



The Highest Mountains, The Toughest Conditions, The Most Extraordinary Soldiers.

Compelling Public Television Documentary Recounts 10th Mountain Division's Uphill Battles

Press Release

May 7, 2007— During World War II, the 10th Mountain gave new meaning to the phrase “uphill battle” as they embarked on a true mission impossible. Now a one-hour documentary, *The Last Ridge* narrated by National Public Radio’s Scott Simon, recounts the 10th’s remarkable history, beginning with its earliest days as a legendary WW II alpine fighting force.

With the Germans entrenched in Italy’s heavily fortified mountaintops, the Allied advance towards Germany was effectively blocked. Other Allied divisions had tried—and failed to capture this critical high ground, losing 15,000 soldiers in the process. Finally, Army brass called up the 10th and the rest is history: how the 10th turned the tide for the Allies in Italy, revolutionized winter mountain warfare abroad, transformed winter sports at home, and inspired an entire generation of soldiers.

“If you look at the battles fought in World War II, the 10th did the near impossible,” reflects Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin III, a former Commander of today’s 10th Mountain Division (Light.) “They’re still called to do the near impossible. The 10th Mountain mindset of going where others don’t is still important.”

To breakthrough to a younger generation, *The Last Ridge* documentary takes an active history approach. “Many young people today find it difficult to grasp the cataclysmic events of the World War II era,” comments program producer Abbie Kealy. “There’s nothing in recent history that compares in size and scope of the devastation.”

The Last Ridge weaves together re-creations, eyewitness accounts, 3-D animation, Allied and captured German archival footage and newly discovered letters to help viewers understand it in a meaningful way. The film also looks at how the current 10th Mountain Division is taking the legacy from here, featuring their Afghanistan patrols, comments from soldiers based out of Fort Drum, and those recuperating at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

“It’s clear when you talk to young soldiers today, that they are part of something that transcends now. That’s not lost on the soldiers of the 10th,” said Brigadier General Arthur Bartell, a former Chief of Staff for the 10th Mountain Division (Light.)

The film helps viewers understand the times, terrain and what the 10th faced during battles and backbreaking training. They lived outdoors for weeks at a time, in sub-zero weather, at altitudes approaching 13,000 feet. No tanks, no trucks, no jeeps—just the men, their skis and whatever they could carry. They knew winter and mountains and the invincible German Army were a deadly combination.

The 10th Mountain Division: Part of History...Making History...Changing History.



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But the 10th's difficult training paid off with their astonishing success in battle under impossible conditions. "The 10th was transformational when it was started during World War II." said Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin III. According to Kealy, "The 10th Mountain was a superstar of its time. Today's extreme sports have nothing on them. The 10th invented extreme sports—and then they used that skill and determination in battle.

Produced by 10th Mountain descendent Abbie Kealy, the program was filmed extensively in Colorado, Italy, Afghanistan and Slovenia, with insights from over one hundred 10th Mountain veterans and soldiers, including ten from Colorado. "With a thousand World War II veterans passing away daily, the 10th's extraordinary story is one that must be told now by the soldiers who know it best," reflects Kealy. "We hoped to make the program of record about the 10th. It's turned out to be a story that transcends time."

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