

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### ***“THE ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST”<sup>1</sup>***

#### **A HISTORY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AT COLORADO COLLEGE – 1874 TO 2011**

**by Andrew Wallace**

*Editor’s Note: Andrew Wallace, a Southwest Studies major in the class of 2012 at Colorado College, wrote this essay for an Independent Study class in Political Science.*

#### **Colorado College and the Outdoors**

The first *Colorado College Catalogue* emphasized the centrality of location in Colorado and Colorado Springs to the essence of the College:

“The sublime scenery of the Rocky Mountains, with all its vast educating power, is most accessible.... The purity of the atmosphere conduces to general healthfulness, and so favors clear and continuous thinking.... The location, in every respect, seems all that can be desired.”

This description of the natural attractions of the Pike’s Peak region clearly envisions a college that is engaged with the land.

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<sup>1</sup> This quote is from the Colorado College Mission Statement: “Drawing upon *the adventurous spirit of the Rocky Mountain West*, we challenge students, one course at a time, to develop those habits of intellect and imagination that will prepare them for learning and leadership throughout their lives.”



**ANDREW WALLACE**

*A 2012 graduate of Colorado College, Andrew Wallace was photographed while leading a New Student Orientation (NSO) trip for Colorado College students in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado during the fall semester of 2012. (Photograph from Andrew Wallace.)*

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Though it is difficult to judge the precise extent to which early Colorado College students and faculty ventured beyond the Colorado Springs city limits, it is clear that the college community took advantage of the recreational and educational possibilities of the mountains from the very start.

In its early days, Colorado College had no formal program facilitating *recreation* in the outdoors for the average student. Unlike many older colleges and universities in the East, that had established “outing clubs” by the early Twentieth Century, Colorado College lacked any college-recognized student outing group. This situation persisted until the establishment of the Colorado College Mountain Club in 1945. The neighboring University of Colorado at Boulder had an established hiking club by 1919.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, however, that many students and faculty in the early days of Colorado College were drawn to the beauty of the Rockies for recreational purposes. In the May/June 1891 issue of the college’s monthly student news magazine, the *Colorado Collegian*, student Joseph B. Kettle of the 1892 graduating class wrote of his ascent of the Mount of the Holy Cross, the northernmost 14,000-foot peak in the Sawatch Range. Recalling the beauty of the view from the summit, Kettle wrote:

“Who can describe the feelings that filled our hearts? Who can picture the grandeur of the scenery before us? The photographer’s camera, the artist’s brush, the poet’s song all fail of portraying the reality.... It was with reluctance that we withdrew from the scene and started our descent.... At last all but worn out and scarcely able to walk we reached home about three o’clock the next morning, but feeling fully paid for our two days experience among the wilds of the Rockies.”<sup>3</sup>

It is likely that Joseph Kettle was not alone in his exploration of the enticing wilderness west of campus in the first decades of the College.

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<sup>2</sup> CU-Boulder Alumni Association, “Hiking Club History.” *The Coloradan* (University of Colorado at Boulder), June 1, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Kettle, J. B., “In the Region of Eternal Snow,” *Colorado Collegian* (Colorado College), May/June 1891.

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Without any college organizations to define the outdoor culture in the period between 1874 and the mid-Twentieth Century, outdoor recreation at Colorado College is best explored through the histories of several key individuals and non-affiliated organizations that contributed to the outdoor culture of both the College and the city of Colorado Springs. Town-gown relations at the dawn of the Twentieth Century were quite different from the early 2000s. By 1900 the population of Colorado Springs was a mere 21,085, and the college enrollment was only 216.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Saturday Knights**

One organization to bring together college faculty and Colorado Springs gentlemen was the Saturday Knights, an all-male invitation-only hiking club. In 1903 a group of three Colorado Springs men decided to establish a “walking group” or “tramping party” to organize weekly hikes in the Pike’s Peak region.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that Herbert Skinner, Albert Hodges, and Sidney Pattison could imagine that they were the catalysts of one of the longest-lasting hiking traditions in the region. By 1905 the Saturday Knights were firmly established as a weekly hiking club and upheld the tradition into the Twenty-First Century.

More than mere walks in the woods, the club’s weekly jaunts were valued by its members as opportunity for camaraderie and reflection. As described in *The Book of Colorado Springs*: “Trips into the mountains are made every Saturday throughout the year with unfailing regularity, regardless of storm or temperature; the cheerful gathering around the ample campfire for the evening is a most attractive feature of the expedition.”<sup>6</sup>

Though this hiking club bore no official association with the College, the Saturday Knights were, and continued to be, an important aspect of the

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<sup>4</sup> Reid, J. J., *Colorado College: The First Century, 1874-1974* (Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado College, 1979), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Tucker, F. H. , *Knights of the Mountain Trails: A Century of Hiking in the Mountains and Parks of the Pike’s Peak Region* (Colorado Springs, CO: Little London Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ormes, M., & Ormes, E., *The Book of Colorado Springs* (Colorado Springs, CO: The Dentan Printing Company, 1933), 275.

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outdoor culture of Colorado College. In the early years of the group, membership was more or less evenly composed of town and gown.

Many notable Colorado College faculty members participated in the weekly Saturday hikes.<sup>7</sup> Among them was Florian Cajori, the famed Colorado College professor of mathematics responsible for the first successful X-ray images produced west of the Mississippi River. Others included Guy Albright and Harold Davis.<sup>8</sup> As one commentator observed:

“Not like the ordinary climbing club, the so called ‘Saturday Knight’ society...is comprised of some of the best minds represented by town and gown.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Manly Ormes**

One Saturday Knight most important to the early history of outdoor recreation at the College was Manly Dayton Ormes, Colorado College librarian from 1904 to 1928. Manly, father of longtime Colorado College Professor Robert Ormes, was an avid outdoorsman and a passionate collector of historical material. His interest in local history resulted in the posthumous publication, thanks to the efforts of his wife, Eleanor Ormes, and his son, Robert Ormes, of *The Book of Colorado Springs*. This 1933 publication detailed the early history of the region.

In addition to his work as a librarian, historian, and pastor, Manly Ormes began a tradition of exploring and mapping the Pike’s Peak wilderness that would be continued by his son. His *Mountain Trails of the Pike’s Peak Region* was published by the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce in 1914, 1918, and 1921. The guide encouraged would-be hikers and included a detailed trail map.

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<sup>7</sup> Ormes, Manly, & Ormes, Eleanor, *The Book of Colorado Springs*, 274.

<sup>8</sup> Reid, J. J., *Colorado College: The First Century, 1874-1974*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Dodge, S., “Thirteen Members of ‘Saturday Knight’ Club Hike Each Weekend,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, February 3, 1924.



