



Overview: The Ninety-Pound Rucksack Challenge (“Challenge”) will create a ski mountaineering event that leans into the legacy of the 10th Mountain Division while celebrating its historic contributions to both the Allied victory in World War II and the development of the post-war outdoor recreation industry.

The Event: On February 18, 2025, a tribute to the 10th Mountain Division’s signature action will take place at 7 p.m at MRM as well as many other locations around the country.

Background: The 10th Mountain Division was the US Army’s World War II specialized unit of skiers and climbers whose January 1945 insertion into the Italian Theater helped end the war in Europe. After training for more than three years in the Adirondacks, Cascades, and Rockies, often carrying ninety-pound “rucksacks,” or backpacks, they were inserted into Italy’s Apennine Mountains to break Hitler’s Gothic Line, a fortified series of summits and ridges the Nazis had used to stymie Allied advances for more than 500 days.

At 7 p.m., February 18, 1945, some 800 10th Mountain Division soldiers began a night-time ascent of Riva Ridge, the Gothic Line’s lynchpin. Carrying packs that weighed up to 60 pounds, they ascended four different routes that ranged from 1,500 to 2,500 feet of vertical gain to take the Germans on top without a casualty. Their successful ascent not only helped break the Gothic Line; it catalyzed the German surrender of Italy and hastened the end of the war as well.

Ski towns from around America, including Lake Placid, Sun Valley and Jackson Hole, contributed soldiers to the 10th. Post-war, 10th Mountain Division veterans founded or developed more than 60 ski areas around America, including Steamboat, Vail, Arapahoe Basin and Jackson’s Snow King Mountain.

How It Works: At Mad River we will complete this challenge from 7-9pm on Feb 18th. Because Mad River is only 300 ft tall, we will complete this challenge by hiking up the hill in a predetermined route and then ski/board descend back to the start of the loop. Participants should plan on completing 3-5 loops. Uphill travel can include skiing or hiking and wearing a rucksack with up to 50 lbs is encouraged. Members of the public who sign waivers releasing participating entities from liability will be welcome to join.

To sign up, scan the QR code below. This will take you to a sign up page where you will sign up. You will arrive at the Patrol Room of MRM at 630 on Feb 18th to sign a waiver and then be ready to start at 7pm sharp.

