



Journal of the New England Ski Museum

Summer 2016

The Mountain Troops and Mountain Culture in Postwar America

Issue Number 101

By Jeff Leich



University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Bob and Ira Spring Photographs.

Fred Beckey, a member of the elite 10th Recon and Mountain Training Group units of the 10th Mountain Division, is depicted here in about 1949. Beckey, with more first ascents to his credit than any other alpinist, was actively climbing well into his eighties.

Origins of the U.S. Army Mountain Troops

On November 15, 1941 a new kind of specialized U.S. Army unit, the 1st Battalion of the 87th Mountain Infantry, was activated at Fort Lewis, Washington, just outside of Seattle. The 87th was the first of many units envisioned as infantry capable of operating under winter conditions and in mountainous terrain. Within the next few years these entities would be combined into a mountain division ultimately named the 10th Mountain Division. Following three intensive winters of experimentation with military mountain doctrine and high altitude training, the 10th Mountain Division entered combat in the Apennines of Italy in January 1945, and distinguished themselves in a series of brutal battles in the waning days of World War II. The unique recruiting methods used in assembling a division of mountain fighters brought together thousands of like-minded

men oriented to a life in the outdoors, and after the war, many of these veterans had a profound impact on the direction that outdoor recreation would take in postwar America.

Behind the 1941 activation of the 87th lay almost two years of determined promotion and advocacy by two civilian sports organizations and a handful of general staff officers, all of whom were concerned about the lack of an ability by the Army to fight effectively under winter conditions. These advocates were met with an equally resolute opposition in the War Department that was resistant to the idea of specialization of forces when it was apparent that the number of divisions needed to be increased drastically from peacetime levels to address the growing probability of American involvement in the war then raging in Europe.

Continued on page 4

New England Ski Museum

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Mission

New England Ski Museum collects, conserves, and exhibits elements of ski history for the purposes of research, education, and inspiration.

Specifically, the Museum:

- ❖ collects and preserves examples of ski equipment, clothing, art, and ephemera;
- ❖ collects and preserves photographic records, films, and historic documents of skiing;
- ❖ maintains a reference library of ski literature, including books and periodicals;
- ❖ collects and preserves memorabilia of the 10th Mountain Division;
- ❖ maintains an oral history library of notable skiers;
- ❖ provides exhibitions about the history of skiing and its importance to social and economic development; and
- ❖ provides education programs for its community.

Paul Valar Society

Have you considered including New England Ski Museum in your estate plan?

By including a financial bequest to the Museum in their estate planning, Paul Valar Society members continue the Museum's mission to preserve the history and heritage of skiing beyond their lifetime. The Society takes its name from Paul Valar, the charismatic and influential ski school director and coach who was the first president of the New England Ski Museum.

If you have made provision for the Museum in your planning, we would appreciate knowing that so we can thank you. Bequests need not meet any particular threshold, and the amount of the bequest need not be shared with the Museum. If you are considering such a step in concert with your financial advisor, a Museum board member or senior staffer can provide more information.

*Journal of the
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We welcome your questions, comments, and letters.

Jeff Leich, Editor

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The capital campaign to fund our proposed expansion to the former North Conway Community Center began this past winter and we have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm it is generating in the Mount Washington Valley. We are looking forward to becoming a part of this historic community.

So where are we? In this early phase we have passed the \$500,000 mark

in donations and pledges received as of the middle of August. This is substantially more than the Museum has raised in any previous campaign, either for the original Museum or for the Paumgarten Building. This clearly speaks to the enthusiasm being generated by this project. Our goal of \$1,700,000 looms large but with the help of our donors and key valley organizations we are making significant headway. We are meeting with individuals, foundations, federal and state grant agencies and local businesses.

After numerous meetings and reviews of design submissions we have selected the award-winning museum exhibit design collaborative HER Design/ObjectIDEA/The Square Office from northern Massachusetts. This group has prepared exhibits at the

Smithsonian, Yellowstone National Park, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame as well as many other well-known institutions. They have already begun work on the first phase of interior design plans that we anticipate will create a striking series of displays for the North Conway branch. Our building committee headed by Phil Gravink is working closely with HER to create a stunning museum that will become an important part of the valley. As new versions of the design concepts refine our thinking on what will be included in the North Conway branch, they are posted on the “Expansion Project” page of our website, www.newenglandskimuseum.org. Take a look when you can.

Of course, everything hinges on our fundraising success. In this ‘quiet’ phase of the campaign we are concentrating on building a strong base of support before we unveil a wider initiative targeted at members and the public, which we think will occur sometime this winter. We are committed to raising the appropriate amount of money that will not only create a state-of-the-art museum but will also sustain the museum for future generations.

Our goal of opening in the fall of 2017 is still in our sights. We will continue to update you and our growing community of donors who believe in what we have begun. We are committed to preserving the future of skiing’s past, and are convinced that this project provides our best way forward to accomplish that.

Director’s Report

By Jeff Leich



With this issue, and with the 2016 exhibit of which it is a segment, we revisit one of the more popular topics we have ever displayed, the 10th Mountain Division of World War II and the impacts that many of its veterans had on skiing and outdoor recreation in the postwar period. While there is an element of our permanent exhibit about the mountain troops, it has been

fifteen years since we have mounted a full annual exhibition on the 10th. This year is particularly appropriate to recognize the contributions of the mountain troop veterans, because this November 15 will mark the 75-year anniversary of the activation of the first unit that made up the division, the 1st Battalion of the 87th Mountain Infantry.

The continuing interest in the story of the 10th Mountain Division is indicated by the steady publication of books, articles and documentaries on the subject since we presented our 2001 exhibit, *Tales of the 10th*. There is now more archival material on the mountain division available than ever, most notably in the Denver Public Library’s Western History Collection, which was an invaluable resource in preparing the exhibit on which the articles in this issue are based. The biggest concern in planning the exhibit was to avoid repetition in image selection so that those members who may recall the 2001 exhibit and the book that grew out of

it, *Tales of the 10th: The Mountain Troops and American Skiing*, will have a fresh visual perspective on what may be a familiar subject. It is only through the vast resources of the Denver Public Library and its knowledgeable curator dedicated to the 10th Mountain archive, Keli Schmid, that we could manage this.

As the annual exhibit on the 10th Mountain appears serially in the *Journal* this year, we are fortunate to be able to include the view from the ranks of the mountain troops in the form of articles by member Bob Parker, who many will recall as a long-time, well-known marketing and operational executive at Vail. Parker’s book of reminiscences of his time in the 87th Mountain Infantry, *What’d You Do In The War, Dad?* was published in 2005, and he has graciously allowed us to reprint chapters this year that give his unique perspective.

Those people who take the opportunity to view the new exhibit this year can do so in the Alec Bright Exhibition Hall, which has better lighting than ever, thanks to a 2014 donation from Virginia Thoma in memory of Hans Thoma that the donor asked to be used for a special project. Over time the track lighting that dated from the 1982 creation of the Museum became increasingly inadequate as individual lamp heads failed and could not be replaced. The new lighting installed this spring by electrician David Gabriel features energy-efficient LED bulbs, and not only provides much better visibility for exhibits, but is noticeably cooler in this warm summer. Many thanks go to the donor for this generous enhancement of the Museum.

EASTERN SLOPE EXPANSION CAMPAIGN

Donations and Pledges Received from October 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016

Double Platinum (\$50,000 and up)

Cal Conniff and Joan Stanley

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the Donor Wall in the Eastern Slope Branch Museum

EXHIBIT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE MOUNTAIN TROOPS AND MOUNTAIN CULTURE IN POSTWAR AMERICA

*The New England Ski Museum extends sincere thanks to these people and organizations who
contributed time, knowledge and expertise to this exhibition.*

The Membership of New England Ski Museum

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National Association of the 10th Mountain Division

National Outdoor Leadership School

The Mountaineers

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Charles Minot Dole (1899-1976) had a love for mountains dating back to pre-World War I family vacations at the Mountain View House in Whitefield, New Hampshire. He took extended hiking trips in the Presidential Range, staying overnight at the Gray Knob cabin, then a private camp. Enlisting in the Army as soon as he was eligible, he reported for duty on the day that peace was declared in 1918. His brief Army service left him with the nickname “Minnie,” bestowed by a gruff noncom, and the name followed him for the rest of his life. Graduating from Yale, Dole worked first in the wool business, then became an insurance broker with a firm named Flynn, Harrison and Conroy in New York City.

Skiing appealed to Dole from the time it was first introduced, and he was an early guest at Peckett’s on Sugar Hill, the Arlberg ski school that provided the first alpine ski lessons in a resort setting. As founder of the National Ski Patrol System in 1938, Dole made a wide acquaintance in the growing sport of skiing throughout the country. His formidable organizational skills and optimistic, voluble personality would serve him well when he turned his attention to the task of creating a mountain warfare ability in the U.S. Army.

Continued from page 1

More than the opening of hostilities on the continent on September 1, 1939, it was the subsequent Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940 that served as the triggering event that focused attention on the need for an American winter warfare capability. Many observers in the Army and among the expanding population of skiers were quick to cheer the success of Finland’s ski-equipped guerilla fighters as they resisted Russia’s armored columns in the first few months of 1940. The ensuing speculation in many minds then became how the United States’ warm-weather Army would fare in a winter war.

