

# RIPCORD REPORT

For Friends and Survivors of the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord  
Republic of Vietnam • 12 March – 23 July, 1970



Number 63

Spring, 2004



## The Battle For Ripcord On Fox News

by Ben Harrison

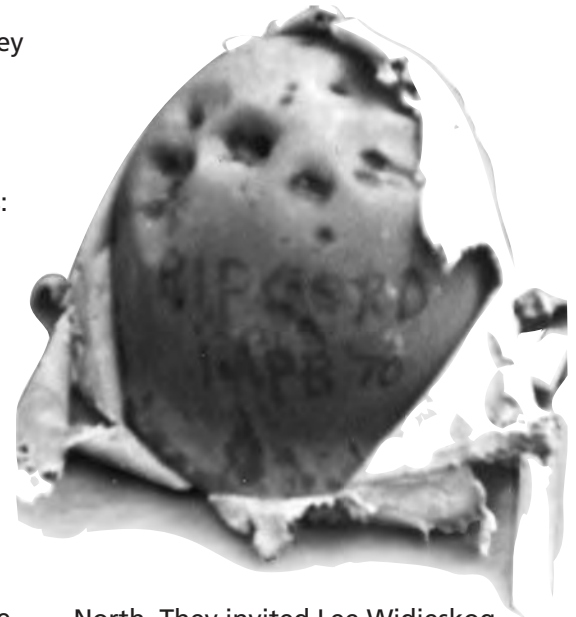
Keith Nolan brought the battle for Ripcord to thousands of book readers. Martin Hinton and Oliver North brought the battle for Ripcord to hundreds of thousands of television viewers. In 447 pages, Keith told as much as 80 percent of the story. In 40 minutes (plus 20 minutes of commercials), Martin told as much as 15 percent of the story. We should be most grateful for their efforts on behalf of our fighters, our fallen comrades and our families.

My hasty review (8 Mar) of the program was: "The Fox News special, "The Siege of Firebase Ripcord," probably could have covered more of the critical events of the battle and included B Co and the aviation units. On the other hand, it included more about the Ripcord battle than has ever been on national TV and it was done in a truly superb manor allowing many of the enlisted soldiers to tell their stories in a most dignified manor. The message of suffering and sacrifice, bravery and brotherhood came across forcefully. Martin Hinton, the producer, had earlier done bits about Bob

Kalsu and the reunion of Paul Burkey and Dennis Bloomingdale and now with this show, he is right up there with Keith Nolan as the best friend that the Ripcord veterans have."

And now, another special thanks: To Frank Marshall for creating and monitoring our web site. Great job, Frank! In the three weeks after the Fox show, 8–28 Mar, forty-nine people posted a review of the show on our web site. There have been 972 people visit our reviews on the web site. That is most impressive. Great job, Frank!

It is of interest how the interviews were done. Many of us made suggestions to Martin as to whom should be interviewed. Several were invited, but declined. Some thought the show was done at Ft Rucker. Oliver North was visiting Ft Rucker in late Jan and did the introductory takes in the Aviation Museum. No interviews were done there. I think they were done as follows: Martin went to Washington for the Hawkins and Straub stories, to Connecticut for Doc Cafferty, St Louis for Keith and Belton, TX for my part. We never saw Oliver



North. They invited Lee Widjeskog, Paul Burkey, Bob Smoker, Fred Martin and Gary Radford to New York and gave them VIP treatment. Don't know how/where for the Norris interview. In most cases, we were interviewed under strong lights for about three hours producing about two and a half hours of "good video" with each of us.

The scripting and editing by Fox News was superb.

## Martin Hinton Answers Some of Your Questions

*Martin Hinton is a television producer with over a decade of experience. He has produced segments on everything from unsafe medical treatments to rock bands to Ripcord. He has worked at Fox News for five years and lives in New York City with his wife and daughter.*

Gentlemen,

So many of you took the time to write I thought it only right that I respond.

As to length, the show without commercials is 40 min-

utes and 40 seconds. Given that absolute limit it is always necessary to leave things out. This is true of every War Stories I have worked on, actually it is true of every piece of television I've ever done. I can promise you removing stories of bravery and sacrifice is gut wrenching, but our bag only fits so much. It seems to me you could easily do a whole show on what it was like on the FSB or the skill and daring of the pilots. Maybe we will.

