

Jack Owens Riley
Pictures from Irene L. Riley

JOHN G. Riley - Intro from
Wife: Irene L. Riley

In Cemetery
K. D. Kenney, Jr. A Wife
SARAH LYNN Riley

(Daughter of Bruce
W. Riley - Brother of
Jack and John)

Jack Owens Riley
John G. Riley

John E. Riley

Served in the army
from June 1941 to
Dec 1945 - 82nd Airborne
Command sent to Luzon
until the war ended.
Was invited to the Gov's
Palace in the Philippines
to receive a commendation
for helping get medicine
for the hospital - the Japs
had taken everything.

John - when I went to his
footlocker ~~with~~ everything
had been taken by my
two children - which they
can no longer find. A
Jap flag all news papers
items, even his discharge
papers. Sorry I have
nothing but the picture!
Gene Riley

John E. Riley

Served in the army
from June 1941 to
Dec 1945 - 8th Airborne
Command sent to Luzon
until the war ended.
Was invited to the Gov's
Palace in the Philippines
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footlocker ~~with~~ everything
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can no longer find. a
Jap flag all news papers
items, even his discharge
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nothing but the picture?
Gene Riley



1st Sgt. Tom G. Riley



Killed in Invasion

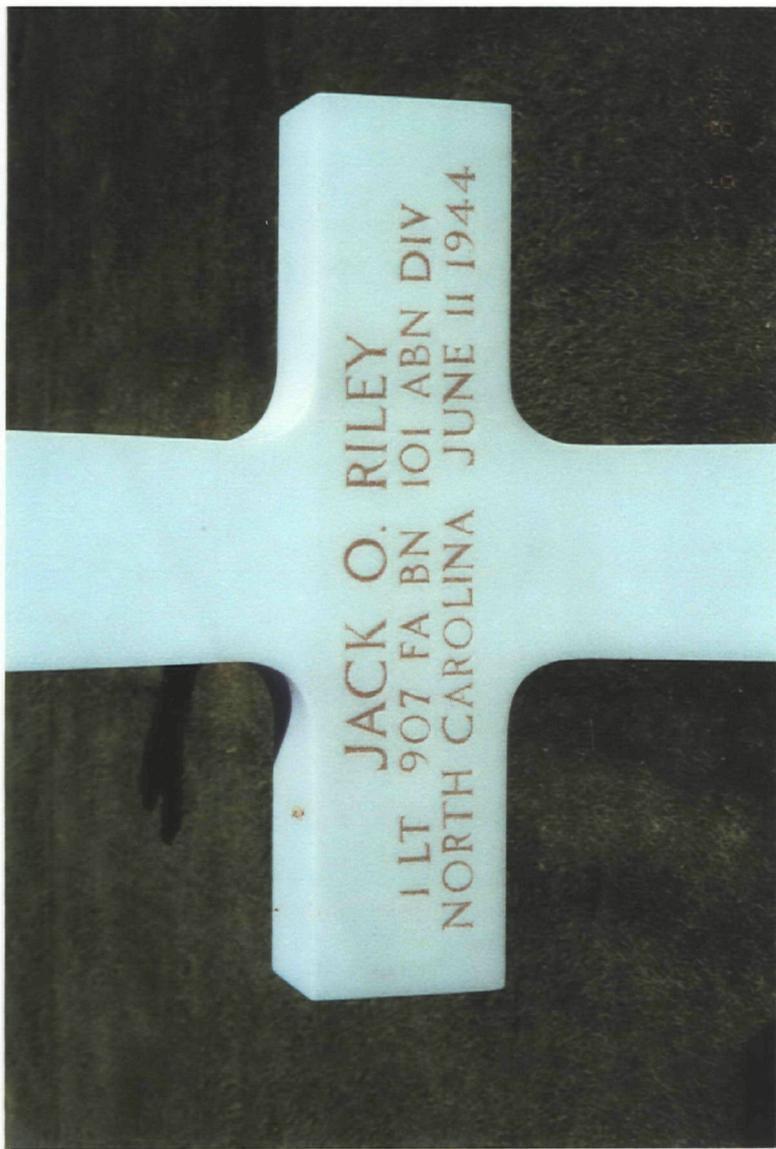


Lt. Jack Owens Riley, son of Mrs. John Riley of Wilson, and the late Mr. Riley, has been killed in the invasion of France, the War Department has announced. His wife is a Williamston resident. Lieutenant Riley is a graduate of Atlantic Christian College in Wilson and was commissioned at Fort Sill, Okla., in February, 1943.





