Skiing at Camp Hale: Mountain Troops during World War II

Jack A. Benson

In May 1943 the Denver Pigeon Club donated some of its finest fowl to the United States Army's 10th Light Infantry Division at Camp Hale, Colorado. Proud to be making a practical contribution to the war effort, the club's president explained, "Pigeons are extremely reliable in carrying messages. They travel faster than forty miles an hour and can cover over five hundred miles a day." At the same time, base commanders were delighted to receive such a simple solution to the vexing problem of communicating with troops separated by mountains. Only one thing went wrong. Camp Hale was located at 9,200 feet above sea level and pigeons cannot fly at that altitude. Thus the birds—like the men at the base—spent their active duty waddling through frozen mud, suffering from twenty-below-zero temperatures and doing little to defeat the fascists.

The story of Camp Hale began inauspiciously and far from Colorado. In February 1939 the Hochbirge Ski Club of Boston held its annual winter outing at Big Bromley Mountain, Vermont. After one of the day's activities, some members congregated before a log fire in a local inn. Included were C. Minot (Minnie) Dole of the National Ski Patrol and Roger Langley of the National Ski Association. According to Dole in his autobiography, Adventures in Skiing, the conversation inevitably turned to the Russo-Finnish War, which was then in progress.

Both men applauded especially the tactics of the Finnish troops. Dressed in white uniforms to match the backdrop of snow, the Finns glided quietly on long, narrow skis through forests to attack the Russians moving along plowed roads. Then, after surprising the Russians at a point

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Ibid.

For published histories rich in information on Camp Hale see Hal Burton, The Ski Troops (New York, 1971); Curtis Casewit, Mountain Troopers: The Story of the Tenth Mountain Division (New York, 1972); C. Minot Dole, Adventures in Skiing (New York, 1965).

of the Finnish army's choosing, they returned to the forest, secure in the
knowledge that no mechanized vehicle nor man on foot could follow
them. Dole and Langley then compared American combat troops with
those of Russia and Finland and had to conclude that the U.S. Army more
closely resembled the slow-moving Russians than the swift Finns.

Having identified a weakness in American preparedness, Dole and
Langley set out to correct it. Over the next fourteen months they met
repeatedly with representatives of the U.S. Army to argue for the creation
of a division of skiers and mountaineers. Dole was especially persistent.
He phoned government officials whom he had known as fellow students
at Yale to argue his case. He wrote to anyone in the military who might
play some role in establishing such a unit. His persistence was finally
rewarded in April 1941, when General George C. Marshall ordered
subordinates to find a suitable site for the training of a division of troops
adept at skiing and climbing. Until such a base could be established, he
further ordered that such training begin immediately at Fort Lewis,
Washington. By such means, the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment
under the command of Colonel Onslow S. Rolfe came into being.5

The first soldier to report to the 87th, appropriately enough, was a ski
racer—Charles D. McLane of the Dartmouth Outing Club. After wan-
dering through several old WPA barracks that were to serve as the
temporary home of America's first mountain force, McLane finally found
an officer and reported for duty with the ski troops.

"Son," the officer said, "at this point you are the ski troops."6

Meanwhile, Marshall's search team had found a promising site for a
permanent base near the northwest corner of Yellowstone National Park.
But when President Roosevelt's uncle, Frederick Delano, heard of the
army's plans through membership in a conservation committee, he dis-
cussed his reservations about the site with his powerful nephew.
Paramount among these reservations was the inevitable danger to Yel-
lowstone's wildlife if the army trained troops in the area, not to mention
the damage a stray shell could wreak on one of the park's geological
wonders. Such doubts convinced the president to order Marshall's search
team to look elsewhere.7

Colorado then became the focus of attention. After eliminating
Aspen because of the high cost of property in the area and Wheeler
Junction (the site of the present-day Copper Mountain ski resort) because
of its inaccessibility to other towns in winter, the search team recom-
recommended that a base be built at Pando, six miles north of Leadville. Pando
seemed the perfect headquarters for mountain training for several rea-

