

RIPTCORD REPORT

For Friends and Survivors of FSB RIPCORD, RVN

Editor's Flashback

RIPCORD: A DIEN BIEN PHU OR KHE SANH?

CAMP EAGLE, PHU BAI, Vietnam, July 23, 1970--Fire Support Base Ripcord was evacuated by airmobile extraction today as enemy gunners fired salvos of mortar shells, rocket grenades and automatic weapon fire at departing 101st Airborne Division troopers. In one of the most courageous air operations in the war, aviators gunned their choppers under the barrels of enemy weapons to pull the beleaguered Screaming Eagle division's men to the safety of their lowland base camp.

Despite 23 days of North Vietnamese siege operations against the outpost, deep in the rugged rain forest of western Nam Hoa district of Thua Thien province, the G.I.s and their leaders were in remarkably good spirits. Senior officials estimated that a division-size force of NVA regulars had been dealt a crippling blow, through aerial and artillery bombardment and in numerous fire fights supported by attack helicopters. Friendly losses were described as "severe."

As the deadly siege wore on, senior division officers grew concerned over its possible effects on the American public. According to one official report, just released, one of the "additional factors of critical importance in the decision to close Ripcord were the domestic and foreign political implications of another U.S. fire base undergoing a Khe Sanh or Dien Bien Phu siege." Khe Sanh was a U.S. Marine base that came under concentrated attack in the early months of

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VIETNAM WAR, 25 YEARS AGO

SAIGON, Oct. 4, 1969--Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited top U.S. Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, planners today to inspect arrangements to turn conduct of the ground war completely over to South Vietnamese forces. The senior officer began yesterday to shift their focus from combat assistance activities to providing technical training and assistance.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7--In a White House meeting today, President Richard M. Nixon reassured Laotian Prime Minister Souvannah Phouma that removal of all North Vietnamese forces from Laos and Cambodia would be a condition for settlement of the Vietnam War.

Reports from Saigon said that Gen. Wheeler was departing, satisfied that "progress in Vietnamization is being steadily and realistically achieved." Wheeler cautioned, however, that U.S. forces would have to assist the combat effort for "some time to come."

CHICAGO, Oct. 8--Violent clashes with police during a demonstration of members of Students for a Democratic Society resulted in 40 arrests. The protest was over the trial of the "Chicago Eight," arraigned for conspiracy to incite riot.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9--Defense Secretary Melvin Laird reported his satisfaction with Gen. Wheeler's visit to Saigon. The "highest priority," he said, will be placed on formal new procedures for operating in the field and shifting the burden of fighting to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam forces. Laird called the new military tactics "protective

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A Newsletter

No. 35 OCT. 1994

CURRENT NEWS BRIEFS

War-Wearied World

Haiti:

There Today, Gone by 2013??

The last time U.S. forces intervened in Haiti, they were there 19 years, one month and three days. Marines landed in July 1915, and helped establish and secure a protectorate as a hedge against European meddling. Things were quiet for several years, then, at the end of World War I in 1918, troubles began. Marines suppressed the revolt against U.S. occupation, and continued "in-country" until August 1934.

Desert Storm II?

Saddam Hussein still doesn't "get it." In recent days, Iraqi troop movements toward the Kuwait border have included a Republican Guard division. Defense Secretary William Perry has called Saddam's massing of 65,000 troops 15-20 miles from Kuwait "not typical of what we seen in the past."

In response, the U.S. aircraft carrier George Washington has been sent to the Persian Gulf. About 12,000 U.S. military personnel remained in the Gulf region after Desert Storm, half are Navy and Marine Corps, about one-third are Air Force.

The Army is sending 4,000 troops from the 24th Infantry Division from Ft. Stewart Ga. as re-inforcements, and likely to be more on the way.

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Vietnam War, 25 Years Ago

continued from page 1...

reaction," but allowed that the new orders do not forbid U.S. commanders from seeking out and attacking enemy units that pose threats.

In Chicago, National Guard troops were called out to quell demonstrations as the trial of the Chicago Eight continued.

SAIGON, Oct 10--In the largest transfer of naval equipment of the war, 80 U.S. Navy river patrol boats were shifted to South Vietnamese control today. In addition, ARVN troops assumed complete responsibility for the defense of Saigon as the last U.S. combat unit moved away.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 15--Wide ranging demonstrations against the war continued across the nation, prompting the view that such nationally coordinated protests were unprecedented in U.S. history. The broad spectrum of activity included prayer vigils as well as civil disobedience and violence.

