both the conservation and ranching communities. We took the philosophy of partnerships into action, conserving land and communities that will have positive impacts for generations.

Looking back, those early pioneers sure had a lot of faith in CCALT, and maybe that faith was more on the promise of what the land trust could be rather than what it was in those first years. There was the presumption that cowboys couldn't do conservation, simply because they never had before. CCALT worked hard to change perceptions about ranching and conservation, and went from being an outcast to an accepted leader in the field in less than a generation. Today, there isn't any debate about the need to include the ranching community in any conservation discussion, and the unmatched set of individuals who have been a part of the CCALT staff have a lot to do with that.

Our staff logged countless miles on just about every road in the state, traveling hours each way to Durango, La Junta, Walden, Saguache, or Walsenburg and a hundred other places to have coffee with a family around a kitchen table. Conservation is a people business, and I know that much of our success is due to the staff's willingness to put the time into those relationships. It also is a testament to the board, to our funders, and others, who realized that the cattlemen were going to do it their own way, and not to doubt that they would figure out their own way to get it done.

Today, CCALT is a national leader, an institution in Colorado conservation, and a bridge between two communities that a generation ago were often at odds and rarely partners.

Colorado is a better place because of CCALT. It will continue to be a great place if we continue to honor our roots and yet innovate for the rapidly changing world. I am excited to see what the next quarter century holds for conservation, ranching, and Colorado.





# **CENTENNIAL RANCH**

# Ouray County - Kontny Family

CCALT's first conservation easement

From his naval service in Vietnam, to his work as an engineer in the Australian Outback, to his time working cattle in the West, Vince Kontny has lived a remarkably interesting life. Throughout his many adventures, both in his own backyard and abroad, Vince has always held his agrarian roots close.

Vince was born in 1937 "an inch from the Colorado State line" in Chappell, Nebraska. His parents, Ed and Ruth, had a small farm and plenty of children. Vince was the second youngest of ten – his brother Jim, two years older, was his best friend. Vince and Jim spent their days milking cows, feeding chickens, raising pigs and sheep, stealing cigarettes from their older brothers (Vince says he quit smoking at age six), and being sure to clean up properly for Sunday Mass. With their mother's stern warning: "Do not come inside unless you're bleeding or on fire," fresh in their minds, they spent the majority of their time outside, finding plenty to keep them busy in the middle of nowhere. Vince knew then that he wanted to have a ranch of his own someday.

In 1944, the Kontnys sold their family farm and moved across the Nebraska state line to Julesburg, Colorado. Vince's dad had purchased the local grain elevator and was in the process of building a feedlot. Once the feedlot was in full operation, Vince accompanied his dad while he shipped, doctored, and sorted cattle. It was about this time that Vince saw the Rocky Mountains for the first time on a family vacation to Rocky Mountain National Park. As someone who had grown up on the prairie and had never seen large granite cliffs and mountainsides covered in evergreens, Vince was awestruck. He decided then and there that not only would he own a ranch of his own someday, but he would own a cattle ranch in the mountains!

