

# YEAR-ROUND LIVING

by Amanda C. Mitchell / photos by Thomas Roshkind

For these full-time residents, the seasons change,  
but their addresses stay the same

AUTUMN IN THE MOUNTAINS BRINGS crisp days, vibrant color—and packed suitcases. The first glistening frost masking summer's lush fairways often prompts a pre-winter migration away from the mountains. But what about those who choose to stay behind?

Cordillera is a year-round haven for a growing number of residents, many of whom had to juggle professional and lifestyle challenges to move here full time. For them, the change of seasons is now a natural and welcome part of mountain living. In this issue, *Cordillera Living* speaks with three couples who have chosen to call Cordillera "home" all through the year.

## HEADING WEST

"Don't you think you'll get bored?" Three years ago David and Ellen Mitchell announced they would be taking up residence in the Colorado Rockies, and their friends and colleagues on the East Coast seemed somewhat skeptical. Both David and Ellen had enjoyed long, successful careers with IBM. They traveled a great deal with their jobs, spent their free time boating off Long Island Sound, and were within driving distance of every cultural, social, and business hub in the northeast. However, the Mitchells had always known they would move elsewhere, and retirement beckoned them westward.

For Craig and Ellen Fetterolf, who made Cordillera their permanent residence last summer, the desire for a better quality of life inspired their move from Princeton, New Jersey. Their careers—Craig in real estate development and Ellen in pharmaceuticals—had left little time for each other, community involvement, or outdoor pursuits. "I loved what I did," Ellen recalls, "but at the end of the day, I would get home and think: 'So now what?'" It was time to move west, a vision the Fetterolfs had carried with them since meeting in 1986 while both were living in Colorado Springs.

Similarly, Gary and Cindy Adams came to Cordillera in 1999 from Denver in pursuit of a lifestyle change. "We'd been doing the same thing for 28 years," Cindy says. With two daughters grown and married and one beginning high school, the Adams were also preparing for a future as empty nesters.

The Fetterolfs and Mitchells carefully researched the place where they would retire, and their decisions were driven by similar criteria: golf, skiing, and accessibility. The Vail Valley incorporated all three. Meanwhile, the Adams were attracted to "small-town living on a nice economic scale."





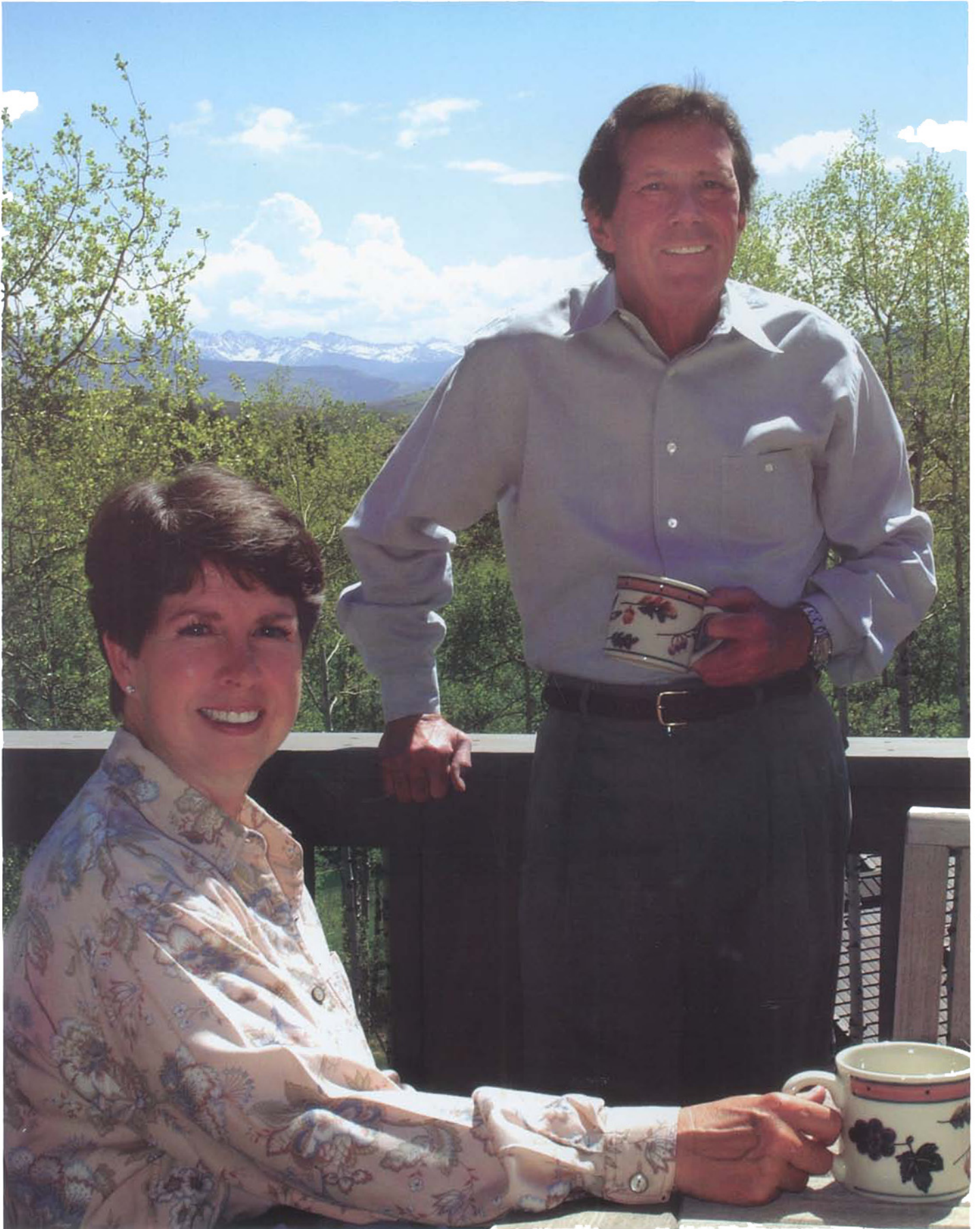
## TRANSITIONING AND DEFINING A NEW LIFE

After careful consideration, these couples all made the decision to leave their communities and try their hands at life in the mountains. Although the decision seemed bold at the time, they have found the transition easier than expected — and, happily, a new life unfolding before them.