Four days earlier, a Gallup-Poll re-

vealed that 57 percent of Americans would like U.S. troops in Vietnam returned home by the end of 1970.

Commentary

U.S. SENATE SHOULD RE-THINK THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

By Charles F. Hawkins

OAKTON, Va.--Regarding possible Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention into law, we may do well to remember the United States' refusal to sign the first accord to limit poison gas in war, and the reasons why.

Conferees of the International Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes--the Hague Peace Conference or International Peace Conference--met at The Hague from May 18 to July 29, 1899. A resolution they considered was to "abstain from the use of projectiles the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases." This was to be binding in the event of war, so long as a non-contracting power did not become a belligerent. The U.S. was the only na-

ported that 57 percent of Americans would like U.S. troops in Vietnam returned home by the end of 1970.

On Oct. 21, seven Americans were killed and 20 wounded in six sharp engagements with enemy units north and west of Saigon. Forty-six Communist soldiers were said to have been killed. Two more Americans lost their lives when their forward air controller plane was shot down.

On Oct. 22, U.S. field commanders argued that there have been no basic changes in their tactics or operations, but that refinements will keep U.S. troops from making ground assaults against fortified enemy positions. They denied that there were any orders to keep casualties down, and added that they had never even heard of Defense Secretary Laird's policy of "protective reaction." Implementation of the Vietnamization policy continued on Oct. 24th as the U.S. Army's 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (Blackhorse) turned over its base to the ARVN 18th Infantry Division. South Vietnamese will use the base for a regimental headquarters and a training

center. The U.S. will maintain its right to refuse signature. Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, one of the U.S. delegates, explained the "Nay" decision: "The objection that a machine of war is barbarous has always been raised against new weapons ... In the Middle Ages it was firearms which were denounced as cruel. Later, shells, and more recently torpedoes have been denounced ... It cannot be proved [to me] that shells with asphyxiating gases are inhumane or unnecessarily cruel ... that they cannot produce decisive results."

"I represent a people that is animated by a lively desire to make warfare humane but which nevertheless may find itself forced to wage war; therefore it is a question of not depriving itself through hastily adopted resolutions of means which it could later avail itself with good results."

Mahan and his colleagues were instructed by Secretary of State John Hay, who wished not to restrain "the inventive genius of our people in ... devising means of defense," and warned of "the temptations to which men and nations

ing camp.

Twenty-eight miles north of Saigon the U.S. 25th Infantry Division engaged a large force of North Vietnamese, killing 47. U.S. losses were 10 dead and 12 wounded.

CHICAGO, Oct. 29--Bobby Seale, one of the Chicago Eight defendants, was gagged and chained to his courtroom chair today. Prompted by his violent outbursts and insults of the judge and prosecution, Seale's restraints seem permanent until the trial is over.

(In November, Seale's continued defiance forced the judge to try him separately, and the remaining defendants became the "Chicago Seven.")

DUCLAP and BUPRÄNG, Vietnam, Oct. 31--Enemy threats to U.S. Special Forces camps in these remote outposts were dealt a crippling blow today as American B-52 bombers conducted heavy air raids along the Cambodian border in the Central Highlands.

Source:

World Almanac of the Vietnam War, Pharos Books, N.Y., 1985

may be exposed in time of conflict." This is still fit guidance.

A century later, and with the horrible experience of toxic gas in World War I, chemical weapons are no longer new. But they have not been proved more horrible than shells or torpedoes, bombs or precision-guided munitions. And the deterring effect of potential retaliation in kind was demonstrated several times during World War II.

We are right to dislike war. We are equally right to deter and defend against its various forms.

RIPCORD REUNION '95,
July 19-23
Denver, Colo., area.
Contact
John "Custer" Mihalko,
[Redacted]

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A NATIONAL NEWSLETTER SINCE 1983

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR AUGUST

John Bowman

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Ben Harrison

Chip Collins

Ken Hamilton

Tony Cox

D/1-506 Assn.

Thanks for your support!