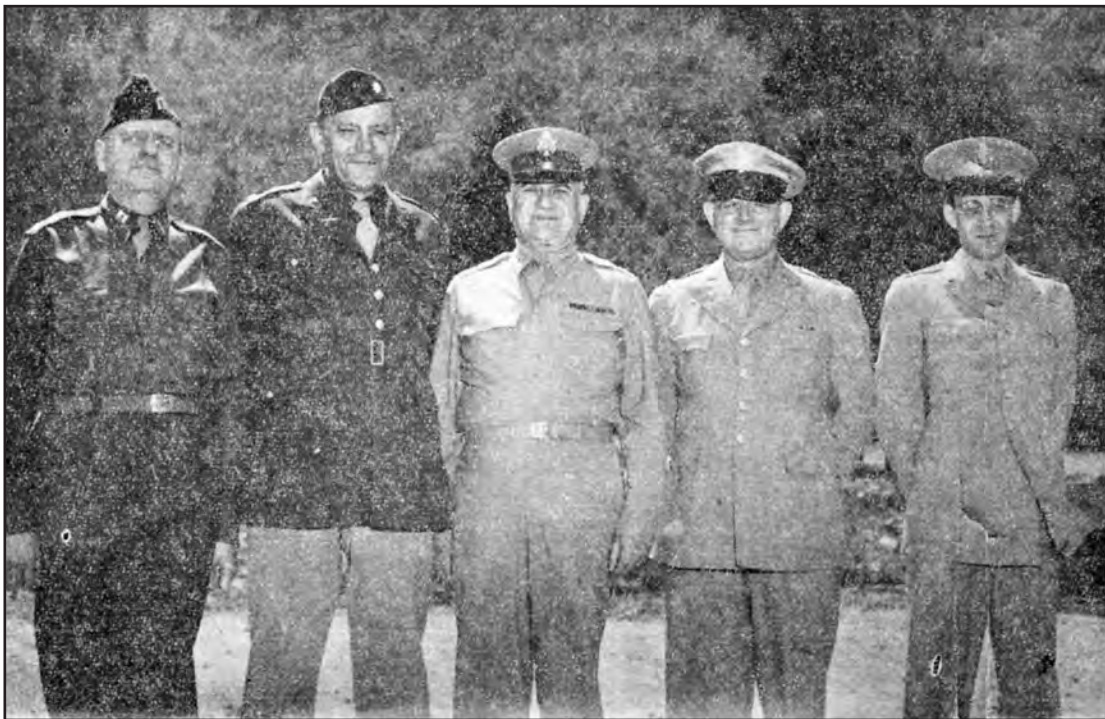
Long before the intrepid Finns on skis were crushed by the overwhelming military resources of Soviet Russia, Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson asked Chief of Staff of the Army George C. Marshall just that question—what was the Army doing about the special equipment, transport, clothing that would be needed to fight in similar conditions to wintertime Finland. Marshall’s response was that the Finland situation was being studied, and that small-scale winter operations in Minnesota and Alaska existed, though more were needed but could not currently be funded.¹

In the first months of 1940, Lieutenant Colonels Charles E. Hurdis and Nelson M. Walker of the general staff were assigned to evaluate the potential of troops operating on skis, and soon another officer, Captain Ridgely Gaither, was ordered to investigate other forms of troop specialization besides mountain operations, including jungle, airborne and amphibious units.² These three officers were the most influential military men in

the eventual formation of the mountain troops, and they were joined by a stubbornly persistent civilian advocate in the person of Charles Minot Dole, the founder and leader of the National Ski Patrol System (NSPS).

As the Finnish war was still contested in February 1940, Dole had an informal, post-ski race meeting near Bromley, Vermont with Roger Langley, leader of the National Ski Association, of which the ski patrol was a division, and with Alec Bright and Bob Livermore, two Olympic skiers and influential figures in eastern skiing matters. The four agreed that the NSA should offer its winter knowledge and expertise to the War Department, and Roger Langley soon wrote to Secretary of War Harry Woodring offering its assistance. When the reply arrived from the War Department, it was a polite but clear rebuff.³

In the same period, the American Alpine Club (AAC) was thinking along similar lines, and opened its own channel of communication to the War Department. All those who took up the idea of an American winter warfare capability came at once to the conclusion that mountain troops need specialized equipment, and that because mountaineering was largely a European pursuit, American-made mountain equipment was in short supply. As the quartermaster general’s office began to address this shortfall, the AAC was especially significant in the development of a domestic supply of mountain equipment through a handful of its members including Bob Bates, Bill House, and Adams Carter, all of whom worked in that office.⁴ Following the initial repulse of the NSPS offer by the War



New England Ski Museum

One of the first military men to support Dole's quest for a winter capacity in the Army was General Irving Phillipson, the chief of staff of the Second Corps which encompassed New York. Dole and his associate John E.P. Morgan met with Phillipson in July 1940, and while Phillipson became an instant ally, he had been so insistent in the past about winter training that he predicted that higher-ups in the War Department would react that "There's Phillipson shooting off his face again." As a commander at Pine Camp in upstate New York, site of today's Fort Drum, he knew cold weather and knew the Army was not equipped for it. Here, Phillipson is seen in the center on a trip to Camp Hale in June, 1944.

Department, Dole, known to his many friends as 'Minnie', took it upon himself to become the chief activist for ski and mountain training in the military, and he and his associates John E.P. Morgan, and John L. Tappin, Jr. worked with dogged determination in 1940 and 1941 to convince the military command to take seriously the need for winter equipment, personnel and training.

In September 1940, Dole was informed by General Marshall that both a test agency for winter equipment and a limited program of ski training in selected northern divisions would take place in the winter of 1941. At this point Dole met with Colonels Hurdis and Walker, and the military and civilian strands of mountain-focused thinking joined together. At Walker's suggestion, and probably with financial support from the War Department, Dole opened an NSPS office in New York City, establishing a modicum of credibility with the military that his previous home office did not possess. This office would become the recruiting station through which thousands of skiers and mountaineers were sent to the 10th Mountain Division.⁵

Elements of six U.S. Army divisions took part in the experimental details on skis in the winter of 1941 from one side of the country to the other. Lake Placid and Old Forge, New York; Fort Snelling, Minnesota; Fort Warren, Wyoming; Camp McCoy, Wisconsin; Mount Rainier and the Olympic National Park, Washington were the locations at which regular Army soldiers were trained

in ski and snowshoe operations by experienced instructors that included Rolfe Monsen, Eric Wikner, Al Lindley, Harald Sorensen, Karl Hinderman and John Woodward. At Camp McCoy, a Winter Warfare Training Board under Captain Albert Jackman carried out testing of clothing and equipment. A variety of findings came out of the experimental patrols of 1941, with the most general conclusions drawn being that soldiers with no skiing background but in robust health could learn the fundamentals of military skiing in a matter of months, but that proper cold weather gear and a season of acclimatization to winter camping was important.⁶

The April 1941 directive to Colonels Walker and Hurdis to locate an appropriate site for a high altitude, cold weather military base provides an early indication of the Army's commitment to the eventual activation of a mountain division. Working with Robert S. Monahan of the U.S. Forest Service, the two selected a site beside Henry's Lake, Idaho, just west of Yellowstone National Park. Located at the northeastern corner of the Snake River Plain, which acts as a low-elevation channel through the mountains for precipitation-laden Pacific air masses, the Henry's Lake site was a region of heavy snowfall surrounded on three sides by mountain ridges. A local newspaper reported in October that an Army base for 35,000 was planned, and municipalities were planning for an increase of 1,000 in the local school population. Construction began shortly thereafter, and continued into November.⁷

Continued on page 11



Colonel Harry L. Twaddle, as acting assistant chief of staff of the Army, contacted the American Alpine Club in late 1940 and met with Bob Bates and others from the club in March 1941 to solicit their opinion on developing mountaineering equipment for the Army. He provided two B-12 bombers for an expedition being planned for Alaska that summer, and was in general very supportive of the mountain project. Major General Twaddle, then commander of the 95th Division, is shown here in April 1945 with Franz von Pappen, the German diplomat who had just been captured by Twaddle's troops.



Two of the key Army supporters of mountain troops are shown here with two of the chief civilian architects of the concept in late 1940. Colonel Charles E. Hurdis, standing second from left, and Colonel Nelson M. Walker, sitting on right, were assigned to work with Dole in 1940 and became enthusiastic supporters. Here they are shown with Minnie Dole, standing on right, and John E.P. Morgan to his left. Roger Langley, President of the National Ski Association, points to the map at a meeting at NSA support for the War Department was planned.