(continued on page 3)

# FROM THE EDITOR

The Newsletter and the website are getting a lot of good reviews from the membership. I would like to thank all of you that continue to send articles, and information. This issue's theme is the received letters and comments and family members in Iraq.

Special Thanks to Lee Widjeskog and Dennis Bloomingdale for all their hard work.

The results of the Post Card Survey are in this newsletter and posted on the Website. Out of 618 mailed newsletters, there were 329 responses.

I am in the planning stages of putting a Memorial Page on the website for our fallen brothers during Ripcord.

Please send me photos and info to post on the Website.

Frank Marshall

## DONATIONS

**Donations are very important!** It's how the newsletter gets printed and mailed. Checks should be made payable to: "**Ripcord Association**". Please send all donations to:

**Fred Spaulding**  
7702 White Dove Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46256-1750

## ARTICLES

Please send all articles, photos, incoming mail, and interesting reading to:

**DEADLINE July 4, 2004**

**Frank Marshall**  
224 Derry Hill Ct  
Mt Laurel, NJ 08054-3709

e-mail: [frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com)

## RIPCORD BIOGRAPHIES...THEN AND NOW

Please send us a brief bio on yourself to be included in the newsletter. Include which company you served with, the dates you were in the service, the dates you were in Vietnam, your rank, any interesting facts about your involvement with FSB Ripcord, what you did after Vietnam, career, family, and some comments of your choice. You may include a picture if desired. Send all information to:

**Lee Widjeskog**  
493 Stillman Ave  
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

e-mail: [leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com)

## Ripcord Association Website

The Ripcord Association website is on line and very informative. You can check it out now at:

**[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)**

## Survey Results

There were 618 mailed newsletters last mailing and we received 329 responses. So our mailing list now consists of 329 members. Listed below are the Top Picks for the Reunions to be held. A lot of the responses for the choices were either blank or said "It doesn't matter" or "any".

The Top Month for the Reunions to be held was July with 79 picks. Followed by October with 57 picks.

The pick for how often in Years was One year with 144 Choices. Following was 2 Years with 47 Choices.

The Top 10 States were Missouri, 30 picks, Florida, 30 picks, Texas, 30 Picks, Tennessee 26 Picks, Nevada 25 picks, California, 20 Picks, Washington DC 19 Picks, Illinois 18 Picks, Kentucky 14 picks, Louisiana 13 Picks.

The Top 10 Cities were, Washington, DC 19 picks, Las Vegas 16 Picks, Nashville 14 picks, Chicago 14 picks, San Antonio, 13 picks, St Louis 12 Picks, Ft Campbell 10 Picks, San Francisco 8 picks, Branson 7 picks, Atlantic City 7 picks.

## Donations

Bill & Shiela Williams, Garrett & Mary Reiersen, Ken Hamilton, Tim Runyard, Gary & Kathy Madsen, Dan & Lydia Esposito, Michael & Gaylene Thomas, Gary Madsen, Randy & Jeanne House, Joe & Patricia Guerra, Tom & Janyce Rubsam, Chuck Hawkins, Terry & Elizabeth Unger, Clifton & Elaine Franks, Joe & Helen Connelly, Joe Pojedinec, Layne Hammons, Bill Edmister, Dave Snyder

Mrs. Francine Ayers (in Loving Memory of her Husband, William Ayers, 7-26-01)

Marty Rollison (In loving memory of her husband, Gabe Rollison D/2-506)

## Troops In Iraq

Here are the names of Family members serving in Iraq. Please mail them a letter of thanks and praise.

*Jim Campbell's Son:*

1Lt. James H. Campbell  
C Co 3-8 Cav.  
39th BCT  
Camp Cooke  
APO AE 09313



*Larry Frazier's Son:*

SSG Frazier, Eric J  
HHC 2BCT / 1ID  
TPT 1471 PSYOP  
OIF CAMP DANGER  
APO AE 09392  
e-mail [EricFraz1@aol.com](mailto:EricFraz1@aol.com)

Jack Wilhite has one son in Iraq, Sgt Daniel Wilhite, 1/504th PIR 82nd Abn. His other son just returned from Iraq 1/8th Inf also a Sgt., and his daughter, Latricia Wilhite is a 1st Lt in the reserves as a nurse and has orders to Iraq.

