



# RIPCORD REPORT

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



Number 78

January 2009

## 2008 LAUGHLIN NEVADA REUNION by Lee Widjeskog

Once again the reunion team of Spaulding, Judds and Widjeskogs have managed to pull off another great reunion. Over 100 people attended and made heavy use of the gambling facilities in town as well as toured up and down the Colorado River to view the sights many had not seen before.

## SLOTS COMPETITION

Frank Marshall participated in the slot machine competition in a manner seldom seen on the floor or the casino. His gyrations and movements were not normally associated with slot machines, but they got the desired results as he scored the highest number of points during the first round. However, he was followed up by Fred Martin who confused the machines by borrowing Frank's hairpiece. With that little added touch of confusion, he beat Frank's score and won the competition!

All the competitors had fun and by the time their 3 minutes of punching the slot button there seemed to be some budding cases of carpal tunnel syndrome flaring up.

## FIRST TIMERS

This year we gave out 5 Ripcord coins. First timers to the reunion were Gabriel Yuselew of B 2/506 with his significant other Verna Pinto, John Marlowe of B 2/501 with his wife Mary, Gary Mercer of Eagle Dustoff with his wife Edie and Ron Janezic of A 2/506. Additionally, a replacement coin was given to Steve Morgan who presented his coin to the son of Richard Meier at the funeral.



## RIVERSIDE NUPTIALS

Our group is like any large family. Grandchildren are born; kids grow up and go off to a job or to war. Some die, some suffer health problems, some divorce, some split up, jobs are lost and new ones found, others retire and some will work till they die. But every once in a while someone in our group decides to get married. In 1998 the Judds did so on the way to the reunion in Atlantic City. Others have gotten married while away from this extended family. This year Robert Pressley and his lovely lady, Gloria Carringer decided to wed while at the reunion! So on 9 October 2008, at 1300 hours, they were wed with Ewe and Diane Meyer serving as best man and brides maid. The wedding took place in a lovely gazebo overlooking the Colorado River while over 30 of their Ripcord family looked on and cheered when the vows were complete. It was a lovely ceremony and it did not appear that Bob had to be forced into it in any way! Following the ceremony everyone returned to the hospitality room to celebrate but it appears the bride and groom first went to their room for some private celebration because we did not see them until late that evening.



## 2008 Ripcord Reunion

Our reunions would not be half as great as they are without the wives and friends that also join us. Here is the group photo taken at our past Reunion in Laughlin

## 2009 Ripcord Reunion Oct 7 - 11, 2009 Sands Ocean Club Resort Myrtle Beach, SC



By Fred Spaulding

Registration:

1. Call 888-265-8846 and book your room with the "Ripcord Group"
2. A Dinner boat serves dinner on the ride out to the 12 mile mark. It then turns into a casino and returns to the dock around 11pm.
3. There are several country western theatres there - The Dixie Stampede - Dolly Parton - A Medival Dinner Theatre - Grand Ole Opry and a few others. A more detailed list will be furnished to you when I get the schedule of what "stars" will be appearing in "09" and at what theatre. I get the schedule in April.
4. There are 7 beautiful plantations in the area to see. Brookgreen Gardens is just one.
5. There are over 100 Golf Courses in the area (but that had nothing to do with me picking Myrtle Beach). go to <http://www.sandsresorts.com/resorts/oceanclub/> for more info on the resort.



# FROM THE EDITOR

Here it is, another year gone by. Wow, how time flies. I have to apologize for the delay in the newsletter but I have been very busy in Real Estate (and in a bad market too) and at my age, I still have to make a living to pay my bills. Especially since I just bought a single family home in an over 55 community here in New Jersey.

The 2009 Reunion in Myrtle Beach is going to be a good one. I am sure there are going to be a lot of Ripcord Veterans there. I recommend that all of you try to make this one I am not sure if there is going to be another one on this side of the world..

I want to thank Bob Wallace for helping me to take portrait photos photos at this past reunion. I am going to put together a yearbook and will keep you posted on the details.

I hope you are all enjoying the newsletter and website and would really appreciate if you could send me e-mails, letters, photos, etc. pertaining to FSB Ripcord or anything about Ripcord veterans to put in the newsletter and on the website.

