



RIPCORD REPORT



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

Number 97

Spring 2014

Publication in the works

Thanks to all of those who have gotten back to me with information for the book to be published on the Battle for Firebase Ripcord. Work is progressing steadily and pieces are falling into place daily. This is your story. I want to hear it from you so that future generations will know what happened between March and July 1970 at Firebase Ripcord.



*Chris Brady
Author*

If you want to reach me, email me at cbrady@windstream.net or contact Frank Marshall and we can set up a time for an interview. If you are in the area of Central Pennsylvania, let me know and I'll make every attempt to meet you personally.

I will also be attending the reunion in October and look forward to meeting you there.

Thanks again to all who have corresponded with me and a huge thanks goes to Frank Marshall, who has been instrumental in putting me in touch with the men who will make this publication something everyone can be proud of.

Chris Brady



Frank Marshall, Lee Widjeskog, Freddie Gilbert, Pete Melero, Jim (Tiny) Aanonsen, Dennis Stortz, Dave Corredetti, and Dennis Blooming were in NJ and interviewed for the new book being written.

Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow

Hi everyone.

I sure hope you're have all survived this winter. Here in Boise Idaho we've had a typical winter. Snow in the mountains and rain in the valley. I'm looking forward to spring and summer.



Our Facebook family keeps growing. We are up to 369. I bet it will be more by the time the newsletter is published. I'm guessing once the documentary shows we will have a big increase in members. I want to personally thank Frank for his great work on our association web page, also for all the things he does for us.

To all our FB family, thanks for the posts, your all great. Keep them coming. Please post pictures if you have them. The Ripcord area pictures would be best, but any and all pictures of your time in Vietnam would work also. I recently read the book *Chickenhawk* by Robert Mason. It's of his time in the 1st Cav 1965-1966. I recommend it as good reading.

Everyone have a great and safe spring.

2014 Ripcord Reunion
Oct 2014
Mrytle Beach, SC
Registration forms are in this issue
on page 7 and 8

Anna Britt Nolan Trust

by George and Mary Murphy



Dear Fellow Members of the Ripcord Association,

Thanks to the funds raised at for the Anna Britt Nolan Trust Fund at the reunion in Myrtle Beach last October, as well as royalties from Keith Nolan's final book and other donations, the fund continues to grow.

All donations are greatly appreciated by the Nolan family. Ulla Nolan thanks everyone who has contributed to the fund and wants everyone to know how much their donation means to the Keith's family. Each donation makes a college education for Britt more possible.

Thank you,
George and Mary Murphy

Members were asking where they could get one of the Vietnam shirt that Charlie Tipton and Lee Widjeskog were wearing at the reunion. The fellow who sells them is a Vietnam Vet and the shirts are well made and done in the US.

On the web page the shirt is the full button down Vietnam shirt for \$49 Charlie asks that anyone who buys a shirt should let us know. He is going to try to get a donation from them. The address is www.combatartistcollection.com.



Opinions expressed in submitted material are not necessarily those of the editorial staff. We reserve the right to reject any material deemed to be inappropriate. We also reserve the right to edit all submissions, but we will make every effort to maintain the writer's concept and meaning. Please be brief and concise.

Donations

the life blood of our Association

The following have given donations to the Ripcord Association since the last newsletter. These donations help keep the website and newsletters published to keep all our Ripcord members up to date.

