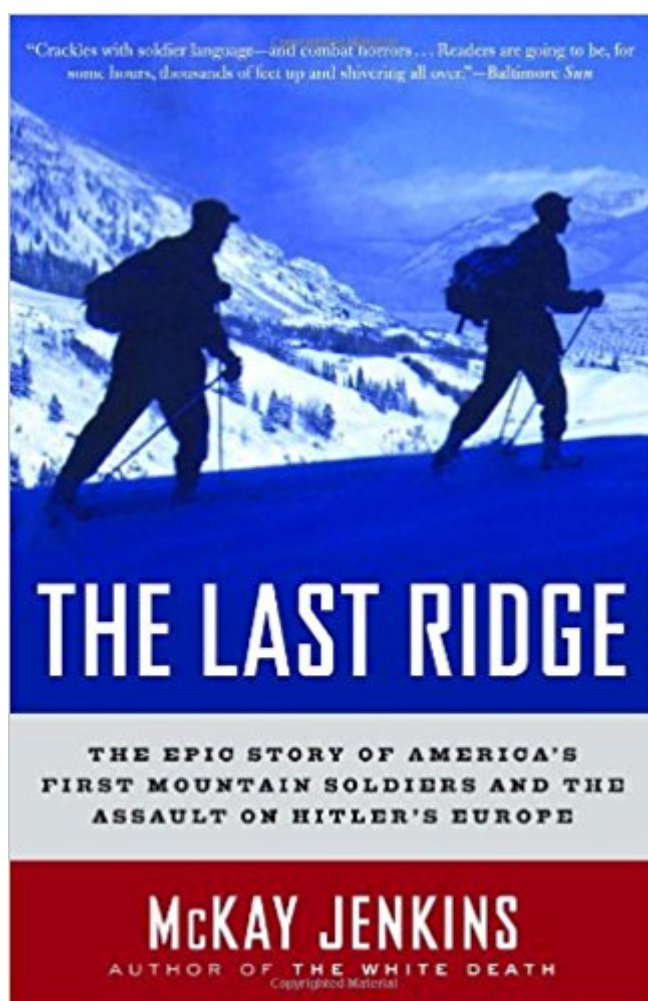


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# The Last Ridge: The Epic Story Of America's First Mountain Soldiers And The Assault On Hitler's Europe



## Synopsis

When World War II broke out in Europe, the American army had no specialized division of mountain soldiers. But in the winter of 1939–1940, after a tiny band of Finnish mountain troops brought the invading Soviet army to its knees, an amateur skier named Charles Minot A. Dole convinced the United States Army to let him recruit an extraordinary assortment of European expatriates, wealthy ski bums, mountaineers, and thrill-seekers and form them into a unique band of Alpine soldiers. These men endured nearly three years of grueling training in the Colorado Rockies and in the process set new standards for both soldiering and mountaineering. The newly forged 10th Mountain Division finally faced combat in the winter of 1945, in Italy's Apennine Mountains, against the seemingly unbreakable German fortifications north of the Gothic Line. There, they planned and executed what is still regarded as the most daring series of nighttime mountain attacks in U.S. military history, taking Mount Belvedere and the sheer, treacherous face of Riva Ridge to smash the linchpin of the German army's lines. Drawing on unique cooperation from veterans of the 10th Mountain Division and a vast archive of unpublished letters and documents, *The Last Ridge* is written with enormous warmth, energy, and honesty. This is one of the most captivating stories of World War II, a blend of *Band of Brothers* and *Into Thin Air*. It is a story of young men asked to do the impossible, and succeeding. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

"The Last Ridge is the breathtaking story of how one man's vision, and the sheer

courage of the legendary 10th Mountain Division, helped change the course of World War II in Europe. Among the war's countless acts of bravery and sacrifice, this one stands out, and McKay Jenkins brings it to life in his riveting account.

•Senator John McCain

"The 10th Mountain Division was the only American Alpine unit to fight during World War II, and its heroic and daring exploits during the final months of the Italian campaign are fully documented by McKay Jenkins in this stirring, first-rate account of men at war.

•Carlo D'Este, author of *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*

"Stymied by army bureaucrats, forced to climb snowfields without ice axes or crampons, trained in skills that were never properly exploited, the soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division nonetheless became the stuff of myth. Without McKay Jenkins's meticulous research, the achievements and eccentricities of this remarkable group of men could easily have been forgotten. Instead, they have been brought to life.

