



# RIPCORD REPORT

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



Number 87

Fall 2011

## JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog

The hot month of July is now past and the humid and hot days of August are upon us. Bad, but still better than the Vietnam jungle in 1970!

Our reunion is fast approaching and Kathy and I are gathering the necessary stuff for the event. As you read in the last newsletter Dr. James Smither of the Grand Valley State University Veterans History Project is planning to attend and record your memories if you are willing.

As I look around I realize we have lost some of our members over the past 41 years. Some to health, others to accidents and yet others to old war injuries. With each of those who have passed we have lost what they remember of the time they were in Vietnam in 1970. This is a loss that is virtually impossible to replace.

Each of us has memories of the Ripcord battle whether you were on the hill, at Evans providing supplies, at adjacent firebases, flying helicopters, piloting jets or pounding the ground around O'Riley and Ripcord. You may think you have nothing to add to the Ripcord story because you were not there in July but every little detail when connected with other little detail from the first attempt to set up the firebase on March 12 to the last days in July after the evacuation helps to tell a more complete story. Each year I find another of my platoon who was in the AO during Ripcord. Some were in the thick of it and others were wounded early and were able to avoid more damage. Others were on R&R when we got hit or were in the rear awaiting a chance to come help us. I have talked to many of them and their memories help clear up my recollections of the battle. All these small and seemingly insignificant stories add up to a more complete big picture or the chaos that is typical of a battle.

With that in mind, I encourage all that will be attending this year's reunion to take time to get interviewed by Dr. Smither. Dr. Smither is highly recommended by Capt. Wilcox whom he has previously interviewed. I see this as an excellent way to get our individual stories out and preserve a history of our experience at Ripcord.

If you think you might be interested in talking let me or Frank Marshall know as soon as possible. The good Doctor will bring along an extra interviewer in order to collect all the stories. Your story will be put on a DVD and you will get one to keep for yourself.

See you all in October!!!



## Ripcord Reunion 2011

Oct 5, 2011 thru Oct 9th, 2011

will be held at  
Indianapolis Marriott East  
Indianapolis, IN  
Registration forms  
are in this newsletter  
and on our website  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)

# FROM THE EDITOR

What a Hot Summer we had. I just hope the winter is not as bad as last year with all that snow we had here in New Jersey. I think I will move to Florida.

This is the last Ripcord Report newsletter before the reunion in October. So, get your registration in now.

I would like to thank everyone for all the letters to the Editor that you send me. This keeps the newsletter interesting and gives other members updates on how you are doing. Please keep them coming.

We have 722 members in our Ripcord Association.

541 are Ripcord Veterans

181 are Associate Members

233 Recieve newsletter via Postal Mail

490 Recieve the newsletter via e-mail

Our website has a list of all members and their units. go to [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com) and click the membership roster.

You can always check out our website and get all the past Ripcord Report newsletters since 1985.

## 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.

contact me at [mail@ripcordassociation](mailto:mail@ripcordassociation) or at my address below.

## Biographies on our website.

I would like to put Biography of all Ripcord Veterans on our website. Please 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: [biographies@ripcordassociation](mailto:biographies@ripcordassociation) or at my address below.

## ARTICLES

Deadline for the Dec issue will be **Nov 1st 2011**

Please send all articles, photos, incoming mail to:

**Frank Marshall**

**5 Taconia Ct**

**Mt Laurel, NJ 08054**

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

## 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.

## DONATIONS

Bill Williams

Tony Cox

Pete Meloro

Ken Hamilton

Sam Rawlinson

Audrey Wrightsell

Mike Leiviska

Wilburn Wall

Jim Harris

Richard Drury

## 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

5 Taconia Court, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

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

Editor: Frank Marshall

Phone: 856-273-4426

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

Writer: Lee Widjeskog

Phone: 856-451-1108

E-mail:

[leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation)

## 2011 Ripcord Reunion

Members signed up as of August 2, 2011

Bruce Brady & Korolyn Kruger A 2/506  
Tex Campbell D 2/506  
Dale & Sue Cooper C 2/506  
Tommy & Judy Counts, Lisa Hill D 2/506  
Merle, Ruth & Joshua DeLagrange D 1/506  
Richard Doyle D 1/506  
Kenny & Mary Grimm D 2/506  
Bob & Red Judd B 2/506  
David Kreckle A 2.506  
Alfred & Sondra Martin A 2/11 FA  
Uwe & Diane Meyer B 2/506  
Bob & Anita Muhlhauser B 2/319 FA  
Bill Mulvey A 2/506  
George & Mary Murphy B 2/320 FA  
Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506  
Bill & Sheila Williams B 2/506  
Alvin Wright E 2/506  
Polly Atkins Guest  
Floyd & Diane Alexander A 2/506 & B 2/319  
James & Jan Carter D 2/506  
Tony & Sean Cox D 1/506  
Charlotte Faddis A 2/506  
Arthur & Robin Faddis Guest(A 2/506)  
Rudy & Linda Forsman D 2/506  
Fred & Carol Gilbert D 2/506  
Ben & Carolyn Harrison 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde  
Chuck & Jean Holman A 159<sup>th</sup> ASHB  
Murphy & Phyllis Majoria Guest  
Ron & Linda McCrory E 2/506  
Peter & Christine Meloro C 2/506  
David & Robin Mitchell D 2/501  
Robert & Anita Muhlhauser B 2/319 FA  
Benny & Teresa Mulkey Pathfinders  
Gary & Patty Radford D 2/506  
Sam & Luree Rawlinson Guset  
John Reilly 2/11 FA  
Dave & Lisa Snyder A 2/11 FA  
Dennis & Jane Stortz D 2/506  
Bob & Jackie Wallace B 2/506  
Jeff Wilcox A & C 2/506  
Audrey Wrightsell & Sammie Johnson A 2/11 FA  
Douglas Puffer D 2/506  
Stephen Forsstrom B 2/501  
Robert Layton B 2/501  
John & Annette Kuennen C 2/506  
Robert Leibcke C 2/506  
Paul Buhr A 2/506  
Isabellino & Uthocamporm Vazquez C 2/506  
Dan Espisito B 2/11 FA  
Bruce & Ramona Nelson 2/319 FA  
Ken & Maryann David 1/506