“There is more to do here than there was in Greenwich,” Ellen Mitchell explains. “We ski, golf, hike, bike, and are learning to play bridge. We also mentor two brothers through the Year of Dreams program.” Ellen emphasizes the variety of cultural opportunities in the valley, plus Denver’s attractions just two hours away.

Also avid golfers, skiers, and hikers, the Fetterrolfs recently purchased two horses, a hobby that caught them a bit by surprise. Craig has even tried his hand at flying, taking lessons at Eagle County Airport. Although he is less actively involved in his company now, he does some management from home, using e-mail to communicate with his staff in their respective locations.

The Adams maintain active professional lives in the valley. Gary opened a satellite office for his architectural firm in Edwards, and Cindy responded to a lifelong passion for collecting and opened Mountain Lodge Antiques in Edwards’ Riverwalk.



*Ellen and Dave Mitchell*



*Craig and Ellen Fetterolf*



Gary and Cindy Adams with youngest daughter Kathryn

## “INTERESTING, DYNAMIC PEOPLE”

All three couples value the sense of community they have discovered in the valley. Craig Fetterolf remarks, “The contributions people make [to the community] out here are amazing.” The Mitchells have been equally impressed by the community spirit in Cordillera; “People are really pulling together to help one another,” Ellen explains. The Adams have quickly put down roots in their friendly Bearcat neighborhood and often join neighbors for Thursday evening cocktail parties.

The couples also participate in a variety of community-driven groups such as the Rancheros and Los Compañeros, and activities like Ski Tuesdays, Book Club, Tuesday Poker Nights, Wednesday Mah Jong, and Thursday Bridge. “We have found interesting, dynamic people who could be anywhere but choose to be here,” Gary Adams enthuses. David Mitchell confides his initial apprehension that the community would be comprised of driven, over-achiever personalities. “There are a bunch of ‘type-A’ people here, but they’re into play,” he says with a smile.

Those who choose to make their homes in the mountains tend to share certain characteristics, these couples have noticed. Mountain residents are typically lively people willing to try new things. Conversations, Ellen Fetterolf notes, more often begin with what people did that day rather than what they do for a living.

## A DIFFERENT WORK SPACE

Attitudes differ in the work place as well. As a business owner in the valley, Gary Adams explains, “You have more time and are more focused and involved with your staff here. It’s a smaller office and smaller community. Up here, the people who

work for you are much more like family than employees. Your own families also can be much more involved in your work life.”

Gary and Cindy both commuted long distances to their jobs in Denver. In Edwards, they work literally a stone’s throw from each other, and their daughter Kathryn and her friends sometimes stop by their workplaces after school. The tight radius of the valley enables parents to be more involved in their children’s school and outside activities.

Gary relishes the more relaxed work environment. However, he finds an admirable level of motivation among his employees. “They want to get their work done so they can enjoy their outside pursuits,” he observes. “I have found highly motivated employees who love where they live. It is a strong recruiting tool.”

## SURPRISE, SURPRISE

Mountain living prompted several lifestyle adjustments by the three couples, but the challenges were surprisingly minimal.

Dave and Ellen had not planned on learning about the valley’s medical resources quite so quickly, until Dave was diagnosed with cancer one month before their scheduled move. Luckily, they found the Vail community boasted excellent medical facilities and personnel.

“There is a wonderful support structure, and the staff is so responsive,” Dave enthuses.

Without big-city shopping resources, the three couples complement local shopping with catalogs, the Internet, and field trips to Denver. Cindy and her daughter make an annual spring trip to Scottsdale. However, Ellen Mitchell points out, “Your needs are simpler here.” She gave away half of her clothes before moving to Colorado and will give away more during her next visit to Connecticut.

Adjusting to the beautiful but snowy winters has also been easier than many expected. The Fetterolfs barbecue on their deck three times a week throughout the winter months, thanks to the legendary Colorado sunshine and dry cold. Ellen Mitchell informs, “Driving is less hazardous here in the winter than most places, because there is less ice.”

Nor do the couples seem to mind the “shoulder seasons” of April and May, November and December. During those months, the families might do some traveling (made easier by the convenience of the Eagle Airport), but they also find those months a great time to play catch-up around the house. A sense of relief settles in when the valley quiets down and is returned temporarily to “the locals.” Ellen Fetterolf notes, “We love the restaurant specials this time of year.”

All three couples look forward to welcoming more homeowners to year-round living in Cordillera. “We’re glad to see more and more families moving in,” expresses Ellen Mitchell. “It keeps the community vital.”

As summer turns into autumn and winter melts into spring, those who stay to embrace the magic of four-season living in the mountains will agree with Craig Fetterolf when he says: “How blessed we are.”