

FROM MAIL TO MOUNTAIN; READ ALL ABOUT IT

ADRIEN, MI - Jun 15, 2020 John Jackson grew up the son of a World War II veteran. Yet, he doesn't recall hearing much about his dad's time in the war. "I don't remember a whole lot of conversations from him about the war or his experience," John said. The information John did gather as a kid was bits and pieces from others. His father, Chuck Jackson, a Palmyra native who now lives in Adrian, had to have a story worth telling, though. He's a Bronze Star recipient who was an ammo bearer in the 10th Mountain Division, an infantry division. Coupled with the fact that Chuck's three brothers also fought in the war, and all four returned home unscathed, there certainly had to be a story worth hearing.

John, a former Adrian firefighter who now lives in Dumfries, Virginia, first had the idea for a book in 2004. "I had the interest in learning more about his (Chuck's) experience," he said. What John lacked was the same thing he lacked as a child — information.

A few years later he interviewed his dad but still needed more information about the 10th Mountain Division. John found the inspiration he needed to put words on paper in 2018. "I realized my dad was getting older and he wasn't going to live forever," he said. John's goal? Finish the book so Chuck could read it. "My goal in writing the book was to honor my dad, really," he said. "My goal was to write it for him." John tracked down the unit's morning reports, all of which are archived. The reports, issued every morning, detailed the unit's activities from the previous day. The morning reports were packed with information, all the way down to the weather. They were just what John needed. He even found the morning report of the day his dad was assigned. "It was the perfect timeline," John said.

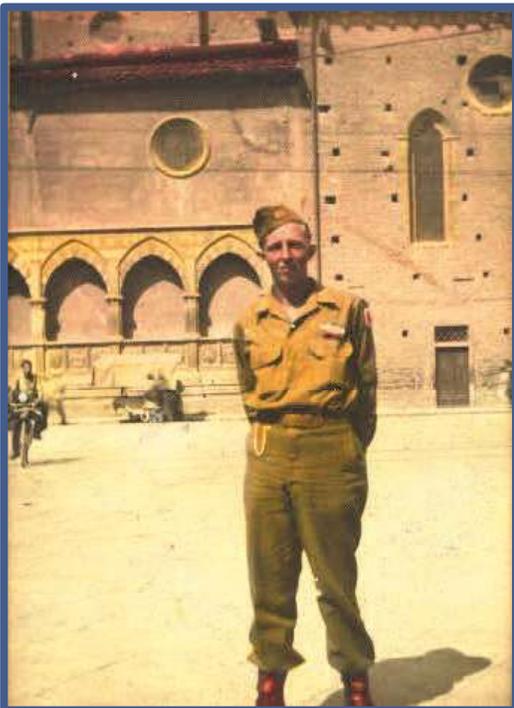
John had his framework and filled in the timeline with color — dialogue and description. Soldiers names were changed but the main character is obviously inspired by Chuck.

John said he based the dialogue on the morning reports and his own experience in the military.

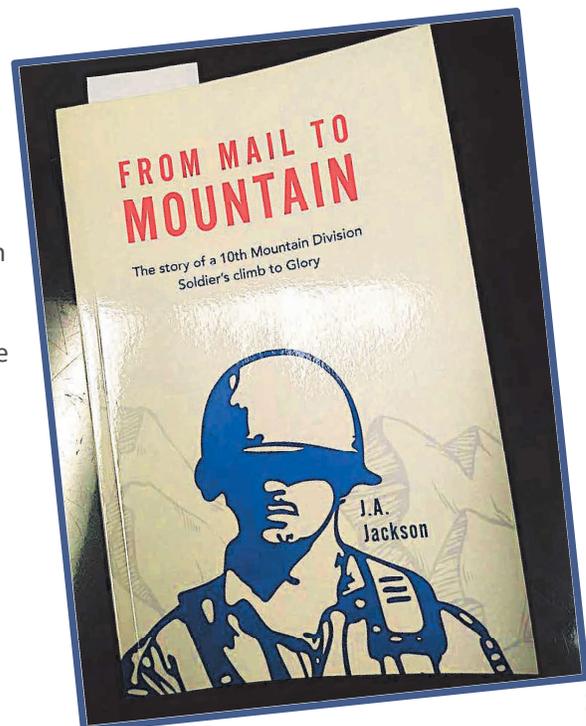
Finally, the story started to flow. "From Mail to Mountain: The Story of a 10th Mountain Division Soldier's Climb to Glory" was finished three months later. The book is historical fiction. Chuck's first job in the Army was sorting mail, but he was later assigned to the front lines of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment, the first unit of the 10th Mountain Division to arrive in Italy in late 1944.

One of the unit's first assignments was to take Riva Ridge in the northern Apennine Mountains in Italy. Germans held the area and prevented Allied forces from moving into the rest of Europe. They had the high ground. "Never even stopped to think about it," Chuck said of the assignment. "We just did what they told us to do." From sorting the mail to climbing a mountain, literally and figuratively, is the inspiration behind the book's title. Chuck's unit took the ridge at night. It would prove to be a pivotal battle for Allied forces and their eventual victory in Europe. John said learning about his father's unit gave him a clear picture of what the group was up against and how fast they moved. Command posts were set up in about 15 different towns in as many days. "That just boggled my mind, how quickly that went," he said.

As an ammo bearer, Chuck's duty was to keep machine gunners supplied. Chuck claims he was never shot at but his son disputes it. The situation almost guarantees he was. "He tries to tell me he never got shot at, but I know for sure



(Left) Chuck Jackson pictured in Italy during World War II
(Right) A copy of the cover of the book John Jackson wrote



FROM MAIL TO MOUNTAIN; READ ALL ABOUT IT, CON'T



(Top) Tony Nicholas pictured with fellow 10th Mountain vet Chuck Jackson on his 100th birthday at a book signing in Adrian, for the book his son wrote about him. Photo courtesy of Tony Nicholas. (Right) John and Chuck Jackson pictured.



he got shot at because of what his company went through," John said. Chuck was honored with the Bronze Star on his birthday. John has the citation letter that came with it. The citation states Chuck risked his life multiple times to keep gunmen supplied.

John self-published about 50 copies of "From Mail to Mountain" for friends and family. The book was a hit in those close circles. "It gives people who weren't there or were never in combat an idea about what day-to-day life was like for a soldier," John said. "I think that's the best outcome of this. And I like that."

Chuck said it brought back memories. "It's easy to read, especially when it's about someone you know," he said with a smile. Chuck was almost reunited with one of his brothers while in Italy. Both his unit and his brother's unit were heading in the same direction toward the Italy-Austria border. John said they were within 75 miles of each other. Chuck said his brother asked an officer about possibly meeting up with Chuck but was sent home before a reunion could happen.

Chuck was in Europe until August 1945. He was sent home to

prepare for the more hand-to-hand combat troops faced in the Pacific. Chuck said he arrived back in the states on Aug. 6, 1945, the day the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. He was later discharged.

Given the reception "From Mail to Mountain" received, John updated the book, adding close to 30 pictures obtained through the 10th Mountain Division archives as well as chapter titles. Retired U.S. Army Lt. General James M. Dubrik, a friend of a friend of John's, wrote an endorsement for the back cover. Other former military members have also given praise. "That makes me feel like I was accurate in my writing and interesting," John said. "That's what I wanted to be." John said when he finished the updated version his dad read it instantly. "I know he's shown it to everyone he can," John said. "It makes me feel good to make him feel good."

The second version is available now. John, who is back visiting for the summer, has organized a book signing. It was held on June 22, 2020. It was also Chuck's 100th birthday. Books can be purchased online at www.mailtomountain.com.