6 Burton, Ski Troops, 94.
7 Ibid.
sons. First, there was plenty of room for a military base. Pando, after all, was only a small town of three hundred people at the edge of a twelve-mile-long L-shaped valley surrounded by 12,000-foot-high peaks. Second, the site did not have to be purchased because, with the exception of Pando, the region was part of a national forest. Third, the site was accessible. Not only did a transcontinental railroad cross the valley but a major U.S. highway connected Pando with Colorado Springs and Denver to the east and with Salt Lake City to the west. Finally, the citizens of Pando looked forward to having the army as a neighbor and secure employer after they had barely survived the Great Depression by supplying ice to refrigerator cars on trains arriving from the orchards of California.

Construction began at Pando in April 1942. Six months later the partially completed base was dedicated in honor of Irving G. Hale, a native of Colorado, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, and one of the founders of the VFW. Then on November 15, 1942, the Army Corps of Engineers informed Colonel Rolfe that Camp Hale was ready for occupation.

In anticipation of that announcement, Rolfe had established a staging area for troops at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs. On November 16, 1942, Rolfe and his men left for Camp Hale. Upon their arrival, they discovered that snow had fallen the previous night, giving the base a pristine appearance it did not deserve, for beneath the snow lay any number of spikes, pieces of glass, and tools left by the Corps of Engineers. As trucks and jeeps moved through the camp they turned its streets into a quagmire of mud and snow. Soon one vehicle after another became mired in the slush. But as soon as one was freed, another stopped suddenly, its tires punctured by a half buried screwdriver or saw. Within a few hours an unknown, and undoubtedly exasperated, soldier renamed the base "Camp Hell." "Camp Hell" seemed an appropriate nickname at the time, for much of the base was still under construction. Theaters and clubs did not exist; neither did laundries nor dining facilities. The nearest gas station was in Leadville, which was convenient only in comparison to the completed

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8 History of the Mountain Training Center, 26-29, Study No. 24, 1946, Army Ground Forces Historical Section, RG 337, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter History of the MTC).

9 For information on the building of Camp Hale, see Rene L. Coquez, The Invisible Men on Skis: The Story of the Construction of Camp Hale (Boulder, 1970); Denver Post, April 27, 1942; Rocky Mountain News, June 28, 1942; Denver Post, August 30, 1942; ibid., December 9, 1942. The author interviewed Earl Eaton, who worked at Camp Hale during the summer of 1942. Eaton interview, December 9, 1976, Lakewood, Colorado.

10 Camp Hale Ski Zette, December 17, 1943.

11 John Jay, Skiing down the Years (New York, 1966), 175-77.
guest house for officers' wives in Glenwood Springs, some seventy miles to
the west.12

Soldiers could joke about the lack of facilities since they realized
laundries, gas stations, and mess halls would be built. But the problem of
air pollution was no laughing matter. Camp Hale probably had a more
serious problem in this regard than other installations because the camp's
location in a natural bowl permitted little access to wind. Therefore,
smoke remained trapped above the base for days, and there was plenty of
soot to be caught. Stoves in the five hundred or so barracks of the camp
burned coal. Trains—each powered by four or five locomotives spewing
forth thunderheads of smoke as they struggled to pull the loaded cars the
last few feet of a close to two-mile-high climb to Camp Hall—arrived
daily. On some days as many as a dozen trains arrived and departed. Not
surprisingly, many soldiers complained of a rasping cough, which they
called the "Pando Hack."13

Encountering these problems in the early months of Camp Hale's
existence were soldiers from three units. Of course, the 87th Mountain
Infantry Regiment was sent to Camp Hale. Since most of its troops had
spent a year at Fort Lewis and had become expert skiers and climbers, its
transfer to Colorado made sense. The assignment of the other units did
not. One, the 10th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, came from Fort
Meade, South Dakota, and was composed largely of cowboys. The other
unit was the 31st Dixie Division from Leesville, Louisiana, which even the
official record of Camp Hale, The History of the Mountain Training Center,
admitted was "one of the hottest, flattest, and lowest spots in the United
States."14 Regardless of where they were from, these soldiers were as­
signed to either the 85th, or the 86th, or the 87th Mountain Infantry
Regiment. Ironically, the average ski trooper in early 1943 had never
been on a pair of skis.