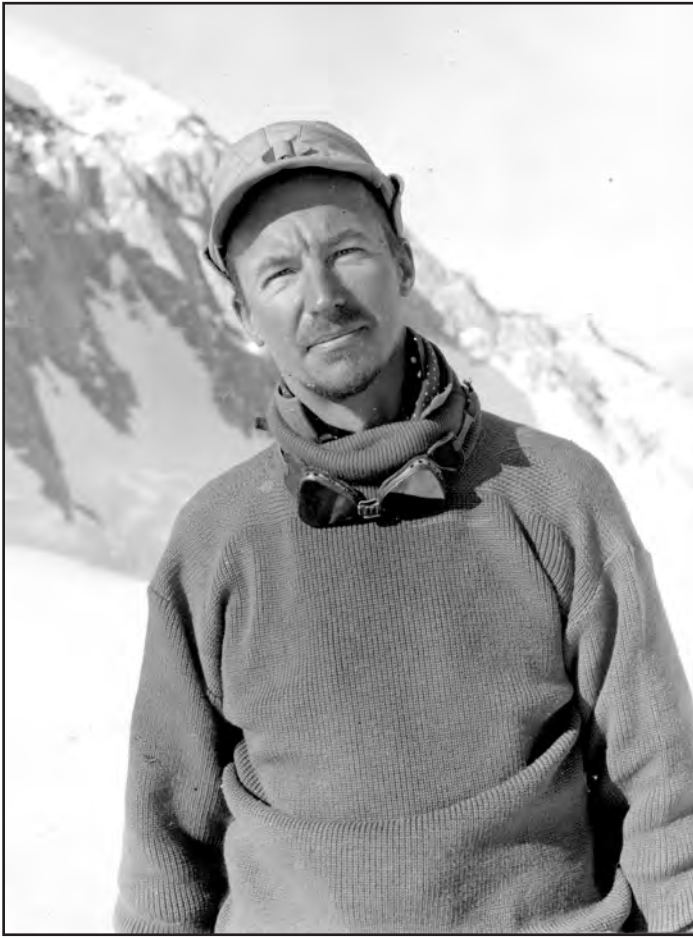
The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, S11

The advocacy of Dole and Morgan of the NSPS, and by members of the AAC, along with the affirmation of officers like Walker and Hurdis led the War Department to keep six divisions in the northern part of the country in the winter of 1941, and to designate small units from each division that would learn to operate on skis and snowshoes under the guidance of experienced skiers like Rolfe Mosen and Harold Sorensen. The 15th Regiment ski patrol of the 3rd Division seen above, operated out of Longmire near Mount Rainier, Washington under Captain Paul Lafferty with Lieutenant John Woodward as ski instructor.

Lieutenant Eric Wikner, inspecting the rifle, led the 44th Division ski patrol from Fort Dix that operated out of the Adirondack ski town of Old Forge in the winter of 1941. Wikner was a Swedish immigrant with a skiing background, and he was joined by Harold Sorensen, former coach of the U.S. Olympic team as ski coach. Maneuvers of Wikner's ski patrol were watched by thousands of villagers, and in the spring of 1941 the patrol marched in downtown New York City in Army Day observances under the eyes of the governor and mayor.



The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection



Captain Albert H. Jackman, a Princeton graduate and experienced skier, organized a Winter Warfare Training Board at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin in the winter of 1941 while officers and men of the 5th Division trained in cross-country skiing and learned cold weather camping skills. Jackman would be involved as a staff officer in the early years of mountain troop development, then served as executive officer of the 604th Field Artillery attached to the 10th in Italy.

Alpinist Bob Bates, working on cold weather clothing and equipment in the Office of the Quartermaster General, called his superior Colonel Georges F. Doriot "perhaps the most intelligent man I have ever known well". Doriot was a professor at Harvard Business School who served with the Quartermaster Corps throughout the war, then in 1946 founded one of the earliest venture capital firms, American Research and Development Corporation. The mountain and cold weather equipment developed by the Quartermaster General's office in the early days of the war was critically important to the 10th Mountain Division, and some of the gear was issued to standard divisions as well.



United States Army Signal Corps, Georges F. Doriot, July 16, 1942. HBS Archives Photograph Collection: Faculty and Staff. Baker Library, Harvard Business School (obvwork640098).

Bob Bates and other American Alpine Club members like Bestor Robinson, Brad Washburn and Bill House were involved with developing cold weather gear, and in the summer of 1942 took part in an expedition to Mount McKinley to perform tests prior to the widespread procurement. Here, Bates is seen on that expedition with a sweater featuring a button neck that he designed with Harold Lent of the Quartermaster's office, which proved to be popular throughout the Army.



New England Ski Museum



New England Ski Museum

In April 1941, Colonels Hurdis and Walker along with Robert S. Monahan of the U.S. Forest Service were detailed to find a high elevation site for a division-sized military base where a future mountain division could be trained. Construction began in October 1941 on the shores of Henry's Lake, Idaho, not far from West Yellowstone, Montana. Opposition from a conservation group concerned with a population of trumpeter swans was the apparent reason that the Henry's Lake base was abandoned sometime in the winter of 1941-42. These remnants of the construction from the fall of 1941 remain at Henry's Lake today.

Continued from page 6

Efforts in the summer of 1941 to activate a mountain division by Brigadier General Harry L. Twaddle and seconded by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Clark of the general staff (later commander of the Fifth Army under whom the 10th served) were vetoed by Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, chief of staff of Army headquarters. General McNair's reasoning centered on the proposed table of organization of the division, which would have almost 8,000 pack animals and only 369 motor vehicles.⁸

The tables turned quickly after General McNair's rejection of a mountain division, most likely due to news of a defeat suffered by the Italians at the hands of the Greeks in the Balkans which was attributed by the American military attaché in Italy to that country's lack of mountain-trained troops. Dole received word in October 1941 that a test force of Army mountaineers would be formed at Fort Lewis in a matter of weeks, capping the two-year effort by Dole and the NSPS, the AAC, and the few committed Army staff officers who could foresee that American forces on the verge of war might be called on to fight in mountainous terrain anywhere on earth.⁹

The 87th Mountain Infantry was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Onslow Rolfe, a cavalryman and Concord, New Hampshire native who left that state as a child. His earliest officers were drawn from men with Alaskan experience like Majors Robert Cook and Robert Tillotson, and some with skiing

background like Captains Paul Lafferty and Albert Jackman. Jackman was the test officer of the Mountain and Winter Warfare Board, a role he had filled the previous winter at Camp McCoy. Lieutenant John C. Jay, budding ski filmmaker and descendant of the first chief justice, was the official photographer. The initial troops assigned to the 87th came from the 3rd and 41st divisions at Fort Lewis, both of which had fielded ski detachments the previous winter. Dole and the NSPS were soon called upon by the personnel division of the general staff to handle the vetting process for additional recruits to the 87th, a completely unprecedented role for a civilian agency. Gradually at first, then in swelling numbers, recruits who had applied via NSPS questionnaires eliciting their qualifications as skiers, climbers, and general outdoor people arrived at Fort Lewis for service with the first large-scale American unit of military mountaineers.¹⁰

Twenty two days after the birth of the 87th Mountain Infantry, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and the pace of life sped up greatly for the military. Those general staff officers who had spent some time on the concept of mountain warfare were diverted to the more pressing necessity of creating and training large numbers of standard infantry and armored divisions, and airborne and amphibious units. The mountain infantry and their commander, Colonel Rolfe, began work on developing military operational doctrine in the mountains with little oversight or direction from above.¹¹

Endnotes

1 Captain Thomas P. Govan, *Training in Mountain and Winter Warfare*. (Study No. 23, Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2001.098.001, p. 1.

2 Albert H. Jackman, "The Tenth Mountain Division: A Successful Experiment," *The American Alpine Journal* (Special War Number, 1946, Reprint Edition 1991), 13. Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 68.

3 Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 63-65.

4 William Lowell Putnam, *Green Cognac: The Education of a Mountain Fighter*. (New York: The AAC Press, 1991), 19-20.

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6 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 3-6. Albert H. Jackman, "The Tenth Mountain Division: A Successful Experiment," *The American Alpine Journal* (Special War Number, 1946, Reprint Edition 1991), 14.

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_River_Plain, accessed May

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8 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 10.

9 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 11.

10 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 11, 94. Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 93-94.

11 Captain Thomas P. Govan, *Training in Mountain and Winter Warfare*. (Study No. 23, Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2001.098.001, p. 5.



The Mountain Troops and Mountain Culture in Postwar America

Building the Mountain Division

December 7, 1941 was the same sort of chilling, electrifying, all-changing event that later generations recall from November 22, 1963 and September 11, 2001, but with implications that were infinitely larger for the nation. Soldiers and civilians involved in the growth of mountain troops perceived immediately that their long period of advocacy and planning was over, and their work assumed a new realism overnight.