•Anne Fadiman, author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

"Few have written about the Army's elite 10th Mountain Division, and no one has done so as dramatically and with such passion and insight as McKay Jenkins. The perfect war story has, at long last, found the perfect storyteller.

•Andrew Carroll, editor of *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars*

"The Last Ridge is one of the very best books yet written about any part of the World War II story. My friend the late Stephen Ambrose would be proud of this work about one of the most fascinating yet little-known records of the mountain ski patrols both in war and in the peacetime that followed.

•Senator George McGovern

"The Last Ridge is a great untold story of mountaineering and war. It's a terrific read, sharp with characters, full of real drama, and, best of all, it's true.

•Richard Preston, author of *The Hot Zone*

"The Last Ridge, based on skillful interviews with the survivors, is a fine account of a great story, long overdue in the telling, and very well told.

•Peter Matthiessen, author of *The Snow Leopard*

From the Hardcover edition.

When World War II broke out in Europe, the American army had no specialized division of mountain soldiers. But in the winter of 1939-40, after a tiny band of Finnish mountain troops brought the invading Soviet army to its knees, an amateur skier named Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole convinced the United States Army to let him recruit an extraordinary assortment of European expatriates, wealthy ski bums, mountaineers, and thrill-seekers and form them into a unique band of Alpine soldiers. These men endured nearly three years of grueling training in the Colorado Rockies and in the process set new standards for both soldiering and mountaineering. The newly forged 10th

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This is an excellent account of Soldiers that faced the elements (The D Series, etc,) the Enemy (Nazis) and were not properly equipped when it actually mattered (Snow Gear was on a Ship that Never Came, 'Sorry if I spoiled that for new readers!'). Better trained than the Officers and conventional Army methods. America has forgotten whom and what has paved the path for others to follow.-Vail Ski Resort, Colorado is thanks to the 10 Mountain DIV. A lot of your modern day mountaineering came from the 10 Mountain DIV to include the Park Rangers etc. Please watch this Clip on youtube from 1943 Warner Brothers called *Mountain Soldiers* (1943).

[http://youtu.be/\\_3PEvRjEzRM](http://youtu.be/_3PEvRjEzRM) (For those that have watched John Wayne and the Green Berets it has that felling!) Very Respectfully to Hugh Evens a Soldier whom I met that was 89 years old, his PLT SGT died in his hands and of course to all of his 10th Mountain Brothers fallen, past, and present. Please checkout Hugh Evens Denver Post

[http://www.denverpost.com/ci\\_22885313/world-war-ii-veteran-still-comfortable-high-country?source=infinite](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_22885313/world-war-ii-veteran-still-comfortable-high-country?source=infinite). The man is still tough as Nails.Sincerely,1LT Jones, Marc1-157th IN.

I've skied for more than 60 years, so the story of the origin and exploits of the 10th Mountain Division found a receptive audience in me. Jenkins does a fine job of introducing the key players, some of whom I was already familiar with thanks to my interest in skiing. His depiction of the early days -- from recruiting to the rigors of training and the earliest missions in the Aleutians -- were particularly compelling for me. The narrative and anecdotes focusing on the troops' involvement in the war in Italy graphically underscored the horrors of war, the soldiers' heroism and courage and the staggering price they paid. But what I missed, and had hoped to find, was how these skier soldiers gave birth to the modern ski industry in the U.S. There were pieces of that, but I was hoping to see the arc connecting then and now more completely drawn. Perhaps Jenkins is considering a

second book on just that subject. If so, count me among those offering enthusiastic encouragement.

Excellent story of guys who didn't get much credit.

I enjoyed this book and the history it included in the forming of the 10th Mountain Division. The inclusion of the forming of the National Ski Patrol and how it helped the Army assemble these crack troops was very interesting. I also enjoyed learning about the personal stories of the men and their backgrounds. This was included for the men prior to and after the war. A great read and history lesson.

After learning that my grandfather had been in the 10th Mountain's 126th Engineering battalion during World War II I wanted to know more about what the 10th Mountain's history during the war. The book is well written and detailed and gives some insight about what my grandfather went through. I am not a WWII history buff but I liked the writing and the stories included in the book.

I had the wonderful opportunity to work in a Senior Retirement Community and become friends with one of the survivors of the Mountain Soldiers. He spoke at length about these men but he never got into details. I have found most of that generation always spoke highly of their elite members and rarely of themselves. I highly recommend this book to every amateur WWII historian. What these men went through was incredible. America owe these men and their spouses so much.

A fascinating story of a group of men and women during WWII that I had never heard before.

Good book about 10th Mountain Division!

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