



RIPCORD REPORT

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



Number 83

Fall 2010

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog

As I write this it is July 4, 2010. Forty years ago many of us were celebrating the national holiday in Vietnam. Those of Alpha Company 2/506 under Captain Hawkins were sitting on the hill known at Fire Support Base O'Riley a few clicks north of Ripcord. Our job was to man the steep sided hill and protect the ARVN (Army Republic of Vietnam) artillery unit sitting on the top of the steep hill from attack.

It was a great place to be if you enjoyed blazing sunlight, high temperatures and humidity to match. To keep you entertained at night when it cooled down a bit, the rats would come out of hiding to feast on whatever food they might find. It was a never ending battle to control the vermin on the hill and to try to get comfortable. The one great advantage of that hill was that no one was shooting at us. This tended to make all the other issues merely annoyances and things to complain about.

For us the Fourth of July was just another day in Vietnam. That night we held a "Mad Minute" just before midnight. For those who were not in Vietnam, a Mad Minute was 60 seconds of firing of rifles, machineguns, grenades etc. into the surrounding jungle to keep the enemy who might be out there on their toes. This gave us a chance to get rid of old ammo and on this night, an opportunity to fire off a lot of hand launched flares that would gently float on their tiny parachute into the surrounding wire and jungle. This was an infantryman's modest version of fireworks.

While we were doing this we all had the thoughts of what had happened to Charlie 2/506 under Captain Hewitt only two nights before. They had been hit after 0300 and suffered heavy losses and many wounded. We felt it was only a matter of time before we would be sent back into the jungle to pick

up where Charlie Company had left off. Six days after the 4th we were once more in the jungle and life goes on for the grunts!

Well, now it is 2010! Most of us survived the walks in the jungle but many still have vivid memories of those days. 40 years have passed but we still remember those we lost to the battles. Our reunion this year will be in Fort Worth, Texas and we hope to see many of the survivors there. At this time we have reservations for 60% more people that a year ago. If you are considering attending, this could be a great year to find that buddy from 40 years ago!

See you in Fort Worth!

2010 Ripcord Reunion

40th Anniversary

Oct 7 - 11, 2010

Radisson Hotel

Ft Worth South, Texas

Don't miss this one!

**If you have not been to a
Ripcord Reunion,
then this is the one you should be at!**

**Make your Reservations now!
Radisson Hotel, Fort Worth South
1-817-293-3088**

**Use the code "Ripcord"
when making reservations**

FROM THE EDITOR

Our 40th Anniversary Reunion will be in October 2010 at The Radisson in Ft Worth Texas. The registration forms are included in this newsletter. Please respond quickly. More information is on our website and the registrations are in this newsletter. I hope to see you all there this year.

The Ripcord Gathering in Wash. DC this past June was a huge success. The Gilberts and their friends and family were fantastic hosts.. Read more about this on our website.

Once again, I would like to thank Anthony Critchlow for keeping our Facebook page updated. He is doing an excellent job.

The response to the postcards I sent out to those receiving our newsletter via postal mail was great. For those that did not send the postcard back to us, will not receive the newsletter via postal mail.

E-mail address

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.

Postal Mail Delivery

If you would like the newsletter by Postal mail, and you DID NOT send the postcard enclosed in the mailed newsletter back to us, please contact me at frank@ripcordassociation or at my address below.

Biographies on our website.

I still need a lot of you to send me your biography for our website. Let me know about your Ripcord experience, and you can also tell us about your family and life after Ripcord. Send them to: frank@ripcordassociation or at my address below.

ARTICLES

Deadline for the Dec issue will be **Nov 1st 2010**. Please send all articles, photos, incoming mail to:

Frank Marshall

5 Taconia Ct

Mt Laurel, NJ 08054

or e-mail to: frank@ripcordassociation.com

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
Murphy Majoria
Bruce Brady
Wilburn Wall
Uwe Meyer
Jeff Wilcox
Charles Krause
Chuck Hawkins

Ben Harrison
Deborah Kuennen
Ricardo Ruiz
Richard Blyth
Audrey Wrightsell
Bill Hand
Leonard Russel
Dave Kreckel

DONATIONS:

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

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An Annotated History of 2/506 Infantry