## 2004 Reunion News

DES MOINES, IOWA, OCT. 4-7, 2004

We have, as of this writing, 29 personnel signed up for the Reunion in Des Moines, which is a little less than we had last year at this time. I hope it's not the idea of having a "Pig Roast" at Uwe Myer's farm that's scaring everyone off.

For those of you that have not attended a reunion, or since Mobile Alabama 1997, please put on your registration form, that this is your first time attending a reunion. Also, make sure that you put down which company and Battalion that you served with. We keep statistics on how many from each unit that attends and it will be published in the newsletter following the reunions.

Hope to see you all in Des Moines. Until then, health and happiness to you and yours, always.

Fred Spaulding

## Back To Vietnam Again, The Quest Continues

by Ben Harrison

The University of Southern Mississippi's Studies Abroad award winning program has asked me to accompany their military history graduate students as guest lecturer 17 May-6 June touring from the Delta to north of Hanoi. I tentatively agreed if we could establish that Maj Gen Chu Phong Doi, CG, 204B Div during the battle for Ripcord, is still alive and that I could take time to try and interview him.

When Fred Spaulding and I tried to interview Gen Doi on our trip in Jun 2001, we were told that he was living in Cao Bang and could not come to Hanoi for an interview. Cao Bang is 200 miles north of Hanoi and Fred and I could not take the time to go there.

Courtney Frobenius and his wife Trang have verified that Doi is alive at 83 and still in Cao Bang. I will go to Cao Bang for 2-3 days while the students are in Hanoi.

The closest we will get to Ripcord is on our visit to Khe Sanh and Hue. Anything I can do for anyone? Maybe I'll have some good stories for the next edition of the Ripcord Report and the reunion in Des Moines.

## The Siege Of Firebase Ripcord Video on Sale

If you would like to purchase a copy of the show, you can call 1-800-933-0760 or visit FoxNews on the web at [www.foxnews.com/warstories](http://www.foxnews.com/warstories) and go to the "Own An Episode of War Stories" link.



## Questions

(continued from page 1)

Many of you pointed out some of the other things we left out or didn't explore in detail. I randomly chose a few other things to respond too.

**"THERE WERE A LOT OF ASPECTS THEY BRUSHED OVER PRETTY LIGHTLY SUCH AS THE CHANGE OF DIV AND BDE CO RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BATTLE"**

– COL GEORGE STENEHJEM

I would have loved to get into this, but when I spoke to Gen. Berry, on the phone, he declined to do an on-camera interview. We spoke at length and he was very forthcoming, but in the end he knew that time spent focusing on any role he played would reduce the time spent honoring the men. That was something he didn't want. In the end I think he is right, so this is the closest thing to a reason. That and time.

**"I CAUGHT ONLY A VISUAL GLIMPSE OF FOOTBALL PRO BOB KALSU NEAR THE END – I THINK A NARRATIVE MENTION OF HIM WOULD HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATE (OR DID I MISS IT?). HATS OFF TO FOX NEWS, TO OLLIE AND THE PRODUCERS. GREAT JOB!"**

– JERRY RODGERS

This is true, we only showed his picture. Again, time was a factor here. Fox has done a segment on Kalsu and I have the interviews with his family. Including his mother, who died last year. I felt that this time round I should leave him out. He has received a lot of attention. It seems to me, he was the kind of man you wouldn't mind giving up a little of the spotlight for his brothers. I hope I was right.

**"I GIVE IT A GOOD RATING. I FELT THEY COVERED TOO MUCH ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE STATES AND NOT ENOUGH OF WHAT HAPPENED ON AND AROUND RIPCORD."**

– ANTHONY CRITCHLOW

On this note I thought it important to educate viewers about America at the time. We know and remember the war. For a lot of the younger generation Vietnam is like World War Two for us. It happened before we were born. It is not part of our living history. So mentioning protests, Kent State or John Wayne is a way to put the time period in context for someone who is not well versed in history. On that note the ratings were good, which means people care and are interested. That should make us all feel good.

I realize I only responded to a fraction of your posts. If anyone has questions for me you can reach me at [martin.hinton@foxnews.com](mailto:martin.hinton@foxnews.com).