**Also, very important! I need your e-mail address. If you are not receiving updates and information about the Ripcord Association via e-mail, you may be missing out on a lot of news. Please go to our website and update your information.**

## IMPORTANT: Please note new mailing address

### ARTICLES

Deadline for the April issue will be March 1st 2009. Please send all articles, photos, incoming mail and interesting reading to:

**Frank Marshall  
5 Taconia Ct  
Mt Laurel, NJ 08054  
or e-mail to: [frank@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frank@ripcordassociation.com)**

### DONATIONS:

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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

### 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 newsletters free to all who wish to receive it.

Ron Janezic  
Jim Harris  
Steve Wallace  
Gary Watrous  
Isabelino Vazequez  
Dave Cordetti  
Frank Delfino

Bill Williams  
Ben Harrison  
Chuck Hawkins  
Dale Falconer  
Storm Russell  
Fred Martin

This donation was sent with no name on it:

**In Memory of Bob Utecht  
KIA 07/03/70  
(B/2-506)**

Those that came home are getting old.  
But you left us when still young .  
What a big stinking waste.  
-Rest in Peace Brother-

## 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.

### **Please note NEW ADDRESS**

**Ripcord Report**  
5 Taconia Court, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)

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Design: Frank Marshall

# INCOMING MAIL

I have always been proud of my father's service to our country. I have always wanted to know more about his experiences in Vietnam. Over the years he has told me tid bits about where he was and what he was doing. I know he was at FSB Ripcord and Col Lucas brought my dad to the hill with him. My dad was also friends with Bob Kalsu. They were both graduates from Oklahoma University. I am interested in finding out more about FSB Ripcord and I hope my dad will get involved with the Association. I think he still harbors to much of what happened there and I know he still has night terrors from his experience. I don't ever want the story of FSB Ripcord to be forgotten.

*Scott Tennent*

*Son of John Sam Tennent*

*s.tennent@cox.net*

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I did not know about the association until about a month ago. Troy Porter had seen my name and address on another site and contacted me by phone. Then he E-Mailed some information to me.

Thank You,

*Ted Keller*

*HHC 3rd Bde Air Cav*

*triggertwo49@hotmail.com*

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I was on FSB Ripcord from 7/21/1970-7/23/1970. I came upon Lt. Colonel Lucas just seconds after he was wounded from the mortar round. Somehow I made it out of that man-made hell that final day, but I will never forget that dreadful place.

*James H. Morris*

*101st, 2nd of the 506th*

*follylake1@wmconnect.com*

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I was placed in 2nd 501st mortars a short while after my original recon unit was completely wiped out on Firebase Henderson in May, 1970. I was not there the night they all died on Firebase Henderson. I was on Ripcord and our unit was sort of new on the hill. I was standing outside of a large bunker on July, 18th, 1970 when the Chinook helicopter was shot down on the ammo dump. I remember it as clearly as if it happened ten minutes ago. I

was in the bunker with my unit, below the ammo dump when it was exploding with continual rounds going off. I was freaked out from the prior recent history of my other unit all being killed so I ran out of the unit and went down the hill away from the fire and explosions. I got caught up in the barb wire and took off my boots and pants. I kept running and worked my way around the other side of the hill. When I was coming up the hill on the other side, I was wounded by M-80 fire from our own troops. I was yelling I am an American, stop firing, and I was rescued by two men who came down the hill and brought me up to the hill. I found out the rest of the my unit were alright. I discovered the story in the Keith Nolan book and I believe I am the one he wrote about as the naked soldier (I was only partially naked in that I had my shirt and underwear on still). The story ends well. I am alive and well, Praise God!!!. I am 30% disabled but I am fine other than some scars. I am a speech-language pathologist in Florida and my hobby is surfing in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. I sure would like to find the two soldiers who were brave enough to help me up the hill to safety. I was sent back to the states with my last day in country on July 18th, 1970.

*David John Wall*

*2nd 501 mortars*

*wall3630@yahoo.com*

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I flew into and out of Ripcord countless times with the Lancers (Co B, 158th Assault Bn, 101st), and someday hope to attend a reunion.

*Bill Walker*

*Lancer 17*

*18Feb70-19Feb71*

*BillWalker17@aol.com*

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I became a Lancer with B co 158th around Jan of '70. I don't recall specific missions into Ripcord but I know that we flew out there regularly. My last mission was an extraction of some of our Grunts in that area and was very hot....6 days later I was home. That was early July of '70. I was not there for the actual evacuation so I'm not sure if I am eligible for membership or not. All you guys that survived that cluster f\*\*\*k deserve all the good things life has to offer. Thanks and welcome home.