In the Bull Run Mountains of northern Virginia, Bob Bates and Bill House, civilian employees of the Office of the Quartermaster General, were on a rock-climbing excursion with Captain Jackman. After a pleasant day of top-roping on the short cliffs facing west toward the Blue Ridge, the group encountered heavy traffic on the return to Washington. On arriving home, they learned of the Pearl Harbor attack, and of the just-issued orders that now all military men in the District, previously told to wear civilian attire, were to report to work in uniform.¹

Across the country at Mount Rainier, Captain Paul Lafferty and Privates Duke Watson, Ralph Bromaghin, and Charles McLane of the newly-formed 87th were on a ski expedition from Fort Lewis when they heard the news on the radio. Watson and Bromaghin were two of the earliest regular Army men with skiing backgrounds posted to the 87th, and McLane was the first

of the recruits from the NSPS process to arrive. “Well fellows, there go your Christmas furloughs to Sun Valley,” Lafferty joked with the enlisted men. The full import of the event sank in when they found Fort Lewis in a state of blackout on their return, with some equipment being relocated for concern over a further attack.²

Mount Rainier was visible from Fort Lewis on a clear day, but distant enough to make frequent trips to its snowfields impractical for the 87th. As troops arrived to fill the ranks, and spent their days patrolling around Fort Lewis in the days after Pearl Harbor when no one knew if a Japanese attack was imminent, Colonel Rolfe negotiated a lease of the Paradise and Tatoosh Lodges within the Mount Rainier National Park with the Park Service. Quarters for the 400 men of the 87th there would allow front-door access to some of the finest ski terrain in the Cascades, and on February 13, 1942, the unit moved to Rainier. Ski training began under the direction of Swiss mountaineer Peter Gabriel and Yosemite instructor Arnold Fawcus, with the emphasis on effective technique for skiers laden with heavy backpacks.³

Though hampered by the National Park Service regulation that no live ammunition could be used in the Park, the 87th spent three otherwise productive months at Mount Rainier before returning to Fort Lewis in late May. At the same time, the planning process for a mountain division base took a turn away

Charles C. Bradley, *The Denver Public Library*,
Western History Collection, TMD-962



When the 1st battalion of the 87th Mountain Infantry was activated on November 15, 1941, it was based at Fort Lewis, Washington, likely because it was the only existing Army post in proximity to alpine terrain. On clear days, Mount Rainier could be seen from Fort Lewis as seen here in the spring of 1942. The first officers of the 87th were Colonel Rolfe, Majors Robert L. Cook and Robert Tillotson from the Chilkoot Barracks near Seward, Alaska, and Captain Jackman, in charge of the Mountain and Winter Warfare Board. The first company commanders were Captains Paul Lafferty, Henry Hampton, and Ross Wilson. Troops from the 3rd and 41st Divisions manned the initial companies of the 87th.



Charles C. Bradley, The Denver Public Library,
Western History Collection, TMD-957

On February 13, 1942 the 87th moved from Fort Lewis to Paradise Lodge, sited in a meadow at timberline on Mount Rainier. Snowfall was abundant at Paradise, and often access to the lodge was via second-story windows. Here the three companies of the 87th trained in skiing, snowshoeing and winter survival skills for three months, while the Mountain and Winter Warfare Board carried out equipment tests. By the end of May the last of the units had returned to Fort Lewis, where rock-climbing lessons were held on makeshift climbing walls erected in a gravel pit. In June, two more battalions were added to the 87th.

from the Henry's Lake site, seemingly due to an early success of a wildlife conservation group seeking to protect a population of threatened trumpeter swans whose flyway would be disrupted. The alternative location selected by Colonels Hurdis and Walker was a high, flat, expansive valley near Leadville, Colorado at an elevation of over 9,000 feet near a mainline railroad whistle stop called Pando. Engineering work began in Denver in April 1942 by a coalition of firms called Pando Constructors, and once engineering offices were built on the site, construction began in earnest in June. Though work on the base for the future mountain division was underway, the general staff made the decision to defer its full activation until 1943, when more of the specialized equipment and personnel it required would be available. In the meantime, the 87th, still seen as a 'test force,' was expanded to a full regiment through the activation of 2nd and 3rd Battalions on June 1, 1942.⁴

The next step to the activation of a mountain division was the creation of the Mountain Training Center with the 87th as a nucleus, intended to assemble all the Army's expertise in mountain and winter operations in one unit. Other specialized training centers existed in the Army for amphibious and desert operations. In August the Mountain Training Center was established at Camp Carson, Colorado, with Colonel Rolfe as commander. Once the new Pando base, Camp Hale, was ready the Mountain Training Center would transfer its operations there.⁵

In the summer and fall of 1942, small detachments of the 87th

and elements of the Quartermaster's office pursued equipment development and testing from the summit of Mount McKinley in Alaska to the Old Man of the Mountains in New Hampshire, and in Aspen Colorado and on Canada's Columbia Icefield. Supply airdrops onto glaciers, portable tramways and bridges, numerous forms of arctic clothing, and Studebaker over-snow vehicles were some of the more prominent items tested in the wide ranging experimental efforts.

As the work of those scattered detachments wound down, most of the soldiers reported to newly-occupied Camp Hale, largely complete by the end of 1942. Two battalions of the 87th were sent to the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in Jolon, California for six weeks of maneuvers in low, scrubby, poison-oak filled hills, opposing the First Filipino Regiment. At Camp Hale, the 1st Battalion of the 86th Infantry Regiment was formed, and filled with an experienced core from the 87th and new recruits sent by the NSPS. Dole was asked to find 2,000 more qualified skiers and mountain people to fill out the skeleton ranks of the new 86th. Ski training commenced in early December, and at the end of the year the 87th troops returning from Jolon arrived at Camp Hale trailing accolades from military observers for their performance.⁶

With some 16,000 soldiers and at least 2,500 pack animals at Camp Hale at the beginning of 1943, mountain training of a division-sized force could begin in earnest.⁷ Ski instructors were trained by Peter Gabriel and former European ski race star



After the abandonment of the Henry's Lake site as a mountain training base, Colonels Hurdis and Walker selected this high alpine valley near Tennessee Pass, Colorado. Construction of the division-sized base began in April 1942 and by the end of the year was largely complete. "A light snow had fallen prior to the troops' arrival, mercifully hiding the trash, debris, and mud of a summer's work—but it only turned the streets into a queasy quagmire of slush, and cleverly concealed the nails that soon began to puncture G.I. tires with annoying rapidity," wrote Captain John Jay of the early occupation of Camp Hale. In this photograph taken as construction began, Pando, the railroad station that was the only building in the valley, is seen in the center where the road grade crosses the railroad. Tennessee Pass is up the low draw in the center left. The entire valley would soon be filled with 500 or more buildings.

Ski training took place at slopes at either end of Camp Hale's valley, and at Cooper Hill, just above Tennessee Pass. Despite all the recruitment efforts of the NSPS to enlist experienced skiers, many of the expanding units of the mountain regiments would be filled with officers and troops with no skiing or winter background, and these men were introduced to the fundamentals of military skiing with heavy packs by the expert ski instructors overseen by Sergeants Walter Prager and Peter Gabriel. The Mountain Training Center ski school consisted of 120 ski instructors, evenly divided between Cooper Hill and the companies at Camp Hale.



Snowshoes were found to be more effective than skis for the heavy weapons units. After initial experiments using heavily loaded toboggans hauled by men on snowshoes in harness, that method was abandoned in favor of individual snowshoers carrying backpacked loads. Duke Watson recalled in an interview that when platoons of skiers and snowshoers traveled from Camp Hale to the future site of Vail, the weapons platoon on snowshoes was first to the destination, much to the frustration of the skiers. Here, a unit of troops on snowshoes wearing winter whites labors up a draw above Camp Hale.



Curt Krieser, The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, TMD-458

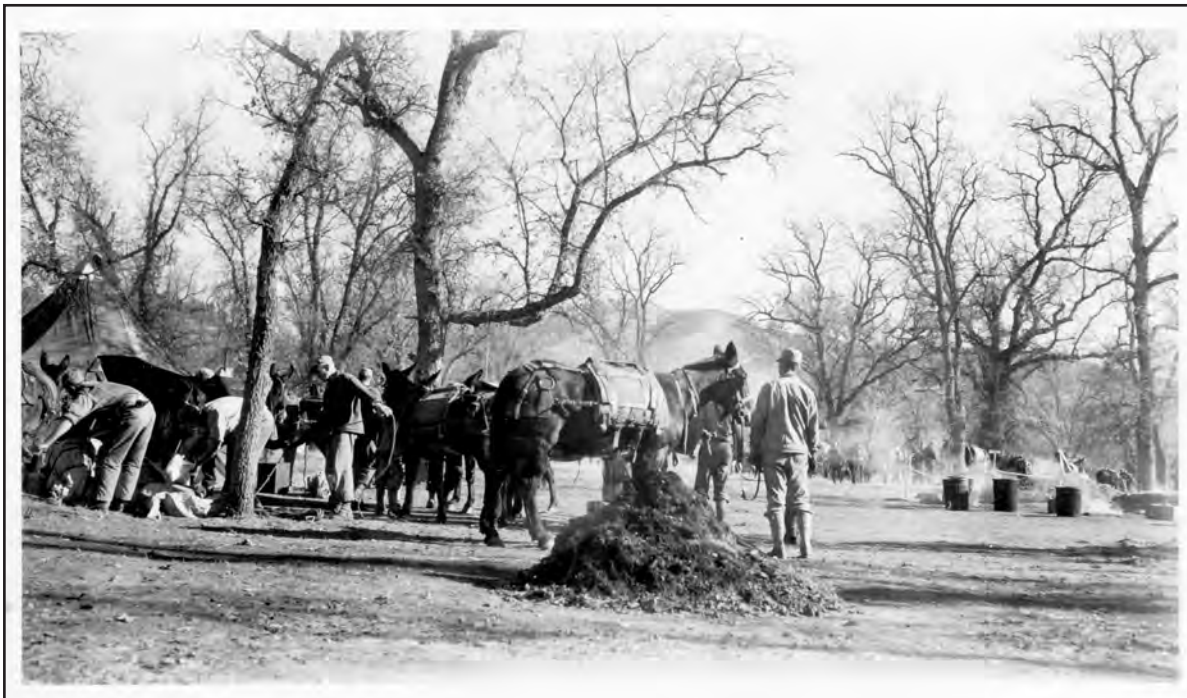
Mountaineering training was held at Camp Hale, introducing thousands to the intricacies of rock-climbing methods and equipment. One of the important equipment items developed by the Office of the Quartermaster General for the mountain troops was nylon climbing rope produced in Army olive drab color, seen in this photo of a trooper climbing on Crestone Needle in the Sangre de Cristo Range. When the first sample of the rope arrived in Bob Bates' office in Washington, he immediately tested it by rappelling out of his second story window, leading a secretary on the first floor to believe she was watching a suicide attempt. Colonel Doriot soon brought his superior, Quartermaster General Gregory to see Bates repeat his performance, to their great amusement.



