

The de Vallance Family
Alexandria, Virginia
United States

February 11, 2026

Dear Mayor Grout and our dear friends of Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles,

On behalf of the Garrow family, we send our deepest gratitude and affection as you gather once again to remember February 11, 1944, and the men of the Lonesome Polecat. Although we cannot be with you in person this year, please know that we are with you in spirit, standing beside you at the memorial, listening to the names read by the young people of the town, and feeling, as we always do, the profound kindness and faithfulness with which you carry this history forward.

What you have built in Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles is far more than an annual ceremony or a stone monument. You have created a living act of remembrance—one that has endured across generations, borders, and time. In doing so, you have given our family and many others the assurance that these young Americans are not forgotten, and that their sacrifice continues to matter.

Mayor Grout, as this marks your final ceremony as mayor, we want to thank you in particular. Through your example, you have shown that remembrance is not passive—it is a choice, renewed year after year, to honor sacrifice and to stand for the values of peace, unity, and freedom. The legacy you leave is etched not only in stone, but in the hearts of the families you welcomed, the citizens you led, and the generations you inspire.

Diane and Patrick, through your tireless work, the establishment of Remembering Americans in Europe, and your belief that these stories of service and sacrifice must be carried forward, you have reunited our family and so many others with their history and given meaning to loss that once felt distant and unresolved. Because of you, strangers became friends, and remembrance became a shared responsibility. We are forever grateful.

This year is especially meaningful to us for another reason. Many years ago, when our son Jackson was just ten years old, he discovered the story of the Lonesome Polecat and the people of Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles while searching the internet. What he found changed the course of our family's history and, in ways we could not have imagined then, helped shape his own future.

Last month, Jackson commissioned as an officer in the United States Army. His decision to serve was inspired in part by the example set by the men of the Lonesome Polecat, and just as importantly, by the people of Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles, who taught him that service and sacrifice are values to be lived, honored, and carried forward together. Your commitment to remembrance did not simply preserve the past—it helped shape the future.

To the people of Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles: Thank you for your friendship, your constancy, and your extraordinary generosity of spirit. You have shown us that gratitude can cross oceans, that memory can outlast generations, and that unity is built through acts of care, humility, and remembrance.

As you stand together today, please know that our hearts stand with you. We carry Rouxmesnil-Bouteilles with us always, and we remain committed to honoring the bonds you have forged between our families, our nations, and our shared belief in peace and freedom.

With enduring gratitude and affection,
Jennifer and Brian de Vallance