

Colorado Proud: Honoring American diplomat and first female U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

In honor of Women's History Month, RTD is recognizing contributions by women to events in history and contemporary society. RTD salutes Madeleine Albright, a formidable American diplomat who has played a key role in international affairs around the world and was the first woman to serve as Secretary of State.

Albright was born on May 15, 1937, in Prague, Czechoslovakia. After the Communist coup in 1948, her family immigrated to America. They briefly lived in New York before moving to Colorado, where her father, Josef Korbel, became the founder and first dean of the [Josef Korbel School of International Studies](#) at the University of Denver. She graduated from Kent School for Girls in 1955.

Albright became a U.S. citizen in 1957. She earned a bachelor's degree in political science with honors from Wellesley College in 1959. Afterward, she studied public law and government at Columbia University, from which she earned a master's degree in 1968 and a Ph.D. in 1976.

During President Jimmy Carter's administration, Albright worked as a staff member for the president's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had been her thesis advisor at Columbia University.

A champion for women, Albright directed the Women in Foreign Service program at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. She also held high-level posts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Center for National Policy. In 1992, she was chosen by President Bill Clinton, and unanimously confirmed by the Senate, to serve as a delegate to the United Nations.

President Clinton nominated Albright in late 1996 to serve as Secretary of State. Ninety-nine U.S. Senators voted in favor of Albright's confirmation; none voted against her. As Secretary of State, Albright was known as a savvy, passionate and strong-willed defender of U.S. interests who was not afraid of using military force when necessary. "Peace is not a gift. It must be earned and re-earned," Albright said. She held the position from 1997 until 2001.

Albright has served as the chair of the [Albright Stonebridge Group](#), a consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., since 2009. She is the author of several books, including "Read My Pins" (2009); "The Mighty & the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs" (2006); and "Memo to the President Elect" (2008); along with two memoirs: "Madam Secretary" (2003) and "Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948" (2012). In 2012, President Barack Obama

awarded Albright the [U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom](#), the country's highest civilian honor, for her work as a tireless champion of democracy.