Bill Williams	Fred Edwards
Terry Smith	Joe Connelly
Gary Madsen	Tom Rubsam
Ron Miller	Richard Drury
James C. Smith	Lee Tremblay
Alfred Lee	Richard Frazer
Gene Marshall	Wilburn Wall
Ronald Hudson	
Fred Lynch in memory of Capt. David Rich	
Terrance Drury in memory of Burke (Buck) Miller	
A 2/11 FA	
Ralph Forbes in memory of Paul Kosank & Willie Austin	

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

Lee Widjeskog,
493 Stillman Ave.
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

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

5 Taconia Court, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
www.ripcordassociation.com

Editor: Frank Marshall

Phone: 856-273-4426

E-mail: mail@ripcordassociation.com

Writer: Lee Widjeskog

Phone: 856-451-1108

E-mail: leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com

INCOMING MAIL

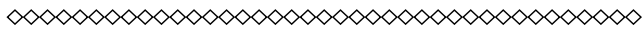
To Our Ripcord Family, Myrtle Beach 2013

Bob & I want to thank everyone that contributed to, and signed the very nice card that we received at the banquet. The gesture is very much appreciated. It covered our dinner with Lee & Kathy Sunday night after we had everything packed and loaded so the 4 of us could relax and discuss what works, what doesn't and brainstorm for improvement. Continuing on our road trip home, on Tuesday Ripcord took us out for our anniversary dinner. Us, alone together with no cooking and no dishes what can be better. Gas prices being what they are, the truck drank the rest and we are all familiar with that scene.

We are very grateful for everyone that pitched in and gave their time to help us do what we do and the many who offer and are ready and willing. Just knowing you are there if we need you is so reassuring. All of you deserve recognition, THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH. Having each others backs is so typically what 'Ripcord' stands for, as it was then and as it is now.

Planning on another big, busy reunion in Myrtle Beach 2014!

Bob & Red Judd



Dear Lee,

I received your welcome letter in the mail this morning...thanks. I have been very reluctant to join in any reunions over the years until a very close friend told me it was time to share my experiences with other veterans who shared similar experiences.

On my first tour I was assigned to B Troop 2nd Squadron 17th Cavalry. Because I was Infantry, airborne, ranger and pathfinder qualified I commanded the aero-rifle platoon. I had the platoon from 1 May 1970 until 23 September 1970.

I first heard of FSB Ripcord according to my flight log on 10 July when the platoon recovered a UH-1H just west of FSB Jack. The aircraft was trying to make it back to Camp Evans when the engine quit. It had been damaged supporting one of the companies operating outside FSB Ripcord.

On 13 July we were inserted just east of Ripcord to pick up another UH-1H that had been shot down. While preparing the aircraft to be pulled out one of my

trooper found a green coaxial like cable running parallel to a trail, About this same time we could hear mortars being fired from behind the hilltop. I made the mistake of reporting the cable and the next thing I knew I was told by the troop commander to not cut the wire but to hold until a team was inserted to monitor the cable. All I wanted to do was get off that hill. It was obvious from all the debris around that a recent fight had taken place. It took an hour but soon a LOH approached with a three man wiretap team from division. I showed them the cable and soon they were listening to the enemy. Sometime during this monitoring I sent a squad up to the top of the mountain to see if they could spot the mortar position. As they were moving up they ran into a camouflaged bunker and had three wounded one seriously. The squad was able to pull back but we began taking ineffective small arms and RPG fire from a squad size element above us. I requested a medevac for my seriously wounded trooper and again requested immediate withdrawal. About this time the wiretap team leader told me that the regiment was sending some personnel to check the cable. Yes he said regiment. At that time he said "regiment" I had 24 personnel, three that were wounded. Shortly after that my commander ordered our extraction and the shot down helicopter was destroyed.

On 18 July our morning mission was to capture a 120mm mortar. This mission came directly from our squadron commander LTC Molinelli. One of the C Troop 2/17th pink teams did engage a mortar team moving behind a hill killing 5 enemy personnel. We inserted on the mortar team and found that they were carrying an 82mm mortar. We recovered the tube, base plate and a couple of rounds. We delivered them to a G2 rep back at Camp Eagle.

That afternoon we recovered a B Troop 2117th LOH west of FSB Ripcord. Took small arms fire on the insert but were able to rig and extract the aircraft with no casualties.