LT JACK O. RILEY - THIRD FROM LEFT - SECOND ROW - FT. SILL, OKLA.



SARAH LYNN RILEY AND
 HUSBAND
 K.D. KENWAY
 AT THE
 GRAVE OF
 HER UNCLE
 LT. JACK O.
 RILEY
 NORMANBY
 FRANCE



ARMY CAPTAIN AT GRAVE OF
 LT. JACK O. RILEY - 1944 -
 NORMANBY, FRANCE

Berry Pan -
Put this with
The Sellers History
You or Person have

March 9' 2009

Dear John :

Sveral weeks ago Deborah Webb of Wilson sent a message to multiple e-mail addresses including your son's e-mail address. I sent you a message to his address thinking whoever downloaded it would acknowledge it and pass the message on to you. Apparently you never received it. My first item then and now was to tell you how sorry I was to hear of Ann injuring herself in a fall. I do hope that she is making satisfactory progress in her recovery My personal regards to her. Last November I fell in y room and fractured one of my ribs, and that is not a fun thing to do. The only treatment is to live with the discomfort until it heals. Between usng a cane and a walker I still get about the house. Low vision is a handicap that compounds my situation. Without this computer I would be up the creek as far as comunnication is concerned. My hearing is shot, so that leaves out the telephone. I have enclosed a little piece of memorabelia from the Rocky Mount paper that appeared sometime during the war about my interview on the BBC from London. The program was called "The American Eagle In Great Britain." Not only did the BBC bradcast the program "live", they recorded it for the Mutual Broadcasting System in the United States. The nearest Mutual affiliate to Rocky Mount was WGTM in Wilson. Since they stll had a power of only 250 watts, the station manager invited my parents over to the station in Wilson. He piped the broadcast into a studio speaker to assure static free listening had there been bad weather at the time. I cannot believe I was ever that young.

A little test for your memory. When we we were in Woodard School, there was a lady who lived the next street over from Kenan Street who had a glass showcase on her back porch stocked with all kinds of candy. We kids would gather on her back porch before classes in the morning and spend our lunch money on candy.

Local Man Tells British About Life In Rocky Mount

Cpl. Sellers Talks On BBC Broadcast

Any Rocky Mount folk who might have been listening to their radios early in February would have been amazed to hear the voice of Cpl. William A. Sellers of 419 Falls road who spoke into the British Broadcasting Corporation microphone during the weekly broadcast to America from American Red Cross Rainbow Corner in London.

Cpl. Sellers, shown here in this BBC photo at the microphone, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Sellers of this city.

His radio interview, sent here by BBC, follows:

Interviewer: Will you tell us your name please?

Sellers: Corporal William Sellers, Junior.

Interviewer: And where's your home Corporal?

Sellers: Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

Interviewer: Well what about Rocky Mount, what kind of a place is it? What's it noted for?

Sellers: Well I guess it is known best as the home of the old professor Kay Kyser.

Interviewer: Oh why sure.

Sellers: Old Rocky Mount is a good place to sell tobacco. Our tobacco market's in the eastern part of the state in the bright leaf tobacco section.

Interviewer: Very good, what else about Rocky Mount?

Sellers: It's quite a big railroad town.

Interviewer: What did you do there?

Sellers: I was a locomotive fireman in civilian life.

Interviewer: And in the army?

Sellers: I'm in the air force and an aircraft armourer.

Interviewer: Well I think we've had a good many stories about the important work that the air force armourers do, suppose you tell us something about your off time activities.

Sellers: Well needless to say I take advantage of all passes and furloughs that are granted. Other than that I find a lot of pleasure in promoting discussion groups on my base. I understand the army has an idea that it's good to train a man's mind as it is his body so we discuss current and military affairs and it's a very interesting thing to do.

Interviewer: A very sensible idea, could you give us a thought perhaps on the various subjects that your group discusses.

Sellers: Well we discuss such things as Anglo-American relations, what we are fighting for, lend lease, and of course that pertain to the United States only.

