

HAROLD B. BURTON
1908-1992

Harold B. Burton died on March 8, 1992 at the age of 84 after a distinguished career as a newspaper reporter and author as well as a mountaineer who in World War II was involved with the training of thousands of soldiers in assault climbing. He was also a skier whose voluntary efforts led to the creation of the Whiteface and Gore Mountain Ski Centers in the Adirondacks through constitutional amendments.

He was among the first World War II volunteers to join what eventually became the 10th Mountain Division. Assigned to a detachment that camped on the Saskatchewan Glacier north of Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada, to work on military operations in the high mountains, his group tested *Weasels*, army snowmobiles, under alpine conditions and drove them across crevasses on improvised bridges. In charge of training artillery officers at Camp Carson, Colorado, to climb mountains for fire-observation purposes, Hal developed the Cheyenne Canyon climbing area, which has been used by the military ever since to train National Guard and Reserve units in rock climbing. He also persuaded generals to send his climbing school to the Crestone Needles, where climbing classes engaged in some of the finest climbing in the Rockies.

In 1943, Hal was one of the officers in charge of a climbing school at Seneca Rock, West Virginia where units of twelve other divisions were trained by instructors from the 10th Mountain Division. The climax of training was Hal's invention. With the enemy on top of a 300-foot cliff supposedly held down by artillery fire, assault teams would wade the Potomac River and climb the cliff, driving pitons and setting fixed ropes up which reinforcements could climb. Hal's instructors sat at various spots on the cliff throwing fuse-lit dynamite sticks down unclimbed gullies to furnish appropriate atmosphere. Some soldiers conceded later that actual combat was an anticlimax after this operation. Toward the end of 1943, Hal and the late Ed Link led a detachment of climbing instructors to Italy, where they trained British attack troops and especially Gurkhas, who proved to be superb climbers.

Hal spent years working on conservation and recreational projects in the Adirondacks. He is also remembered by *Saturday Evening Post* readers in the 1950s for a graphic account of his traverse of the Matterhorn via the Hörnli and Italian Ridges with the guide Otto Fuhrer. He was a member of the American Alpine Club from 1945 until his death.

Serving in his latter years as a book editor for *Newsday*, Hal lived in Glen Cove on Long Island but had a second home in Keene Valley, New York, where he was a popular participant in community affairs. Pre-deceased by his wife, Henrietta Ward Burton, he leaves his son Frederick, his daughter, Mary Burton Mulligan, and two granddaughters.

JAMES A. GOODWIN