I think that, in the end, a show, book or movie can only offer a slice of what your lives were like. It is impossible to understand what you went through. All I can offer is my thanks, to you, and all the men who did not see home again. I hope the show, in its small way, stands as a tribute to all of you.

All the Best,  
Martin Hinton

# INCOMING MAIL

Dear Frank,

I want to thank Jon Chaffin for his donation to the Ripcord Association in memory of my husband, Col. Herb Koenigsbauer. Herb would be honored to know that one and a half years after his death he's still remembered in such a special way.

Many thanks also to Mr. Jim Williams for submitting the photo of himself, my husband and Ltc. Lucas. Needless to say, I was surprised and pleased to see my husbands face again in the Ripcord newsletter. Thanks for printing it! (Wish they would have shown that very same photo on "Oliver North's" program just a second longer rather than focusing on Ltc. Lucas only.)

Thanks again

Veronika Koenigsbauer

Dear Frank,

My father, Bill Kohr, was a paratrooper at Ripcord. He helped to land helicopters during the extraction of the firebase. Sadly he died before I was born and I'm try to learn more about him through what he did in his life. I have the book and I'm trying to get a copy of the show from Fox. I also have some pictures of his that are of a howitzer and the scenery from a hilltop. I don't know where they are from though or if you could use them. If you knew him or someone who did I would appreciate hearing about it but I also understand if you can't. Please let me know about the pictures and anything else that pertains. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Kristen Kohr

To The Editor

When I first heard about the Ripcord Association, I thought it was mostly 506th guys. Sounds like you are getting responses from guys in 2/501st, too. Read Nolan's book. Good work, but I know damned well that the first WIA's in Recon 2/501st on the 14th were not ALL from RPG's. I got hit by a AK/SKS round!! Chest, shoulder, and jaw. Damned thing ended up in my mouth and I spat it out into my hand. It was hot. Been trying to find the medics who worked on me. They did a trache on me with a ball point pen and (I think my own knife but may be wrong). Kept me going with mouth-to-mouth. One had been with Recon for a while, and the other was a fairly new transfer from another 2/501st unit - I think. Later, he and the CO (and maybe the Lt.) came to see me at 85th Evac. I was pretty out of it, but I know I gave my handgun to the medic. Hope it helped him. Been trying to find those guys for years. I had volunteered for 101st from another unit incountry and was new.

How do I join the association?

Bill McGehee

*I got a call from a Sarah Saunders who receives the Ripcord Report.*

*She is the mother of Nick Saunders, a chopper Pilot KIA during the Ripcord Battle while evacuating the wounded. Ft Campbell has named LZ Saunders after him.*

*She said that Fred Spaulding is a walking Saint and an unbelievable person of all Heart for all the support he gave to her after her daughter had called Fred.*

*Fred had sat with the daughter and the mother and provided them with a brief summary of how proud they are of how her son continued to fly missions to get the wounded out.*

*Fred gave a signed book To a Gold Star Mother on the behalf of the Ripcord Association.*

- FM

Frank,

I just want to let you know how terrific the improvements are that have been made on the publication of the Ripcord Report. This was immediately evident when I pulled my latest copy out of the mailbox. The inclusion of the "Screaming Eagle" logo next to the mailing address sets the tone. We Ripcord veterans are proud to be members of that storied Division and it is a fitting introduction to the information within.

Once inside the newsletter it becomes apparent how much time you and your "staff" have put into the effort. The print quality is crisp and the layout concise and uncluttered: it creates a professional presentation. Most significantly, however, is your usage of halftone printing techniques to produce legible photo reproductions. This format tends to not wash out the gray midrange values that give such vivid detail to images. I think this will allow for the printing of Ripcord photographs that could not previously be shared with our association members. Perhaps a FSB Ripcord photo gallery page is in order?

Many thanks for your hard work and devotion to the cause!

