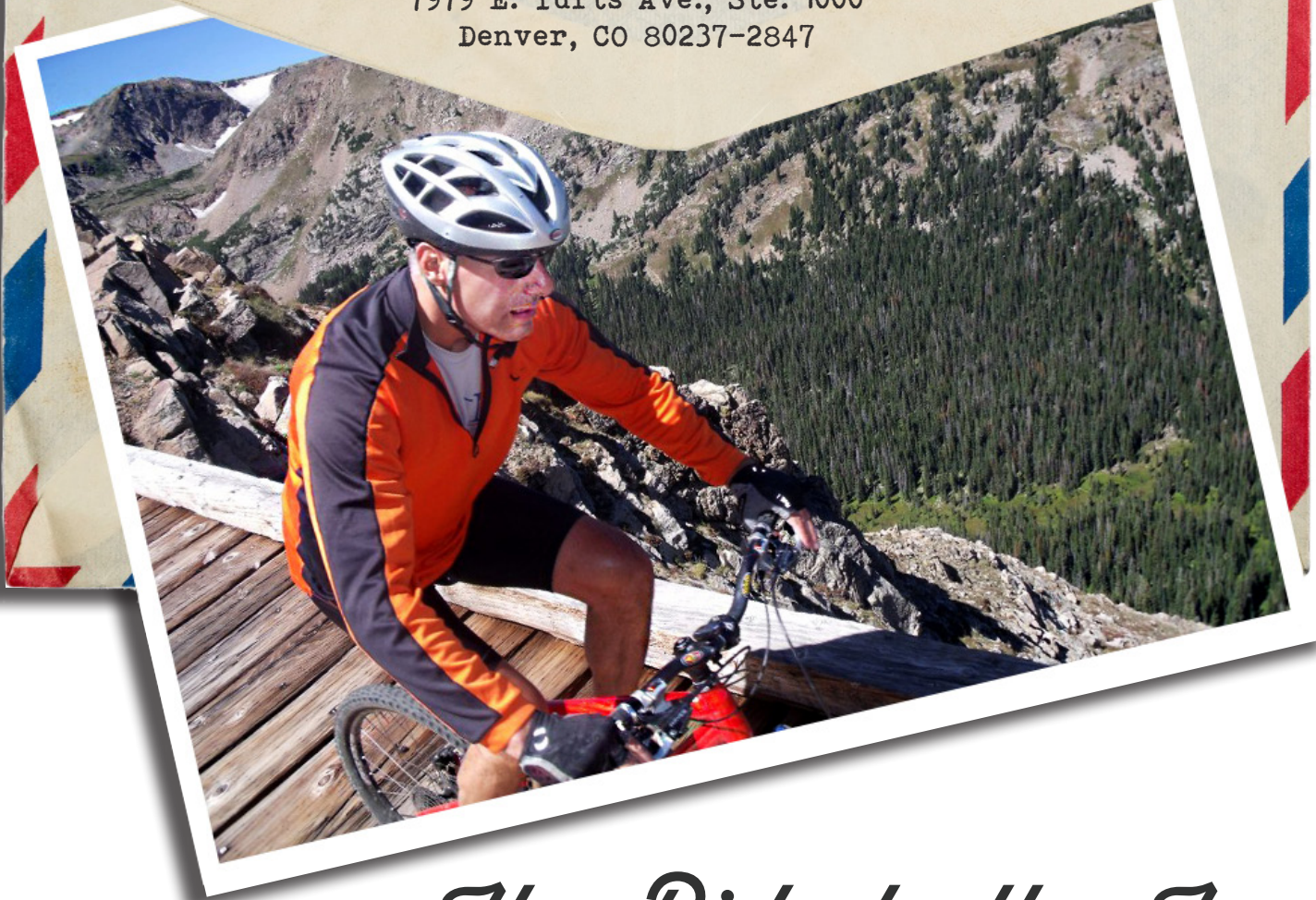


CSCPA  
7979 E. Tufts Ave., Ste. 1000  
Denver, CO 80237-2847



## *The Ride to the Top*

### Colorado's Greg Anton En Route to AICPA Chairmanship

Over the AICPA's nearly 125-year history, 99 individuals have taken the helm. Already, three of them — **Clem W. Collins**, **Marvin L. Stone**, and **A. Marvin Strait** — have hailed from Colorado, a state small in population with a big presence on the accounting profession's national stage. On Oct. 19, the CSCPA's **Gregory J. Anton, CPA**, founding partner of Anton Collins Mitchell LLP, will become the fourth Colorado CPA to chair the AICPA board of directors, putting the Centennial State in the national spotlight once again.

Born and raised in a Boston suburb, Greg Anton grew up next to a small lake, boating, fishing, and sailing. He also lived just five miles from a local ski area. It wasn't much by Colorado standards, 300 vertical feet and one chair

lift, but he learned how to ski and liked it well enough to head to the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley after high school.

Greeley was good to Anton, even though he discovered the university was so far from the mountains he did not ski as much as he hoped to while in college. "On the UNC brochure it looked like Long's Peak was just beyond campus," he laughs. "They tricked me."

Since he wasn't spending much of his time skiing, Anton had plenty of time to pursue his education, prepare for his future in the accounting profession, and meet his wife, Julie.