On 20 July a pink team engaged 15-20 enemy personnel moving on the back side of the high mountain SE of FSB Ripcord. Platoon was inserted to collect enemy equipment and intelligence. We recovered one complete .51 HMG, thirteen AK-47s, four cases of ammunition and one SKS. Because several of the KBAs had on helmets I thought they must be from an AA unit. Weapons and equipment was flown back to Camp Eagle.

(continued on page 4)

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



Tuesday, February 11, 2014. Here in southern New Jersey the snow has come and gone a number of times, it has gotten cold into the single digits and I have had many an opportunity to tell those 20 years or younger that it was colder back in the late 70's and early 80's. If you are going to get old, you may as well talk about the "old days" and try to impress the youngsters. Of course, they nod and smile and nicely say "Wow, it must have been cold!" Then having satisfied you they get back to their daily lives and stash your comments in the back of their minds. They will dredge them up in 20 years and use them as their own just as we have done with comments from our parents and grandparents. The more things change the more they stay the same!

This past reunion went very well as we reported in the last newsletter. Since we will be back in Myrtle Beach again this year, there is no reason not to expect another great reunion!

As we approach March, the announcement of who will be honored as a Distinguished Member of the Regiment has been released. From the Ripcord era we have Merle DeLagrange D 1/506, Fred Gilbert D 2/506, Jim Aanonsen A 2/506 and Jeff Wilcox C 2/506. The ceremonies will take place during March 12 thru 14 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Anyone wishing to attend is invited and should check the 506th Association web site for details.

As is often the case, following the reunion, Kathy and I took a little trip as a vacation. This time we decided to explore Florida away from Orlando and the Space Center which we had previously visited. So, in the middle of the government shut down we headed for the Everglades. Since it was still closed we traveled on down to Key West. We stayed there for one night, had some good food and enjoyed the sights. It is obviously a city geared for good times but not what we generally seek. It was not hard for us to head north and visit the Everglades National Park.

We traipsed around the park for a day or two and then made our way to Sanibel Island. This has been a destination that Kathy sought for years! We spent three days beach combing for shells and just generally enjoying the weather. The trick now is for Kathy to figure out what to do with all her shells. This will keep her occupied till the next trip!

From there we traveled north to see the Okefenokee Swamp and then beach combed our way up the outer banks of North Carolina and wandered back to New Jersey just in time to head north to Massachusetts to visit our kids and the grandson for Thanksgiving. Since then it has been mostly hunkering down and enjoying the winter months. Summer will soon be upon us and then we will be complaining about the heat as much as we grumble about the cold! Isn't it great to be Alive!!!



INCOMING MAIL

(continued from page 3)

On 22 July inserted on the high mountain due west of FSB Ripcord to again recover a 120mm mortar knocked out by an air strike. We were on the ground for just 5 minutes when we took eight or ten 82mm rounds in the 12. Three personnel were wounded. We were immediately extracted. Two of the four aircraft received hits during the extraction. I actually saw enemy troops moving up to the LI as we flew over them.

On 23 July we were alerted to support the closing of FSB Ripcord. We did not participate in any missions that day.

On 27 July our mission was to confirm enemy activity around FSB ripcord. We made two insertions. The first was in the valley between two mountains SE of FSB Ripcord. We found the grave of a senior person because of the way it was decorated and the graves of additional ten or eleven personnel. AU were buried with their weapons and personnel equipment. I was unable to tell how they died. The second insertion was into a valley NE of FSB Ripcord. There were lots of bomb craters but no sign of the enemy.

On 28 July our mission was the same as previous day. Platoon was inserted three times. Found more individual graves on the first insertion and a mass grave on the last insertion. Enemy appears to have withdrawn from the area. Only their dead remain and their abandon equipment. Every trooper now has an AK or SKS and a pith helmet. One of my troopers found a blue pith helmet with a red star beside one of the graves.

That was my last mission on the ground in the FSB Ripcord AO.