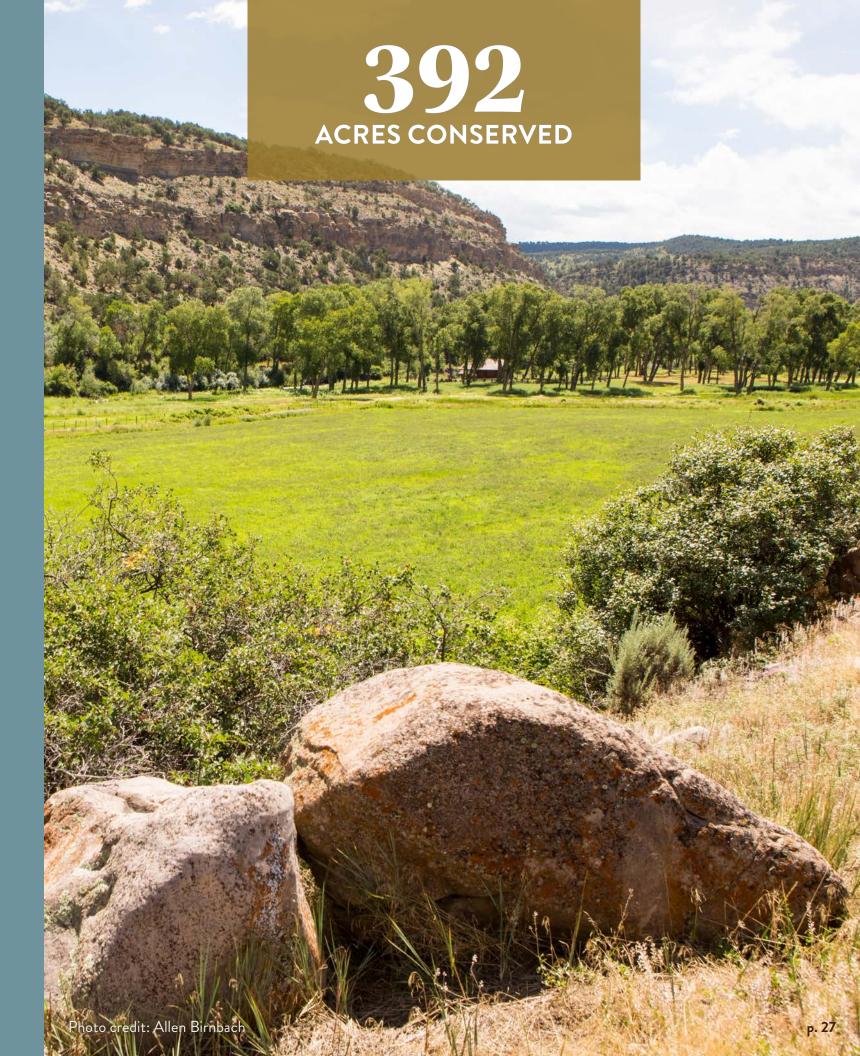
After an education and naval career that took him from Boulder to Asia and Australia, where he met the love of his life, Joan, Vince retired as the president of a major construction company with operations in sixty-seven countries. In the next chapter of his life, Vince finally fulfilled his dream of owning a mountain ranch. He and Joan traveled with their family to Colorado's Western Slope, and in 1989 after touring several properties, they bought the Last Dollar Ranch near Telluride.

Shortly after that purchase, the Kontnys bought the nearby Centennial Ranch on the Uncompander River. With lower elevation and a slightly more temperate climate, the Centennial Ranch was a better spot to winter cattle and would support their operations on Last Dollar. The Kontnys operated both ranches for fifteen years before selling Last Dollar and making the Centennial Ranch their primary home.

As Vince tells it, the Centennial Ranch was founded in 1879 through the United States Homestead Act. James and Charlotte Smith had packed up their three small children and their life in the San Luis Valley to travel by mule-drawn wagon over the Continental Divide to western Colorado. In the early 1980s when Vince bought the Centennial Ranch, he purchased it from the fifth generation of the Smith Family. Together, Vince and Joan restored and conserved the Centennial Ranch. It was Vince's dream come to fruition: raising cattle in a place where you could touch the mountains.

On November 5, 1995, the Kontnys officially conserved the Centennial Ranch with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust. They had already done one conservation project with the American Farmland Trust on Last Dollar Ranch, but conserving the Centennial Ranch was unique because it was the first easement ever conveyed to the newly formed Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust.

Out of everything that Vince Kontny has accomplished or seen in a life that has taken him across continents and cultures, the two things he is most proud of are his family and his ranch. As Vince puts it, he's "got one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel," but at least he knows that his and Joan's work on the Centennial Ranch won't be undone, and that the legacy of the Smith family and of his own will always be preserved in this mountain valley.



# SAN ISABEL RANCH

# Custer County - Shields Family

Sara Shields is a fourth-generation rancher in Colorado's Wet Mountain Valley. Her family's San Isabel Ranch was first homesteaded in the mid-1800s by five brothers who had emigrated from Lincolnshire, England to Colorado. Why those brothers chose to settle against the backdrop of the Sangre De Christo Mountain range isn't entirely known, but why Sara's family chose to stay on the San Isabel Ranch certainly is – it's home.

Growing up, Sara (Kettle) Shields and her siblings were raised in a house built around the original one-bedroom cabin Charles Kettle (Sara's great-grandfather) constructed for his family in 1869. Like typical ranch kids living in rural Colorado, the siblings grew up with a strong connection to the land and their family. Ben Kettle, Sara's father, was the local veterinarian in Westcliffe, which meant that not only was Sara exposed to the day-to-day ranch operations but that she also became intimately connected with the ins and outs of animal husbandry.