That changed quickly. On January 2, 1943, Colonel Rolfe issued a
directive that soldiers at Camp Hale begin forty half-days of ski instruc­
tion. The directive included officers and soon led to a situation in which no
one seemed to know who was in charge. That is, when training began at
Cooper Hill, a two-mile-long gentle slope south of the camp, many officers
refused to obey the orders of their instructors because the latter hap­
pened to be of lesser rank. Some officers boycotted the sessions. Others
reached inequitable compromises. One colonel, for instance, ordered his
instructor, a lieutenant, to teach only turns to the right because of an old
injury the colonel had suffered to his left leg. With lack of discipline a

12History of the MTC, 37-38.
13Interview with Mac McKenna, October 26, 1976, Englewood, Colorado; History of the
MTC, 39.
14History of the MTC, 45-46.
rampant problem among officers, instructors were hardly surprised when
many enlisted men refused to follow orders. The result was a high absentee rate at Cooper Hill.15

Superiors in Washington, D.C., remained unaware of these problems
until soldiers participated in a tactical exercise at Camp Hale during
February 1943. Then, with Marshall’s aides on hand, the weaknesses
became glaringly apparent. An army report of the exercise, in fact,
termed it a “minor scandal.”16

What happened?

According to The History of the Mountain Training Center, troops were
to establish a defensive position at the 13,500-foot level of Homestake
Peak, a few miles from Camp Hale, and then to execute a series of
maneuvers. Evidently, the soldiers had little difficulty with the initial task,
but when they tried to take the offensive, chaos resulted. Part of
the problem was due to horrible weather—two weeks of twenty-five-below-zero temperatures and heavy snow. Most of the problem, however, was
man made. Instructors, for instance, had failed to teach the use of climbing skins or climbing wax so that even those soldiers who had attended
the sessions on Cooper Hill struggled in vain to stay in formation on the
packed trails. Meanwhile, squadron leaders tried to maintain a pace of
106 steps per minute—the accepted rate for forced marches at sea level,
but hardly an appropriate pace for men on Homestake Peak. Compounding these problems, some soldiers had received less than a week of
instruction in winter survival and could not even operate the all-weather
stoves. Thus they slept in cold tents and ate uncooked food. In the end, 30
percent of those participating in the exercise suffered from frostbite or
exhaustion.17

Many veterans of a year at Fort Lewis also ended up in sick bay
because they had been driven beyond the limit of endurance. A weighing
of packs after the exercise revealed that each man in the 87th Mountain
Infantry Regiment had carried an average of eighty-six pounds up and
down Homestake Peak, although the army manual for high altitude
training set a maximum weight of forty-five pounds per pack. (Unlike the
other regiments in the exercise, the 87th carried extra equipment, most of

15Interview with Lawrence Jump, December 9, 1976, Denver, Colorado. (Jump was the
lieutenant referred to in the paragraph.) For other reminiscences of training at Cooper Hill
see David Browder, “First Winter at Hale,” Sierra Club Bulletin (June 1943), 67-68; E. C.
American Ski Annual (1944), 21-23; John E. P. Morgan, “Special Training,” American Ski
Annual (1944), 21-23.

16History of the MTC, 42-43.

