During 1977 and 1978 my husband, Maurice Strong, and I made a number of visits to the Baca Grande. On our first visit, I remember how mesmerized I was at the beauty of the place and knew we would make it our home. Maurice and a partner had recently acquired AZL Resources, the company who owned the Baca Grande Ranch since the early 1960’s. We had also visited other AZL land holdings of approx 2 million acres of ranches in the southwest including Colorado, New Mexico Arizona and Nevada yet, I knew Baca was the place. We had a home in Canada at the time but decided to relocate to the Baca in 1978. My mother, my daughters and I moved from Canada to the Luis Maria Baca Ranch house built in 1823. As we first entered the Valley through North Cochetopa Pass, we were greeted by four Golden Eagles.

In October of 1978, a few months after settling in, a stranger appeared at my door and introduced himself as Glenn Anderson. I immediately sensed his kindness and a certain light in his eyes. I invited him in for tea. I did not know that many people throughout the Valley knew of Glen as the local mystic and prophet. The first words he uttered were, “I have been waiting for you to arrive.” He then began recounting the prophetic vision for Crestone he experienced in 1960. He came to visit me every day for the next four days to share in detail these predictions. He revealed that the originally conceived retirement community planned for the Baca would collapse to make way for the Baca’s real purpose. He went on to explain that following the collapse, a foreigner would come to manifest the vision and that different world traditions and religions would come to Crestone to help bring forth a new civilization of evolved human beings. He stated that thousands of people from all over the world would receive teachings in the elevation of consciousness and spiritual transformation at the centers that would be established. These individuals and organizations would become part of the foundation for a new civilization based on higher spiritual values. The area would eventually be known throughout the world for its interfaith community and its commitment to education, environmentalism, and spiritual pursuits. When he had finished relaying his vision he told me “This is what you’ve come to Crestone to do.”

Glen’s predictions seemed quite remarkable at the time and I was amazed with what he had shared and there was something inside me that deeply resonated with it. Before coming to the Baca, I had spent the last many years meeting indigenous elders, spiritual leaders and prophets from around the globe and it seemed that all of these encounters prepared me for the years to come. A short time after meeting Glen I retreated to the mountains for a four day and four night vision quest and knew in my heart that Crestone would become the ‘Refuge for World Truths’ with many different religions and traditions (of unbroken lineages) making it their home. Soon after, I sought out
the wisdom and verification of indigenous elders who were my teachers. I visited the Hopi nation, a nation whose roots in the San Luis Valley are thousands of years old, to seek Grandfather Dave’s and Thomas Banyacaya’s counsel. When I left Hopi land I had received affirmation from the elders to move forward in helping to manifest this prophecy.

During 1979, my mother Karen Marstrand established an organic garden near the old ranch house and started a World Seed Bank. She was a master chef and cooked tirelessly for the many groups and visitors that came over the years. Maurice and I consolidated thousands of Baca lots in chalet two and chalet three and invited two organizations to locate to the Baca. Other groups who came later seeking land grants were drawn to the Baca on their own. The first few organizations to settle here included the Lindisfarne Association; the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies; the Spiritual Life Institute of the Carmelite Order, and Karma Thegsum Tashi Gomang, a Tibetan Buddhist group headed by the 16th Karmapa. Maurice had deeded 300 acres to the Aspen Institute who held conferences and seminars in Crestone bringing in artists, scholars, and other leaders from around the globe. The Julliard String Quartet, started by Bobby Mann played regularly during the summers. Years later the Aspen Institute transferred their holdings to Colorado College. The Lindisfarne Association, headed by William Irwin Thompson, later transferred its property to the Crestone Mountain Zen Center led by Baker Roshi.

During the 1980’s we began receiving many requests for land which led to Maurice and I to establish the Manitou Foundation’s land grant program in 1988, to facilitate “the Refuge for World Truths”. Laurance Rockefeller was the first and main donor of the Foundation and a dear friend who fully supported the vision of establishing an interfaith community. He and his wife Mary loved the Baca and visited a number of times. More than any other individual, he helped manifest the Baca spiritual community. He believed it would contribute significantly to the needed paradigm shift. The Haidakhandi Universal Ashram, of the Hindu tradition received land in the mid 80’s. Shirley McClain also purchased a large tract of land which remained undeveloped and sold many years later. Maurice donated his interests of the Baca Ranch to the Fetzer Institute who had a similar vision for supporting the development of an ecological and spiritual community.

During the 1990’s, Educo which provides transformative wilderness experiences for children and youth, Mangala Shri Bhuti, a Tibetan Buddhist group and Shumei International, a Japanese spiritual organization received land grants. Yeshe Khorlo a Buddhist organization from the Kingdom of Bhutan also

Authors Note: There are a small number of groups who received land from Manitou that are not mentioned here.