Sincerely,

Fred A. Shuttleworth

E/2/506th Mortars

*Many thanks go out to Dennis Bloomingdale who has been in the Graphic Design business for more than 28 years. He does wonders with the material that Lee Widjeskog and I send him. I have received many good comments on his work and it is appreciated very much.*

-FM

To The Editor

Loved your site, I was one of the pilots that helped pull you guys out, I had also spent almost a whole night on Ripcord when I got weathered in, I remember the young kid

that ran the mess hall bunker tried to fix us a place to sleep but there was a mortar pit right above us and every time it fired, which was a lot, our heads bounced so needless to say not much sleep. I ran into a Captain at Ft. Rucker about 3 or 4 years later who had been on Ripcord, I don't remember his name but he did tell me that the soldier from the mess hall had been killed by a 106 round. I am retired military and live just outside Ft. Campbell, they have opened a large restaurant, golf shop etc. here and one of the dining rooms is called the Ripcord Room (even though they spelled Ripcord as Rip Cord) hey what the hell, military intelligence. Myself and a fellow pilot from Neb are going to try to make Des Moines this year, hope to see you guys.

Butch Doan  
Phoenix 64

Sir or Ma'am,

I am contacting you to welcome the FSB Ripcord Association to enjoy all that Fort Belvoir's Golf Club, Officers' Club, and Community Club have to offer. Golf season is here and I can gladly aid in the planning of golf outings, leagues, and tournaments for any group. I am also your POC for using our clubs to hold events, meetings, reunions, and celebrations. We have a variety of options to choose from between the three clubs. Do you have an information officer or a person responsible for forwarding information to your entire organization? I would greatly appreciate any advice and am open to any question. Thank you for your time.

B A  
Department of the Army/MWR Marketing  
5280 21st Street, Suite 109  
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5920  
Phone: (703) 805-1378  
Fax: (703) 805-3287

Frank,

I was a medic on the Dust Off ships that came into Ripcord during this period of the war. I was the platoon sgt. and made several trips into that fire base. Needless to say, the pucker factor was quite high all the time. Do you happen to have anything regarding the Dust Off ship? I was sent this web site by a friend of mine named COL. Jerry Rodgers, USA Ret. At that time, he was a 1LT pilot of the Dust Off's. He was severely wounded, and was taken of flying status after that. Please reply.

Bob Fravell  
ISG, USA Ret  
552 Desert Oak Drive  
Pensacola, FL 32514  
850 478 7272

Dear Mr. Marshall,

I feel compelled to explain a little about my relationship with my Uncle Dennis Heinz. He died in Vietnam on April 16, 1970. My grandmother, my grandfather and my father (my uncle's only family) found out on April 19, 1970. My dad was only a sophomore in college. He had already buried a sister and two grandparents - now he was faced with burying his big brother and his hero. Thank God he had my mother there to help him through this incredibly difficult time. In 1971 they were married and four years to the day after they found out my Uncle Denny had died, I was born. So you see, I never had the pleasure of knowing this man and my father's only sibling but for some reason I felt a connection to him that I can't explain. My grandmother and my father would tell me and my other siblings (I'm the oldest of four) all kinds of stories about him. The thing I love most about him is that he wasn't perfect. He was a troublemaker with nothing but innocent fun in mind, he could be a bit of a hellraiser at times but he had a heart of gold, he could be stylish and sophisticated yet goofy and immature. In his short 21 years, he managed to embody life to the fullest extent without knowing what the future held.

I am very close with my father and for all intents and purposes, he has always been my hero. It kills me that I never got to meet this brother of his. From what my grandmother tells me, my dad was the good kid - Uncle Den was the "handful". They were very much the opposites but I think they had equal respect for each other. I am more like my dad, however I envy those like my Uncle Den. I miss him and I didn't even know him. Because of this I was always fascinated (I don't know if that's the correct word or not) by the Vietnam War. I've been to The Wall more times than I can count, I took all the classes in college I possibly could on Vietnam, and I try to read as much as I can.

I would love to see a memorial page for the men lost at Ripcord and for you to include my Uncle Den, however I'd like for these men to be portrayed not only as soldiers but as brothers, sons, fathers, and uncles.

Lastly, I would really appreciate it if you would include my name on the mailing list for the newsletter. You can send them electronically to my e-mail address and save the postage. I would also love to know the names of the men my Uncle Den served with if you know who they are and where they are now.

It's funny. My father has done a lot of research over the years trying to find out exactly how, when, and where his brother died. At one point we thought it was friendly fire. At one point we thought the dates had been messed up. It was only when Fox News called my parents that they got the full story and the truth. This is incredibly painful for my father and my grandmother however I know that this has brought them some much needed closure.

