

# Message in a Bottle

## Biographical Series on Tyler County Folks

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### Faye and Charles Riley – Owner, Kountry Kids

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Faye and Charles Riley have lived in Tyler County most of their lives and will be retiring from their Kountry Kids daycare on June 1, 2012, after nine years.

Faye was born in Luling, Tx., and moved to Tyler County as a teenager when her father, the Rev. J. C. Carter, became pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Colmesneil – where he remained pastor for 40 years.

Charles was raised in Doucette. After the eighth grade in Doucette, that did not have any other grades, he went to Kirby High School in Woodville. After graduation, he studied diesel engines at Lamar University and worked for Mustang Tractor and Equipment.

They married in August of 1961 and lived in Houston for a short time. They moved back to Doucette to start their logging business that lasted for 40 years, from 1963 to 2003.

Logging was a way of life and hard work.

In the '60s they could “rut up on the land” without a lot worries. It was business, and people understood better back then than they do today when the land got messed up. Sometimes the ruts would get four feet deep. Now if they get rutted a little, everyone gets bent out of shape.

One time close to Evadale the area became so bad they could not get their trucks off the road, and the people complained about the trouble getting through.

The “Woods Coordinator” who managed the tracks to be logged had told them they “paid taxes like anyone else,” so the loggers reasoned they had the same rights to traffic the roads as anyone.

Jasper County sued both the Kirby Lumber Company who hired Charles and his Charles Riley Logging company.

“We were raised in church and believed in the power of prayer,” Charles said. “We had the preacher to pray for us.” Their pastor, the Rev. R. C. Tillery, Pastor of the First Assembly of God in Woodville, prayed for them, “expecting the best,” recalled Charles.



**Kountry Kids**  
**Licensed Child Care**  
**Director**  
**Faye Riley**  
**259 CR 2570**  
**Colmesneil, Texas**

The logo for Kountry Kids Licensed Child Care. It features the text "Kountry Kids" in a large, blue, bubbly font, followed by "Licensed Child Care" in a smaller, black font. Below this, it says "Director Faye Riley" in black. At the bottom, it provides the address "259 CR 2570 Colmesneil, Texas". To the left of the address is a cartoon illustration of a woman in a brown dress holding a pink flower, and to the right is a cartoon illustration of a man in a blue shirt and hat holding a fishing rod.

A Kirby Lumber official confronted them and said they would have to lay them off until they could see what was happening. Then Luke Martindale of Jasper called and had a track ready to go.

“I made better in those two weeks than I had ever for Kirby,” Charles said.

In 1994 Charles got Lyme Disease from a “dear tick,” or “blacklegged tick,” the disease named after several outbreaks in Lyme, Conn., in 1975. The disease was not discovered to be tick-borne until 1978.

Charles had all the symptoms, was miserable, and it stumped the local doctors for a while. It took two months of intravenous antibiotics to begin the healing process that took over a year!

He retired in 1995, but could not sit still and went back to logging in 2000 for three more years.

“In my young years, I never had time for my children,” Charles said. “I worked seven days a week.”

Faye and Charles have two children, Robert Junior and Cheryl. Cheryl is a beauty operator at Katrina’s Salon in Woodville.

In August of 2003, Faye and Charles started Kountry Kids daycare. We needed a job to supplement our retirement.

Yet, not totally to their surprise, the daycare became so much more as their circle of good friends increased.

“There are parents out here who would do anything in the world for us,” he said proudly. (This *Message in a Bottle* story came from by recommendation from a proud parent.)

Yet the cup of retirement is bittersweet. They have loved the kids as their own grandchildren. The time to finally relax a bit has come.

Licensed for twelve by the State of Texas, the Kountry Kids was full up most of the time.

“We will miss all of the children,” he said, referring to their upcoming retirement. “You cannot get depressed working around children. It is impossible,” he emphasized.

One day when the Riley’s daughter, Cheryl, was helping them, a little brother and sister were in their care. All of the children were tattling on each other.

Cheryl had to finally tell them, “You make sure it is a 911 emergency.” That should keep them busy for a while.

Later in the day, the little boy came to the door and said, “I don’t know if it is a 911 or not, but Wade is choking my sister!” Yes, that would be a 911, Cheryl thought.

Never a dull moment. One has to keep a vigilant eye on young children, mainly birth through five-years old, with a few school-age children.

How do they do it?

“Got to love children,” he said emphatically. “Respect the child. They know it (the children know if you are sincere). The children know a fake. It is a ministry to us.”

As usual and by state code, they have daily educational plans and certain food guidelines, including 1% milk for children over two and 2% milk for children under two. They play educational games and sing songs. Children love songs. Food and supplies cost about \$360.00 a week. It is a lot of work.

“You don’t get over in a corner,” he said, “you have got to watch every second. We have an 11-month old and have to watch them like a hawk.” Every mother, grandmother, and daycare knows that very well.

“Every month we have a fire drill ... check all the detectors,” he said. The children are specially trained to go in an orderly fashion to a place by the Riley’s fence.

“We are so blessed,” he said, “during nine years we have had only accident. One girl broke her arm in a swing, the only one, a new girl on her first day here. She swung too high in a swing.”

The parents are so appreciative.

“Stacy Ackley has been coming out and tilling up my garden,” he said. “Wyatt Walsh has his cows out on our property and takes care of our fences.... This winter Alex Davis brought us some fire wood. We appreciate all of our parents.”

Like a second set of grandparents, they are. Then Charles reinterpreted that, “Or a third or fourth set.” That is the service and ministry of their daycare, to provide the loving kindness of your best God-fearing grandparents. Looking diligently after the little ones, the Kountry Kids.

Retiring in June, they will trust God to look out after them, “their” kids, and us too, even as His own little ones, for – after all – we shall gather together in that land that is fairer than day as His Kountry Kids forevermore.