**MANLY ORMES**

*He was the Librarian at Colorado College for 25 years and a leading member of the Saturday Knights hiking club. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)*

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To the curious hiker, Ormes wrote:

“Off the beaten path, accessible only to those who take to the trail, there are new wonders and new beauties, bits of primeval forests, little glens of indescribable loveliness, foaming cascades hundreds of feet long, and rare beautiful flowers that choose to hide away in the mountain fastness.”<sup>10</sup>

In the period between 1906 and 1921, the Ormes family, along with about six other families from the College, made a tradition of spending summers near Crystola, a small mountain community 16 miles west of Colorado Springs. Their summer vacation spot, which was on the banks of a stream, came to be known as “College Gulch.”<sup>11</sup>

In January of 1929, the Saturday Knights canceled their regular Saturday hike for the first time in twenty-three years to honor Manly’s death at age 70. The passing of Manly Ormes was a great loss to the community as well as the College. One obituary stated: “The club [Saturday Knights] developed into a group of intellectuals who exchanged opinions and talk around the campfire at night, and most of the time drank in the words of wisdom coming from Dr. [Manly] Ormes.”<sup>12</sup>

The Saturday Knights would remain a strong tradition at Colorado College into the early Twenty-First century, but the organization gradually became less affiliated with the College.

### **Early Colorado College Climbers: The Ellingwood Era**

While some professors were exploring the Pike’s Peak Region with the Saturday Knights, a group of Colorado College students and faculty were breaking new ground in American mountaineering. The man most remembered for his mountaineering achievements in the Colorado

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<sup>10</sup> Ormes, M., *Mountain Trails of the Pikes Peak Region* (Colorado Springs , CO: Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, 1921), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Tucker, F., *Knights of the Mountain Trails: A Century of Hiking in the Mountains and Parks of the Pike’s Peak Region*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> “Saturday Knight Club Calls Off Regular Hike in Memory of Manly Ormes, Late Leader.” (n.d.)

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Mountains was a Colorado College student turned professor named Albert Russell Ellingwood.

Born June 22, 1887, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Ellingwood moved to Cripple Creek with his mother and was settled there by 1900.<sup>13</sup> Ellingwood entered Colorado College as a freshman in 1906 and became active in the campus community. He was a member of Cercle Francais, a French language and literary group, and the Ciceronian Club, an academic honors society. His junior year, Ellingwood was the assistant editor of the *Tiger*, the student newspaper at the time.

Similar to Manly Ormes, Albert Ellingwood had a habit of recording his hiking activity in a notebook he labeled “Tramps.” This record shed light on his active hiking schedule while a student at Colorado College. Fellow French club members or friends from Phi Beta Kappa [the national scholastic honor society], of which Ellingwood also was a member, often accompanied him on these hikes.<sup>14</sup>

Ellingwood graduated from Colorado College in 1910 with what the student newspaper said was “the best scholastic record of any student who has ever graduated from this institution.”<sup>15</sup> He was the first Colorado College student to receive a Rhodes Scholarship and thereby continued his studies at Oxford University in England.

While in England, Ellingwood became involved with the legendary Oxford Mountaineering Club and participated in climbing expeditions in Wales, the Lake District in northern England, and the Alps.<sup>16</sup> The details of his climbing in England are unknown, but there is no doubt that Ellingwood learned much about the art of climbing from his European climbing mates.

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<sup>13</sup> Arnold, J., *Albert Ellingwood: Scholar of Summits* (Pueblo, CO: My Friend the Printer, 2010), 1

<sup>14</sup> Arnold, J., *Albert Ellingwood: Scholar of Summits*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> “To Oxford: Ellingood Wins Rhodes Scholarship.” *Tiger* (Colorado College), January 14, 1910, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Achey, J., Chelton, D., and Godfrey, B., *Climb! The History of Climbing in Colorado* (Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books, 2002), 13.





**ALBERT RUSSELL ELLINGWOOD**

*He graduated from Colorado College in 1910 and was said to have “the best scholastic record of any student who has ever graduated from this institution.” He was a Rhodes Scholar and, after completing his studies at Oxford University, returned to Colorado College to teach Political Science. He was a skilled technical mountain climber. Ellingwood Peak, a 14,042-foot mountain in the Sangre de Cristo Range of Southern Colorado, was named in his honor. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)*

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When he returned to the United States, Ellingwood began a PhD program at the University of Pennsylvania. He accepted a teaching position in the Department of Political Science at Colorado College in 1914. Once back in Colorado, Ellingwood introduced European climbing techniques to his fellow climbers and thus revolutionized mountain climbing in Colorado:

“He knew how to use rope to belay a climber, and brought back soft iron pitons<sup>17</sup> from Europe. Crude as his techniques were, they allowed him to go where other Colorado climbers had not yet dared.”<sup>18</sup>

When not teaching or working on his PhD, Ellingwood was sharing his new techniques with other climbers in the Garden of the Gods, the red sandstone rock park in Colorado Springs just a few miles west of Colorado College. His explorations in the Garden of the Gods in 1914 and 1915 marked the start of technical rock climbing in Colorado.

Ellingwood received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1918. He left Colorado College in 1919 for a faculty position at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Illinois. He returned to Colorado each summer, however, to climb with friends and colleagues from Colorado College. This practice continued after he joined the faculty of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

### **Eleanor Davis**

While teaching at Colorado College, Ellingwood became acquainted with Eleanor Davis, a woman who would become one of his longtime climbing companions. A graduate of the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics in 1907, Davis joined the Colorado College faculty to teach women’s Physical Education in 1914.<sup>19</sup> She taught at the College for 16 years, departing the faculty in 1930. It was her job to organize and teach

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<sup>17</sup> A piton is a metal spike (usually made of steel) that is driven into a crack or seam in the rock to provide protection for technical rock climbing.

<sup>18</sup> Achey, J., Chelton, D., and Godfrey, B., *Climb! The History of Climbing in Colorado*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> *The 1922 Nugget* (Colorado College yearbook), Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.

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non-credit courses in Physical Education to the women students. She eventually married and became Mrs. G. E. Ehrman.

Eleanor Davis and Ellingwood took a hike together in 1915 in Queen's Canyon, a rocky canyon to the north of the Garden of the Gods. Shortly afterwards, Ellingwood offered to teach Davis technical climbing at the Garden of the Gods.

Eleanor Davis possessed impressive physical agility. She was Ellingwood's partner on some of his most important and difficult technical climbs. As a woman in the early Twentieth Century, she was defying social and physical expectations for women by attempting to reach the summits of high and difficult mountains.

When they were climbing together, Ellingwood and Davis were equals. There appears to have been no romantic interest between them. They continued to climb together after Ellingwood married, and Ellingwood's wife would sometimes accompany them on their forays into the mountains.