STAFF JOURNAL: LZ OAKTON



"Somebody gonna' die today! Ah feel it in mah boooones ... somebody gonna' die!"

Those were the words of Sergeant First Class Henderson, spoken in a hoarse, airborne half-holler while I was standing at parade rest in the chow line at the Ft. Benning, Ga., Airborne School during jump week in 1967. It was the first day of jump week. After our breakfast, we were all going to the airfield, strap on our parachutes, board perfectly good C-130s, fly over the green Georgia landscape, and jump out.

"Ah feel it in mah bones," Henderson's voice quavered like a witch doctor summoning spirits of the dead. "Somebody gonna' die today!"

It was summertime. I was still a cadet at West Point, and had volunteered to spend my leave time to become airborne qualified—ooragh!

Henderson was tough, like burnt-leather. He was a favorite among the airborne candidates, mostly for his strict and fair treatment of us during training. He cared. We cared back, but not so anyone would notice.

"Somebody ...," his voice would trail off into a harsh whisper, "gonna' die," whisper rising to a wavering shout.

We were young, invincible. We had been through most of one of the Army's "tough schools." We could take it. All we had to do now was jump out of an airplane five times, and live.

Henderson cared that we lived. Probably, he cared more than we did, us being young and ignorant, and all. That's why the scare tactics. It was to make us think twice, maybe three times, so we wouldn't screw up or do something stupid. Like forget to hook up the static line.

Nobody died. Everyone made their five jumps successfully, if not gracefully. Even classmate Dennis Rosenberry. Denny's fourth jump was a little awkward, to say the least. He fractured his fibula (the smaller bone in the lower leg), and it pained him something awful. But he strapped on a dressing and wrapped it tight with athletic tape, laced up his jump boots, and made his fifth and qualifying jump. Then he went to the medics.

Guts. I feel it in my bones.

Henderson was also the name of a fire base north of Ripcord. On May 6, 1970, it was

newly defended by "Hard Luck Alpha" Company, 2d Bn., 501st Inf. (Geronimo), and the battalion reconnaissance platoon. The scouts were led by a classmate of mine, Richard ("Rick") Hawley.

Rick Hawley was a special guy. He stuck it out four years at the academy, even though he was on the edge of flunking out every single semester. He didn't want to graduate last in the class, but he did.

Academics behind him, Rick proved to the Army, and the Geronimos in particular, that he was one hell of a leader. He was jungle-smart almost immediately, he loved his soldiers, and he was personally brave. He earned the coveted Recon Platoon assignment as a result of his battlefield performance.

On the night of May 6th, disaster struck.

North Vietnamese sappers led the way in the nighttime assault. They penetrated base defenses, and like wildfire, they spread satchel-charge destruction wherever they went. Rocket propelled grenades from supporting infantry outside the wire added to the confusion.

Rick and his men reacted savagely. Their sector of the perimeter had not been penetrated, but they quickly found themselves caught between enemy gunners outside and exploding artillery shells inside. Started by satchel charge explosions, the unrevetted shells began sympathetic detonation. For the battalion scouts, it was "damned if you do, damned if you don't."

The bursting artillery at their backs was worse, and Rick and his men charged forward, into the wire, trying to fight their way through the enemy. Most of them died there, including Rick. One man, Staff Sergeant Refugio Teran, could not be found the next day, or any other.

There was another MIA, Sergeant Larry Kier, of Alpha Company. He was last seen just as the ammunition storage area erupted in flames, and no trace of him could be located.

Fire Base Henderson. I feel it in my bones.

A special tip of the Currahee Steel Pot to Gary Jesters (2/506), who provided the MIA information for this journal entry.

Chuck Hawkins, LZ Oakton

INCOMING

Chuck,

It was good to see the Ripcord Report again. Enclosed is a summary of incidents on 101st Airborne Division members listed as missing in action in Southeast Asia.

I obtained this information from Charles Runkles who commanded a plane that brought POWs home from North Vietnam in 1973.

I do not know the present status of these men. Please consider putting this in the Ripcord Report. Enclosed is a little donation.

Gary Jester
Manchester, Md.

Chuck,

Enclosed is my donation for now. Please keep up the good work. Please let me know about the reunion. I never have wanted to go to my high school, college or law school reunions, but I do want to take myself and my family to the Ripcord reunion.