Following her father around the ranch had Sara hooked from day one – she all but refused to attend kindergarten because it would conflict with her fall cattle work. From the beginning Sara knew that the San Isabel was the only place she wanted to be. Ben and Bet Kettle must have known that too, because they made sure to encourage their daughter to leave Westcliffe, pursue her education, and broaden her experience base before making a final decision about committing to a life on the ranch.

She went to Colorado State University, earned several degrees and traveled across the West training horses and learning from other agricultural operations. Sara had been working as the vice president of membership services for the Nebraska Cattlemen's Association for three years when she finally got the call to come home. It was spring calving season and Ben Kettle needed a hand.





Not long after her move home, Sara met her husband, Mike Shields who had stopped by to ask Ben Kettle for veterinary advice on a group of sick calves. Sara and Mike were friends first, then coworkers, then parents, and today, they run the San Isabel Ranch side by side.

Looking back, Sara is thankful that she came home when she did. She got to spend five good years learning from her dad before he passed away suddenly at the age of seventy-eight. Today, his notes and ledgers are treasured keepsakes full of useful wisdom, and his presence is still palpable in the ranch house that Sara and Mike call home. Ben Kettle wasn't alive when the final ink dried on the San Isabel Ranch conservation easement, but the project solidified his legacy nonetheless — having initiated the original conservation easement discussions with Lynne Sherrod at CCALT himself, he would be proud to know that Sara and Mike took the final steps to ensure that the family ranch would never be developed.

There is no telling what the future holds for the San Isabel, and every once in a while, the heartache and thought of losing her family's ranch creeps up on Sara. "You get extraordinarily attached to your place – the land, the ground – to see other people build or operate on the land you grew up on is a painful thing. As we face drought, development, and lean years, you worry that you will be the generation that ends this — we just have to trust that we won't be."

Fortunately, as long as Sara Shields has a say in it, it feels likely that the San Isabel Ranch will continue to produce high quality cattle, model excellent land stewardship, and be a family ranching operation grounded in integrity for years to come.

# Marj Perry gathers cattle on a Forest Service Permit Photo credit: Chris Case

# **COLD MOUNTAIN RANCH**

# Pitkin/Garfield County - Fales-Perry Family

In 1880, Marj Perry's grandfather, David Robinson Crocker Brown (D.R.C. for short), rode into the Roaring Fork Valley on a horse-drawn wagon. His travel party had made their way over Taylor Pass from Leadville, Colorado. With no road or trail at that time, the settlers were forced to disassemble their wagons and lower them slowly down the steep mountain pass using ropes and pulleys. It took them two weeks to travel just 10 miles. Mr. Brown would be one of the first merchants into Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley – the area was rumored to be the next silver boom!

D.R.C. invested the earnings he made from the mine and hardware sales into ranchland – purchasing local property piece by piece as he could afford it. After he married Ruth McNutt, the pair acquired the Mount Sopris Farm from a local potato breeder. During that time, the Roaring Fork Valley was made up of more farmland than anything else, and potatoes were the crop of choice. Appropriately named, the property sat nearly at the base of Mount Sopris – with spectacular views of both the valley and the iconic peak. D.R.C. and Ruth had four children. In 1940, their only daughter, Ruth "Ditty" Brown married Bob Perry, and soon after, Bob took on operation of the Mount Sopris Farm. Eventually, Ruth and Bob bought out Ruth's three brothers and took on sole ownership of the ranch. The Perrys transitioned from potatoes, and instead raised seven children and countless registered Hereford cattle on what they would rename the Mount Sopris Hereford Ranch.

Life growing up on the ranch was typical of rural life in the 1940s and 1950s – large families and labor-intensive operations. Even though tractors were beginning to redefine how ranchers operated, making many jobs easier than ever before, Bob Perry still insisted on hiring additional young men to stack hay in the summer months. This turned out to be a good thing, because in 1973 a young Bill Fales arrived from New Jersey to cut hay and take a break from his Harvard education. In no time at all, Bill fell in love with Bob's daughter, Marj Perry, and his single haying season quickly turned into forty-seven more.