*Steve Pullen
B Trp 2/17 Cav
Murphy NC*

William (Baldy) Baldwin A/2-506

Lee,

The second time we went to Eagle Beach, 12 April, we had been in the bush for 90 days or more. We thought we had 3 days in the rear but it wasn't so. Drinks were 25 cents and beer a dime. The boys drank too much, someone made them mad and as it happened they just about tore the place down. Me and 5 or 6 guys were out on the beach and didn't know what had happened till the next morning when we heard the story.



Next we hear that Black Spade was hopping mad and told them to throw us out. Everyone took their weapons from the CONEX and left for Camp Evans. By the time I got to the CONEX they didn't have an M-16 for me. Jim Noll told me not to worry, we would get one when we got back to Evans. Well, we were not allowed to go back to our Company area and had to sleep outside the wire.

The next day we were loaned to the 1/506, I think, and I still did not have a weapon. Dick Ames gave me his .45 with two clips and 48 extra rounds. I thought it sucked, but what do you do?

Anyway, we were in a new place and on April 15, Second platoon was ambushed by NVA using M-16's and M-60 machine guns which confused us. By the time we got it straightened out I believe the NVA got away. I don't know how many guys were hit but one guy was hit badly. A medevac was called in but the pilot would not come in because we were taking fire. By the time he was able to get in the guy had died. (*Ed. Note: Official reports for 15 April indicate 2 NVA KIA, 2 GI WIA and the 3 GI's killed were Dean Dadler, Charles Steffler and Bobby Young.*)

The next day or so we tried to hump off that mountain. We went down but had to stop when we came to a sheer rock drop off. We climbed up and down with the same results. I think 3 or 4 people had to be medivac'd due to heat exhaustion. Finally, we just CA'ed back to our AO. I guess that was our punishment for getting drunk at Eagle Beach. I always wondered what they thought

we would do after being in the bush for 90 days or more.....We were animals! I'll never forgive them for that. I finally got an M-16 from Doc Draper. He told me he couldn't shoot anyone with it, so I told him I would use it for both of us. I didn't or couldn't honor my promise to him and it kills me to see his name on the wall. I feel like I should have done something and I know I couldn't.

In June we were on Firebase O'Reilly. There was a trail we really couldn't see very well from our position in our part of the Third Platoon defensive section. The LT, Sgt. Dick Ames or whomever else wanted it covered. So a couple of guys and I set up a 5 claymore mechanical ambush on a curve in the trail. Then one



day we were told to keep an eye out for a recon group that was coming to the firebase on our side. Dick Ames went to me then but he didn't want to wake me because I had a late guard shift. Dick took the detcord out of the claymores but for the first one he wasn't sure where the trigger device was so he waited down the trail to lead recon around the trap. The recon guys took a fork in the trail and missed Dick but they hit the claymore. One guy was hit in the leg, but died before the medevac arrived in spite of all the medical help on the firebase. I know it wasn't my fault, but I have always felt some responsibility. I often wondered what they told his people back home about how he died.

Baldy

Incoming Mail

My brother, Dennis Morrill, was killed in Vietnam on 3-20-1970. I am interested in connecting with anyone who may have served with him and/or knew him.

Marie Foster
ruppertsbakery@aol.com

**RIPCORN REUNION 2014
MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA**

- Yes, I'll be there!
 Yes, I'll attend and have not received a Ripcord Coin.

NAME _____ PHONE _____
ADDRESS _____ UNIT IN 'NAM _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____+

Will a family member(s) or guest be sharing your accommodations [] yes [] no?
How many including you? [], If yes what are their names? (For name tag purposes only).

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____
TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT IS PROVIDED BY COMPLEMENTARY AIRPORT
SHUTTLE. MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR PICK UP AT LEAST 48 HOURS BEFORE
ARRIVAL! (1-888-265-8864)

Registration fee of \$ _____ is enclosed for # _____ Adults and # _____ children under 18.
\$40 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below!

DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:

Before June 30, 2014, \$75 per adult
July 1 through 31, 2014 \$80 per adult,
August 1 through 31, 2014 \$85 per adult.
After September 1, 2014 \$90 per adult

Your registration fee covers the cost of the hospitality room, snacks and beverages, and dinner on Saturday.

Registration fee due no later than October 3, 2014.

Make your check payable to "RIPCORN ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

If you have questions call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 5 October 2013

AGENDA

Wednesday, October 8: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)
Thursday, October 9: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)
Friday, October 10: Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7PM)
Saturday, October 11: Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.
Sunday, October 12: Homeward bound
Thursday golf outing (not included in the registration fee). Check here if you will play [] .

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY AND BY September 8, 2014

CALL 1-888-265-8846

**ASK FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS AND REFER TO THE GROUP
CODE: RIPCORN**

Winfield, Kansas Vietnam Memorial

As Kathy and I have traveled around the country, we often note Vietnam memorials along the roads and in the towns. Some are extravagant and are done on a state wide basis but many are just local memorials put up by the communities affected by the war. The one in Winfield, Kansas is that type.

After leaving the 2007 Ripcord Reunion in Springfield, Missouri, Kathy and I stopped in the town of Winfield, in southeastern Kansas. While it is not a large town, (population under 12,000) it has been listed



as one of the 100 best small towns in the nation. We stopped there simply because I cannot drive without some rest.

After securing a room for the night we took a ride around the town and came across a Vietnam Memorial. As the pictures show it is a miniature replica of The Wall. It contains the names of the 777 state residents who lost their lives while in Vietnam. This is not the only memorial in Kansas, but probably the nicest for such a small community.

It was created almost by happenstance. In December 1987, members of the Winfield High School Class of



1963 gathered to plan for the 25-year class reunion. As they discussed items for the up coming event, they came to realize that a number of their classmates had died in Vietnam. One of those (Gary Bannon) was well know by the class, but there had been many others who also served and fell. This group formed a sub-committee, which decided to create a replica of The Wall in Winfield to honor their fallen classmates and all in Kansas who had died in the war.

In 1988 they met with the Winfield Park Board and an architect to come up with plans and a location for the memorial. Later that year at the reunion, the Class of 1963 voted to support the project that was by now



estimated to cost \$100,000. A non-profit committee was formed and enough money raised so that by 4 October 1989 a groundbreaking ceremony could be held with Gary's father participating. From there things moved fast and by 11 November 1989 the memorial was completed and opened to the public.

It is a fitting tribute to their classmates and all the others who died in service to their country!

Firestore Ripcord Association October 8-12, 2014

Hotel Reservation form for
Sands Ocean Club Resort
9550 Shore Drive
Myrtle Beach, SC 29572
Phone: (888) 265-8846
Group code: RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION

Group Room Rate: Sunday thru Sunday \$75 per day + \$2.14 access charge per day + tax.
(Breakfast included)

A deposit for the first night's room and tax or a Credit Card Number is required to guarantee this reservation.*

Room rate is available three days before and after the group-blocked dates.

Tell them you are with the RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION when you register.

Your Name: _____ Telephone # _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____ No. of Rooms _____

Roommate Name(s): _____

Room needs: _____

Although we cannot guarantee special requests, every effort will be made to meet your request.

Deposit Enclosed: _____ Credit Card Number: _____ Exp: _____

Cardholder Signature Authorizing Hotel's Use of Credit Card: _____

***PLEASE NOTE: Those guests sending a cash deposit should be aware that a credit card imprint and valid , state issued ID will be necessary upon check in. Should you wish to pay for your stay with cash, a credit card imprint and valid ID will still be required upon arrival to secure your accommodations. All cash payments are accepted upon departure.**

Check-in time: 3:00 PM

Check-out Time: 11:00 AM

To confirm reservations, return form to the hotel or call by September 8, 2014.
We look forward to seeing you in October!