

## Backcountry CMA

By Gary W. Myers, CMA, CPA, CGMA



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**F**our decades ago, a high school guidance counselor advised me that to find the greatest joy in my life's profession, I should make my hobby my career. One of the hobbies I enjoyed in those early years was backcountry hiking, which led me into the study of forestry. By the time I earned my bachelor's degree at the University of Montana in Missoula, however, I had decided to look into accounting and seek a master of business administration (MBA) degree.

I found my niche in accounting. Bruce Budge, Accounting Department chair at the University of Montana, told me about the CMA® while I was studying for the CPA exam. I knew that I would be a management accountant at some point, so I resolved then that I would someday also be a CMA.

After I received my MBA, I worked in a CPA firm for several years. Then I moved into management accounting, taking a position at a company headquartered in Kalispell, Mont., almost within sight of Glacier National Park—a hiker's paradise.

A few years after moving to private industry, I decided the time had come to get the premier credential for management accountants. After I earned my CMA in March 1992, Teresa Beed of the University of Montana, a former president of the Western Montana Chapter of IMA®, invited me to do a presentation to accounting students to encourage more interest in sitting for the CMA exam. We enjoyed some success with that effort and repeated the presentation the following year. It was also my privilege to

help proctor the CMA examination several times.

My career in management accounting has taken me to the best hiking areas in the country—from the Rocky Mountains in Montana to an island-studded archipelago in Southeast Alaska and now the mountain, desert, and canyon wilderness of Utah.

Because I chose to make my career in rural areas, I haven't lived close enough to an IMA chapter to be as involved as I would have liked, but I enjoyed my associations through the IMA functions I was able to participate in. I particularly enjoyed representing the accounting profession at several high school career fairs, where I was able to promote the CMA while shattering a few preconceptions about accountants.

The friendships and associations I acquired through IMA also provided that all-important network when I needed to make a career move. In addition, because of the IMA Core Competencies project in 1997, I was able to design a structured training regimen to allow me to achieve the highest career level possible in the world of management accounting.

Now, as I approach retirement, I can look back and see a career path almost as full of turns and switchbacks as any hiking trail I ever trod. It has been a career as rich and fulfilling as many of the vistas I've had at my feet. Who would have believed that a career in management accounting would afford me a view of wilderness outside my office window? **SF**