1 March 1970 to 1 August 1970

By Robin Graham

A quick review by Lee Widjeskog

After 23 July 1970 when we had all been evacuated from the Ripcord AO, Chip Collins had time to think and felt there was a lot more to the story of the battle than the little piece that he was involved in. As the years passed it became more important to Chip to find the truth and details of the battle. The results were the Ripcord newsletter that Chip and others started as a way to gather the info about the battle. This newsletter and a small reunion in Wippany, NJ led to the excellent book by Keith Nolan. This tome gave us the view of the guys fighting the war and a feel for what was happening all around us. This was followed by yet another book. General Harrison went to Vietnam to find out what the NVA commanders were doing when around Ripcord. This information about the bigger picture by General Harrison helped us understand the North Vietnam leader's perspective of the battle. There have also been two TV shows that interviewed Ripcord survivors (one by Oliver North and Fox News and the other by National Geographic). Even with all the literature and writings about the battle, many of us still have questions about what was going on when we were there.

Today in the mail I received a CD from Robin Graham, one of the Ripcord Survivors and former platoon leader for the Battalion Supply and Transport Platoon. He spent many a day flying to and from Ripcord as well as spending nights on the firebase in an effort to assure supply were properly delivered.

This CD contains 1,111 pages of information about the battle for Fire Support Base Ripcord as gleaned from the daily log (DA Form 1594) of the 2/506 during the Ripcord Battle. These reports were received from the National Archives and painstakingly reviewed. Robin's personal recollections, letters, flight logs and supply notebook have augmented the facts gleaned from the forms. The day by day information tells where each unit was at a given time, what was encountered by each unit on a day and time, the map location for the unit, who was killed, what we did to the NVA and how many of our men were wounded day by day.

Robin took the time to decipher the Army jargon used in the daily log to make it readable by those of us who do not use the Army language any longer. Robin has added his photos to help get the point across and maps to

allow us to determine where we were at any given time.

This CD will give many of us a way to figure out where one was at any given time and perhaps help clarify some of the foggy memories that are the result of the years' passage. This work was not done over night. Robin spent several years compiling, tying (no computer), and editing this information to make it available for the survivors and friends of Ripcord. Robin Graham is to be commended for taking on this task and making it available to the membership!

(This disk will be given to each person who attends the reunion. Following that we will mail it out on request for the cost of postage and mailer (\$2.50). You may get them through the Ripcord Association only after the reunion since at this time we don't have a supply to send out.)



Photograph taken from a point to the right (i.e., west) of the watchtower seen in the photograph on page 20MAR70-5, and it is looking west by north to the explosive end of the CH-47 medium transport helicopter belonging to Company A, 159th Aviation Battalion. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2/506th Infantry, at Camp Evans (YD535320), is approximately 100 meters to the right of the exploding helicopter (photograph by?).

INCOMING MAIL

Frank

Thought you may enjoy my recollection of our July insertion on hill 902:

We were at Camp Evans on stand down (we were the ready reaction battalion for the division) when we were told we would be relieving a company that had been in contact for several days and had lost their company commander (found out when reading the Ripcord book that it was Hill 902); most of the details weren't passed on to the rank and file, probably better that we didn't know. We took heavy artillery & mortar fire as we were lifted in, the 506th guys were scrambling to get on the birds and off that hill as fast as possible while at the same time our pilot hovered above the LZ.

I decided it wasn't in my best interest to be hovering above a hot LZ; I leaped from the Huey while forgetting about the 80 lbs of rucksack on my back. The short jump closely resemble a front ½ flip which landed me on my back, lost most of my C rations, cut my arm, I crawled into the nearest hole, I then had an opportunity to look around me to see the total devastation. Needless to say, we soon found out this was not a very good place to spend a summer day.

Once again you are doing a great job with the Ripcord website.

Thanks,

Brian Eveleth

BEveleth@gwu.edu

Frank,

I am trying to find out if anyone in the association was in Co. D, 2/506th on July 21, 1970. Co. D was sent in to help a company from the 501st I beleive. I along with Marc Skinner was on the first two helicopters to come in on the hot lz. a bunker was knocked out and a 51. cal machinegun was captured. I was point and a guy named "snake" was my slack man when we moved off the lz . unfortunately snake stepped on a mine or booby trap and lost his right leg below the knee. I took a lot of the schrapnel in my backpack and a piece got me in the buttocks. A guy that carried the m60 was hit in his hairline also. We finally reached the company where Cpt. Rollison called in an airstrike to take out a mortar position

within a few hundred yards. If there is anyone out there who remembers this event please contact me.