17Ibid.; Interview with Peter W. Seibert, December 7, 1976, Denver, Colorado; and
Training in Mountain and Winter Warfare, Study no. 23, 1946, Army Ground Forces Historical
Section, RG 337, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
which were spare parts.) No wonder the chorus of a favorite song at Camp Hale said:

Swinging a ninety pound rucksack,
A pound of grub or two,
He'll schuss the mountain,
Like his Daddy used to do.

Upon invitation of the army, Dole was also present for the exercise. At one point he encountered two soldiers standing barefoot in the snow. When he questioned them about their behavior, they replied that if their feet froze then surely they would be transferred. Another time Dole spent the night on Homestake Mountain with other observers, including a certain British General Dunn. Sometime in the early morning Dole awoke to discover that bitter temperatures had frozen the zipper on his sleeping bag. But he was not alone in this predicament, for he heard Dunn comment in an exasperated voice, "I say, oh chaps, suppose the bloody Germans were attacking. They'd make sauerkraut out of us." At least the troops did not have to contend with Wehrmacht, although their commanders were forced to face an official inquiry.

In early February 1943 Surgeon General Thomas Parran agreed to a request by Congressman Robert Fay Rockwell (Democrat, Colorado) to investigate training procedures at Camp Hale. Fortunately for Colonel Rolfe and his staff, Parran completed the investigation before the maneuvers were completed. Although conceding there were problems at Camp Hale, Parran concluded that not a single soldier had died because of overstrenuous training. Those undergoing that training, however, agreed with Captain John Jay's retort, "Anyone who transfers to combat from Camp Hale is a coward."

Still, several changes took place at Camp Hale because of the surgeon general's report and the disastrous maneuvers. To correct mistakes in ski instruction, Colonel Rolfe appointed Lieutenant Paul Townsend, a former cross-country skier at the University of New Hampshire, as director of the ski school. Townsend was also given authority to enforce his orders. After assembling his own staff of instructors, he spent the remainder of the winter teaching recruits not only fundamentals of skiing but also the basics of winter survival. Closer attention was paid to the amount and degree of exercise. Soldiers were given greater quantities of water to counteract the rapid rate of dehydration at the 9,200-foot altitude. As
many items as possible were eliminated from the soldiers’ packs. In other words, Townsend forced the army to adjust its expectations to the demands of high-altitude training. It was no mean accomplishment.23

The army also attempted to improve the quality of personnel at Camp Hale by recruiting expert skiers and climbers. To this end its representatives signed a contract with Dole to use the facilities of the National Ski Patrol in enlisting three thousand men by the summer of 1943. This was the first time a civilian agency was designated as a procurement center for any branch of the U.S. armed forces. Any prospective soldier who then wanted to join the ski troops presented three letters of recommendation to a local representative of the ski patrol. If the volunteer was judged competent, the local patrolman gave him documentation to present at his induction center to insure that he would be sent to Camp Hale.24

Because of this system, by June 1943 Camp Hale’s roster read as though it were announcing a convention of Winter Olympic contestants and champion climbers. Some were both. Walter Prager, for instance, had scaled most of the peaks in his native Austria before replacing Otto Schniebs in 1937 as coach of the Dartmouth Outing Club. Peter Gabriel was also an excellent skier, but he was better known for leading teams of climbers on challenging ascents in the Alps. Joining them at Camp Hale were Torger Tokle, U.S. National Jumping Champion, and Friedl Pfeifer, winner in 1936 of Europe’s most difficult alpine test—the Arlburg Kandahar. Other noteworthy skiers included Arthur Douchette of the Hannes Schneider Ski School; Herbert Klein of Sugar Bowl, California; Andy Ransom and Fritz Kramer of Stowe, Vermont; and Johnny Litchfield, Percy Rideout, and Florian Hämmerle of Sun Valley, Idaho. Listed among the climbers were Paul Petzoldt, conquerer of the mighty K-2 peak in the Himalayas, and David Browder, who had specialized in climbing mountains in the American West.25