Roe Duke Watson, who would become a founder of Crystal Mountain, Washington after the war, is shown on Homestake Peak in this photograph. In January 1943, Watson and others tested gear for the Mountain and Winter Warfare Board on Homestake, with their rucksack loads averaging 75 pounds. Watson would become executive officer of 10th Recon under John Woodward, then be sent to Seneca Rocks to command the climbing school there.

In February 1943, a battalion-sized force from the 87th was sent for a two-week maneuver at Homestake Peak under the gaze of observers from Washington, among whom was Minnie Dole, seen here on the right at that exercise. While those soldiers who had been with the 87th for a year thrived, many were new arrivals at Camp Hale who had minimal training before being dispatched into the Colorado winter above 11,000 feet. Over the course of the maneuvers some 30% of the participants had to fall out due to exhaustion or cold injuries. Criticism was directed at the chief of staff of G-3 (Training and Plans) for his lack of planning and overall knowledge of winter operations, and Dole recommended that Erik Wikner, who had commanded the Old Forge divisional ski patrol in 1941, be assigned to beef up that office.





The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

In November 1942, two battalions of the 87th were detailed to the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation near Jolon, California to develop procedures and equipment for standard infantry divisions to fight in roadless, low mountain terrain with thick brushy forest growth. There, they engaged in maneuvers against the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, made up of Filipino Americans that, unlike the 87th, was unburdened by mule trains. This greater mobility gave the Filipinos an advantage in the war games, though Bob Parker noted that in one instance, a unit of the 87th, realizing that the Filipinos did not operate at night, took advantage of that fact to mount a night raid whose success foreshadowed the Riva Ridge attack. This depicts the camp of the 87th at Jolon in the Coast Range of California.



Richard A. Roker, The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, TMD-475

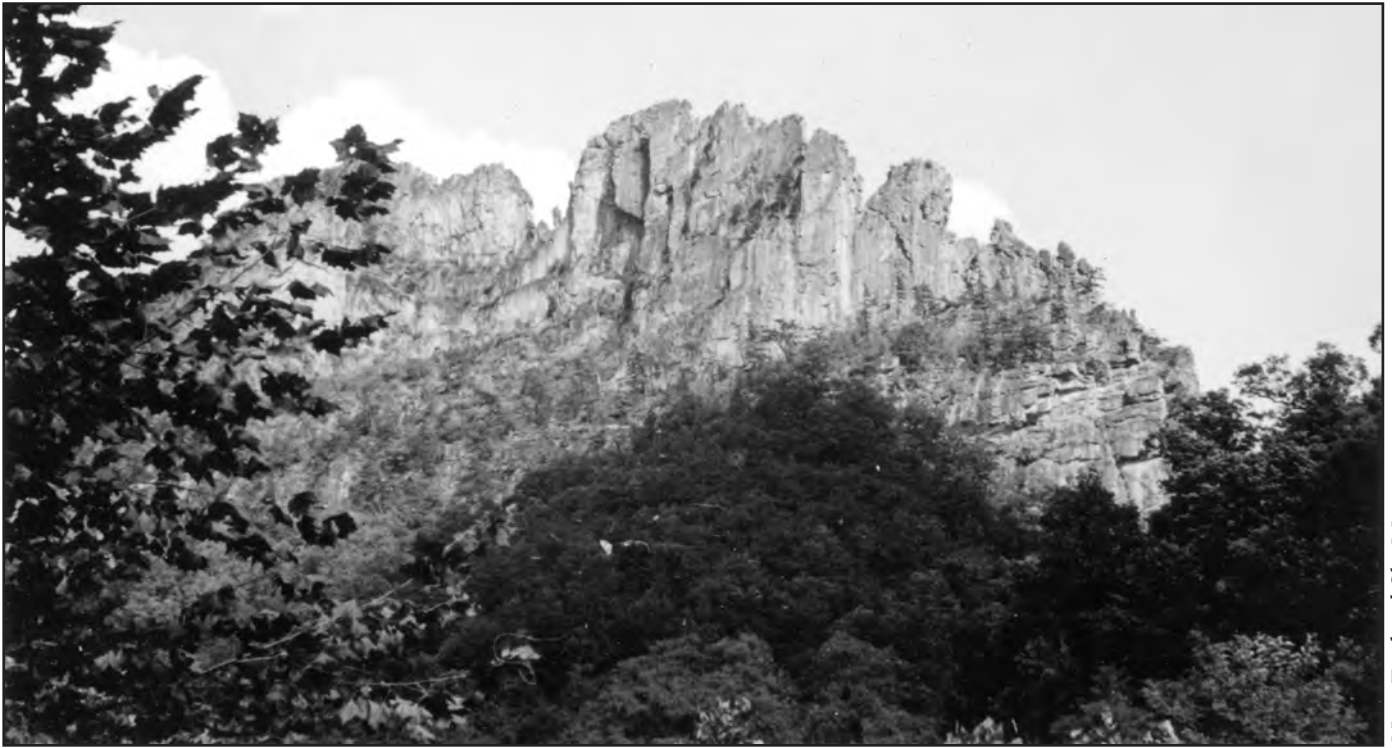
In February 1944, a detachment from 10th Recon and MTG made an unsupported ski crossing from Leadville to Aspen. This photograph depicts one of the troopers on that trip, likely Nathan Morrell of New Hampshire. Their route took them west from Leadville through the saddle between Mounts Massive and Elbert, over the Continental Divide and across the Williams Mountains, then down the Hunter Creek valley to Aspen. Arriving in Aspen expecting to bivouac outside, they were invited to sleep in the Hotel Jerome by its owner, Larry Elisha. In December of that year a 10th Recon group of 53 officers and enlisted men summited Mounts Elbert and Massive, the two highest peaks in Colorado, in a three-day expedition. Captain John Jay and Lieutenant Russell McJury led both these expeditions.



The 87th Regiment was sent to Fort Ord, California for amphibious training in June, 1943, and attached to Amphibian Training Force-9, or ATF-9, given the mission of retaking the island of Kiska, in the Aleutian Island chain, from Japanese occupiers. When the 30,000-man AFT-9 landed on Kiska in mid-August, the Japanese occupiers had slipped away unseen by American naval forces in the obscuring mists of the Bering Sea. Not yet aware that the enemy had fled, several companies of the 87th fired at the sound of rifle shots in the fog, inflicting 11 friendly fire casualties on fellow mountain soldiers.

Kiska was occupied by the 87th until late December 1943, when it returned to Camp Hale. While on the island, soldiers of the 87th struggled to stay warm in the raw, damp, windswept climate. One of the soldiers on occupation duty was Robert Livermore, Jr., seen here on the left. Of the group of four that included Roger Langley, Alec Bright and Minnie Dole who first conceptualized using National Ski Patrol skiers as mountain soldiers at Bromley in Vermont in February 1940, Livermore was the only one to serve in the 10th.

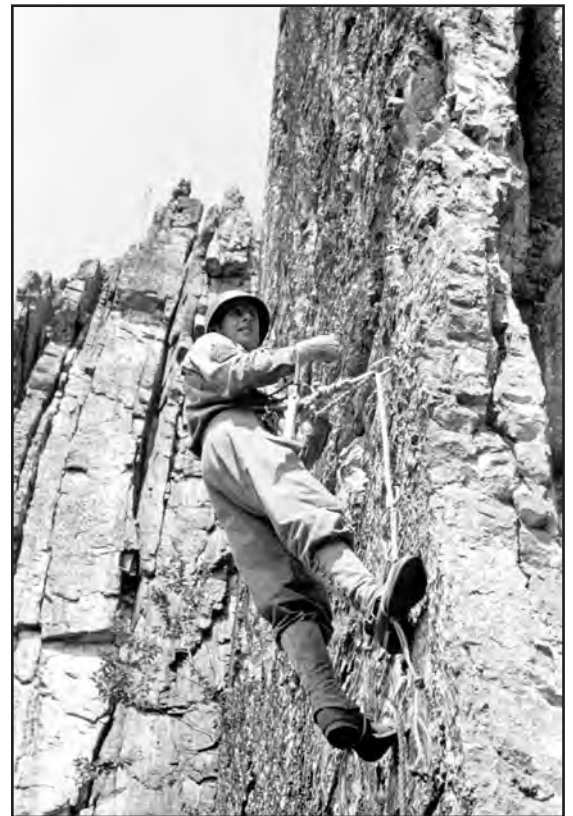




New England Ski Museum

In 1943, low mountain training for standard infantry divisions by elements of the Mountain Training Center was established in Buena Vista, Virginia, then transferred to Elkins, West Virginia. A climbing school was formed at Seneca Rocks, West Virginia, and from the summer of 1943 through July 1944 troops intended to be artillery observers, snipers and scouts from five divisions were given rock climbing instruction there. "The students attack across two cliff-walled defiles, infiltrate thru enemy positions in high rock, and finally assault a cliff and set up fixed ropes," wrote instructor Hal Burton to Minnie Dole. "They also learn to work under fire. That is the meaning of the explosives and fireworks."

