

Post Office Box 1700 Aspen Colorado 81612 970.274.9690 www.independencepass.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robert Lewis Founder (1921-2005)

Ramona Markalunas Director Emeritus (1932-2012)

> Debbi Falender President

The mission of the Independence Pass Foundation is to restore and protect the ecological, historical, and aesthetic integrity of the Independence Pass corridor



staying on the trail.

the importance of

sign at the summi

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wildflowers and

tundra and its

regarding the

and to encourage stewardship, safety, and appreciation of the Pass.

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its original, natural beauty.

debris by mule.

area and hauling

Mountain Boy

stakes from the

metal wire, and

Pulling rebar,

out this abandoned snow fence

and resource protection on the Pass.

improve habitat, and help restore the Pass to

throughout the corridor to stabilize road cuts,

Planting native spruce, fir and lodgepole trees

with school children and other volunteers

This newsletter is made possible by a generous grant from the Thrift Shop of Aspenplease consider donating to, shopping at and supporting this wonderful community institution!

Kristen Henry Vice President Paul D'Amato Treasurer **Lindsey Utter** Secretary

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STAFF Karin Teague **Executive Director** director@independencepass.org



change and other natural phenomregarding the effects of climate and add to the body of knowledge ter understand our native plants tion and phenology studies to bet-Continuing plant cover composi-

social trails.

unsustainable

and closing off

climbing areas

approaches to

Restoring the



our native plants weeds and keep beat back noxious Pitkin County to Working with





prevent bear-human incidents.

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Helping the

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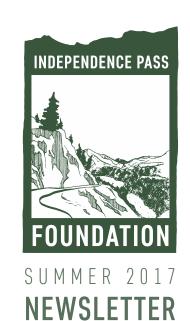
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including installing

closure gate area,

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GRAND JUNCTION, CO PERMIT #34



Rock Stars of the Top Cut

By Gail Holstein

The Top Cut today. Photo by Mark Fuller



The section of Independence Pass known as the Top Cut - the milelong stretch on the Aspen side just below the summit - has given us many "rock stars."

We're talking about the people whose efforts at stabilization and planting over the last two decades have radically improved the safety and esthetics of the Pass. The next time you approach the summit from the west, take a look across the long valley that contains the headwaters of the Roaring Fork River, and eyeball some of the most spectacular roadwork in North America.

When prospectors made their way over the section of tundra previously known as Hunters Pass on Independence Day, 1879, they set the course for a narrow, forbidding road. The journey from Leadville was fraught with danger, literally breathtaking. One misstep could end in death at the bottom of a ravine.

Some improvements had been made to the road over the years since then, but it took the efforts of a few dogged modern-day visionaries to produce the wonder of engineering that we enjoy today.

George Mead

Jeff Kenner

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+006,2\$

Sandra Simpson

Rachel Richards

Bruce Parlette

Ethel Levantin

Suzanne Jackson

Emily Jack-Scott

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Mark Fuller, director of the Independence Pass Foundation from 1996 to 2015, was responsible for many of the enhancements that have turned a white-knuckle drive into, if not exactly a walk in the park, a trip to be remembered in the best sense of the word. Mark followed in the inspired footsteps of naturalist Bob Lewis, who founded IPF in 1989 with the self-assigned mission of restoring the environmental damage done by the road cutting in the 1920s. Both of these heroes obtained funds from the Colorado Department of Transportation, as well as expertise from Jon White of the Colorado Geological Survey.

But, as there has rarely been enough government money to see a grand project through, both Bob and Mark turned to private donors and countless volunteers to fulfill their vision of refurbishing one of Colorado's most beautiful high-mountain passes. Aspen Earthmoving, Pitkin County, and the US Forest Service all donated time and material.

The Top Cut includes Twin Gullies, the Middle Cut, and the section known as the Big Cut. Work began in 1998. Over the next few years, climbers suspended on ropes pried rocks off the steep faces. Boulders were then

continued inside >

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Andrew Allan

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William Blair and James Trapp

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The Rockwood Charitable Trust

lames and Hensley Peterson

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Ernst & Wilma Martens

Kovler Family Foundation

Mary Griffith, in honor of

Michael Fuller Architects

Brown Foundation

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Alpenglow Foundation

(Winter Gate)

Patrick Henry, Jr.,

Carol Craig

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Randy and Bernice Durand

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Adventure Travel Group +097\$ Elizabeth Schneider limberline Bank Jordan Kednor and Howard and Leslie Schirmer Rockwood Charitable Trust Richard and Pamela Musso Орегтеуег Wood Kathryn Pitner Robert Leatherman and 4oly Cross Energy John Keleher/JKG Irust Earth-Wise Horticultural

Fork River, threats to Wilderness values, address the health of the upper Roaring proactively monitor and partners to local non-profit Working with Richard and Sheryl Herrington Aspen Tree Service

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Allyn Harvey Mark Harrison (Winter Gate) John and MJ Gray Richard and Susan Gessner Mark Fuller and Penny Atzet Поготһу Frommer Tim and Ginna Francis The Flunison Fund Don and Cinda Erdman Ellis Design (Ride) Иапсу Сепѕсп n honor of Wolf & Jaclynn and Dean Derosier, Helen Buchanan Davis sister Ramona Markalunas Julie Comins and Greg Pickrell Robert Cardwell

Valerie Borthwick Elise Ellliott leremy Bernstein and Morrison Philanthropic Chuck Bellock/Bellock Aspen Elks Lodge (Ride) +001\$

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Karen Bissett and Robert

Cynthia Wayburn, in memory Mark Tache and Christin Cooper

Kristen Henry (Winter Gate) Corbin Family Fund (Winter Gate) bried nesu2 bne nevet2 The Thrift Shop of Aspen The Louis & Harold Price Foundation J.M. Kaplan Fund (Winter Gate) (Winter Gate) Fred & Elli Iselin Foundation Roger and Joan Gurrentz

Our generous donors — thank you one and all!

These are the rock stars of the Top Cut. and helped them track new, positive courses for their lives.

their labor transcended the physical through their work. In many cases as they gained direction and purpose was seeing people's attitudes change One reward for Mark's dedicated toils rity Buena Vista Correctional Facility. -uses muminim aht mort estemni bne plants by volunteers, school children, 10,000 seedling trees and other native restoration has been the planting of

see how effective these "blankets" one of the Top Cut turnouts, you will hold. If you make a short pause at

A final component of the

rainwater to infiltrate and grip the soil, creating pockets for roots to take the steep sections below and above the road. The green covering allowed

blasted seeds mixed with mulch onto

step of the operation. Huge sprayers post blanketing, was used as the next A relatively new technology, comrocky, and eroding.

but not beautiful. The slopes were raw, completed by 2003. The Cut was safe, the summers), major stabilization was four days of field work every week in Under Mark's guidance (three or

you safe today. create the retaining walls that keep bolts, and covered with metal nets to stacked high, anchored with giant imported from the Weller Campground,



2017 Summer/Fall Projects