While these recruits were familiarizing themselves with their new home, many of their commanders were being transferred, probably because of the ill-fated maneuvers and the surgeon general’s report. One of the first to go was Colonel Rolfe, who was reassigned to the 71st Light Infantry Division. Most of Rolfe’s staff were also transferred. In fact, of the ten colonels who had arrived with Rolfe in November 1942, only three

survived the shake-up. Following the reassignment of personnel, the Office of the Chief of Staff formed in June 1943 the 10th Light Infantry Division from the regiments at Camp Hale and placed General Lloyd Jones in command.26

The enlisted men at Camp Hale, however, were not as concerned with changes in personnel as with changes in the kind of training. After all, it was summer—a season to put away the skis in favor of the ropes, the pitons, and the other tools of the mountaineer. Training began after the creation of a mountaineering school under the direction of Sergeants Prager and Gabriel. Each soldier received six days of intense classroom instruction followed by practice on one-hundred-foot-high cliffs at the northeast edge of the camp. Many soldiers found the techniques of climbing more difficult to master than those of skiing. They feared especially the Tyrolean Traverse, whereby soldiers crossed a gorge by crawling beneath a rope strung from one side of the gorge to the other.27 Some, however, were confident enough in their skills to accept the most unlikely challenges. They especially enjoyed rapelling down the walls of Denver’s most prestigious hotel, the Brown Palace.28

In the meantime, aware that the Rockies lacked the icy glaciers of the Alps, commanders had decided to build a field of ice near Camp Hale to provide troops with the kind of situation they might encounter in combat. Therefore, adjacent to Resolution Creek in May 1943, the Corps of Engineers piled logs on a steep slope to simulate seracs and crevasses and then poured water over the timbers to form the glacier. Unfortunately, the water did not freeze to an even depth, which caused part of the glacier to buckle into irregular shapes found in no other field of ice. That was a minor problem. The major one was that the corps had built the glacier on a south slope. It melted so quickly that few soldiers ever crawled over its slushy face.29

It was also possible to be a soldier at Camp Hale and have little to do with skiing or climbing, for the base had been designated as a training center for approximately one hundred dogs. Under the direction of Edward Moody and Malcolm Douglas, veterans of Admiral Richard Byrd’s 1940 expedition to the South Pole, German shepherds, huskies, and St. Bernards were trained as sentries, messenger carriers, and sled dogs.

The results of this program were mixed. On the one hand, messenger dogs seemed to work well. During the ill-fated February maneuvers, the dogs proved they could travel over unfamiliar terrain, day or night, at the

26 History of the MTC, 45; History of the 10th Light Alpine Division, Study no. 28, Army Ground Forces Historical Section, RG 337, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
27 Casewit, Mountain Troopers, 19-21; History of the MTC, 65, 93.
28 Interviews with Jump and McKenna.
29 History of the MTC, 64.
acceptable rate of nine miles per hour. On the other hand, they could operate only on packed trails. They were also expensive in terms of manpower, requiring fifty soldiers to control every twenty animals. Yet the real problem was," as colonel Earl V. Clark observed, "dogs suffered the same effects of exhaustion at high altitudes as men did." They were excellent on polar expeditions at sea level, but not on training exercises two miles high.

Artillery units at Camp Hale relied on another beast of burden. Mules proved to be the only satisfactory means of moving .75 millimeter howitzers, .81 millimeter mortars, and .30 caliber machine guns through deep snow. In the case of the howitzers, each weapon was broken down into six pieces, each piece transported by a separate mule. Soldiers accompanying the animals traveled on snowshoes rather than skis to avoid sinking too deeply into the snow under the heavy weight of their rucksacks. The combination of man and animal worked well. In fact, one detachment of the 602nd Field Pack Artillery carried howitzers from Camp Hale across the Continental Divide to Colorado Springs. Despite blizzards and sleet storms, they covered the 170-mile distance in only ten days.