Swiss mountaineer Peter Gabriel, shown here, was the lead climbing instructor at Seneca Rocks. Among the climbing instructors at Seneca were some who made reputations in the postwar in skiing and alpinism, including David Brower, Hal Burton, Fred Beckey, Kerr Sparks, Steve Knowlton and Ed Link, who commanded the detachment.



New England Ski Museum



In late June 1944, the division was transferred from Camp Hale to Camp Swift, Texas, seen here. There were suggestions that the division would be converted to a standard infantry division, and plans for maneuvers with other divisions were made. Apart from the questions about the ultimate form of the mountain troops, the transition from an alpine to desert climate was difficult for many mountain soldiers, and early marches resulted in many casualties from heat exhaustion. Troop morale reached a low point. Nonetheless, adapting to the heat of Camp Swift had a hardening effect on the fitness of the troops, so that covering 25 miles in 8 hours became achievable. In November at Camp Swift, the designation of the unit as the 10th Mountain Division erased questions about its ultimate mission, a new commander, General George P. Hays was named, and preparations for movement overseas began.

Walter Prager, and these in turn taught the elements of skiing to officers and enlisted men, quite a few of whom had not arrived at Camp Hale via the NSPS approval process for one reason or another. As the spring came on, the same team of Gabriel and Prager provided rock-climbing lessons for a core group of climbing instructors.

Experienced troopers of the 87th with a year of service behind them adapted quickly to the high altitude and winter conditions of Camp Hale, but new arrivals needed time to acclimate to the elevation, and this was not always provided. Mountain training was a new military specialty, and training guidelines did not exist. Problems became evident in February 1943 on battalion maneuvers near Homestake Peak when some largely inexperienced soldiers of the 87th struggled to keep up with their units while carrying heavy loads at march cadences suitable for sea level but not for altitude. Cold injuries from hypothermia and frostbite resulted, and equally troubling, some officers showed a lack of awareness to the ever-present threat of avalanches. The maneuvers were attended by knowledgeable observers from Washington who recognized flaws in the operation and submitted a diplomatic, yet still critical, report that led to some leadership changes.⁸

The pace of expansion increased in the spring of 1943. The activation of two battalions of the 86th set the structure for its enlargement to a regiment, then in June the Mountain Training Center was renamed the 10th Light Division (Alpine), and in

July the 85th Mountain Infantry was activated at Camp Hale to become part of the 'triangular' mountain division, consisting of three regiments. The new division was commanded by Brigadier General Lloyd E. Jones, with General Rolfe moving on to become assistant commander of the 71st Light Division.⁹

The 87th was sent to Fort Ord, California for amphibious training, then to the Japanese-occupied Aleutian island of Kiska in the summer of 1943 as part of a larger amphibious task force. As the force approached the nearly perpetually fog-shrouded island, the Japanese defenders abandoned their positions and slipped away on their ships undetected by the Americans. On Kiska the 87th suffered its first casualties, as units of the regiments incurred friendly fire in the confusion of the initial occupation. The 87th would remain on the island throughout the summer and fall, only returning to Camp Hale in February of 1944.¹⁰

While the 87th was away on the Kiska task force, mountain training continued for a second summer at Camp Hale. More detachments from small, select units such as the MTG—the Mountain Training Group, which held the remnants of the larger, now dissolved MTC—and the 10th Reconnaissance Troop, or 10th Recon, moved around the country to provide mountain training to standard infantry divisions at places like Buena Vista, Virginia and Seneca Rock, West Virginia.

Just one month after the return of the 87th from Kiska, the entire division was sent into the winter wilderness of Colorado

for a month-long excursion called the D-Series, or Divisional Maneuver Training. Coinciding with blizzards and temperatures as low as -25, the D-Series, initiated by higher levels of command at XVI Corps with little knowledge of mountain operations, was deemed a success in the aftermath, but the troops endured ferocious conditions at the time. "Even 18 months later, after severe combat in the Italian Apennines, mention of the "D" Series brought awe to the voices of the veterans," Colonel Jackman wrote in 1946. "Cold, snow, refractory mules, sleepless nights, 14,000 ft. peaks, and hazing from the "brass" combined to produce a situation that batteries of German 88's and later actions could not make men forget. "It's not as bad as the 'D' Series," they later cried, and believed it."¹¹

If the subzero temperatures and driving snowstorms of the D-Series in March 1944 constituted a trial for the soldiers of the division, at least they were equipped and trained to adapt. They soon endured a climatological test of an entirely different order as the division was ordered to depart Camp Hale for Camp Swift, Texas in May 1944. Army Ground Forces advised General Marshall that the 10th should be converted into a standard infantry division with more heavy weapons, and relocated to Texas where they were to participate in maneuvers with other divisions in Louisiana. Morale took a sharp downturn as soldiers wondered about their ultimate disposition, but marches of up

to 25 miles in 8 hours in the Texas heat furthered the fitness of the men, and at least one officer noted that the MTG experts in mountain operations were kept together despite appeals from other divisions for their transfer.¹²

In November 1944, three years after the initial activation of the 1st Battalion of the 87th, the division was given the name by which it would be known henceforth--the 10th Mountain Division. The special nature of the unit was recognized by the addition of a supplementary uniform patch with the word 'Mountain' to be worn over the existing 10th divisional insignia. Most significantly, General Lloyd Jones, in poor health, was replaced as commander of the division by Brigadier General George P. Hays, a Congressional Medal of Honor holder from World War I and most recently in combat in France with the 2nd Infantry Division. Perhaps already sensing the caliber of his new soldiers, General Hays told his men in his first address, "If you're going to risk your life, you might as well do it in good company."¹³

"The General will be good company," reprised the *Blizzard*, the divisional newspaper. Within weeks, the 86th Mountain Infantry would be on a ship bound for Naples, Italy, and by January 20, 1945 all three regiments would be on the front line.¹⁴

Endnotes

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3 Charles J. Sanders, *The Boys of Winter*. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 56. Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 12-13.

4 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 26. Captain Thomas P. Govan, *Training in Mountain and Winter Warfare*. (Study No. 23, Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2001.098.001, p. 6. J.R. Smith, "The Building of Camp Hale, Pando, Colorado April, 1942--January, 1943," typescript in Denver Public Library Western History Collection; photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.006, 2-3.

5 Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 36.

6 George F. Earle, History of the 87th Mountain Infantry in Italy, <http://skitrooper.org/87th.html>, accessed May 19, 2016. Captain John C. Jay, *The Mountain Training Center*. (Study No. 24, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), photocopy in New England Ski Museum collection, 2000.042.008, 38, 50-51.

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10 John Imbrie, *A Chronology of the 10th Mountain Division in World War II*, National Association of the 10th Mountain Division, Inc., Watertown, New York, 2003, 5.

11 Albert H. Jackman, "The Tenth Mountain Division: A Successful Experiment," *The American Alpine Journal* (Special War Number, 1946, Reprint Edition 1991), 16. Capt. Thomas P. Govan, *Training in Mountain and Winter Warfare* (Study No. 23, Historical Section--Army Ground Forces, 1946), <http://www.history.army.mil/books/agf/agf23.htm#9>, 11-12.

12 John Imbrie, *A Chronology of the 10th Mountain Division in World War II*, National Association of the 10th Mountain Division, Inc., Watertown, New York, 2003, 6-7. Montgomery Atwater to C. Minot Dole, July 1, 1944, Denver Public Library, WH 1001, Dole Papers, Series 2, Box 9, FF 108.

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THE JOHN V. TERREY COLLECTION: A MAGNIFICENT ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY

Wednesday 13 July was a notable day in the life of the Museum. Director Jeff Leich drove to Massachusetts to pick up eight boxes from the ski library of long time member John V. Terrey.

The Terrey collection includes an extremely well-preserved first edition of Olaus Magnus (1555), and an excellent English edition of Shefferus (1675) besides a number of other rarities such as the second edition (1904) of Zdarsky's instructional book as well as his difficult to find 1925 *Wandern im Berge*. We now own the descriptive essay on skiing by Collinder, published in the third volume of Viktor Balck's Swedish encyclopedia of sport titled *Idrottsbok* in 1888, that appeared two years before Nansen published his well-known account of the Greenland crossing. There are books by Rickmers, d'Egville, Gösta Berg and a host of others: all enhance the holdings of the J. Robert Irwin Library.