Larry King

king.larry4771@yahoo.com

Sir:

I served in the Marines in Nam (India 3/4 1967-68). I read "Ripcord" several years ago and was fascinated by it. I was trying to remember, and maybe you can help me, wasn't there a passage in the book regarding the lack of immediate artillery support when certain units were heavily engaged with NVA infantry? Something about the U.S. Congress had allocated a certain number of rounds for the batteries and therefore fire support was delayed ? If you know where that is in the book it would be most appreciated or any other information you might have on that subject.

James Cool

jamesdarecool@yahoo.com

To whom it may concern;

I was a pointman, with the Geronimo's, C- Co-2/ 501st, 101st Airborne Division Airmobile, during the battles of Operation Texas Star, Firebase's, Gladiator, Granite, & Ripocord, and saw the build up of the NVA before & after the withdrawal & return. The surrounding hills 902-Re-up Hill, Hill 805, trails etc,.... See attachment; I was there & survivor. What has been lost in translation of what happened during those battles. We were attached with 2/506, and remember LTC. Lucas, working out every day on Ripcord. I pretty much blocked out, what happened during those battles, after returning home August 8, 1970, tour completed. But, in the last 3 years its all coming back as if it was 40 years ago. I am proactive in my experiences in battle, and remind our grunts what we faced, having walked that path, and advice those grunts who are in harms way as I write. Those who we lost during those battles will always remain on the wall. We returned after your withdrawal, of Ripcord too Hill 902. I volunteered along with another grunt on a forward observation post, we would take 4 hour watches. When we finally left, I was on the last bird out. I salute your site and all those who are still with us & welcome home.

Mondo,

titanmondo@aol.com

INCOMING MAIL

Frank:

I checked out Anthony's work on the Ripcord Facebook page and enjoyed it very much. I sent him a request to be "friends" so that he could check out my 3 albums of pics and recommend how we could share them with Ripcord members.

Thanks,

Bob Worrall

rworrall@gvvc.com

Frank...

I was assigned to BCo. 2/506th on April 12, 1970. This was after the April 1st assault on FB Ripcord. My time with Bravo Company was short, as I was reassigned To HHC 1st. Bde. 101st on May 21, 1970 (can you say REMF), and was the Bde. TOC NCO for the rest of my tour.

During my time in the field we were preparing LZ's and patrolling the AO around Ripcord, while rotating to Ripcord occasionally to provide perimeter defense. When Ripcord was under siege & overrun in July of 1970, I was following the events by monitoring the Bn / Bde / and Div radio nets.

Tom Corcoran

tomcorcoran@comcast.net

Dear Sirs:

Please find a small donation to help continue the fine work of the Ripcord Association. I just recently found your web site and glad to have been accepted as a member. I was a helicopter pilot with the Ghostriders, A Company, 155th AVBN, 101st Airborne based at Camp Evans. I lost my 'cherry' on July 3 during a evacuation flight and also just found out that my uncle, Jack Krause, a USAF fighter pilot was classmates with Colonel Lucas {West Point 1954} so it's another connection I find interesting about my military experience. Thanks for making it possible for many Vietnam veterans find a way to feel good and maybe heal wounds about their experience in a war many Americans would prefer to forget. I will look forward to upcoming newsletters and the web site.

Sincerely,

Chuck Krause, Jr

chuckhead@charter.net

Dear Lee

Please find enclosed check for the hard copy of "Hell on a Hilltop". I'm looking forward to reading it. Also enclosed are a few pictures I rescued from my flooded basement! That explains the damage and poor quality. These are copies. Do with them as you wish. I don't recall exactly when/what day they were taken. I was Chief of section on gun #1, B-2/319th Arty. They took us off the hill the day after the Chinook went down. A couple of days later they asked for a man from each gun section to go back out on detail to help clean up. They planned on putting a sister 105 battery back on there. I had to go to the PX to get an instamatic 110 camera as I lost all my personal items on the hill. So it was a man from my section that took these pictures for me. According to my "camera man", the gun with the hole in the side is supposed to be gun #1. I know nothing of the others. The radar unit was right behind our gun pit.

