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Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole

Born: 1899 Died: 1976

Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole, always an advocate of skiing safety, was a founder of the National Ski Patrol System and the Tenth Mountain Division of WWII.

Minnie Dole, born in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts, on April 18, 1899, was educated at Phillips Academy and Yale, Class of 1923. Following a period of youthful gadabouts, he married Jane Ely, of Greenwich, Connecticut, and settled down in the insurance business in New York City. An outdoors enthusiast since youth, he was a member of the prestigious Amateur Ski Club of New York headed up by Roland Palmedo.

Jane, Minnie and friends, Frank Edson and his wife, were skiing on Mt. Mansfield over the New Year's holiday in 1936 when Minnie fell on the Toll Road, breaking an ankle. Those were early days of skiing, few skiers and little, if any, help. Minnie endured a ride down the mountain on a piece

of corrugated roofing, getting to a doctor two and a half hours later. Within weeks, Frank Edson, himself, was killed in a race on the Ghost Trail in Pittsfield when he crashed into a tree. Roland Palmedo asked Minnie to head up a committee to study ski accidents and to make recommendations. Roland Palmedo had, early in 1936, suggested a ski patrol under Craig O. Burt at Stowe's Mt. Mansfield Ski Club. Minnie picked up the reins and made recommendations for policing race courses, patrolling ski trails, providing first aid, crowd control and communications. Roger Langley, president of the National Ski Association – now USSA – was so impressed by the operation at the 1938 Nationals on Mt. Mansfield's Nose Dive Trail that he promoted its nationwide adoption. Thus was born the National Ski Patrol System.

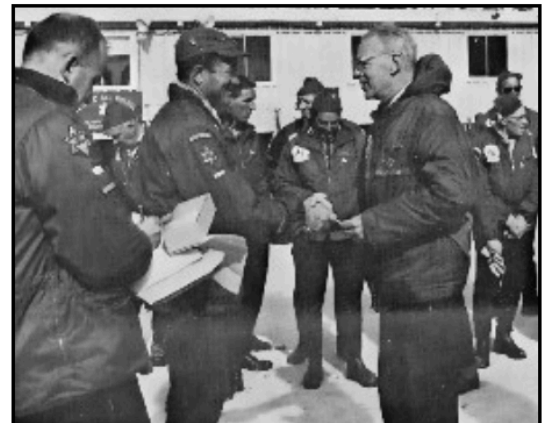
In 1939, Soviet troops were overrunning Finland. The success of Finnish hit-and-run tactics on skis against Russian troops got Minnie's attention. He thought we should have troops trained to fight in snow. He promoted the idea, getting support from the NSPS. He and his sidekick, John Morgan, contacted army brass, first locally and then in Washington, D.C. They got early brush-offs, but persevered. They had Yale acquaintances with good connections and finally wangled a brief meeting with a General Staff colonel who turned them over to a major who, in turn, left them with a captain whose only encouragement was to ask if they could help with advice on winter equipment. Much discouraged, but with a foot still in the door, they returned home.

They plugged on, and another old classmate got them a meeting with the Secretary of War's military aide, a major. He seemed reasonably impressed and finally Minnie boldly said they had to talk with General Marshall, Chief of Staff, who was the only one with sufficient authority to make a final decision. A report of the meeting was all that could be promised. Back to square one, Minnie's John Street insurance office in New York. On September 9, 1940, Minnie received a cable notifying him of a meeting scheduled with General Marshall the following morning. Minnie and John Morgan scrambled for a train to Washington. Marshall seemed interested and said they would hear from him shortly. Two weeks later, two colonels came to New York, asked many questions and were taken with the idea. Winter clothing, equipment, and training were discussed and Marshall established an agency to pursue the idea and to set up ski instruction in certain army divisions. The NSPS would be called on for advice and other help. The line had been crossed.

The so-called ski troops were first quartered at Fort Lewis, Washington, and then at Camp Hale, Colorado. The Tenth Mountain Division saw heavy duty in Italy's Apennines from storied Riva Ridge and Belvedere until they crossed the Po River in the north. But at what cost? In 114 days of fighting, almost 1000 men were lost.

Charles Minot "Minnie" Dole is a legend in the annals of skiing. He

was a founding father of both the National Ski Patrol System and the fabled Tenth Mountain Division, the so-called Ski Troops. Minnie Dole was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1958.



Dole as he received citation from the avalanche Patrol at the Squaw Valley Olympics.