While the vast majority of troops at Camp Hale spent their days training in the mountains, a select few ended up as prison guards. This strange state of affairs came about when Camp Hale was chosen as a place of incarceration for members of Rommel's Africa Corps captured as part of Operation Torch. Camp Hale's role as a POW center would have remained unknown to the public were it not for Private Dale Maple of the 10th Light Infantry Division. In its March 6, 1944, issue, Time reported that Maple had struck up a friendship with two of the prisoners and later absconded with them. In the course of its investigation of Maple, Time uncovered other examples of scandalous behavior at the mountain facility. Three WAC privates, for instance, had been thrown in jail for writing love notes to the Nazis. Fortunately Army officials could conclude that the WACs were guilty of no more than a "springtime indiscretion." Shortly thereafter Sergeant Heinrich Kiikillus, Sergeant Erhard Schwichtenberg, and Private Maple were captured in Mexico and returned to Colorado.
By the time Maple and his buddies were returned to Colorado in December 1943, the soldiers at Camp Hale had completed all facets of training at high altitudes. Commanders seemed unable to decide, however, if the troops were ready for combat, a quandry that would last for much of the next year.

As morale declined among enlisted men, officers countered with a series of spectacular feats on skis. For example, fifty-three soldiers were ordered to scale the two highest peaks in Colorado: 14,431-foot Mount Elbert and 14,418-foot Mount Massive. They completed these tasks on New Year’s Day 1944, while press releases stressed the assaults had been designed as serious tests of men and equipment.35

The official justification for the climbs, however, is hard to accept when the average altitude of the Alps, about 5,000 feet less than the Rockies, is taken into account. That is, a serious test of men and equipment would have taken place at 10,000 feet or less. Instead of being a check on performance, the goal of the exercise, one suspects, was to improve morale by garnering favorable publicity for Camp Hale from Colorado’s newspapers.36

A few months later commanders held a cross-country ski race near Glenwood Springs for members of the 10th Light Infantry Division. Each contestant skied a twenty-mile course with periodic checkpoints to measure accuracy in firing a rifle and in making compass readings. Again press releases argued that the race was a functional test—a means of moving firepower from one place to another in the shortest possible time. And again, one suspects, the real purpose was to shore up low morale.37

Finally, General Jones ordered all troops to participate in a true test of the division’s capabilities. Patterned on the previous winter’s exercise, these maneuvers, known as the “D Series,” took place over a four-week period in March and April 1944. Even the weather was similar to the winter of 1943, with frequent below-zero temperatures and heavy snowfall. The (Denver) Rocky Mountain News reported in this regard that over eight feet of snow fell on Colorado’s high country during the time of the maneuvers.38

Although the results of the D Series were an improvement over the maneuvers of February 1943, they still left a lot to be desired. The final exercise scheduled for Vail Pass was a case in point. In this exercise the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment was designated as “the enemy” and was to surrender the pass after being overwhelmed by the other regiments

35Denver Post, January 19, 1944.
36If the goal of the climbs was to garner publicity, it worked. The following newspapers contained articles on these climbs: Brighton Blade, Colorado Springs Press Gazette, Denver Post, Glenwood Post, Pueblo Chieftain, Rocky Mountain News, and Steamboat Pilot.
37Glenwood Post, May 25, 1944.
38Rocky Mountain News, April 8, 17, 1944.
from Camp Hale. But the 87th's commander, Colonel David Fowler, believed in the cliché that the best defense is an offense. Therefore, he ordered machine guns attached to weasels (over the snow vehicles similar to tractors) and with his men drove to Camp Hale, where they trapped the 85th and 86th Mountain Infantry Regiments for five days. One of Fowler's platoons even managed to steal the base's payroll. With the "enemy" in firm control not only of Vail Pass but also of much of central Colorado, General Jones ended the D Series on Easter Sunday 1944.39

