

Press Release

Release No: 2506-13

June 26, 2025

Fort Drum Public Affairs

## 80 Years Later: Soldier's letter home serves as a window into 10th Mountain Division

The 10th Mountain Division forged its legacy as the Army's elite alpine warriors after dislodging German forces in Italy from the Apennine Mountains and through the Po Valley during the final stages of World War II.

Following months of battle, Pfc. George Morrison Jr., a Soldier with Company C, 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, sat down to write to his parents on June 27, 1945.

He filled more than a dozen handwritten detailing the days from just before his unit left Camp Swift, Texas, on a transatlantic voyage and then his experiences during the division's historic campaign to liberate Italy.

The 10th Mountain Division fought in three major battles against the German Army in the Italian campaign. During the second battle, on March 4, 1945, Morrison received the Bronze Star for meritorious service in combat.

Years later, Morrison would share stories about his time in the Army with family and friends on occasion but was somewhat reticent about his time in war. More than 20 years after his passing, family members discovered the letter inside a drawer at their paternal grandparents' home in Natchez, Mississippi.

It was on Father's Day in 2017, when Daniel Morrison first read the letter that spoke volumes about his dad's overseas experience. His sister, Joie, brought the letter to Italy where they attended the 10th Mountain Division Descendants reunion.

“We read the letter together, literally in the shadow of Riva Ridge, and it was really profound for me to learn the details of his deployment and combat experiences virtually first hand,” he said.

Page after page, Morrison said the details of what his father observed came to life for him.

“There’s this remarkable contrast from one day having a cup of coffee and getting donuts from a Red Cross girl, and then witnessing an enemy soldier being decapitated by a machine gun,” he said. “Not only did the letter answer a lot of questions for me about what he did and what he saw, but also how he felt about it.”

By the letter’s end, Morrison said he could perceive the relief his father felt for surviving the war, and that he looked forward to the future.

“I found it very inspirational, because when reading between the lines, I get a sense of the values that these Soldiers had,” he said. “They were called ‘The Greatest Generation,’ but the Soldiers in the 10th Mountain Division today have those same values and they are carrying on that legacy.”

Morrison brought a copy of the letter with him when he visited Italy earlier this year – the same time a group from Fort Drum were there to observe the 80th anniversary of the 10th Mountain Division’s assault on Riva Ridge.

“For me, the letter says a lot with very few words, even though it is some 14 pages long,” he said. “It’s just one Soldier’s letter home to his parents, but I think it speaks universally about the commitment and sacrifice young people made or make for their country, and how important their service is, or can be.”

With Morrison’s permission and a contribution of family photos and memorabilia, the letter, along with a historical narrative of Company C, 86th Mountain Infantry Battalion are now publicly available on the Fort Drum website here:

<https://home.army.mil/drum/about/news/news-archives-june-2025/10th-mountain-division-soldiers-letter-home>

###

Editor's Note: This multimedia project on the Fort Drum website is a part of our community celebration of the 80th anniversary of the 10th Mountain Division's historic assault on Riva Ridge during World War II, the U.S. Army's 250th Birthday, and the 40-year anniversary of the 10th Mountain Division (LI) reactivation at Fort Drum.

Photo Captions:

Camp Hale Night - George Morrison Jr. and his wife Virginia are photographed at a 10th Mountain Division reunion in French Lick, Indiana, in 1989. It was "Camp Hale Night" and the Morrisons dressed up in authentic period attire to win the contest. (Photo courtesy of the Morrison family)

1 March 1943 – PFC George Morrison Jr. training at Camp Hale, Colorado in March 1943. Morrison was trained and certified in the U.S. Army method of skiing and went on to serve as a ski instructor at Camp Hale. (Photo courtesy of the Morrison family)

For more information regarding this release, contact Katherine Wright at 315-772-9043 or email [katherine.e.wright12.civ@army.mil](mailto:katherine.e.wright12.civ@army.mil).