*Seldon D. "Ted" Irvine*

*B Co. 158th AHB 101st Abn Div*

*lancerdg@knology.net*

# INCOMING MAIL

My name is John Marlowe B-2/501 infantry July 70 July 71. Ripcord was my first mission in country, in fact after working in that AO while you were under attack I was part of a team who came back after to recover the dead bodies and aircraft, howitzers and I saw a lot stuff the NVA normally picks up. We were careful not to touch everything in fear of booby traps They must have didi moud right after the evacuation! There wasn't much left that looked like a Firebase! The whole thing still haunts today. For many years whenever I would seek help for my demons, no one ever heard of FSB Ripcord (it was like it never happened!) and there came a time when I question myself about it. Finely I got the help I was seeking (VET CENTER) and found you guys on the internet.

My wife Mary (a Navy nurse in late 60's early 70's retired from the VA) and I have sent in our registration fee yesterday and we are very much looking forward to seeing you all soon.

*PARATROOPER JOHN*  
*paratrooperjohn@aol.com*

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Served with many friends before and who were at ripcord, firebases Arsenal, raid to Pistol, and FSB Tomahawk, Bob Kalsu was my XO before transferring to "A" battery at ripcord...was 2nd shift leader in FDC in C battery at the time...was on radios at time..and kept up...was a very sad time..we were hit at Tomahawk hard on June 10, 1970, "B" battery was almost wiped out at Fsb Henderson the month before, and then "A" battery at ripcord...when Ripcord was evacuated I went back to eagle to see my friends...we were 155mm towed, Airmobile...Also attended Kalsu Building dedication At Ft Campbell in 2003, where Ripcord Vets were in attendance...

*Harold E. Gaither*  
*battery 2/11th arty*  
*hegaither@yahoo.com*

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Hi Frank,

Larry Frazier here, a longtime member of your group. I've recently been in contact with Dick Schonberger about linking to or creating a page from the 101st Airborne Div. Assn. for your site.

I'd suggest that you link to our site at [www.screamingeagle.org](http://www.screamingeagle.org) which is the main page, and maybe

also [www.screamingeagle.org/reunion.htm](http://www.screamingeagle.org/reunion.htm) that usually carries all reunions that we're aware of including our national reunion each August and Snowbird in February. If you have other thoughts, let's talk.

I created the 101st Assn. site many years ago at [www.screamingeagle.org](http://www.screamingeagle.org) and still maintain it. We've been linked to your website for many years, see [www.screamingeagle.org/links.htm](http://www.screamingeagle.org/links.htm) . I've also had several articles written about Ripcord on our site, one written by Chuck Hawkins (removed a year or so ago I believe), and one written by Tom Marshall which is still active at [www.screamingeagle.org/ripcord.html](http://www.screamingeagle.org/ripcord.html) . I'd like to have Ripcord stories/history written from other perspectives (infantry, artillery, etc.) for our site, let me know if you have ideas here.

Anything we can do to promote membership of both groups will benefit everyone. Thanks..

*Larry Frazier*  
*C 158th Avn Bn*  
*Mar 69 - Oct 70*  
*frazierlg@ctos.com*

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As a hamburger hill rakkasan camp Evans brother, I was not aware of the sacrifices the 2/506th made at ripcord. It was not until I saw it on a documentary....ripcord as the show went was deliberately "covered up" kept quiet by the army because of the bitch out from dong ap bia. Despite this you know in your hearts as brothers you will never forget. At the hill we had every swinging dick from Zais on down at the battalion cp. I was there pulling perimeter in bravo company towards the end. there was f--king camera men running around, sticking to the CP. They didn't go to the hill. due to bad publicity that reached the states from the press, the 101st as I understand it was not to directly engage the dinks in force and for the rest my tour we did that. ...until you guys came along in 70'.

god bless all of you,  
*Ralph Beauvais*  
*101st Airborne*  
*3/187th Co. B Rakkasans*  
*February 69' - January 70'*  
*lilythistle@wowway.com*

# INCOMING MAIL

I came to the Ripcord Reunion for the first time in Laughlin Nevada. I was only with you all for about 2-3 weeks. Then I started flying as a door gunner. Ben Harrison remembered me because I politely declined the job of his personal cook and waiter. I reiterated my request to be a door gunner and he sent me to LANCERS that same day. I would like to thank Lee for his kindness in helping me with names of the 2-3- whom I recall on the Firebase. Hope to see you all again at another reunion.