I haven't been to a reunion yet. I found out about the association about 5 yrs ago when I saw an ad for Keith Nolan's book. My wife and I are planning on the Ft Worth get together. Looking forward to meeting the "grunts" that watched over us arty boys!!

Thanks for your service. Thanks again for your part in the Ripcord Association.

Gene Marshall

Frank

I started this letter 20 yrs ago now I hope to finish it. I'm looking for 5 young men injured in a mortar attack on ripcord. Here are the details. I remember it like it was yesterday.

My background. I'm WO Kenneth Mayberry (NE), call sign Phoenix 50, flying my aircraft 606, I was a Aircraft Commander with the Phoenix (blue dot on the tail boom) C/158 Avn Bn at Camp Evans. My right seat (pilot) was WO David Rayburn (GA) a new guy first combat mission, my Crewchief this day was Sp4 John Ackerman and my Doorgunner Sp4 Wayne Wasilk both from a small town in SD.

The Phoenix were 10 aircraft of 6 flights of 10 for this move. All 101 Avn assets were employed. Due to CC commo failure our flight lead, Cpt Randy House broke off to lead the evacuation. We were directed to report over a prominent waterfall in the area & were then directed to a pickup pad for extraction. We were the second flt of 10 to go in. The first flt all made a "go around" because of hostile mortar fire. I was

INCOMING MAIL (continued)

directed to the log pad & as I turned final I had mortars impacting along a seemingly straight line paralleling my flt path. Boom Boom Boom I believe 4 or 5 mortars impacted. I instinctively intended to go around & then the mortars stopped, I seen the guys waiting for me so elected to go in. As I flared another mortar impacted knocking the men down like bowling pins. My left leg felt like a hot poker had been stuck in & I knew I had been hit by shrapnel. Over the intercom someone said "go around" & I said "no, get those guys first". Before my skids hit the ground I saw my crewchief & gunner dash past my wind screen & begun to carry the wounded guys into the aircraft. What I witnessed was the most courageous act I'd ever seen. 2 guys running across open ground carrying wounded troupers to our aircraft. If another mortar splashes down they are dead. Everything went into slow motion. I had people calling asking if we had trouble because we were on the ground so long. I was afraid to answer because I didn't want to break the spell. Finally John & Wayne got everyone loaded & we took off. These guys were wounded BAD! My crew tried their best to dress their wounds with our on board first aid kits. Blood was everywhere in the bay. I realized blood has a distinctive odor. We went directly to Charlie Med. Phoenix 44 followed me & checked my air craft out. At Charlie Med one of the Drs asked me if I was wounded (he saw the shrapnel holes in the chin bubble), I said "no". Compared to the guys we just brought in I would have been embarrassed. I flew back to the Nest to have maintenance check my aircraft out. They immediately grounded it, I had over 40 holes. Its next flight would be under the belly of a Chinook sling loaded to DaNang for repair. After a long wait maintenance finally released a bird for me to get back in the air. My Battalion called twice asking if I had been wounded, they had seen my aircraft. I lied and said no. By the time I got back in the air the evac was over but I got in on pulling the security force out that we had inserted before the evac begun. By the time I got in that night my leg was really hurting so I got a beer & went to our medics' hootch & had the shrapnel extracted. I tried to put Ackerman & Wasilk in for medals, I thought Silver Stars were a pppropriate, but my Plt leader told me he would have to put me in for a higher

award so I dropped it. Medals were not a high priority then. I regret that now.

For 40 yrs I've thought about those guys we brought in. What happened to them? They were horribly wounded that day. I would love to hear from them. Can you help?

Kenneth L Mayberry

Phoenix50@neb.rr.com or kensue@neb.rr.com

Hell on A Hill Top is now available in electronic Kindle format.

Hell On A Hill Top -

**Kindle Edition - Kindle Book
by Harrison, Ben, Moore, Don,
Pribbinow, Merle, and
Dinh, Phan Van**

Buy: \$9.99

Auto-delivered wirelessly

Kindle Store:



ANNA BRITT NOLAN TRUST FUND

Hi, everyone! Are you ready to head to Texas? We are going to have a special guest at the Ripcord Reunion—Keith Nolan's mother, Ulla Nolan, will be attending the banquet with us. If it were not for Ulla working with us to get the fund set up, it may never have happened. Ulla literally picked up the ball and ran with it when Keith was too ill to do anything. She is the trustee of the fund and is so pleased at the generosity shown by so many in memory of Keith.