Interviewer: You might tell us too, Corporal. Is this a side line endeavour for you or is it part of the army organizational work?

Sellers: In the regular ground forces it's compulsory I understand but in the air forces it is discretionary, but we have quite a good attendance as it is.

Interviewer: You do, well thanks a lot for a swell story about a swell project from Corporal William Sellers of Rocky Mount, North Carolina.



CPL. W. A. SELLERS

are meeting stiff resistance near Apaukwa, a southwest Asia commune said today.

Apuakwa is 39 miles north of Akyab.

Meanwhile, British forces in the Ngakyedauk Pass area continued to mop up stray Japanese units left over from the recent abortive enemy offensive to the north.

A large body of Japanese troops discovered in a valley northeast of Ngakyedauk village

Buckle on sale like a f... irritation by far t... cine in a... New Ze... the san... doses—f... action s... bronchia... up thick... membra... Ger Bu... today. ALM

PRESCRIPT

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WE SAVE YOU

Almand's Drug

ROCKY MOUNT, N. C.

March 3, 1944
Rocky Mount Even. 19
Tells...

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Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

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King Solomon Had Nothing

of the... can Revo... Mrs. M. n vice re... were: s of Dunn... s. Hubert... arle, reg... Dillard of... were Mrs. Charlotte... san Wil... t. district... arborough... ld... r... March 3—... s Mildred... Gatesville... el of the... nome yes... Rev. C. E... r of Hobc... ce in the... Scotland... id taught... ome time... ital Tues... a month... others, P... and J. S... and two... of Gates... Downs of... Line Units... 3.—(AP)—... or truck... ed Akers... a for re... E. Blair... ation of... Defense...)DT), an... ne largest... anted by... since ra... rucks was... ed certifi... ctors and... cates for... re issued... operators... February... NG... 3.—(AP)—... temple of... Charlotte... jaz Tem... in receiv... orley Mc-

John Hackney III

From: KDIBUC [kdibuc@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2009 12:27 PM
To: - CARENTAN HISTORIC CENTER
Cc: perry; jjones@barton.edu; n.stewart@libertysurf.fr; boykinappraisals@coastalnet.com; boykinja@yahoo.com; John Hackney III
Subject: Re: Donation of \$1,000.00 for Dead Man's corner Museum

Michel (at Dead Mans Corner Museum)

I just got off the phone with Charles Placidi, the corporal who was in the foxhole with Lt. Jack O. Riley when Jack was killed. We talked for 1 1/2 hours about his war time experiences. Charlie, after about 30 minutes he asked me to call him Charlie (and I told him to call me K. D.) lives by himself (his wife has died) and his only family lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and he was anxious to talk with me. He is 89 years old, plays golf three times a week, drives himself, and has amazing memory of what happened during the campaign at Normandy. Someone should visit him and get his entire story before he is 100 years old. He says he is going to live to 100 at least! He said he was going out to plant some tomatoes when we got off the phone, but he had plenty of time for me.