*Walt Fuller  
HHC & E - 2 / 506  
lancer565w@yahoo.com*

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38 years and months later. Question - With all due respect from a strategic /tactical/ implementation standpoint I have always questioned the logic of the whole endeavor. Yes I have read the book and web items. At the time very aware of the strategic intelligence and last days of June the lack of. This may not be the proper venue to ask my field grade question - but do not know where else to go. I was conscripted to the 2/319 FDC in a rebuild mode with a math education and mechanical skills in Nov 1969 coming from the 82ndAB - MOS Combat Engineer. I was the first or among the first badly wounded on FSB Ripcord on July 1st around 630 hrs. 1st round (no warning) 2nd barrage discharged months later from Fitzsimons in Denver.

Everybody did their job well - very well.

Never forget those who gave their lives as well those who physically came back but mentally/emotionally did not.

Imagine World Peace

*William Leslie Cochrane  
2B/319  
cochrane46@earthlink.net*

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I was with Co. A, the 22nd of July 1970, Chuck Hawkins is my CO. I got divorced in 2001 and pretty much got lost, or should I say got lost. Anyway, would love to hear from all of my brothers. Damn we're getting old.

*Jody Lee Smith  
A/2/506  
jodylee1950@hotmail.com*

Would like to hear from guys in my platoon. Can't remember the number but on May 10 1970 Lt. Smiley went down and Ranger made me acting plt leader. I got in country in July 1969 and assigned to the 1st Infantry Div. Then sent to the 10st in January

Would like to hear from someone, I think we were 2nd platoon. Was squad leader and platoon sgt when Lt Smiley went down on May 10 1970 Ranger made me acting platoon leader. We were in and around Ripcord, went in hot at Maureen.

*Mike Shields  
mikeshields06@yahoo.com  
D 1-506*

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To our Ripcord family,

We wish to extend a heartfelt 'Thank You' for your gift of the 'Code Talker' throw from camp Pendleton. It is perfect for Michigan's long winter evenings. We will enjoy it and always remember your thoughtfulness and generosity. See you next year!

Bob & RED

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I gave my information earlier this year. Please put me on the member list. I was the one that went down the hill on 7/18/70 and was wounded coming back up the other side of the hill. From these earlier comments, Craig Van Hout did E-mail me and he explained that he was one of the guys who thought I was an NVA and tossed a few grenades at me as I ascended the hill. I want to be part of your group and I hope to attend the next reunion. Thank you,

*David Wall  
wall3630@yahoo.com  
2/501 mortars*

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I was new to the Lancers when we did the assault on Ripcord and I was there for the withdrawl of the troops. I crewed the aircraft that was dropping CS gas on the enemy positions at the base of the mountain.

*Dennis Souza  
B Co. 158th AVN BN  
LNCR7684@comcast.net*

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# INCOMING MAIL

Hello, My name is Keith Bowman. I served in Delta Co. from April 1970 to Nov. 13 when I was wounded in the ambush. I recently found a link to the Firebase Ripcord Association on Google Earth which is how I got the email addresses above. I remember some of the names but can't put faces to them.....38 years is a long time. The link below has some pictures I took in Nam....I would appreciate if you are any of the guys in the photos or remember any of them to let me know their names. My thoughts today are with the families of Sergeants. Aiken and Valentine who gave the ultimate sacrifice when we were ambushed 38 years ago today.

Currahee.....Keith

Link to photos: <http://picasaweb.google.com/namgrunt51/VietnamPics?authkey=DnyLIW0svGY#5268312674981879890>

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Today is Veterans Day 2008 I don't Know what brought me to Look up the 101 st Airborne on my MSN search engine but I found this web page and was pleased to see some of my old friends names posted there I have had very little contact with anyone from my old unit. Was good to see their names. Keep up the good work. Thanks for doing a good thing I will start checking into this web site for news.

*John E Harvey Jr*  
C 2 / 506  
*ops@cal-tech-telephones.com*

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I am working on a Battle analysis of the Battle for Fire Base Ripcord and have had no luck in finding any type of graphics to which I can use in order to give my audience a solid visual. I also have been able to find an operations order for any of the missions that were conducted. I understand that certain information is classified, however, I was wondering if you could help me in any way? I thank you in advance for anything you can do for me.

V/R

*Harold G. Butterfield*  
2LT, AD  
BB#671  
*harold.butterfield@us.army.mil*

Dear Frank,

I have recently learned of Chip Collins' death. He and I were friends since 1972, but in the last few years, I moved and had lost contact with Chip. This summer I have been attempting to locate him and was devastated to learn that he had died on April 9. I was in the midst of reading the copy of RIPCORD he had given me some time ago. I have a wonderful picture of Chip with some of his friends at one of the reunions.