Like the generation before them, Bill and Marj felt at home on the land. They worked together to purchase their own property south of the Perry family's place, and they continued to work closely with Marj's father. Bob Perry was as hard a worker as you could find and an encyclopedia when it came to cattle and horses. By watching and listening, Marj and Bill learned everything there was to know about how to make a ranch operation work and how to respect the land while doing it. Eventually, Marj and Bill inherited a portion of the Mount Sopris Hereford Ranch, and in 1990, in combination with the small property they already owned and a few additional purchased acres, they made a ranch of their own, and called it Cold Mountain.

In 2009, Bill and Marj placed all 609 acres of Cold Mountain Ranch into a conservation easement. By that point, they had raised their own two daughters on the land, and conserving the ranch felt even more significant. Following conservation of the ranch, the Fales family made CCALT's most transformative gift to date – a \$500,000 donation to create CCALT's operating endowment fund. Realizing that so many families had already donated so much to CCALT in terms of land value, they felt that it was only right that they do something to honor those families and make sure conservation would continue to be an option for future landowners.

Looking ahead, Marj and Bill aren't sure what the future holds; it's too soon to say whether their daughters will want to take over the family operation like generations before them. This much is certain, though: the land will stay available for agricultural production forevermore. Marj and Bill haven't found a way for themselves to be around in perpetuity, but they are proud to know that their ranch will.





# THANKYOU FOR MAKING ADIFFERENCE.

Although CCALT would not spring into being for some decades to come, Wad Hinman, the 1966–1967 president of CCA captured the indomitable spirit of this organization and the people that make it possible when he spoke:

"You've often heard there's no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit. That's the reason why we got where we are now, and why we are getting so much done today. There's a whole lot of people doing lots of hard work for the Association. Many of them don't get the credit they deserve, and they don't ask for it. They're just interested in getting the job done."

TO OUR SPONSORS, PARTNERS, AND LANDOWNERS,
THANK YOU FOR 25 INCREDIBLE YEARS — WE WOULDN'T
BE HERE WITHOUT YOU.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF CCALT

Tim Wohlgenant – 1996–1997 Lynne Sherrod – 1997–2006 Chris West – 2006–2015 Erik Glenn – 2015–present

## PRESIDENTS OF THE CCALT BOARD

Tom Compton – 1995–1996 Jay Fetcher – 1997–2004 Bill Fales – 2005–2014 Ben Duke – 2015–2018 Mark Johnson – 2019–present

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS (1995-PRESENT)

Tom Compton Bill Fales Wiley Berthelson Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Sydney Macy Jack Orr Dean Davis Penny Lewis Dale Lasater Miles Davies Ed Hansen Peter Decker Tim Wohlgenant Corwin Brown Kent Rickenbaugh Randy Rusk Roger Evans Joanne Sinclaire Robbie LeValley Joe Kasza Ron Morris C. J. Mucklow

# Jay Fetcher Richard Knight Ben Duke Kenny Rogers Steve Wooten Mark Johnson John Braly Jen Livsey Koger Propst Ben Rogers Ken Mirr Sandi Turecek Tawny Halandras Stacy Kourlis-Guillon Chancy Love Tom Stoever Terry Swanson Adonna Allen Rye Austin Orlando Gonzalez

# STAFF MEMBERS (1995-PRESENT)

Lisa Nelson Courtney Bennett David Kirk Chris Herrman Tim Wohlgenant Lynne Sherrod Barb Dowdy Erik Glenn Chris West Megan Knott Cecelia Lankutis Maggie Hanna Ray Ilg Anne Rogers Tawnya Ernst Molly Fales Alyssa Street Jayne Thompson Carolyn Aspelin **Bob Tate** Julie Gallick Amber Pougiales Paul Holsinger **Brad Cory Bryce Hinchman** Jerod Smith Sharon Pierce Morgan Weinrich

66

There's a whole lot of people doing lots of hard work for the Association. Many of them don't get the credit they deserve, and they don't ask for it.

They're just interested in getting the job done.

Wad Hinman, president of CCA, 1966-1967



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# TERRY GARDNER

The beautiful cover art for this report is an original piece by 2019 Coors
Western Art Show Featured Artist, Terry Gardner of Morrison, Colorado.
Terry has graciously donated a significant amount of time and effort to benefit the 2020 Forever Colorado BBQ where this painting will be auctioned off.
The painting depicts Fetcher Ranch, which will also be the site of the 2020 Forever Colorado BBQ and 25th Anniversary Celebration.