I was with the 42d Scout-Dog Platoon, 101st [Airborne] at Camp Eagle, walking point for platoons and working from there.

I wrote the following on July 23, 1970: "Fire Base Ripcord was abandoned and 35 men lost. A Lt. Col. and Sgt. too. I hope they bomb the place. I understand 40 fighter-bombers will be in there tomorrow."

I don't know how much of that was true or not, but that was the rumor mill going to town at Camp Eagle.

Sincerely,
John A. Bowman
Davenport, Iowa

Sirs,

Here is a donation. I hope it helps. It is good to hear from you again.

Ken Hamilton
Mendon, Ohio

Dear Chuck,

I enjoyed the new issue, and wanted to applaud your and Frank Marshall's work, and the continued cooperation on everyone's part that keeps Ripcord Report going. It's not essential that we get an issue every month. It is essential that we remain in touch as best we are able to, and the group has done that admirably.

For those who might be wondering, the newsletter and the association are now over 11 years old. We got started in early 1983, and the newsletter has gone through several able editorial and publishing hands: from mine to Blackie Blackman, and John Mihalko sometime in 1986, and a short time later to you. You have born the burden, although it has never seemed that way to any of us, through some difficult times. It is good to see you getting help again. Needless to say, for the association to continue, that needs to occur regularly.

I would love to hear from many of the people I've been in touch with in the past. Giving up editorial duties tends to take you out of the group's mainstream. Still, I remain very committed to the group and its continued survival, and value the many excellent friends I made during the early years of the association. At the time of the last issue there were some inquiries as to just what had happened to me. So, from that standpoint, this letter is timely. I continue to want to hear from the group.

As most of you know, I reside in Virginia and work as a human rights advocate in a mental health setting. I bring out all my old Ripcord Report files from time to time and remember the many people who helped us get things together early on. There were two exciting reunions that I was able to attend. The memories are worth a million.

Some years ago I did an unusual poem for the newsletter that many of the group commented on. I recently reworked it and you may run it again, when and if, space permits. I think it is better than

the original, but will let readership decide.

Hope to see an updated membership list soon. With Frank's publishing facilities and the small computer print now available, the space-consuming worry isn't what it used to be.

Good luck as always, Currahee!
Chip Collins

Dear Chuck,

Thanks for getting the Ripcord Report back in business.

One of these days I will take time to add the brigade commander's perspective to your August 1992 report in the American Sentinel.

Keep up the good work.
God bless,
Ben Harrison
Belton, Tex.

Dear "Currahee" Hawkins,

Many kudos for Ripcord Report newsletter No. 33. Thanks for the wealth of information.

I've got a couple of ex-106ers to add to the association mailing list. They will appreciate it much...

Can you check with your readers out there for some information, history, pictures of fire bases: Veghel, Blaze, Normandie, Burchesgaden, Bastogne and Currahee?

Welcome back!

Paul A. Greaux
Hollywood, Fla.

P.S., Looking forward for the association roster in a future issue.

NOTE: See page seven for new members.

Continued on next page...



INCOMING



Chuck,

Delighted to see Ripcord Report reborn ... thought you guys had auggered-in.

A note of interest, perhaps. A retired colonel in your AO is putting together an anthology of Vietnam non-fiction stories, of humor, poignancy and the unusual. Seems like a nice guy and plans to share 70 percent of profit with authors.

Contact: Bob Michel, TLI Marketing,

Best,
Mike "M-60" Kelley
Sacramento, Calif.

NOTE ... I spoke with Bob Michel, and he's dead set to get this book published. And he's excited over the short stories he's gotten so far, but he needs more. He wants true tales, either really funny

(like the forklift operator who picked up a latrine with a general inside), bizarre, or real tear-jerkers. Contact Bob and he'll send you a packet describing what he wants and in what format.

By the way, I told Bob that most of you guys were such b____s____ers, that he'd want to have two or three other guys confirm the stories. Just kidding. Haha. Anyway, we welcome a new friend to the Ripcord Report.--Editor

Bn., 506th Inf., who died at Ripcord on July 20th and 21st, 1970. As far as I know, this list is accurate.

On a final note, let's not forget Ronald James Schultz, who is still missing in action (July 21, 1970). I've been in touch with his parents the last couple of years. They passed through Indy last year and I was very fortunate to meet them.