Over the past few years, the museum has made an effort to attract papers and photographic collections of those who made and recorded ski history; recent additions have come from SE Group and John Fry, for example. We also have a fine collection of photos (Dorothy Crossley's were recently reviewed in the *Journal*)

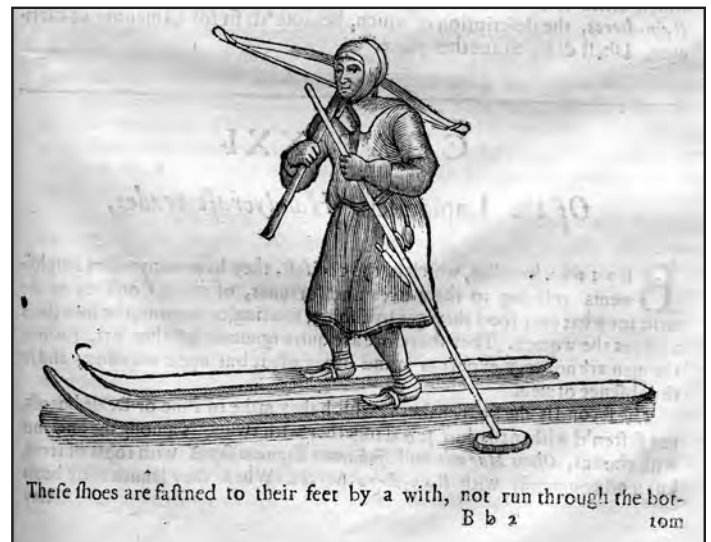
including a recently donated album once owned by Dorothy Clay, sometime Lake Placid visitor. None of those volumes matches the two heavy albums among the Terrey donation, both in immaculate condition, from world-traveling elite Australian ice skater Marie Lansell, who also loved to ski. She spent the winters of 1938 and 1939 in Sun Valley and left a remarkable record in black and white shots of skiing, ski teaching, après skiing, local scenes, ski personalities, all meticulously identified. What an addition!

Other gaps in our collection will be filled by the occasional, very early volumes of *På Skidor* (1897, 1901, and 1902); by runs of the Australian and New Zealand, and Canadian *Year Books* of the 1930s. Included are a First World War (1915-16) bound Austrian Touring Paper and a very rare Spanish mountaineering journal from 1919 that contains information and photos of skiing in the Guadarramas, northwest of Madrid. There are plenty of brochures, catalogs, postcards and I must mention one piece of ephemera: a flip film reel of skijoring from Germany! It is difficult to express how much the Museum appreciates John Terrey's lasting gift; it will enable us "to preserve the future of skiing's past" with greater authority.

E. John B. Allen



Museum member John V. Terrey, right, on the verge of relinquishing his collection of rare skiing books to the New England Ski Museum.



These shoes are fastened to their feet by a with, not run through the bottom

*This woodcut in John Shefferus' 1674 book *The History of Lapland*, included in the John V. Terrey collection, is the first image of a skier in an English language work.*

MANEUVERS, MULES AND MANZANITA AT JOLON

*Robert W. Parker, Excerpted with permission from *What'd You Do In the War, Dad?**



*87th Mountain Infantry regiment veteran Bob Parker had a long career in the ski business. He is best known as editor of Skiing magazine, and long-serving marketing executive and vice president at Vail and Beaver Creek. Parker's 2005 book *What'd You Do In The War, Dad?* features many vignettes of life in the 10th Mountain Division told from the soldier's point of view that escape historical studies of wider scope.*

As was usual in wartime, we, two battalions of the 87th, were traveling by train, with window shades rolled down, to an unknown destination somewhere south of Fort Lewis, Washington. As we rattled south, some of the most spectacular scenery in America unrolled around us, and we, for security reasons, could not enjoy it! All we could do was sleep, or play cards, or snack on the uninviting C-rations in our packs.

Our stay at Fort Lewis had been a combination of standard but strenuous basic training during the week, and varied, exciting, even exhilarating weekends. Now we were destined for some kind of maneuvers, probably in California, probably in the mountains, but none of us (except our close-mouthed officers) knew where!

As we wound southward that November, we had stolen glimpses of great rivers in Oregon, big redwoods in northern California, and teasing bits of civilization around San Francisco Bay. Now in the morning of the third day, some guys curious enough to lift our blackout curtains announced we were in flat farm country, with a hint of mountains to the west. And before long, with a tired screeching of brakes, and the hoot of our engine's whistle, we slowed and stopped.

A breath of hot, almost desert air swept into the stuffy atmosphere of the troop car as our doors were opened wide. Noncoms shouted orders, we straightened our uniforms, hoisted our barracks bags and descended into the California dust.

"Where the hell are we?" was on everyone's lips as we formed up in ragged platoon units and marched to a loading area swarming with trucks, jeeps and harassed looking officers. All around was the strong smell of livestock. Pens, corrals, and barns confirmed this was cattle country. Several hundred yards away we could see a cluster of homes and small commercial buildings.

The announcement by one of our sergeants that we were in "King City, California" meant nothing to anyone, until a lieutenant, a Californian, attempted to explain. Scratching a crude map in the dust, he said "Here's Salinas to the north. Here's Paso Robles to the south. Here's King City, roughly in the middle. As you can see, it's a cattle town. That's the Coast Range (waving vaguely west). Nobody I know's every heard of it, but we're going to maneuver near a place called "Holon". That's all I can tell you 'til we get there!"

More puzzled than ever, we sat on our barracks bags and gazed around us at the dry and dusty little cattle and railroad settlement. After misty, mountainous and forested Washington, what a place this seemed to be to send a bunch of mountain troopers!

Jolon with a "J"

But we were Army, so when the sergeants hollered for us to "mount up", we climbed, with our barracks bags, into the six-by-six trucks lined up for us. Soon the convoy began to move, dust began to swirl into the open back trucks, and we began the long slow trip to our mysterious destination. One of our Hispanic sergeants explained that "Holon" was spelled with a "J", and that the country we were headed for was once the site of a "Mission San Antonio".

"That's all I know," he admitted. "But this place was probably settled by Spanish missionaries long before you guys' ancestors came over from Europe!"

So we ate dust, shifted our aching bodies, smoked and stared out of the truck's open back at the other trucks that wound up the road behind us. At the Mission, a cluster of half-ruined adobe buildings, we paused, every truck's motor running, while our officers studied their maps. We had been climbing through grazing country, then Ponderosa pines mingled with brush oak. When we started again, suddenly the terrain changed to open parklands studded with big boulders and massive old live-oak trees. Though still gravel covered, our road was so little traveled there was almost no dust. And as we looped around many hairpins, we caught glimpses of tree-covered mountains to the west. Maybe this place called "Holon" wasn't going to be so bad, after all!

The Nacimiento

Our destination proved to be a rolling plateau of live oaks, boulders and a drying-up river called the Nacimiento. Like magic, it seemed, assisted by our strenuous efforts, our camp sprang up from the dry leaves and grass of the plateau; pyramidal tents for the troops and officers, a big rectangular mess tent, another for the medics, water bags, a field shower, and off by themselves, canvas-enclosed slit trenches for toilet facilities.

After our first hot meal in days, the officers gathered us in the mess tent under the bluish glare of gas lanterns. Our colonel, Jefferson B. Willis, gave us an outline of our duties here at Jolon.

"First, I hate to tell you this," he began, "but Washington hasn't decided what to do with us mountain troops!" There was more than a little grumbling among the men—the prevailing scuttlebutt had already told us this.

"Just to cover their bets, they've sent us here to California for what they call Jungle-Mountain training! We start tomorrow with familiarization hikes, then the day after, when the mules get here, there'll be a new kind of training—that's all I can say about it, now."

The Peaks of the Coast Range

Then he turned to some maps stretched between frames. "Here we are at Jolon. Just to the west, the peaks of the Coast Range; Cone Peak and Junipero Serra are the highest summits. Beyond, though we never may see them, Highway One and the Pacific. Southwest of us, Hearst's San Simeon estate. Due south, Camp Roberts Military Reservation, but we won't see any of it while we're here. With the war on, you probably couldn't find a lonelier stretch of country in America than this remote valley!"

As we scattered to our bunks, the talk was all about the mysterious “new kind of training” the colonel had mentioned. What could be so different from the varied rock and ice and rope and horse and mule training at Fort Lewis?

It turned out it was not one day but three before the mule skinnners and cowboys in charge of our animals began setting up camp east of us. These guys were, in the vernacular, really pissed off at us infantrymen. Instead of riding trucks, most of them, except for a few horsemen, had walked their mules all the way from King City. It was thick dust, and a long, hot slog from the hot plains to the foothills until finally they arrived on this relatively cool and shady plateau, to find us already ensconced in the choicest campsite!

Lethal Looking Machetes

But we didn't have time to respond to their epithets. On the first day, we broke up into company units, and walked an easy five miles into the hills, along old game and burro trails. On the second, it was a longer, circuitous route, at least ten miles into and out of steep canyons, up some steep, rocky hogbacks and then back along a forest road into camp. The third day, we were issued machetes, long, lethal-looking blades of steel, with leather sheaths to hold them on our packs.

Noting our curious glances and comments about the machetes, our captain called for silence. “They call these maneuvers ‘Jungle-Mountain’ exercises,” he noted. “Today you'll find out why. No more trails or roads. No more cool snow or rain. We will cut our own trails. Each man will lead a column, until everyone has practiced with a machete. Then, next week, you'll have a chance to test your new skills against a real enemy!”