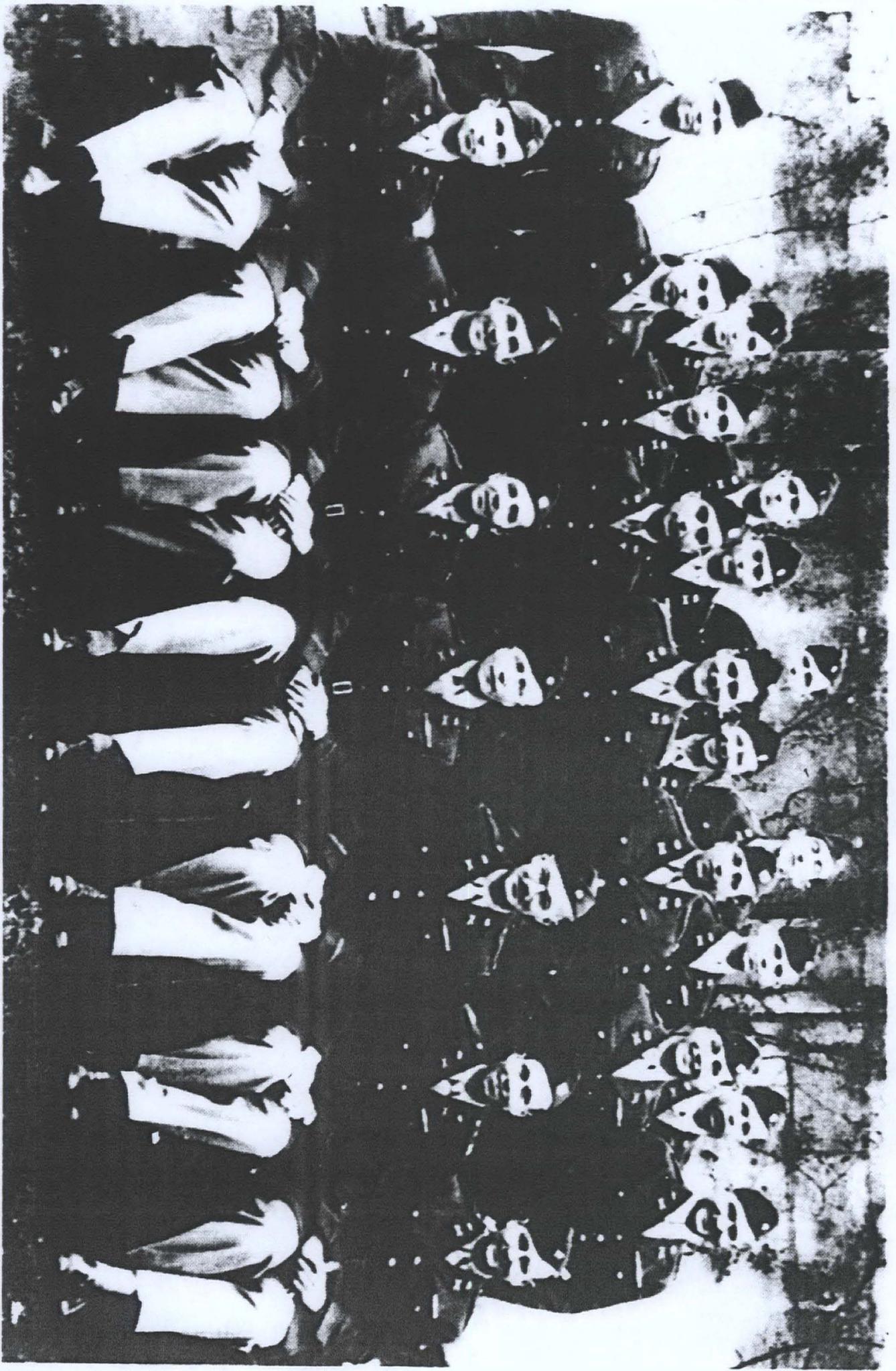
Jack and he and two others were forward observers who were out in front of the 101 infantry lines calling back positions of German troops and artillery. They encountered some shelling and they jumped into a German foxhole about 100 feet off to the left side of the road going between Saint-Come-du-Mont and Carentan. Charlie said it was a long, straight road with very little cover so the 4 foot deep fox holes were excellent to have available. There was a hedgerow just behind the foxhole and between them and the German position which was several hundred yards away toward Carentan. Remember, the Germans had build the foxholes over years to prepare for a possible assault and they had hedgerows behind themselves for retreat and cover purposes.

Anyhow, they jumped into the foxhole and got settled for a moment of quiet and Jack offered Charlie a cigarette and said to Charlie, "Charlie...you got a light?" Charlie put it in his mouth and said, "yes, sir" and lit Jack's cigarette first. Immediately there was an explosion. Not a whining noise as artillery shells would have made, just silence until it hit. It had to be a mortar Charlie said. The Germans must have seen their position and wanted to eliminate the forward observers to keep them from radioing their position back to the American 907th field artillery.

Charlie felt a tinge in his shoulder and arm. He had been hit by shell fragments! He looked over to Jack who had slumped down into the foxhole. He noticed that the cigarette was still in his lips. "Are you okay, Leutinant," he said! He grabbed Jack's shoulder and noticed the back of his neck and hair was very bloody. Jack did not answer. "It must have been a large piece, because it was buried in his body and he died instantly." Charlie could not call for medical help, there were no medics within half a mile or so. The other two soldiers who were with them, Sgt. Colley, and Pvt. Wentworth, stayed on with the radio to call in more artillery on the German positions. Charlie tried to revive Jack for several minutes until Sgt. Colley told him to make his way back to our lines, give them information, and get medical help for himself. He said he hated to leave Jack, who he had become very fond of, but he knew that nothing could be done for him. He eased his way into a ditch and made his way low and slowly back to a medic station over the next two hours. A doctor there sent Charlie back to England to get repaired since he had some potential infection problems.