Currahee,

Tony Cox

**D/1-506th Infantry Association
Indianapolis, Ind.**

P.S., In the news analysis of Ripcord in the last newsletter, the last paragraph may have been referring to D/1-506th being ambushed. The headlines from our local paper read: "Twelve Paratroopers Killed in Ambush." I think the date was July 22, 1970.

NOTE: See page seven for new members.

Editor's Report,

continued from page 1 ...

Dien Bien Phu or Khe Sanh?

1968; Dien Bien Phu was where the French were defeated in May 1954.

"An inordinate amount of adverse publicity," the report said, "might well have jeopardized the program of Vietnamization," the policy of turning prosecution of the ground war over to Army of Republic of Vietnam forces. "Therefore, the decision to extract from Ripcord was made," which will "make troops available for offensive [operations] against the enemy supply caches and logistic installations to the rear of NVA forces." Operations in the Ripcord area drew the enemy from his cache sites and caused him to mass his forces, thus exposing numerous targets that were vulnerable to heavy air attack and artillery fire.

From March 13th until the extraction from Ripcord, the enemy suffered 422 killed, six prisoners captured, and 93 individual and 24 crew-served weapons seized, according to 3d Brigade headquarters, which had overall responsibility for actions around the fire base. The brigade also reported U.S. losses as 68 killed, 443 wounded during the period.

Three men were killed and 20 wounded during today's airmobile evacuation, including the 2d Bn., 506th Inf., (Currahee) commander, Lt. Col. Andre C. Lucas, killed along with his operations officer, Maj. Kenneth Tanner. A sheaf of 120mm mortar shells caught them in the open, on top of Ripcord as the evacuation proceeded. The other KIA was PFC Gus Allen, a new member of the battalion's Alpha Company.

At a battalion memorial service, the Currahee chaplain, Capt. Lee Fox, helped soldiers come to grips with their

grief and sorrow over the loss of friends and comrades. Rev. Fox recalled the words of Ecclesiastes: "To everything there is a season; and a time to every purpose under the heaven ...," and asked the men to pray. "We have just passed through one season," said Fox, "but now we must live in another. The Lord has been good to we who are left and we should give Him thanks. We can do that best by living our lives as He would have us, and by performing the tasks before us in the best possible manner."

After the prayer, SP4 Bill Woody sang The Lord's Prayer, and standing men paid silent tribute to their fallen friends. The sounding of Taps and retirement of the colors concluded the ceremony. For a long time, the boots, helmets and stacked arms, representing the dead of the battalion, remained in place. No one, it seemed, wanted to disturb them or their memory anytime soon.

SEDUCTION

She came with him easily.
After they had gone a'ways:
A comfortable spot, and discovering
one another.

A long, appraising look at him:
So lean, young, handsome and ...
serious.
A thoughtful, hungry gaze back at her:
Exotic, sculpted jade ...
Still, so much seems hidden.
Mystery ... upon mystery.

No words for a long, long time;
Only silence and a feeling like heaven.
Then the beginning of a probe:
His hand grazing her hand;
The other, a one-man RIF along her arm;
Muted brushstrokes of skin across silk and
skin.

The beginnings of sapper-like move-
ment,
Furtive, but sure.
His kiss to eyelids,
Her soft breath against hollow of neck.

Along body perimeters
Defenses are alerted to invasion.
Contact ignites a trip-flare
Very close to his heart.
She feels like fire just ignited, her soul,

Her body like a burning forest.
She is a sniper, watching him from a
distance, her eyes like a fire, her
body like a burning forest.
She is a pointman, watching him from
a distance, her eyes like a fire, her
body like a burning forest.

She is a pointman, watching him from
a distance, her eyes like a fire, her
body like a burning forest.

Body offenses gear swiftly to action.
Hands, arms and lips
Begin long-range reconnaissance
patrols.
Mouth seeks out mouth.
Tongue delights in tongue.
There is no pretense of defense.

He is a pointman,
Probing at first with caution.
Expecting ambush and finding none
He enters he kill zone.
She is a sniper,
Watching every move,
But, responding to each touch,
Knowing she is ultimately in control
if the larger her remains hidden.