Thank you for allowing me to share,  
Jessica Daniel

*(continued on page 6)*

## Incoming Mail

(continued from page 5)

Greetings!

I was the PSYOPS guy that flew around in the loudspeaker ship throwing leaflets out the door while my KIT CARSON SCOUT interpreter was telling the enemy to surrender. With a bunch of different flight companies. like C/158 and A/101 Comancheros, with whom I later was a doorgunner with, I was at Ripcord for about three days. I took one or two pictures that I could share with you but you gotta respond to Dago\_doorgunner@yahoo.com and I will jpeg them to you.

I have an ulterior motive in that I am trying to find the flight crews for my reunions, but it would be nice just to get to know you too.

Martin

To The Editor

A friend of mine, he didn't make Ripcord but was shot down near FSB Rifle, emailed me about Oliver North's War Stories about Ripcord on Sunday. I will be watching, I hope they do the story justice.

I checked out the site and it seems to be well done. After all those that were lost there, it is great that you all are taking the time to remember.

I was an Eagle Dustoff pilot and flew into Ripcord numerous times during the operation. My call sign was Dustoff 92. I just found out about your organization and would be very interested in learning more about it.

Thanks

Gary Mercer

Dear Mr. Spaulding,

Hello. My name is William John Kiehner. You do not know me but I was extremely compelled to write or shall I say type you this letter. I am a Sergeant with the 204TH MP Company in the U.S. Army. My company and I have been deployed in Baghdad, Iraq for 9 months. I have constantly read books about the man who fought in Vietnam and how amazing you all are. But no book has truly influenced me than the book my wonderful wife sent to me in a package. The book is titled, "RIPCORDER". I have read this book 4 times already and all of your men who fought in those battles are all heroes. You fought for our nations freedom and I would like to thank you for that. All of you men are amazing. When I get down since I have been over here. I think back on all the things that you and the men under you had to endure on a day-to-day basis.

I didn't know what to expect going off to WAR, as I am sure that you didn't either. Getting mail or any kind of letter from the States is the best thing myself and my soldiers could ever ask for. As I am sure that was the case for you and your soldiers. My soldiers and I am extremely proud to be apart of a brotherhood if you could call it that. Even though over here you have Infantry, MPs, Artillerymen, Engineers and a variety of other MOS's. Everyone works together and protects each other because that is all that we have in this place. Again I would like to thank you and the men under you for what you have done to make our country a better place; I will never forget what you and your men have done. I hope that I can hear from you.

Sincerely,

SGT William John Kiehner

## A True Hero

For the past few years I have read the personal stories in the Ripcord Report. Some of these people I knew in country. I don't recall them as the heroes I read about, some of them were the draftees that bitched and complained, that had to be forced to carry their share. So I thought I would tell you about one of those that can't speak for himself. Nearly every day I remember Spc 4 Dan Heater, he grew up in Gas City, Illinois. He and his high school buddies used to hang out in their cars at a drive-in with car hops just across the railroad tracks from the center of town. Dan was not a real impressive looking kid, not the one you would pick out as a hero. He never complained, never bitched, (how many of us can say that).



I first met Dan when I took over second squad in the fourth platoon under Lt. Love, Alpha company 2/506, in October 69. In December of 69 Dan and our sniper (I think his name was Peters, he carried a M14 with a scope) and I were assigned to hang out in the

foothills between FSB Jack and Camp Evans. Alpha company was assigned to provide security for the Bob Hope show at Evans that year. Dan carried an M16 over and under, with a full vest of rounds, our radio and an extra battery. He never complained once. Peters was prepared to find any NVA trying to sneak up on Evans and was ready and professional.

By March 70, fourth platoon had lost Lt. Love to a chopper crash. Our next Lt. (I don't remember his name, but he was a damn good LT, really cared about his men), stepped on a booby trap that busted up his legs, we were then assigned Lt. Davis. By this time fourth platoon's two squads had been reduced to mine, with five men and Sgt. Arvel E. Koger's with six. With my agreement, Spc 4 Dan Heater had volunteered to be our new Lt.'s radio operator. When Alpha company went in on Ripcord, March 12, 1970, fourth

(continued on page 7)

# THEN & NOW

## Daniel Thompson, HHC/2-506

Dan hails from Massachusetts from a background of "HARD-CORE" military history. His father served as a marine in World War II, so Dan always knew he would end up serving in the military when he grew up. In 1969 he graduated from Quincy High School in Quincy, Mass. and soon volunteered for the draft. Surprisingly, even with the military background of his father and family, his parents wanted to keep him out of Vietnam as the "sole surviving son". Dan had other ideas.