#### Future CPA

Anton took his first accounting class while he was in high school. "I was fortunate

to have a high school teacher who was actually a business person," he says. "As a result, the class had a business focus to it instead of being a bookkeeping class, which was typical for that day." Also, his father had opened and operated a family business. Anton became intrigued with how it worked.

He wasn't sure what his major within the business school would be, "but I was learning how integral the language of business (accounting) is to success in business."

Then, a cousin who was an accounting major told Anton to go to the university's career services office and see who was hiring. "All of these CPA firms were coming to recruit. It was the perfect combination of wanting to get involved in business, and accounting was an avenue to do so. Account-

ing gave me the ability to put myself in a position to have a job when I graduated.”

Right out of college, Anton went to work for Seidman and Seidman, which became BDO USA, LLP, but he always had a vision for his own business. “I never imagined it would be a CPA firm, but that’s the path that led me to business ownership and being an entrepreneur in the profession I grew up in.”

## Founding of a CPA Firm

In 2002, Anton, along with Jim Collins and Gary Mitchell, formed Denver CPA firm Anton Collins Mitchell LLP (ACM). “We had each other’s best interests in mind,” Anton says. “It was a partnership of three individuals with the same vision and goals.”

As Anton talked to clients about the new firm, they let him know what he was in for. “They told me I would really understand what it was like to own a business now,” he remembers. “And that I’d start paying attention to postage and when lights were left on. It creates a different sense of ownership,” he laughs. He also realized being the owner was an entirely new burden in terms of responsibility. “But it’s a good feeling to create opportunities for others and share the success.”

Recently, ACM was named a “Fastest Growing Private Company” by the *Denver Business Journal* and has been recognized as a “Best Company to Work For” multiple times.

“If you’re not willing to fail and to put something at risk, you’ll never achieve success,” Anton says of his decision to start ACM. “We were willing, from day one, to take the risk in order to achieve success. In that manner, we were very much aligned with the businesses and companies we work with that evaluate and take risks every day.”

The firm celebrated its ninth anniversary in July.

## From CSCPA to AICPA

How does a CPA go from being a member of a smallish state CPA society to chair of the profession’s national body? “The Colorado Society of CPAs is responsible for it all,” Anton says jokingly.

But that’s not far from the truth.

Anton’s CSCPA involvement began when he served as a facilitator and instructor for an SEC reporting course. From that experience, he got involved in other CSCPA committees — including real estate and planning for conferences. Eventually he was asked to join the CSCPA board of directors. He served two terms and was chair during the CSCPA’s 100th anniversary in 2004 – 2005. “It was a great experience,” Anton says about visiting each chapter for centennial celebrations and presenting CSCPA members with pioneer awards.

“I learned some valuable life lessons from CPAs who had been practicing for more than fifty years,” he says.

As a CSCPA leader, Anton attended AICPA Council meetings. His national involvement included a special board committee to evaluate the peer review process. “It continued from there,” he says.

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He was then nominated to serve on the AICPA board, became chair of the finance committee, and learned all of the financial operations of the organization.

“I showed up, I participated, and I tried to make a positive contribution every time,” he says. “In each meeting, I learned something, met new people, and improved myself.”

## The National Stage

Anton finds it a wonderful coincidence that he served as CSCPA chair during the CSCPA’s 100th year and will now have the opportunity to lead the AICPA during its 125th year in 2012. He’s looking forward to celebrating and says there will be many opportunities for members to be involved.

As for what’s on tap for his leadership year, it’s looking like a full slate of activity ahead. Anton says critical items on the radar include:

- Supporting the Blue Ribbon Panel on Private Company Financial Reporting recommendations on differential standards in GAAP and a separate, autonomous standard-setting entity for private companies. Anton says the majority of his clients are privately held companies, and they all see a need for changes.

- Rolling out the new global management accounting credential and enhancing the value proposition to members in business, industry, and government.

## At Home in Colorado

Serving as chair of the AICPA will come with a lot of responsibility and a lot of travel, but Anton plans to make plenty of time for his family, firm, and clients. “I really try to integrate work and life,” he says. “I try to blend things that I really enjoy with work.”

Last January, he combined his love of skiing and work by heli-skiing with two clients in Canada. You will also find Anton mountain biking after work and on weekends with his family, coworkers, and clients.

He and Julie have two sons: Cam, 18, a freshman at Fort Lewis College; and Jake, 12, who is in middle school and an avid hockey player. The family enjoys skiing together and has a home in Winter Park.

As Anton prepares for his term as chair of the AICPA’s board of directors, he reflects on Colorado’s long history as part of the profession’s national footprint. “It’s important that we continue to reach beyond our own state boundaries and support the profession,” he says.

A few people have suggested Anton change his first name to Marvin to keep the CSCPA/AICPA tradition alive: AICPA chairs named Marvin (Stone and Strait). The idea makes Anton laugh.

He replies simply: “I’m proud to continue Colorado’s legacy of significant involvement at the national level.” ▲

Contact **Greg Anton** at [ganton@acmlp.com](mailto:ganton@acmlp.com) or follow him on Twitter with handle @gregantoncpa.