### **Ellingwood's Accomplishments**

In 1916, Albert Ellingwood, Eleanor Davis, and a party of six others, five of them women, made a trip to the Sangre de Cristo Range in southern Colorado. They accomplished three "first ascents" of unclimbed mountains, including the famous Crestone Peak. An attempt was made on the formidable Crestone Needle, but the party was forced to stop that climb due to weather.

As absurd as it may seem, the party chose to walk most of the way from Colorado Springs to the town of Crestone, a distance of more than 150 miles. Eleanor Davis explained: "We didn't have much money in those days."<sup>20</sup>

In 1920, Ellingwood and climbing partner Barton Hoag, Colorado College class of 1922, made the first ascent of Lizard Head, one of Colorado's most challenging summits. Located in the San Miguel Range, Lizard Head is a 13,113-foot volcanic uplift of highly fractured and brittle rock.

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<sup>20</sup> Robertson, J., *The Magnificent Mountain Women* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 33.



**ELEANOR SOUTHGATE DAVIS**

*She pioneered the art of technical mountain climbing for women in Colorado. This photograph is from the 1922 Colorado College yearbook. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)*

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**ELEANOR DAVIS IN 1927**

*As the Director of Physical Education for Women at Colorado College, she organized and helped to teach the non-credit Physical Education classes required of all women students at the College. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)*

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Following that accomplishment, Ellingwood once again teamed up with Eleanor Davis. They set their sights on the Crestone Needle, the mountain they had failed to climb because of bad weather. In 1925, this time accompanied by Marion Warner and Stephen Hart, Ellingwood and Davis accomplished their goal. Their route to the top was named the *Ellingwood Arête*.

In addition to his accomplishments in Colorado, including numerous new routes to summits in the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado, Ellingwood is remembered for making the first-recorded ascents of the Middle and South Tetons in Wyoming and other important first ascents in the Wind River Range in Wyoming.<sup>21</sup>

Albert Russell Ellingwood died on May 12, 1934, at his home in Evanston, Illinois, due to complications from abdominal surgery. Ellingwood Peak, a 14,042-foot mountain in the Sangre de Cristo Range, commemorates his legacy to technical mountain climbing. How amazing it is that a Colorado College student and faculty member should have a high Rocky Mountain peak named in his honor. He truly was a “Scholar of Summits.”<sup>22</sup>

With Ellingwood’s death, an important chapter in the history of climbing came to a close. In addition to Ellingwood’s role in revolutionizing mountaineering in Colorado, a significant contribution to the sport was the knowledge and experience he imparted to the next generation of climbers, many of them Colorado College students.

### **The Colorado Mountain Club**

An important development was the increasing popularity of recreational hiking, as evidenced by the founding of the Colorado Mountain Club in 1912. The mission statement of the organization reads:

“We are organized to unite the energy, interest and knowledge of the students, explorers, and lovers of the mountains of Colorado; to collect and disseminate information regarding the Rocky Mountains in behalf of

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<sup>21</sup> Bueler, W., *Roof of the Rockies* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co, 1974), 119.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold, J., *Albert Ellingwood: Scholar of Summits*.

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science, literature, art and recreation; *to stimulate the public interest in our mountain areas*; to encourage preservation of the forests, flowers, fauna and natural scenery; and to render readily accessible the alpine attractions of this region.<sup>23</sup>

The Colorado Mountain Club, often referred to as the CMC, was open to both men and women and had a definite influence on attitudes towards women in the outdoors. The Pike's Peak chapter of the club, organized in 1919, became popular with many in the Colorado College community, Ellingwood and Davis included. Manly Ormes acted as the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Pike's Peak chapter when the group was established. He remained an active member until his death in 1929.

Eleanor Davis continued to achieve feats in the mountains and was invited to join the American Alpine Club after climbing the Grand Teton in Wyoming with Horace Albright in 1923. She remained active in the outdoors. She married in 1930, and passed away at age 107 in April of 1993.

Back in Colorado Springs, Colorado College continued to evolve in changing times. The College weathered World War I and then adapted to the more liberal social standards of the Roaring Twenties.

### **The Robert Ormes Legacy**

Robert Manly Ormes was born in Colorado Springs on September 27, 1904. He was the youngest child of Manly D. Ormes and Eleanor R. Ormes. Robert Ormes's passion for the out-of-doors was engendered early by his father, Manly, whose weekly trips into the woods with the Saturday Knights were a source of envy and inspiration for his son. At age ten Robert Ormes climbed Pike's Peak with his siblings.

In 1921, a young Robert Ormes accompanied Albert Ellingwood, Eleanor Davis, and Eleanor Bartlett on a month long mountaineering expedition through the Sawatch and Mosquito ranges of central Colorado. Robert Ormes was only 17-years-old at the time. He was presumably

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<sup>23</sup> Kingery, H., *The Colorado Mountain Club: The First Seventy-Five Years of a Highly Individual Corporation, 1912-1987* (Denver, CO: Cordillera Press, 1988), 11.

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introduced to the Ellingwood/Davis group by his father, Manly Ormes, who was still an important figure at the College in 1921.

Robert Ormes vividly recalled this month in the mountains in his memoir, *Farewell to Ormes*. Recounting these memories in the almost-comical third person used throughout the memoir, Robert Ormes wrote:

“Much of what he [Robert Ormes] remembered was long walks on muddy or dust roads, weary uphill trudging, thirst and endless descents with his toes bumping painfully into the front of his boots. Perhaps it was the necessary inurnment for a life interest in the mountains. He would in later years come back to every one of those peaks - some two or three times, others as many as a dozen times. A pattern was set.”<sup>24</sup>

This trip by Robert Ormes with one of the region’s most important climbers, Albert Ellingwood, signified the passing of a legacy between two generations of uniquely intellectual outdoorsmen. The association that Robert Ormes and Albert Ellingwood had in common was Colorado College.

Robert Ormes entered Colorado College as a freshman in 1922. He spent a difficult sophomore year at Yale, and then he returned to Colorado College the following fall. Robert Ormes began climbing in Colorado with fellow students Dobson “Dobbie” West and Harold Wilm. The three returned to Lizard Head, first climbed by Ellingwood in 1920, where they claimed to have made the second ascent of the “hardest of all Colorado’s peaks to get on top of.”<sup>25</sup> Robert Ormes recalled that West and Wilm brought down the rope Ellingwood had left dangling from his final rappel on Lizard Head back in 1920.<sup>26</sup>

Robert Ormes graduated with a BA in English in 1926 and completed his MA at Colorado College a year later. Upon graduation, he embarked on a teaching career, first in high schools in Colorado and New Mexico,

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<sup>24</sup> Ormes, R., *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect* (Denver, CO: Mountain West Printing Company, 1984), 67.

<sup>25</sup> Ormes, R., *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect*, 67.

<sup>26</sup> Ormes, R., *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect*, 79,



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including the Fountain Valley School in Fountain, Colorado. He returned to Colorado College to join the English faculty in 1952.