He served his basic training in Fort Jackson then went to Fort Benning and was assigned to Fort Bragg with the 82nd Airborne. By 1970 he had decided to sign up for a levy to Vietnam and arrived in country in April 1970. After in-country training he was initially assigned to E, 2-506. After a few days they decided they had enough people and he was re-assigned to work radios on Ripcord.

Here he enjoyed the lovely ambiance of the sun drenched hill, wonderful specially prepared meals, balmy hill top breezes, mellow booming of the 105's, 155's and 81mm mortars and the attention bestowed upon him by the NVA mortar men. He received his first wound on 18 July while helping Major Tanner get the injured off the CH-47 that fell into the ammo dump. When asked about a Purple Heart, he passed up on it since he didn't feel he deserved one unless it happened while he was directly



fighting the NVA.

Working with the Commo Unit he flew out to various LZ's to repair or replace radios for the line units as needed. On one occasion he got to a LZ, moved to the edge, dropped his rucksack and rifle as he tended to a nearby radio. As his back turned to the ruck a mortar round hit and took out his ruck and rifle. All in all a good day for Dan.

Dan continued to serve on Ripcord and was evacuated with all the others on 23 July.

After Ripcord he spent a short time driving for Chaplain Fox and later helped Lt. McCall as they worked with villages in the intelligence unit. He later found himself in Quantri at the Special forces Camp and for a while also worked with Lt.

Doyal. At one point his job included escorting prisoners with drug problems down to the prison at Phu Bai. One prisoner asked what Dan would do if he tried to run off. Dan merely mentioned he did not believe the soldier could out run his .45. No more questions were asked and no one ran off.

Upon returning to the states Dan went to a reserve unit and served until 1975 when he was finally discharged.

He married in 1973, had two boys and two girls and divorced in 1989. In 1994 he retired after working for a lumber company for a number of years and running his own computer business till retirement. Dan now lives in Weymouth, Massachusetts where he spends his time working with the disabled and Purple Heart recipients.

## True Hero

*(continued from page 6)*

platoon was set on the part of the perimeter that wasn't taking any fire. Lt. Davis came and told me to get my squad and follow him! We were to sneak down our side of Ripcord, work our way around to a ridge that the company was taking heavy fire from and assault it, (all seven of us). When we assaulted the ridge we encountered only light resistance and took the top. Lt. Davis ordered a halt, (basic training 101, when you assault a ridge or a hill never, never stop at the top

and sky-line yourselves). My two rifle men didn't stop, I pushed my machine gun team over the top, but Spc 4 Dan Heater's job was to stay with Lt. Davis. Moments later mortar rounds (lots of them), plastered where we had been standing. My assistant gunner was hit in the back with a small piece of shrapnel and began to come unglued, my gunner was shaking with fear, but stood his ground. Lt. Davis was killed and Spc 4 Dan Heater was mortally wounded. While we waited for help to come, Dan's only request of me was to cut the radio off his back so he could breath easier, and to take a pic-

ture of him. He knew he was badly wounded but he never showed fear, never broke. Just quietly waited, him and me until help arrived. After what seemed like an eternity Sgt. Koger and his squad came out to help us carry Lt. Davis and Dan back to the permitter.

We were told several days later that Spc 4 Dan Heater had died from his wounds. Dan knew better than to sky-line himself, but he chose to stay with his LT. In my book Spc 4 Dan Heater lived and died a true hero.

Sgt William J Wagon USA Ret

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## **Ripcord Association Reunion**

**Oct 4 - 7, 2004 Monday to Thursday  
Holiday Inn, DesMoines, Iowa**

***REMEMBER...***

**You must have your reservation fee & form in  
NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 4, 2004.**

## **RIPCORD REPORT**

*Ripcord Report* is a publication of the *Ripcord Association*, and is the authoritative voice of history for the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord.

### **Ripcord Report**

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