I am interested in hearing from some of his friends. I am so sorry to have missed talking with him these last few years. I first met him when he came to the community college where I was working as Coordinator of the Learning Lab. This was soon after he returned from Vietnam. He worked as my evening instructor in the Lab. After he graduated, we continued to stay in touch over the years. In the last few years, my attention was focused on some family difficulties that kept me from maintaining touch with so many people.

Now, I hope to communicate with some of you in order to fill in a few gaps. If anyone would like to email me, I'm at *annbartholomay@cox.net*.

*Thanks very much,*  
*Ann Bartholomay*  
*annbartholomay@cox.net*

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To whom it may concern, please be advised that I am one of the many soldiers that was wounded on Ripcord during the last days, as a matter of fact, I was wounded on the 23rd of July. I knew that we came off of that hill on that day. But I did not know until today that I may have been one of the last GI's to get hurt on Ripcord. I thank you for the information. But now I have even more questions about that day. So I would like you to send me this book. I will contact you when I get off work for all of the information I will need to purchase this book. I look forward to reading it.

Respectfully  
L. Rice Sr  
*Andre.Rice@va.gov*

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# INCOMING MAIL

Thanks guys. I am personally going to Vietnam in May of 2009. My plan is to visit the Ashau Valley and if possible, stand on the top of FSB Ripcord. If there is something you would like for me to do or say or get for you while I am there...please let me know.

*John P (Jack) Faulkner*

*101st Admin*

*campjack@hotmail.com*

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In September of this year a friend and I achieved a long-standing ambition - to ride motorcycles across the USA. Dick and I had gone to school together in England during the mid-1960s, and although I now live in Australia we've maintained touch over the decades. We met in Los Angeles and rode east, breaking our journey at Indianapolis to attend the motorcycle races. There we had the good fortune to meet one of your comrades, John Schnarr, and his riding pal, Jesse, who were also race fans for the weekend.

We spent the three days together, swapping laughs and tall tales, enjoying the friendship of a common interest. But then one evening, as we got to know one another a little better, John began to tell me something of his experiences with 2/506 at Firebase Ripcord.

It was an extraordinary evening. Consider: before meeting John, all I'd known about Vietnam what the BBC TV news had reported at the time, what Oliver Stone has presented on the cinema screen, what I'd read in Michael Herr's book, *Dispatches*. And now I sat listening to this remarkable man - of my age, of similar background to myself - tell me, modestly, quietly, and with great humility, something of what it had been like there for him. It was an experience I'll never forget.

Before we went our separate ways I asked John if he'd sign a copy of Keith Nolan's book 'Ripcord: Screaming Eagles under Siege' for me if I could find one and get it to him. He agreed and I later found a paperback copy in Washington DC and sent it his way. Imagine my surprise when, a few weeks later, a hardback copy dropped out of the mail - signed not only by John but also General Harrison, Mr Nolan and many veterans of 2/506. It was a fantastic gift, and one I'll always treasure.

I wish to make two comments: first, to thank everyone who took the trouble to sign the copy of *Ripcord* John sent to me; second, to offer my very best wishes to all your members. We may never meet, but I for one certainly appreciate your courage and your sacrifice. Thanks to John I have finally learnt a little - a very little - about the real Vietnam war. I won't be forgetting it.

*Best regards,*

*Bob Guntrip*

*Sydney, Australia*

## TRUST FUND FOR KEITH NOLAN'S DAUGHTER

For those who have missed the sad news, earlier this year Keith Nolan, the author of "Ripcord, Screaming Eagles Under Siege", and friend to many of the Ripcord survivors, has been diagnosed with fourth stage lung cancer. Many Ripcord Association members feel they owe a debt of gratitude to Keith for putting together the pieces and telling the story of our battle. By doing so, he has helped us get together once more and for many, vanquish some of the demons of the past. Keith continues to hang on, but the prognosis is not good at this time. In an effort to take some of the worry from Keith's mind, Chuck Hawkins suggested a trust fund for Keith's daughter be established. George and Mary Murphy took the idea and after a lot of hard work and continual effort, we now have an education trust fund set up for Keith Nolan's daughter Anna Britt Nolan.

Robert Patterson made the first donation. This was followed up by money donated at the reunion totaling \$1,550. Let's see if this organization and its members can continue the donation efforts for Anna Britt.

Anyone wishing to make a donation can send a check payable to the  
**"Anna Britt Nolan Trust"**

Send it to:

Anna Britt Nolan Trust  
C/O First Bank  
6211 Midriver Mall Drive  
St. Charles, MO 63304