Thinking of this place now,
He marvels again at the heat.
Watching her ... fire comes to mind.
Everywhere and always here ... heat.
The tips of her nipples,
Like small, inverted bomb craters,
Stare at him and seem to beg for ore.
A five-man patrol gets tasked to the AO.
Moving ever southward
Into where she lives.
A cache of sensual, but deadly delight.
Warrior on top of warrior,
Penetration begins.
His thrusts into moist, willing space.
Needling to explode in overdue release.

Sorting through his thoughts carefully.
He is pointman once again.
Something troubles him.
Softly, he asks again her name.
"Asia," she replies.

Chip Collins

August 1994

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WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS, AND A NEW ASSOCIATION

Paul A. Greaux, of Hollywood, Fla., has signed up Innis "Doc" Moy, PO Box 33494, Seattle, Wash., 98133; and James "Shortround" Foley, Sr., 9 Cottage Place, Westbrook, Maine, 04092-3507. Moy served as a medic in HHC, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., in '68-'69; Foley was a "grunt" with Delta Company during the same period.

Thanks, Paul. A tip o' the Currahee Steel Pot to you, too.

Another Currahee from the 1st Battalion, Tony Cox, a resident of Indianapolis, provided a welcome surprise--a list of 33 members of the newly-formed Delta 1/506th Association. Most of these men were at Ripcord in 1970; and they were involved in as tough a fight as any other outfit, but it's a story that hasn't received as much attention, and needs to be told.

Welcome to the Ripcord Report and Ripcord Association.

From Delta 1/506th Association:

Tim Runyard

Richard Doyle

Dale Tauer

Donald Cook

Al Collins

Sam Moore

John Smith

Kay C James

Dean Finch

Jim Podein

Robert Wise

Custer Bryant

Donald Goss

Glenn Horsley

Richard Greenland

David Smith

Michael Hennessy

Barry Lamarche

Jacob Gillens

Michael Thomas

Elmer Jurgens

John Fraser

Joseph Connolly

Robert Erickson

Gary Madsen

Randy Benck

Manuel Ramirez

Richard Finley

John Banks

Richard White

Roger Black

Jerry Stollings

Gordon Scheerhorn

As if the foregoing collection of 101st stalwarts (all first-of-the-five-sixers) weren't enough, we also add a Currahee from the 2d Battalion, Steve Manthei. Steve served as a machine gunner in 2d Platoon, Charlie Company. He was on Hill 902 the night of July 1-2, when a horde of sappers struck. Steve went by the nicknames "Moon Dog" and "Wild Jacob," depending on friends and circumstance. He's in contact with other Charlie Company members, Bob Tarbuck, among others.

Welcome to the Ripcord Association, one and all.

IN MEMORY OF THE FALLEN DELTA COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 506TH INFANTRY

"Major, tell my father I died with my face to the enemy."

Col. J. E. Avery, CSA
Gettysburg, July 2, 1863

The following names have been provided by Tony Cox, who was there, in the field at Ripcord, when they fell.

Name	Hometown	Killed in Action
Asher, Frank L.	Hamilton, Ohio	July 21st, 1970
Browning, Bill G.	Lyerly, Ga.	July 20th, 1970
De Wulf, Patrick T.	Bloomfield Hills, Mich.	July 20th, 1970
Hays, Robert B.	Weslaco, Texas	July 21st, 1970
Huk, Peter P.	Cedar Rapids, Iowa	July 21st, 1970
Knott, John C.	Pine River, Minn.	July 20th, 1970
Law, Brent R.	St. Johns, Mich.	July 21st, 1970
Schultz, Ronald L.	Hillsboro, Kans.	July 21st, 1970
Valle, Eloy R.	Rio Grande City, Texas	July 20th, 1970
Workman, Donald R.	Kirkwood, Mo.	July 21st, 1970

Of these men, who were consumed in intense fighting about three kilometers east of Ripcord, Hays, Law and Schultz were medics. Workman, who was nicknamed "Ranger," was the company commander.