And it was on this day we learned about the “manzanita”, an enemy so obdurate that we all wondered what “real enemy” could be tougher!

For the mountainsides we now confronted were covered with a thick growth of a shrubby evergreen tree most of us Easterners had never encountered. With glossy green leaves, orange bark partly covered with a nearly black skin, the manzanita also boasted the toughest, sharpest branches nature could have invented! As we slashed and hacked and scrambled our way up these otherwise innocuous looking slopes, our machetes grew dull, our skin scratched and bloody, our shirts soaked with sweat and our minds finally realized the full impact of the phrase “jungle mountains.”

As we took a break on a small bench, our platoon leader slumped beside us. “Makes the Alps look inviting,” he said, grinning. “If our leaders in Washington could see us now, I know they'd find something for us to do in Europe!”

Years later, remembering that moment, some of us wished our leaders had sent us to the mountains of New Guinea, instead of to the Italian Apennines.

But our jungle training that day was just the beginning. We learned to carry whetstones to keep our machetes sharp. We discovered which brush or tree or plant could be cut easily, and which, like the manzanita, had to be hacked out of the way. We even learned to coat ourselves with fly dope from the mule skinnners, to keep the worst of the buzzing, biting insects at bay. And that weekend, we found out who the “real enemy” was that the captain had been talking about.

The Filipino Scouts

Some of us had read newspaper accounts of a mysterious special unit, made up of men who had escaped the Philippines, or were living in the States, called by the newspapers the Filipino Scouts. They were rumored to be tough, angry patriots, eager to return and fight the Japanese in their homeland.

On Saturday, soon after we had been marched in formation to our open field parade ground, a convoy of six-bys arrived at our motor pool. Out of each truck descended a squad of Aussie-style-hatted, khaki uniformed, brown skinned soldiers, until a battalion of them had formed up opposite us. Their officers saluted ours, and our colonel stepped forward.

“Gentlemen!” he began, which was startling enough in itself—usually it would have been “Men!” or “Soldiers!” “I want you to meet the first battalion of the U.S. Army's First Filipino Regiment! For the next week, we'll be maneuvering against them here in the Coast Range. As of tomorrow, we won't know where they are camped, or where their positions are. We, and they, will be competing for the same objectives. In effect, we'll be enemies! Any questions?”

A ripple of laughter passed through our ranks, but no questions were forthcoming. The faces of the Filipinos remained without expression.

“Very well,” the colonel continued. “You'll get your orders at the platoon and company level tomorrow. Meanwhile, no weekend leave or time off until these maneuvers end!”

We and the Filipinos stood at attention in the hot California sun until the colonel had chatted with their officers. Then, without any obvious spoken orders, the brown-skinned battalion returned to their trucks, climbed in and whirled away as if they'd never been with us at all. Their sudden departure, we would learn, was typical of the illusive qualities of this new and clearly different force we were to maneuver against.

Well, to put it simply, these were the strangest maneuvers a U.S. Army unit had ever, until that time, found itself involved in. Not only were the Filipinos illusive, but if the truth be known, whatever the official record shows, they defeated us American mountain troops handily, in almost every exercise.

Everything On Their Backs

Above all, it was their mobility. While we moved through the twisted ridges and canyons of the Coast Range, with mules and horses carrying men and supplies, the First Filipino soldiers apparently carried everything, including food and water, on their backs. While we, with few exceptions, had to hack our way noisily through low trees and brush with our machetes, our enemy were small enough to slip beneath the heavy forest cover, arriving at their objectives almost as silently as ghosts.

To those who knew a little history, it was like the 18th century British soldiers versus the eastern Indian tribes. Except, of course, the British Army had nothing to deal with as cantankerous and stubborn as our Missouri mules.

When we were trying to be silent, our mules brayed or snorted. When we needed a particular pack-load of supplies, like as not the mule carrying it got stubborn and refused to move. One mule fell down a steep mountainside carrying two weeks' supply of

tomato ketchup. When his handler got down to him, and saw him lying silent, covered apparently with blood, he called for a pistol to put the beast out of its misery.

That Bloody Mule

While he was calling for a gun, the mule woke up, got to his feet, and started up the canyon on his own. The mule skinner never heard the last of this event, known to his buddies as “George and that Bloody Mule.”

The Jolon maneuvers will long be known for other nasty aspects of the Coast Range. Several guys settled their sleeping bags into comfortable-looking ivy thickets, only to wake up with serious poison oak infections. There were broken legs, mule kicks and bites, one case of snake bite (we never saw the snake), and many cases of blistered feet and raw, red sunburn. Myriad flies, mosquitos and other flying, crawling things affronted our already sensitive eastern, northern or middle-western skins.

But there were a few highlights on our side. One of our lieutenants, perhaps remembering some of George Washington’s early successes against the Indians, decided to out-think the Filipinos. Having noted they didn’t seem to like maneuvering at night, he led a company of volunteers up a mountainside in the dark, crawling under, rather than hacking through the manzanitas.

By midnight, his men lay just below a mountain summit. At dawn, they swarmed over the Filipino outpost guards, captured the summit, and radioed back their success. Our side got a victory, (eerily prefiguring our later success on Riva Ridge), the lieutenant a promotion, and the Filipinos perhaps their first realization that the American mountain troops might not be the pushovers they had initially thought.

One special advantage our company had was a veteran private from somewhere in Montana whom we knew as Indian Joe, though that was not his real Blackfoot name. From our first day at Jolon, Joe had obtained permission to add to our uninspiring larder by “requisitioning” some of the mule deer that roamed the hills around the camp. I remember him patiently filing the points off some of our copper-tipped target rounds, then filing grooves in the tips to make what we used to call “dum-dum” bullets.

Around sunset, he’d take his Springfield sniper’s rifle and a pocket full of dum-dums into the forest. In a surprisingly short time, we’d hear a shot, then Joe would quietly reappear and ask for a man or two to bring out his kill.

Venison Steaks

For several weeks, our company would feast on delicious venison steaks, roasts and “liver and lights” while the Filipinos were subsisting on the usual Army canned beef and beans.

Our six weeks in Jolon provided a jarring reality check for the enlisted men and officers of the “elite” 87th mountain troopers. But when orders came in December to leave for our new training center in Colorado, most of us were proud of our newfound skills, our endurance, and our tested and toughened physical condition.

We never saw the men of the First Filipino Regiment again. But they had played a major role in preparing us for a difficult winter at Camp Hale, and the ordeals of Kiska Island later the next summer. For those who made it through Jolon, our pre-combat activities would never seem as tough as the maneuvers, manzanitas and mules in the Coast Range of California.



NEW MEMBERS

April 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016

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These friends of the Museum made donations separate from membership dues during the dates shown. The list includes gifts to the Annual Fund Drive and general donations. We extend our gratitude for your generous support, which is critical to our success.

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April 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016

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Centerplate Concessions of Franconia Notch State Park

Jim Chesebrough

Lynn Cunniff

Steve Marcum

Gini Raichle

PEOPLE AND EVENTS OF NEW ENGLAND SKI MUSEUM



USSA Eastern Regional Development director Martin Guyer, left, with Ben Ritchie and family at the 2016 exhibit opening party. The party features the presentation of the Don A. Metivier Golden Ski Award to the top male and female Eastern junior ski racers of the year. Ben Ritchie of Waitsfield, VT is the male 2016 Golden Ski winner.



Veteran US Ski Team coach Mike Kenney and two-time Olympic skier Joan Hannah flank 2016 Don A. Metivier Golden Ski winner Cecily Decker of Saranac Lake, NY and her mother at the exhibit opening party.



The National Association of Snowsports Journalists-East presented Ben Ritchie and Cecily Decker with its 2016 Don A. Metivier Golden Ski Award at the exhibit opening party. Eight Golden Ski winners including Decker have been nominated to the 2016-2017 US Ski Team.



Dick and Milly Calvert, left, and the Brewster Bartlett family were part of a New England Chapter of the National Association of the 10th Mountain Division group that visited Cannon Mountain and the Museum in mid-July.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Meeting and Dinner

Friday October 28, 2016

At Sugarbush Resort, Warren, Vermont
 Join us as we honor the Cochran Family
 With the 11th annual Spirit of Skiing Award

Boston.com Ski & Snowboard Expo

November 10-13, 2016

Visit our booth at the Expo at the
 Seaport World Trade Center

Holiday Party

Thursday December 29, 2016

New England Ski Museum, 5 to 7 PM

Bretton Woods Nordic Marathon

Saturday March 11, 2017

Omni Mount Washington Resort

Hannes Schneider Meister Cup Race

Saturday March 11, 2017

Cranmore Mountain Resort

CURRENT EXHIBITS

Through June, 2017

New England Ski Museum, Franconia Notch, NH
The Mountain Troops and Mountain Culture in Postwar America

Bethel Historical Society, Bethel, Maine
The Mountains of Maine: Skiing in the Pine Tree State

Bretton Woods Resort Base Lodge, Bretton Woods NH
Green Mountains, White Gold: Origins of Vermont Skiing

Intervale Scenic Vista, Route 16, Intervale NH
Skiing in the Mount Washington Valley

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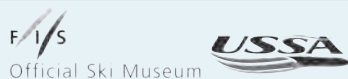
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