Charlie, as I said, liked Jack Riley. I could tell from his voice over the phone and he said, "Jack was one of the 'good ol' boy' officers." "I really liked him after knowing him somewhat all during training for a year or so." They talked about baseball and the South and getting back a lot apparently. He wanted to know about Jack's family and I told him the entire Wilson story up to date. "I knew he was married, but I guess I forgot about his daughter...or maybe he never mentioned it because we were pretty busy in the few days Jack and I were over here right together. Most officers didn't talk with enlisted men, but Jack was different. I just knew he came from good 'ol working class people."

MAJ RILEY - 2ND Lt - 3RD FROM LEFT



"Jack probably saved my life." His being between me and the Germans "knocked most of the shell fragments off of me." (Meaning the fragments hit Jack and shielded himself.) "Yeah...for sure...Jack Riley saved my life. A lot of that happens in war. But we lost a good one in Jack."

Well, we talked about a lot more, but that was the gist of it. I can tell you more later and I am sure I will talk to Charlie a lot from now on. Besides, he needs to visit North Carolina, Ft. Bragg where he jumped, and Pinehurst where he has always wanted to play golf. He said, "I always wanted to visit Jack Riley's people in North Carolina. But when I left West Virginia and came to Detroit and got a job in the Fleetwood plant here, I just never went back. I wish I had." Maybe he will get the chance.

K. D. Kennedy, Jr.

In a message dated 03/17/09 06:57:18 Eastern Daylight Time, carentan.101@orange.fr writes:

Dear K. D.

Sorry for the late answer. I have been traveling to the US to visit several archives and I am just back. We have received your check, again thank you very much..

Attached is a picture of the 907 Battalion Staff taken prior to D-Day. Lt. Jack Riley stands on the second row, 3rd man.

As I mentioned I haven't had correspondence with Cpl Placidi for a few years know and I don't know if he is still alive or at the same location. Our last info was

Charles A. Placidi
9773 Monroe
Taylor, MI 48180
(313) 291-1722

Please keep me updated on Placidi.

A notice will be placed on the museum website by the end of the week.

Cpl. Placidi's helmet doesn't show any damage since he landed in the swamps which were part of the flooded low ground in between Saint-Come-du-Mont and Carentan and lost his helmet.

Best regards,

Michel

> Message du 16/03/09 21:07
> De : "KDIBUC"
> A : carentan.101@orange.fr
> Copie à :
> Objet : Fwd: Donation of \$1,000.00 for Dead Man's corner Museum
>
>

Dear Michel or other historian or manager at DMC Museum:
Nigel Stewart, Normandy Historical Tour Guide, may come by to visit you about this matter attached.
You have been writing to me. I made a donation to DMC Museum. Have you received it?
Yes, I would like to find Cpl. Placidi's whereabouts in the USA such that we can talk to him about that day when Lt. Jack O. Riley died.

Thank you,
K. D. Kennedy, Jr.

A Good Credit Score is 700 or Above. See yours in just 2 easy steps!

>

> Orange vous informe que cet e-mail a été contrôlé par l'anti-virus mail.
> Aucun virus connu à ce jour par nos services n'a été détecté.

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>

> [Fwd: Donation of \$1,000.00 for Dead Man's corner Museum (12.6 Ko)]

Paratrooper
2, village de l'amont
50500 Saint-Côme-du-Mont
Tél: 02.33.42.00.42
Fax: 02.33.42.13.51
www.paratrooper..fr
www.paratrooper-museum.org

The Average US Credit Score is 692. See yours in just 2 easy steps!

John Hackney III

From: - CARENTAN HISTORIC CENTER [carentan.101@orange.fr]**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2009 12:04 PM**To:** KDIBUC**Subject:** re: Donation of \$1,000.00 for Dead Man's corner Museum

Dear Sir,

Firstly, on behalf of the Carentan Historical Foundation, I would like to thank you for your generous donation. Be assure we will make good use of it in honor and respect of the US WWII veterans.