Why We Have an Association for the Battle of Ripcord

The short answer is that veterans of Ripcord associate out of respect for each other and the tough job they faced during difficult times, and in memory of comrades who didn't come back. The longer answer has to do with the fact that Ripcord was a major battle, roughly equivalent in U.S. casualties to Hamburger Hill in May 1969. But enemy forces at Ripcord were greater than at Hamburger Hill, by a factor of four. Yet very little was known of Ripcord at the time, mostly because the media was kept away so as not to compromise operational security, or create headlines that would sensationalize the action to the benefit of the North Vietnamese at the negotiating table in Paris. Most folks never heard of Ripcord, even though the name is carved in granite on the 101st Airborne Division monument at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. So, to understand more about this battle, which was the most significant for the division in 1970, and second only to the Cambodian incursion in all of Vietnam for the year, we have come together to share what we know. The more that is learned of the battle, and it will never be completely learned, the easier it becomes to put this exciting as well as traumatic time of our lives in perspective. Members range in rank from private to general.

There are no membership dues or requirements to belong to the Ripcord Association. Individuals who have an interest in joining, for whatever reason, can just say so, and their name and address will be entered in the computer. The *Ripcord Report* is sent to members free of charge, and its erratic publishing schedule depends on contributions of time and money.

THE COMMAND NET:

MESSAGES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, SEARCHES, AND MORE

Looking for Maj. Sidney Davis, XO of 2/506th during Ripcord. Last duty post was Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md., in early 1970s. Contact Chuck Hawkins, 11614

Fire Bases Veghel, Blaze, Normandy, Burchesgaden, Bastogne, Currahee. Paul Greaux is looking for information/history/photos of these fire bases. 1601 N. 71st

RIPCORD REUNION '95, is coming next July 19-23 in the Denver, Colo., area. Clear your calendars now, and get ready for the "Rocket Ridge" of the '90s theme.

THE LAOTIAN HIGHWAY PATROL, a book by James A. White about aerial combat in cobra gunships of 4/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery--the Griffins, who fought at Ripcord and many other places. White, known as "Sneaky" to the Griffins, flew with the outfit from 1968-71. Write: Veterans About Face, 3579 E. Foothill Blvd., #246, Pasadena, Calif., 91107.

MILITARY BOOKS: PASS IN REVIEW

Clash of Wings: World War II in the Air, by Walter J. Boyne, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, 415 pp. \$25.00

Walter J. Boyne is a retired Air Force colonel, former director of the National Air and Space Museum, and author of 24 previous books. *Clash of Wings* is tautly written, and presents challenging ideas about air power.

In Boyne's view, for example, air power in Europe was not won until American bombers were used as bait to lure German fighters up to be destroyed. He makes a just criticism of the Allies for being unprepared for World War II, particularly failing to recognize how vast the requirements were to achieve true air dominance.

He pins Japan's and Germany's ears back as well. Japan, he says, didn't realize how large an air force they would need; nor did Germany. And, the contribution of air to Soviet victories has been largely underrated.

Key individuals are discussed, and important battles are analyzed. This insightful book does not lack for scholarship or excitement. Enjoy.

EDITOR'S HISTORY CORNER

Dept. of the Army
HQ, 2d BN (Ambl) 506th INF
APO San Francisco 96383
Unit History, March 1971

Continued from No. 34

Shortly after 0600 hours on 1 July, the sun rose slowly in the east sending yellow-hot shafts of light lancing into the cloudless heavens. Fog hung low in the valley scudding around the mountain islands as it moved before strong morning breezes. It promised to be another beautiful day.

Elsewhere in the Ripcord area the beauties of the morning were lost on certain individuals. NVA recoilless rifle crews were too busy consulting their watches and checking their firing data. Perhaps occasionally one of the North Vietnamese soldiers would glance eastward and think about his own particular god, but the work at hand claimed most of his attention.

At 0702 hours, enemy gunners to the southeast of Ripcord chambered deadly missiles into the breach of their weapons. At 0703 hours, Fire Base Ripcord erupted as the enemy recoilless scattered debris and sent fragments singing through the air. The siege of Ripcord had begun.

Miraculously, no one was injured in the initial barrage, but after eight successive heavy weapons and indirect fire attacks throughout the day, six U.S. personnel were evacuated for wounds. The enemy were employing 75mm recoilless rifles, 60mm and 82mm mortars, as well as RPGs and small arms fire against the fire base, and late in the day two Chinook helicopters were shot down.

Throughout the day, Charlie Company, from its vantage point on Hill 902, was able to listen to the pop of enemy mortar tubes, and direct accurate artillery and gunship fire on these locations. Charlie Company was proving to be a definite thorn in the enemy's side. That thorn, however, was shortly to be removed.