It was Ellingwood who suggested that Robert Ormes attempt Shiprock, a volcanic neck near the Four Corners in New Mexico. Robert recalled the friendly verbal joust. Ellingwood said: “Now that you’ve polished off the best climbs in Colorado, why not go down to New Mexico and have a look at Shiprock.”<sup>27</sup>

After a failed first attempt with Dobson West in his undergraduate years, Ormes returned to New Mexico in 1937 with Mel Griffiths, Gordon Williams, and Bill House to give Shiprock another go. It was on this attempt that Ormes took “what may be the most famous fall in American rock-climbing history.”<sup>28</sup> Robert Ormes recalled the 30-foot plummet in his third-person memoir:

“When it gave way he pinched off in a backwards somersault. He had one or two tenths of a second in which to ruminate on a landing place as the desert swirled into sight ... The imaged drama played itself out – the pair of them bouncing downward, connected by a loose rope....”<sup>29</sup>

His account of that fall was published in a widely-read *Saturday Evening Post* article entitled: “A Piece of Bent Iron.” Robert Ormes wrote:

“We were surely not seeking fame; there has never been much public interest in mountaineering feats. As for money, we all had a gay disregard for that.”<sup>30</sup>

In addition to being a skilled climber, Robert Ormes was a prolific writer and gifted teacher. He authored numerous articles on the outdoors

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<sup>27</sup> Ormes, R., “A Piece of Bent Iron,” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 22, 1939, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Achey, J., Chelton, D., and Godfrey, B., *Climb! The History of Climbing in Colorado*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ormes, R., *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Ormes, R., “A Piece of Bent Iron,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 22, 1939, 13.

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following the publication of his account of the Shiprock fall in the *Saturday Evening Post*. In Colorado, he is best known for his cherished *Guide to the Colorado Mountains*, first published by the Colorado Mountain Club in 1952. Although the CMC only asked for a guide to the state's fifty-two 14-thousand foot peaks, Robert Ormes decided to include *all* of Colorado's peaks, most of which he had climbed.

The *Guide* was one of the most comprehensive of its kind and went to ten printings. In addition to the *Guide*, Robert Ormes published numerous maps and books. One was *Colorado Skylines; The Pike's Peak Atlas*. Another was *Tracking Ghost Railroads in Colorado: A Five Part Guide to Abandoned and Scenic Lines*. And there was his memoir, *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect*.

The Colorado College that Ormes returned to in 1952 had been through much since his undergraduate years. The Great Depression of the 1930s greatly reduced the school's endowment and caused student enrollment to drop significantly for some years. Of even greater impact to the school, and to the nation at large, was World War II.

The war effort took center stage on campus. The College was designated a training center for the Navy-Marine V-12 program, Washburn Field was used for military drills, and women students planted "Victory Gardens" (vegetable gardens) on the main quadrangle in front of Palmer Hall. Fifty-two Colorado College students lost their lives fighting in the war.

When World War II ended, there was a dramatic increase in enrollment at Colorado College as many war veterans received a college education under the U.S. Government's generous G.I. Bill of Rights.

### **The Colorado College Mountain Club**

Numerous Colorado College students and faculty were active members of the Pike's Peak chapter of the Colorado Mountain Club in the post-World War II period. This loose group was held together under the leadership of Robert Ormes, Betsy Cowles, and Harry L. Standly, the noted mountain photographer.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Carter, H., "Nostalgia/ Part II Mundus Est Mons," *Climbing Magazine*, April 1971, 3.

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In 1944, high school friends Stanley Boucher and Vernon Twombly picked up a copy of the *American Alpine Journal* and were intrigued by the idea of climbing rocks. Armed only with a manila rope and homemade pitons, Boucher and Twombly began to explore technical rock climbing in the Pike's Peak Region.

When the pair joined the freshman class at Colorado College a year later, the acquisition of surplus climbing gear from the U.S Army 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain division armed them with the tools to take their climbing to a new level. They began establishing new climbing routes in North Cheyenne Canyon Park and Garden of the Gods Park in Colorado Springs. A climbing route in the Garden of the Gods, named the "Boucher-Twombly," honors the pair.

A passion for climbing and a desire to see that a legacy of great climbing at Colorado College continued inspired the pair, with the help of fellow students Don Teague and Walter Sweet, to establish the Colorado College Mountain Club. The CCMC was created as a junior affiliate of the Colorado Mountain Club and received approval from the College in 1945. At last, Colorado College had a college-recognized student organization promoting recreation in the outdoors.

Although Robert Ormes did not officially join the Colorado College faculty until 1952, his close connection to the College made him an instrumental figure in the establishment of the Colorado College Mountain Club in 1945. At a time when the sort of climbing Boucher and Twombly were so passionate about was viewed with skepticism by many, his encouragement and love of the sport ensured that the legacy of great Colorado College outdoorsmen would not be lost.

Remembering Ellingwood's influence, Robert Ormes noted:

"It was Albert Ellingwood who taught me that climbing was not beneath a grown man's dignity."<sup>32</sup>

Concerning the establishment of the CCMC and the culture of the post World War II period at Colorado College, Vernon Twombly recalled:

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<sup>32</sup> Ormes, R., "A Piece of Bent Iron," *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 22, 1939, 13.

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“When we began rock climbing everyone thought we were insane, including our parents, our professors and the townspeople in general. The thought that someone would give up an automobile to walk in the mountains was very strange, particularly when automobiles had not been available during World War II and were suddenly there for everyone to buy and ride in, along with other conspicuous consumptions that come after a major war. We were going against the stream, but did not mind very much because we enjoyed our mountains.”<sup>33</sup>

The club was informally sustained by this enjoyment of the mountains until a forced bivouac (overnight stay) on a casual climb up Pike’s Peak resulted in the creation of a more safety-conscious organization.<sup>34</sup> A club charter was adopted and officers were elected. Stanley Boucher and Dorothy Teague, both of the class of 1949, became the first CCMC co-chairs. As an official college organization, the club began establishing programs and sponsoring trips. Mountains climbed included Pike’s Peak and the Grand Tetons in Wyoming.

An annual “Rock School” was soon established as an important mainstay of the club. Each fall the College’s more experienced climbers would introduce newcomers to the basics of the sport. In the Garden of the Gods Park the neophyte students trained on sandstone. In North Cheyenne Canyon Park they practiced on granite.<sup>35</sup>

The equipment used consisted mostly of sisal ropes purchased from Sears and Vernon Twombly’s homemade pitons. This questionable equipment, laughable by future standards, placed a premium on one’s ability to climb without falling. In addition to the “Rock School,” the club sponsored a film and lecture series bringing such notable Alpinists as Elizabeth Cowels and Mel Griffiths to the College.

A significant achievement for the early CCMC was the first ascent of the 1,500-foot North Face of Blanca Peak in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. After 42 hours of difficult climbing, Stan Boucher, class of

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<sup>33</sup> Twombly, V., Letter to Heidi Hinton, March 4, 1975.