Finally, five months after D Day, the years of preparation ended for the men of Camp Hale. In November 1944 the 10th Light Infantry Division was sent to Italy, where it remained until Germany surrendered in May 1945. Ironically, only three platoons ever skied, although most men found their practice with ropes and pitons of immeasurable value in the Alps. Unfortunately, the 10th suffered heavy casualties. Among its 4,154 wounded were the future developers of Aspen and Vail, Friedl Pfeifer and Peter W. Seibert. Among its 992 dead was one of the division's best-known skiers, Torger Tokle.40

A valid critique of the U.S. Army's experiment in creating an elite unit of skiers and mountaineers must conclude that it was a failure and that a large part of the failure was due to the location of the training facility. As Hal Burton, in The Ski Troops, points out, "The elevation of Camp Hale was equivalent to that of the Hörnle, where the final ascent of the Matterhorn begins."41 That is, Camp Hale's 9,200-foot altitude was simply too high for military needs. There were no targets anywhere near that elevation in either theater of World War II. Moreover, most mistakes in training were a result of instructors failing to compensate for the lack of oxygen approximately two miles above sea level.

The army also squandered a tremendous amount of talent at Camp Hale. Many recruits were expert skiers. Others were skilled climbers. Most were highly intelligent. In fact, 62 percent of one regiment at Camp Hale were smart enough to qualify for Officer Candidate School.42 Instead of using these talents to defeat the enemy, however, the army wasted them for close to a year on exercises to boost morale. Then, when they were finally sent to Italy, they were deployed not as an elite unit but as regular infantry.


See also the following issues of the Camp Hale Ski Zette: March 31, 1944, p. 1; April 7, 1944, p. 1; April 14, 1944, p. 1.


41 Burton, Ski Troops, 123.

42 "A Statistical Table," 3-12, Study no. 3, 1946, Army Ground Forces Historical Section, RG 337, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
The failure to use the 10th Light Infantry Division until so late in the war deserves special comment because there was a need for these troops earlier. They could have been used at almost any time in Norway. They could also have been sent to any number of rocky atolls in the Pacific. And they could have been deployed earlier, and more effectively, in Italy.

For the future of Colorado, however, the army's experiment with ski troops was fortunate. After the war many members of the 10th Light Infantry Division returned to Colorado to play a seminal role in the winter resort industry. In 1946, for example, Pfeifer, Litchfield, and Rideout established Aspen Skiing Corporation. One year later Larry Jump opened a ski area at Arapahoe Basin. During the 1950s Gordon Wren managed the Loveland and later the Steamboat Springs ski areas, while Merrill Hastings published Skiing in Denver. In the 1960s Peter W. Seibert and Robert Parker carved Vail out of the White River National Forest, while Steven Knowlton started Ski Broadmoor in Colorado Springs and then served as the first director of Colorado Ski Country USA, the promotional arm of the industry. Other veterans of Camp Hale staffed the state's ski schools and ski patrols. The men of the 10th Light Infantry Division had finally found a practical application for what they had learned at Camp Hale.

While the ski troops of World War II were establishing a multi-million dollar industry, the army continued to train soldiers at Camp Hale. Twice, war games were held there: Operation Timberline in 1948 and Operation Ski Jump in 1954. Then, in 1959 the CIA trained Tibetan soldiers at Camp Hale. They were later used to disrupt Chinese supply lines in the Himalayas.

With the waning of the cold war in the early 1960s, however, there seemed little need for a mountain base. The army, therefore, dismantled Camp Hale in 1966 before returning the site to the management of the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service has since leased a portion of the site to the city of Leadville as a ski area known as Ski Cooper. To the west of the main tow at Ski Cooper, a drab green building functions as a warming house and a lunchroom. It is also a faint reminder of the once powerful presence of the United States Army's 10th Light Infantry Division.

45 L. Fletcher Prouty, "Colorado to Koko Nor," Empire Magazine (February 6, 1972), 11-17.