George and I are trying to contact other veteran groups that are in books written by Keith, but so far it has been slow going. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be many groups as close knit as Ripcord's.

Start getting your auction items together for the Trust Fund Auction and let's show Ulla how much we care about Britt getting an education.

George and Mary Murphy

**REGISTRATION FOR
FORT WORTH REUNION 2010**
(as of 8/9/10)

William Ianniello C/ 159th
Tex Campbell D 2/506
Bruce & Ramone Nelson 2/319th FA.
Bill & Sheila Williams B 2/506
Ben & Lillian Peters B 2/506
Ben & Carolyn Harrison 3rd Bde
Polly Atkins – Friend
Murphy & Phyllis Majoria (Guests)
Floyd & Diane Alexander 2/319 & A 2/506
Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506
Audrey Wrightsell A 2/11 FA
Uwe & Diane Meyer B 2/506
Bob & Red Judd B 2/506
Jeff Wilcox A,C 2/506
Benny & Teresa Mulkey Pathfinders
Larry & Ruth Haste (Guest)
Bill & Ruth Hand B 2/506
Tommy & Judy Counts d 2/506
Lisa Hill (Guest)
Alfred Martin A 2/11 FA
Fred Spaulding HHC
Frank Marshall A 2/506
Charlotte Faddis A 2/506
Robin Graham HHC 2/506
Dan Esposito A 2/11 FA
George & Mary Murphy B 2/320 FA
David Rich 2/319 FA
Mike & Liz Womack C 2/506
Mike & Lura Renner 2/11 FA
Dale Cooper C 2/506
Peter & Chrisine Meloro C 2/506
Marie Zummo (Guest)
Bill Boles D 2/506
Wayne Spruill D&E 2/506
Robert Worrall B 2/501
Charlie & Juanita Tipton C 2/506
John & Annette Kuennen C 2/506
Charles & Jean Holman A 159th ASHB
Charles Hawkins C & A 2/506

Rick & Betty Kellogg B 2/506
Richard P. Doyle D 1/506
Ralph Motta E 2/506 Recon
Paul Buhr A 2/506
Chuck Shannon D 2/506
John & Mary Marlowe B 2/501
Frank Bort C 2/506
John Reilly 2/11 FA
Dorian & Marsha Alexander A 2/506
Merle, Ruth & Joshua DeLagrange D 1/506
Fred & Carol Gilbert D 2/506
Edith Habib Guest
Sam & Luree Rawlinson - friends
Mike & Kathy Chiarelli B 2/506
Tony & Sean Cox D 1/506
Gene Marshall B 2/319 FA
Bill Heath A 2/506
Bob Leibecke C 2/506
Ron & Linda McCrory E 2/506
Bill & Pam Baldwin A 2/506
Leonard & Carol Moore Mini-Cav
Gib Rossetter & Carrie Wolff D 1/506

Ripcord Website Memorial Page

The Ripcord Website now has a Memorial Page
with the names of the casualties of Fire Base
Ripcord

248 American Soldiers were killed

4 American Soldiers are Missing in Action

3 American Soldiers awarded The Medal of
Honor

Go to our website at
www.ripcordassociation.com for more details.

Ripcord Reunion Registration 2010

Firebase Ripcord Association Reunion, October 6 – 10, 2010

Radisson Hotel, Ft Worth, Texas

☐ **Yes, I'll be there!**

☐ I have not attended a Reunion since 1997 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 _____

Registration fee of \$_____ is enclosed for #_____ Adults and #_____ children under 18.
\$50 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below !

DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:

Before June 30, 2010 – \$75 per adult

July 1 through 31, 2010 – \$80 per adult

August 1 through September 1, 2010 – \$85 per adult

After September 1, 2010 – \$90 per adult

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

Registration fee is due no later than September 30, 2010.

Make your check payable to **"RIPCORDER 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 30 September 2010

AGENDA

- Wednesday, October 6:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)
- Thursday, October 7:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)
- Friday, October 8:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7 PM)
- Saturday, October 9:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.
- Sunday, October 10:** Homeward bound

Thursday Golf Outing (not included in the registration fee) Check here if you will play ☐

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY AND BY SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

USE THE OTHER FORM OR 1-817-293-3088

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