<sup>34</sup> McChristal, J., “They’re There Because...,” *Colorado College Bulletin*, March 1971, 63.

<sup>35</sup> Carter, H., “Nostalgia/ Part II Mundus Est Mons,” *Climbing Magazine*, 3-5.

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1949, and John Alexander, class of 1952, along with Dan King and Dave Johnson, reached the summit in the fall of 1948.

The CCMC faculty advisory committee included Lester Michel, professor of Chemistry and one time Colorado Mountain Club president; Robert Ormes; Thomas Rawles, former Dean of the College and professor of Mathematics; and Roger Whitney, medical advisor to the College. Dr. Whitney was an avid mountaineer who lost his life on July 22, 1965, while on a climbing expedition in Peru with the Iowa Mountaineers Club.

By 1949, the last of the founding students of the CCMC were graduating and a new generation of outdoors-oriented men and women took the reins of the club. Of his four years of climbing with the CCMC, Stanley Boucher wrote:

“I know some of us in later years thought that maybe the best bull sessions we had on many of the basic issues of life were on the CC Mountain Club outings.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1955, Louis T. Benezet assumed the presidency of Colorado College. Benezet was an outdoorsman. He had been a leader of the Dartmouth College Outing Club as an undergraduate. President Benezet frequently joined Robert Ormes on mountain outings.<sup>37</sup> Under Benezet’s leadership, the College underwent a building boom and enrollment reached a new high of 1,209 students.

In 1947 the Ptarmigan Ski Club was established at the College to “help maintain and support the sport of skiing and all winter sports.”<sup>38</sup> The club organized periodic ski competitions with regional schools.

As the Colorado College continued to grow and evolve, so too did the Colorado College Mountain Club. In the period from the club’s establishment in 1945 to the adoption of the Block Plan in 1970, the CCMC was an active part of the campus culture. Several notable individuals defined these years. One of them was Harvey T. Carter.

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<sup>36</sup> McChristal, J., “They’re There Because...,” *Colorado College Bulletin*, March 1971, 63-68.

<sup>37</sup> Ormes, R., *Farewell to Ormes: A Colorado Mountain Life in Retrospect*, 161.

<sup>38</sup> Ptarmigan Ski Club, “Constitution of the Ptarmigan Ski Club,” 1947.

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### **Harvey T. Carter**

Harvey T. Carter, class of 1956, was the son of Colorado College professors Ruth Carter and Harvey L. Carter.

Harvey T. Carter was drafted into the US Army in 1952 and served as a mountain-climbing instructor for the troops based at Fort Carson. That was a job that had been held by Robert Ormes during World War II.

At Colorado College, Harvey T. Carter served as CCMC president. After graduating in 1956, he took a job with the Aspen Ski Patrol. Spending winters on the slopes, he used his summer months to explore climbing challenges in Colorado and the desert Southwest. The precarious sandstone rock at the Garden of the Gods inspired Carter to develop a new protection system utilizing deep-drilled holes and durable angle pitons.<sup>39</sup>

In the late 1950s, Harvey T. Carter formed a climbing club known as the TCC. Those initials stood for The Climbers Club. He was an important force advancing climbing in the region, organizing the first formal bouldering competition in the Garden of the Gods in 1956. Bouldering, a style of climbing without a rope and usually limited to short climbs close to the ground, was still in its infancy.

With only \$900, Harvey T. Carter founded *Climbing Magazine* with two friends in 1970. *Climbing Magazine* quickly became the major journal of the climbing community. Fellow Colorado College student and climbing partner Gary Ziegler, an accomplished mountaineer responsible for several notable first ascents in the Peruvian Andes, described his experiences climbing with Harvey T. Carter in Utah: "We climbed hard. We partied hard. It's amazing we survived."<sup>40</sup>

### **Mountaineer's Weekend**

Another important Colorado College Mountain Club activity in this period was the annual "Mountaineer's Weekend." Started in 1956, these annual gatherings of college mountain clubs from the Rocky Mountain

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<sup>39</sup> Achey, J., Chelton, D., and Godfrey, B., *Climb! The History of Climbing in Colorado*.

<sup>40</sup> Philipps, D., "Harvey's Hands," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, June 4, 2008.

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region provided an opportunity for club members to exchange ideas, equipment, and techniques while exploring the Rocky Mountain West.

In 1962, the CCMC hosted the sixth annual Mountaineer's Weekend, inviting college climbers to the Colorado College campus. The visitors were allowed to make camp on Stewart field, although the College requested "a certain amount of propriety."<sup>41</sup> The CCMC participated in similar events hosted by the University of Wyoming Outing Club, the University of Utah Ute Alpine Club, and Colorado State University.

Sometime during this period, the Colorado College Mountain Club began to compile a comprehensive Colorado climbing guide that came to be known simply as *The Great Book*. Completed in the early 1970s, the guide grew to include information for climbs in Utah, California, and Wyoming. *The Great Book* is a testament to the club's widespread climbing activity in the western region of the United States.

In the 1960s, the club began a process of diversification to expand the range of activities offered. In addition to the Rock School and several climbing trips, the fall 1963 schedule of events included spelunking in Huccacove Cave and cross-country skiing.<sup>42</sup>

The annual Rock School program was expanded to include a winter snow and ice school. The club continued to acquire mountaineering equipment which was made available for rental to club members. In the spirit of the 1960s, the club became active in promoting an ethic of environmental preservation. It sponsored a film series and discussions to this end.

The Colorado College Mountain Club maintained a prominent role on campus into the mid 1970s. A highlight was the first winter ascent of the North Face of Blanca Peak in 1973 by Curt Haire, class of 1975, and Russell Hotchkiss, class of 1974.

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<sup>41</sup> Colorado College Mountain Club, "Mountaineers Weekend, 1962."

<sup>42</sup> Colorado College Mountain Club, "CCMC Schedule of Events, Fall 1963."

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### **The Colorado College Block Plan**

With the implementation of the Block Plan in the fall of 1970, outdoor recreation at Colorado College would assume new prominence as an integral component of the Block Plan vision.

As the Colorado College approached its centennial year in 1974, it was decided that the College should use this historic anniversary to closely examine the state of the institution. Upon getting this recommendation from Professor Fred Sondermann, President Lloyd Worner appointed Political Science Professor Glenn Brooks to carry out a comprehensive review of the entire college program.

In 1968, Brooks began reaching out to as many campus constituencies as possible to understand how the College could be improved. A sense of dissatisfaction and unrest filled college campuses across the nation in the late 1960s. Though students at Colorado College remained subdued, it was a time of nationwide change in higher education.