June 10, 6:00 in the morning, Lt. Riley, was met by Sgt. Colley, Cpl. Placidi, and Pvt. Wentworth on the outskirts of St Come-du-Mont. (This is at Dead Man's Corner, the location where the museum is today). They had been assigned to work with the 502nd and at 9:00, and were advancing along the main road to Carentan (Purple Heart Lane) when German mortar fire forced them to take cover. The 907th team quickly dove into a tank emplacement built by the Germans. Lt. Riley was sitting with his back towards Carentan, and Cpl. Placidi was sitting directly across him when an incoming mortar shell landed in the hedgerow right above. The exploding fragments killed lieutenant Riley instantly and seriously wounded Cpl. Placidi.

We have Cpl. Placidi's helmet in the museum collection and we have been in contact with him a couple of years ago. I don't know if he is still around today but I could find out if you are interested.

Best regards,

Michel

DMC Museum
2, village de l'amont
50500 Saint-Côme-du-Mont
Tél: 02.33.42.00.42
Fax: 02.33.42.13.51

> Message du 01/03/09 20:48
> De : "KDIBUC"
> A : carentan.101@orange.fr
> Copie à :
> Objet : Donation of \$1,000.00 for Dead Man's corner Museum
>
>

Sirs:

My wife and I are honoring 1/Lt Jack O. Riley, her uncle who she never knew, who died on June 11th from wounds received on the 10th, we believe. The 907th FAB was artillery support of the 101st Airborne/502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment near St. Come-du-Mont. He was one of many brave young men who gave their lives in order for us to be free. Thank goodness for them!

I would be interested in any information that you have about Jack or his unit. If you have any information about how we could get in touch with any of those who were with him during the assault, that would be very appreciated.

Thanks for the work you are doing. I am mailing our check to you today.

K. D. Kennedy, Jr.
(919-369-1429, Raleigh, NC, USA)

A Good Credit Score is 700 or Above. See yours in just 2 easy steps!

>

> Orange vous informe que cet e-mail a été contrôlé par l'anti-virus mail.
> Aucun virus connu à ce jour par nos services n'a été détecté.

>

>

>

Paratrooper
2, village de l'amont
50500 Saint-Côme-du-Mont
Tél: 02.33.42.00.42
Fax: 02.33.42.13.51
www.paratrooper.fr
www.paratrooper-museum.org

A hero still among us

By Janelle Clevinger | Daily Times Staff Writer

He may have died in France June 10, 1944, during World War II Normandy campaign, but Lt. Jack O. Riley is still very much among us.

A story titled "Barton travelers touch history: 'Band of Brothers' tour group makes local connection," which ran in the March 14 Wilson Daily Times, rekindled memories of the Wilson man and brought new information about him to light.

The article was about a Barton College trip to England, France and Germany in February. The trip included Barton students, professors and interested residents of Wilson and beyond and followed the footsteps of Easy Company, 506th Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division, U.S. Army, during World War II.

It quickly became clear that the story of the trip would focus on Riley, his death and sacrifice, and the reading of a letter at Riley's gravesite by K.D. Kennedy Jr., formerly of Wilson and husband of Riley's niece, Sara Lynn Riley Kennedy.

The letter, written by Riley's childhood pal Doug Hackney, had been sent to his future wife, Louise Wiggins, after Doug visited his friend's grave, two months after his death. Kennedy choked up as he read the letter aloud to the Barton group standing around Riley's grave. Hackney wrote of his friend's gravesite and the horrors of war.

"When that letter was read it brought a cohesiveness to the whole trip," said John Hackney III, who originally sent the story idea and photographs to the newspaper. "I knew that if there was a story in here, it would be one of a Wilson soldier who served his country and made the ultimate sacrifice."

I interviewed tour participants Perry Morrison Jr., Barton professor Joe Jones III and John Hackney for the story and consulted the Internet in order to fill in some historical and geographical gaps in the story.

The story was published, and suddenly Jack Riley seemed to be alive again.

First, I received an e-mail from Kennedy, informing me that the soldier who was in the foxhole with Riley at the time of Riley's death was alive and well, and he was going to try to contact him. A subsequent e-mail gave details of Kennedy's conversation with that soldier, Charles Placidi, 89, who lives in Michigan.

