



10th Mountain Division Descendants, Inc.

Winter 2026 President's Message

"Is it winter yet?"

"Sempre Avanti" - Always Forward

I can't speak for the rest of the country, but out West we have not had any weather that remotely qualifies as winter. As an avid skier (Thanks Dad!), I relish the start of the ski season, and the hope of deep powder turns. This year I have yet to 'strap on' a pair of skis!

That complaint aside, I can only hope that there is plenty of snow in Leadville when the 51st edition of the 10th Mountain Ski-in Daze takes place on February 26 and 27th, followed by two days of skiing fun at the Vail Legacy Days. I plan to be there, and I hope to see you there as well.

This is going to be a busy winter for the 10th Mountain Division. In addition to their usual duties both stateside and abroad, there are plans being made to celebrate the Army's sponsorship, and more specifically the 10th Mountain Division's sponsorship of the US Ski Team. Leveraging this sponsorship, the 10th Mountain Division leadership is planning a trip to the Italian Hill Towns and an ascent up Riva Ridge to coincide with the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. We have been invited to attend the series of events that have been planned, and some of our membership hope to make their way to Italy to be a part of the celebrations. Stay tuned, as I will be asking those folks to provide us with a full report on their journey to Italy.

In addition, this sponsorship has taken the form of named advertising on the clothing of the US Ski Team. If you follow Alpine skiing you know the name, Mikaela Shiffrin (without question the best Alpine racer of our time). If you look closely at photos of Mikaela that surface in the press and on social media on a regular basis, you'll see both the "Army" and "10th Mountain" patches on her clothing signifying that sponsorship. Actually, every member of the team will be sporting these patches. This brings tremendous exposure to the Division, and to the legacy that we all share.

This year marks the second year of the Ninety Pound Rucksack Challenge, the brainchild of Christian Beckwith of Ninety Pound Rucksack Podcast fame. For those who are not familiar with this event, the Challenge takes place on February 18th to commemorate the 10th Mountain Division's assault on Riva Ridge in 1945. The basic idea is to do a ski ascent of some length and elevation gain with (or without) a load on your back. This year there are 25 venues that will host the Challenge, and they are concentrated in the West and in the Northeast of the country. I hope to take part in the Utah version of the Challenge, sponsored by the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance.

However, you don't have to participate in one of these planned events to take part in the Challenge. You can construct your own Challenge, setting your own mode (walk, hike, ski), distance and difficulty. You can solo the event or gather friends to share the experience. If you want to learn more about how you can be part of this very cool commemoration of Riva Ridge visit Christian's website: christianbeckwith.com/npr-challenge/

Lastly, I want to highlight that we have three new Chapter Directors for our Descendants' organization. Anna White-Menges has assumed the leadership of the Great Lakes Chapter, Nancy Anselm has taken over the duties of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter, and Jenna Smith has stepped into the role of Director of the New Southeast Chapter. Jenna's commitment is particularly significant since this Directorship has been vacant for several years.

I want to express my personal thanks to these three women for volunteering to keep this organization going. Their jobs are not easy given how geographically dispersed our Chapters have become. It is difficult to get people to travel across state lines to attend in-person gatherings, but our hope is to provide events that are significant enough to coax people into making that commitment to meet in person. However, we are looking to hold more virtual events that will eliminate this 'travel' problem. We have some virtual events in the works that you'll be hearing about soon through mass emails, social media and our website.

As always, Sempre avanti!

Ron Sawdey, President

10th Mountain Division Descendants

Ron.Sawdey@10thMtnDivDesc.org