While there was widespread general approval of the college curriculum, Brooks discovered that many were dissatisfied with the scheduling restrictions of the semester system. With the desire to liberate students and faculty from the pedagogical limitations of the traditional semester system, the Colorado College Block Plan took form.

While Brooks admitted that the “first emphasis was on bettering the academic program,” the complete life of the College remained an important consideration throughout the review.<sup>43</sup> In the dialogue that ensued, “the faculty and administration began to understand, and appreciate, that ‘the other life of the student’ had to be taken into account.”<sup>44</sup>

Under the envisioned plan, students would only take one course for three-and-one-half weeks and professors would teach only one course for three-and-one-half weeks. This system of intensive modular learning anticipated all classes ending by 3 P.M. each day, ensuring time for extra-curricular activities. The plan would also allow for a four-and-a-half day Block Break at the end of each block.

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<sup>43</sup> Author’s notes, interview with Glenn Brooks, February 15, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Author’s notes, interview with Glenn Brooks, February 15, 2011.



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The faculty approved the Plan on October 27, 1969, by a vote of 72 to 53. Students who matriculated at Colorado College in the fall of 1970 took primarily only one class at a time.

### **The Leisure Program**

Glenn Brooks' planning committee developed a "Leisure Program" as a key component of the new Block Plan. This Leisure Program was divided into three categories: cultural activities, student organizational programs, and physical activities. Taken together, these components would be "an important element in the liberal education of the student as well as a source of relaxation and recreation."<sup>45</sup>

The new plan encouraged the continuation of all student clubs and organizations that contributed to the Leisure Program of the College or to the general education of the student. In its initial vision, the plan conceived of the possibility for "students and staff with a penchant for skiing or mountain expeditions" to "set aside a full three weeks at the propitious season for their favorite pastime."<sup>46</sup>

### **The Outdoor Recreation Committee (ORC)**

Although the Colorado College Mountain Club was still an active campus organization in the early 1970s, the Block Plan further facilitated outdoor recreation by creating the student-led Outdoor Recreation Committee (ORC). This new committee was under the supervision of the Leisure Program Committee, which was a policy committee "charged with the supervision and generation of significant co-curricular and extra-curricular programming for the entire Colorado College campus."

The Leisure Program Committee oversaw the activities and funding of numerous student committees and existing cultural programs. Among them were the Folk Rock and Dance Committee, the Films Committee, the Co-Curricular Committee, and the ORC. The ORC occupied space in the basement of Cossitt Hall.

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<sup>45</sup> Glenn Brooks, *Memorandum*, August 25, 1969, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Glenn Brooks, *Memorandum*, August 25, 1969, 8.

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The Outdoor Recreation Program under the Leisure Program Committee was developed with the stated goal “to both enhance ecological and aesthetic sensitivity to the outdoors and to re-enforce the basic skills and concerns of outdoor living.”<sup>47</sup> To this end, the Leisure Program Committee had a \$3,000 budget for the 1972-1973 academic year. In addition to purchasing equipment for student rental, the committee organized ten outings, including skiing at the Broadmoor, a leadership-training trip to Crested Butte, and a Rio Grande river raft trip over spring vacation.<sup>48</sup>

The following year, 18 students began the Colorado College tradition of bicycling from Colorado Springs to Aspen during the first Block Break in the fall. The bicyclists departed the campus on Wednesday afternoon of Block Break to begin a three-day and two-night pedal through the Rocky Mountains. On the last day, they coasted down from the top of Independence Pass and arrived in the town of Aspen on Friday evening.

A 1972 climbing accident reminded the college community of the inherent dangers of outdoor activity. In the summer of 1972, Colorado College students Andy Wilson and John Trinkaus, along with their friend John Dickson, headed to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains for a weekend excursion in the wilderness. Trinkaus and Dickson left Wilson at camp and went for a day climb up Blanca Peak. Though precise details of the accident are unknown, John Trinkaus and John Dickson suffered fatal injuries on their descent.

It was in this period of transformation that the College’s most influential outdoorsman entered retirement. Robert Ormes is remembered fondly for his service to the College. Fellow professor Richard Bradley summed up Robert Ormes’s character in an address presenting Ormes an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the College in 1985. Bradley recalled:

“Bob ... is a person whose meritorious achievements and service derive primarily from a lifelong love of the mountains, a great delight in

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<sup>47</sup> Leisure Program Committee (Colorado College), "Report to Faculty 1972-1973."

<sup>48</sup> Leisure Program Committee (Colorado College), "Leisure Program Events - 1972-1973."

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bringing people to the mountains and (through his writing) bringing the mountains to people.”<sup>49</sup>

Robert Manly Ormes passed away on December 22, 1994. In 2010, Ormes was posthumously awarded the “Spirit of Adventure Award” for his contributions to Colorado College.

Though the exact events remain unclear, it appears that the Colorado College Mountain Club gradually became incorporated into the new Block Plan structure and ceased to exist as a separate college organization. In a 1974 article in the *Catalyst*, the student newspaper, the Colorado College Mountain Club was described as “independent of Colorado College.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, club records ceased to exist after the 1975 academic year.

With or without recognized college organizations, Colorado College has, from its inception, attracted many rugged individuals who are drawn to the challenge of climbing mountains.

### **The New Prominence of Outdoor Recreation**

In its early years, the Leisure Program faced challenges. There was a lack of integration between outdoor physical activities and the more entertainment-oriented Leisure Program activities. The new organization, however, was widely embraced by the campus community. In the decade following the adoption of the Block Plan, the Outdoor Recreation Committee grew steadily in both programs offered and student participation.

A highlight of the ORC program in this period was a 1976 spring break expedition to climb two volcanoes in Mexico, Ixtaccihuatl (17,343 feet high) and Popopactapetl (17,781 feet high). Eighteen Colorado College students were led by fellow students Malcolm Person and John Schmuck on this serious and challenging mountaineering expedition.

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<sup>49</sup> Bradley, R., “Citation for Robert Manly Ormes,” Colorado College graduation, June 3, 1985.

<sup>50</sup> Langben, F., “Club Plans for Mt. Orizaba,” *Catalyst* (Colorado College), Fall 1974.

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### **Outward Bound**

In 1984 Outward Bound, the international non-profit outdoor-leadership school, relocated its regional office to Colorado College. This move coincided with the development of the Leadership 2000 program at the College. Leadership 2000 was envisioned as “an all college program which involves students, faculty and staff in the study of leadership and the training of leaders.”<sup>51</sup>

In addition to offering academic programs and encouraging student leadership on campus, the Leadership 2000 program identified the Outdoor Recreation Committee, in cooperation with Outward Bound, as a source of valuable leadership experience. The program was to allow “students to discover Colorado as well as themselves through backpacking, sailing on the high lakes, horse packing, and biking.”

Though short lived, the Colorado College-Outward Bound partnership was invaluable to the development of college outdoor programs. Outward Bound provided consultation and offered refinement of the Colorado College outdoor safety and leadership manuals.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Colorado College students were offered internships with Outward Bound.