"We talked for about 1 1/2 hours about his war experiences," Kennedy said. "He and Jack were forward observers who were in front of the 101 infantry lines calling back the position of the German troops. They encountered some shelling and jumped into a German foxhole."

Placidi recounted that they stopped for a moment of silence, and Riley offered Placidi a cigarette.

"Charlie SLps you got a light?" Riley asked. Placidi lit his cigarette first and said, "Yes, sir," and lit Riley's cigarette. Suddenly, a German mortar exploded behind Riley.

Placidi had been hit in the arm with mortar fragments. He looked at Riley who had slumped down into the foxhole. "Are you OK, lieutenant?" Placidi asked.

"He grabbed Jack's shoulder and noticed the back of his neck and hair was very bloody," Kennedy wrote. "Jack didn't answer. It must have been a large piece (that hit him) and he died instantly. Charlie tried to revive Jack for several minutes, but the sergeant told him to make his way back to (the Allied) lines. He said he hated to leave Jack, who he had become very fond of, but he knew that nothing could be done for him."

"Jack probably saved my life," Placidi told Kennedy. "Yeah, for sure Jack Riley saved my life. A lot of that happens in war. But we lost a good one in Jack."

Then, out of the blue, I received an e-mail from Jack Riley's daughter, Judy Riley Matock.

"I was very interested in the article because I am the daughter of Jack Riley," she wrote. "I never saw my father since I was born on May 6, 1944, and he was already in England waiting for the invasion when I was born. I did not know much about him. By the time I was old enough to learn much, my mother had remarried and did not want to talk about him. When I would visit family in Wilson, we would talk about current things, not things in the past."

A few days later, I received an e-mail from Jack Riley's granddaughter, Robin Matlock, taking the experience one step further.

"It's hard for us to articulate exactly what your article and especially K.D.'s research has meant to us," Matlock wrote. "I know that I've always had a great curiosity about him (Riley) and a connection to him since he is a part of me and I've always wanted to know more.

"He's also served as a personal inspiration for me. I've always somehow known that he died a hero, in the most honest and non-flashy personification of that word. Learning more about the man that was worthy of my grandmother (who was an incredible inspiration to me as well), has meant more than I think I can express. The timing of your article is also very special to me. SLps I'm getting married in about a month and a half and as I prepare for a new life myself, the life that he and my grandmother briefly shared has been very close in my mind."

I felt as though Jack Riley had reached out and touched me. I couldn't imagine how the people on the Barton trip felt, standing beside his grave.

"This trip and it's aftermath have proven to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life," Morrison told me recently. "It has given me a great deal of joy to conceive this trip and see it come to fruition. However, never in my wildest dreams could I have anticipated the subsequent chapters involving Jack Riley, with K.D. Kennedy's efforts to locate his foxhole mate and his daughter notifying the newspaper, both sixty years after Lt. Riley's death in Normandy."

Johnny Hackney said that the trip, and the subsequent contact with Charlie Placidi and Riley's descendents, boiled down to this for him: "When you read or hear, 'You need to honor our servicemen' and 'Don't ever forget those who served our country,' this is what it means. If you have the chance to honor them, you need to do that."

Another e-mail from Riley's daughter arrived in my "In" box Monday.

"My daughter Robin and I have appreciated learning so much more about what happened," Matlock wrote. "Sara Lynn also said that none of our parents' generation had ever shared anything with her either. Our cousin Bob Riley, Sara Lynn's brother, was the only one of our generation who actually knew him. He remembers that my father was the only uncle who would go out and play with him.

"My mother died in December, so I cannot go back to ask her questions," she continued. "She was always one to deal with her grief privately and did not like to talk about the past."

Morrison recently thanked me for the work I had done putting this story together. I told him that I didn't think it was "my" work anymore.

I believe Lt. Jack O. Riley had a hand in putting together these stories and these experiences. And even though he died for our country 65 years ago in a foxhole in France, he is most certainly still with us.

ON THE MAP runs on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. If you have a story that you want to share, e-mail jclevinger@wilsontimes.com or call 265-7811. If you have an event that you would like to enter on our community calendar, go to www.wilsontimes.com and click on the link for submitting information to the calendar.