No one can really accurately record all that happens at various command levels during battle. No matter how good the system or the organization, there is always the matter of human frailty and error. Reports are often missent, or forwarded and never received, and some are neglected. The error may be due to a wrong letter used in code, or may be the result of a tired or overwrought commander, and sometimes it may even be the fault of a negligent radio operator or supervisor.

At any rate, an intelligence report concerning the strong probability of an enemy sapper attack against Charlie Company was never mentioned to Lt. Col. Lucas and certainly did not reach Capt. Hewitt in his field location. Such is the "fog of war," and from such errors are battles won or lost.

In the pre-dawn hours, when the night is darkest, man's body and soul are at their lowest ebb. Superstition and fears make men more susceptible at this time than at any other. At 0345 hours, early in the morning of 2 July, exactly three hours prior to daybreak, the NVA launched a company-size sapper attack against Charlie Company's defensive position on top of Hill 902.

It is possible that no one in Charlie Company knew what was happening, even when it did happen.

To be continued ...

Flotsam and Jetsam

Eighty Years Ago

First Combat Air Support Mission

On May 2, 1914, U.S. Marines encamped near Tejar, Mexico, reported being under attack and requested support of newly-formed Naval Aviation (in 1910) to locate outlaw forces. Lt. Patrick N. L. Bellinger, the Navy's eighth pilot, took off in a hydroaeroplane with observer Ens. W. D. LaMont to scout for the Marines. This was the first operational flight in direct support of ground troops in hostile action.

A few days later, on May 6th, Bellinger and observer R. C. Saufley, while on a reconnaissance flight, took enemy fire from positions in the vicinity of Veracruz, Mexico. Their Curtiss seaplane was hit--the first marks of combat on a Navy plane.

Seventy Years Ago

Bombs Bust Ice; Soviets Ready Rockets; U.S. Flies Firsts

On Mar. 4, 1924, two Martin and two DH-4 bombers broke up an icejam on the Platte River at North Bend, Neb., by bombing.

In April, the Soviet Union established the Central Committee for the Study of Rocket Propulsion.

From Apr. 6 to Sept. 28, U.S. Army pilots made the following firsts: round-the-world flight, trans-Pacific flight, westbound Atlantic crossing. Departing from Seattle in two Douglas "World Cruiser" biplanes, the flyers logged 26,345 miles in 363 hours' flying time, over a period of 175 days.

Sources: U.S. Navy NAVAIR; and National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

After the war, the group remained in close contact, sharing news and stories of their experiences. They organized several reunions over the years, including a major one in 1970. In 1985, they decided to form a formal organization, the "Ripcord Reunion Association". This organization has since grown to include many former members of the group, as well as their spouses and children. They have organized several more reunions, including a major one in 1995. The group continues to stay in touch and support each other through their newsletters and other means.

REUNION '95

The Ripcord Reunion '95 was held in Denver, Colorado, from July 19 to 23, 1995. The reunion was organized by a committee of former members, and was a great success. The group had a great time catching up with old friends and making new ones. They also had a chance to see some of the sights in Denver, including the Colorado Rockies and the Denver Zoo. The reunion was a great way for the group to stay in touch and keep their memories alive.

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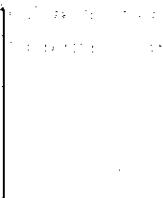
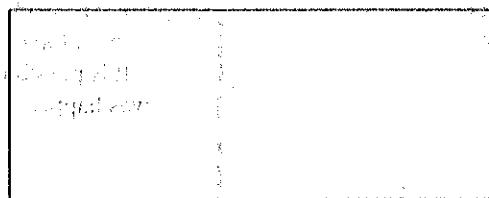
RIPCORD REUNION '95

Twenty-Five Year Anniversary!

July 19-23, 1995

Denver, Colo.

For more information, contact the Ripcord Reunion Association, P.O. Box 1234, Denver, CO 80201.



Rednecks. Rednecks are a group of people who are known for their conservative political views, their love of the outdoors, and their love of country music. They are also known for their love of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Rednecks are a group of people who are known for their conservative political views, their love of the outdoors, and their love of country music. They are also known for their love of hunting, fishing, and trapping.

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RECORD REPORT



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