In 1985, Colorado College student Holly Ornstein took advantage of this opportunity. For her internship, she planned and led a month-long rafting trip on the Green River in Utah for 20 special-education students from the Colorado Springs area.<sup>53</sup>

Outward Bound had ended its relationship with Colorado College by 1990.

### **Freshman Outdoor Orientation Trips**

Another important development inspired, at least in part, by the vision of the Leadership 2000 program was the initiation of the Freshman Outdoor Orientation Trip (FOOT) program in 1984. This program had become

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<sup>51</sup> "Program Draft: 1986 International Leadership Development Institute," Committee Report, Colorado College, 1986.

<sup>52</sup> "Contract between Colorado College and the Colorado Outward Bound School," Colorado College, 1984.

<sup>53</sup> "On Campus," *Business Week - Careers*, September 1985.

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hugely popular by the 1987 academic year, sending over 150 new students into the backcountry over the first Block Break.<sup>54</sup> The FOOT program was the first large-scale annual program with the goal of exposing incoming students to the outdoors.

The program continued to expand into the Twenty-First Century. David Crabtree, class of 1985, fondly remembered leading a group of freshman students on a sailing expedition on Eleven Mile Reservoir, a large lake located west of Colorado Springs in Pike National Forest.

### **Block Plan Classes Take to the Outdoors**

A key selling point of the Block Plan was its potential to facilitate increased fieldwork in academic study. As anticipated, classes in a number of departments began to take advantage of the flexible modular schedule, but with an emphasis on being outdoors. An Anthropology class traveled to southern Colorado to participate in an archeological dig. The Geology Department organized multi-week “rock-chopping” trips throughout the southwestern United States. These trips became standard practice in Geology courses.

Suddenly, the “vast educating powers” of the Rocky Mountain region advertised in the first college catalogues in the 1870s were being realized in Colorado College classes in a participatory way. This increase in fieldwork provided more opportunities for more students to experience the natural wonders of the region. This pattern was intensified with two important additions to the college infrastructure – a mountain cabin and a foothills retreat.

### **The Colorado College Cabin**

In the summer of 1980, eight Colorado College students decided to spend their summer in the mountains working in construction. Their project was building, from the ground up, the Colorado College Mountain Cabin. It was located on 80 acres of land six miles west of Divide, Colorado. The land

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<sup>54</sup> Leisure Program Policy Committee (Colorado College), "Annual Report for the Leisure Program and Worner Campus Center," 1987.

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was donated to the College by alumnus Dr. Donald Cameron. The cabin was envisioned as a mountain hideaway for classes and other campus groups.

This facility was named the Gilmore-Stabler cabin in honor of two Colorado College professors. Sadly, it burned to the ground on May 18, 1991. The cause of the fire was never determined. The cabin was rebuilt and expanded by the College in the fall of 1991. It became a popular mountain meeting place for numerous classes, campus organizations, and alumni groups.

### **The Baca Campus**

Another important addition to the College was the former Aspen Institute Conference Center, located in the small town of Crestone, Colorado. Nestled at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley, the Aspen Institute facilities were first rented by the College in 1987 for Professor Joe Gordon, who brought an English class there to study the literature of the wilderness. Professor Gordon recalled:

“We analyzed Homer in the mornings [and] took long hikes in the mountains in the afternoons.... I can still remember the sharpness of the night air and the sky full of stars.... Most of the students were from large urban and suburban areas. They were struck by the silence around them, the deer that crossed the path, the coyotes that howled them to sleep at night.”<sup>55</sup>

The success of this first trip encouraged the school to continue to rent, and then to purchase, the conference center and the adjacent land from the Aspen Institute. Financial support for the project was provided by Trustee Emeritus Jerome McHugh. The facility was named the Baca Campus. Over 3,000 students experienced “The Baca,” as it came to be called, in the first three years of operation.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Gordon, J., "From the Director...", *La Tertulia* (Colorado College), Winter 1993.

<sup>56</sup> “Then and Now: Studying Off Campus,” *The Barnes Society* (Colorado College), Spring 1996, 1-2.

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In the fall of 1992, the College completed construction of a 7,000 square-foot pueblo-style lodge complex. The new space included ample sleeping arrangements, a small library, and classroom space. An early publication described The Baca as “a special place of *sun, silence, and mountains*, offering an ideal environment in which to work, think, and relax.”<sup>57</sup>

The Freshman Outdoor Orientation program, the construction of the Gilmore-Stabler cabin, and the acquisition and expansion of the Baca Campus became significant aspects of a Colorado College education. Increased numbers of students and faculty were able to experience the additional natural beauties beyond the Colorado College home campus in Colorado Springs. As a result, the “outdoors” assumed a broader educational and recreational role at Colorado College.

### **The Ritt Kellog Fund**

On June 18, 1992, Colorado College alumnus Peter Rittenhouse Kellog lost his life on Alaska’s 17,240-foot Mt. Foraker. Ritt, as friends called him, along with Tom Walter and Colby Coombs, class of 1989, were finishing up a steep snow climb when an avalanche struck, killing both Kellog and Walter.

The third member of the party, Colby Coombs, awoke the next morning hanging from his climbing rope. His helmet was shattered, and he was badly injured. Coombs made a harrowing six-day lone descent, finally reaching the safety of an airstrip camp at Kahiltna Glacier. In the wake of this tragedy, Colby Coombs, with the support of Ritt Kellog’s family and friends, established the Ritt Kellog Memorial Fund in the winter of 1993.

The mission of the fund was to “to help Colorado College students promote imagination, challenge and personal growth in their own responsible and conscientious pursuit of wilderness expeditions and education.” Grants were awarded to Colorado College students to facilitate wilderness travel and safety.<sup>58</sup>

The first grants were awarded in 1994 and provided students a unique opportunity to plan, budget, and execute extended wilderness expeditions

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<sup>57</sup> Colorado College promotional pamphlet for the Baca Campus, 1993-1995.

<sup>58</sup> Ritt Kellog Fund website, February 2011.

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anywhere in North America. Grant criteria necessitated that all trips be at least twelve days in length. To promote and facilitate the acquisition of those “hard skills” necessary for the execution of a safe and successful expedition, education grants were offered to participating students.

The fund was managed by a board independent of the college. Board members included many close friends of the late Ritt Kellog, including Colby Coombs, class of 1989, and Mary Bevington, class of 1990. The Kellog Fund also was used to purchase relevant books to enhance the Tutt Library collection.

Some of the first expeditions funded by the memorial fund were the “Maine Island Trail by Sea Kayak,” by Andrew Shoff and Michael Feuer in 1996, and “A Slickrock Odyssey,” by Ryan McKeon and Anderson Shepard in 2003. Each fall, the fund supported a slide-show presentation for the campus community highlighting the previous year’s expeditions. The fund was a major contributor to the construction of the Ritt Kellog Climbing Gym in El Pomar Sports Center in 2000.

### **Climbing Association of Colorado College (CACC)**

With the disbanding of the Colorado College Mountain Club in the mid-1970s, Colorado College ceased to have a college-recognized organization explicitly for student climbers. Though the Outdoor Recreation Committee did occasionally offer climbing trips, the committee was not accommodating to serious technical climbers. Climbing continued to be pursued by Colorado College students, though they did so on their own time and accountability. This changed in 2001 when a group of student climbers came together to organize the Climbing Association of Colorado College.

In addition to managing the on-campus Ritt Kellog Climbing Gym, the club facilitated the annual publication of the *Colorado College Alpine Journal*. The *Journal* related climbing accounts from current and former students and became an important force unifying the Colorado College climbing community, past and present.

### **The Death of Jason Wilkes**

On August 20, 1992, Colorado College senior Jason Wilkes was killed while rock climbing in the Garden of the Gods, a popular climbing spot for



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students. His climbing rope caught on a sharp ledge and severed. Wilkes' death shocked the campus community. When the grief subsided, the college administration began to examine more closely student activities in the outdoors and evaluate the College's responsibility for student safety.

Wilkes was not participating in a College-sponsored activity, and the accident did not result in any immediate reform of College outdoor programs or policies.

### **“Vision 2010”**

The “Vision 2010” project was initiated by President Dick Celeste when he assumed the college presidency in 2002. Following a “comprehensive examination by the campus community of Colorado College's mission and goals,” Vision 2010 outlined several key themes that the College should emphasize in the first decade of the Twenty-First Century. Among them was the theme of “location.”<sup>59</sup>

The Vision 2010 project observed that “the Block Plan, when combined with our location adjacent to the center of the Rocky Mountains, excites and challenges large numbers of our students in their studies and recreation. Many gain a ‘sense of place’ that equips them to have geographic and regional perspective and sensitivity throughout their lives.”<sup>60</sup>

In addition to providing goals for the increased academic study of the region, Initiative E of the Vision 2010 report called for “increasing the visibility of outdoor recreation in the Rocky Mountain West.”<sup>61</sup> This section emphasized the importance of informing prospective students of the outdoor opportunities at the College. It also listed various ways the theme of “location” could be incorporated into the Colorado College experience.

Such an assessment of the “value” of the outdoors was validated when, in 2003, *Outside Magazine* selected 40 schools that, in the words of the magazine, “turn out smart grads with top-notch academic credentials, a healthy environmental ethos, and an A+ sense of adventure.”<sup>62</sup> Colorado

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<sup>59</sup> “Vision 2010” website, Colorado College, February 16, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> “Intellectual Engagement Theme for Mapping Process,” Colorado College, 2003.

<sup>61</sup> “Intellectual Engagement Theme for Mapping Process.”

<sup>62</sup> “Outside University: The Top 40,” *Outside Magazine*.

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College placed 13<sup>th</sup>, between Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

In addition to increasing the “visibility” of college outdoor programs, the Vision 2010 plan also stated an explicit need to “establish and implement a risk management plan for all off-campus initiatives.”<sup>63</sup> In line with this view, Colorado College created a full-time staff position to oversee outdoor recreation. In 2004, Steve Crosby was hired as the first director of outdoor education at Colorado College.

Crosby came to Colorado College after advising the Adventure Learning Programs at the University of Wisconsin - Madison for 2 years. He completed a Masters of Education in adult and higher education from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, focusing on excellence in outdoor leadership development in higher education. He worked with the Colorado Outward Bound School from 1990 to 1996 and had been an adjunct faculty member teaching wilderness studies at Colorado Mountain College from 1993 to 1998.

With extensive experience in the field, Crosby guided the Colorado College outdoor program from an active student-led campus organization providing recreational opportunities in the outdoors to a fully institutionalized program of outdoor education.

This program was given a financial boost when a portion of a \$7.9 million grant from the Robert & Ruby Priddy Charitable Trust was used for the creation of “The Priddy Experience” for all incoming students in 2003. This new-student orientation program sent approximately 550 students on four-day service trips throughout Colorado to foster “a sense of civic responsibility in partnership with the southwest community.”<sup>64</sup>

Approximately 390 students engaged in urban service-based trips in Colorado and in the Southwest. Approximately 160 participated in back country service trips in the Colorado mountains. The Priddy Experience joined the FOOT program in introducing a large percentage of the freshman class to the region’s natural beauties.

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<sup>63</sup> "Mapping Process Report," Colorado College, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> “The Priddy Experience Page” website, Colorado College.

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### **Jerry W. Ahlberg Outdoor Education Fund**

In 2007 the establishment of the Jerry W. Ahlberg Outdoor Education Fund helped to ensure the continued development of outdoor education at Colorado College. The fund was established in honor of Colorado College alumnus Jerry Ahlberg, class of 1968, by longtime friends Eben Moulton and Bruce McCaw, both class of 1968. The goal of the fund was to enhance Colorado College outdoor programs and make the outdoors more accessible to all students, regardless of previous experience.

To this end, the fund supported the acquisition of a house on Weber Street, on the eastern edge of campus, to become the Ahlberg Outdoor Education Center. The center included an equipment rental program and contained a map resource room to help students plan their trips. The fund also created the Ahlberg Adventure Program to provide professionally guided outdoor experiences for students new to the outdoors.

In November of 2007, the College sponsored the Ahlberg Outdoor Education Symposium commemorating the life and legacy of the late Jerry Ahlberg. At the event, college administrators reiterated a commitment to developing outdoor education programs at Colorado College.

### **Conclusions**

For trapping, for mining, and for the satisfaction one gets from exploring nature, the Colorado mountains have been many things to many people. Since the year 1874 in which Colorado College was founded, the outdoors, as a place for recreation and education, has been a factor in the identity of the College. The first decade of the Twenty-first Century witnessed a major expansion of the College's outdoor programs as a key element in the intellectual life of its students.

In 2010, over 300 students participated in Outdoor Recreation Committee programs, not including backcountry New Student Orientation trips. In addition to backpacking and backcountry skiing, students participated in kayaking and rafting trips. They learned climbing at the Ritt Kellog Climbing Gym.

Significant as these figures were, they failed to represent the actual role of the outdoors in the lives of the students, faculty, and staff that make up the Colorado College community. Whether participating in a freshman

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outdoor orientation trip, exploring the desert with friends over Block Break, or simply waking each morning to the view of Pike's Peak to the west, the outdoors remained very much a part of the Colorado College experience.

One must agree with the College's founders: "The location, in every respect, seems all that can be desired."<sup>65</sup>

*"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn." – John Muir*

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<sup>65</sup> *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Colorado College, 1874-1875.*