(2011 Ripcord Reunion Members signed up con't)

Craig & Sandy VanHout B 2/506  
Mike Chiarelli B 2/506  
Dick & Debbie Cable E 2/506 Recon  
Fred Spaulding HHC 3 Bde.  
Don Keifer A 2/506  
Frank Marshall A 2/506  
Rick & Betty Kellog B 2/506  
Frank Delfino HHC 1/506  
Greg & Krystal Phillips D 1/506  
Dale Lane & Dianne Grote A 2/506  
Jim & Marcelline Harris HHC 2/506  
Darryl & Christopher Reina A 2/506

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a 'Wall' exhibit at Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. It's on the 3rd floor in the 'American Wars - Price of Freedom' section. The exhibit captures the emotion of the 'Wall' by displaying things that have been left there...and it is moving. The section of the Wall they used as the backdrop was panel 8W (the picture above) and adjoining ones, which chronologically captures much of the time of the Battle of Ripcord.

Evan DeWulf

*(Editor's note: There is a lot more on the Facebook page RipcordAssociation group.)*

\*\*\*\*\*

## RIPCORD PICTURES

At the suggestion of Robin Graham, I would like all members to send copies of their Vietnam photos of the guys and area during the Ripcord battle to Lee Widjeskog. They can be hard copies or scanned e-mails. From these we will make albums of them for the reunion and also keep them on a computer for future reference. This will allow others to see what many of us remember after we are gone. These will also be submitted to the Texas Tech Vietnam archives so they will be in more than one place. Thus a better chance that the photos will survive after us.

When ever possible give the names of those in the pictures. If not the names give the units and approximate time period if known. If it is a firebase and you do not remember the name give the approximate date, your unit and if you were visiting or assigned there. Any details you can remember will help. We all have a few pictures and combined we can produce one heck of a collection!

# INCOMING MAIL

Hi Frank,

We were shot down supporting siege by rpg. I was B 1st 501st 11B by way of Tigerland Ft. Polk. All is well with me. I look back at year in the bush with all types of memories, most of them very positive. Whole thing seems so surreal now. I was one of only two in my platoon not to get a rear job (had a tendency to behave poorly on stand downs). Glad I didn't know how many NVA were around Ripcord when we flew in and got shot down. Probably would have been one lousy night's sleep. Hope all is well with you.

*Michael Alioto*

*B/I-501*

*mdalioto@gmail.com*

\*\*\*\*\*

My dad served in the 101St Airborne at Firebase Ripcord. His name is Michael James Walker. I was wondering if there was anymore information on him or if anyone remembers him. He never has talked to us about the battle, we just knew that he was involved. I would appreciate any information.

Thank you,

*Michelle D. Walker Gosnell*

*mgosnell36@windstream.net*

\*\*\*\*\*

For any you who may be interested in reading stories about our veterans or other veteran's issues , please take a look at my new blog. It is associated with the newspapers of Calkins media. It will be updated weekly and all comments are welcomed on the blog site. Please do comment,it shows the blog is being viewed.. Thanks... <http://www.phillyburbs.com/blogs/veteranVoices/>

*Robert Staranowicz [bobstar101@gmail.com]*

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi Frank

On July 18 my wife,Karolyn, and myself had the opportunity to visit France. During our travel we happen to be in Normandy on July 22, 23 and the 24th. We visited Omaha Beach which was invaded by American troops from the 2nd, 29th and the 1st

Infantry Division. Also we visited Pointe Du Hoc. It was taken by American forces. American Second Ranger Battalion scaled 100 foot cliffs to successfully defend against German counterattacks. D-Day June 6 1944, along with other units our own 2/506 parachuted into enemy positions at Utah Beach. Karolyn and myself stood on Omaha Beach on July 23. I kneel and prayed for WWII veterans, and Ripcord veterans. As I stood and looked back at the beachhead I thought of the walls that we scaled in Viet Nam during RIPCORD. I felt proud to be an AMERICAN and proud of all that have served in our military.

*Bruce Brady*

*bwbrady49@yahoo.com*

\*\*\*\*\*

I have the photos I took during Vietnam on a Picasa web album. I've attached 3 pictures that seem key to more understanding of Ripcord. At the time our unit wasn't informed of where we were or the nature of our assignments. An American unit had been wiped out on the ridgeline. We were retrieving the bodies of our fellow Americans. I do not know what unit was decimated on the ridgeline in the picture. In the distance there was this bald mountain. I took a picture of it which appears to be Ripcord. The exact date is unknown by me but it was after July 23rd I think.

In Keith Nolan's book Ripcord on page 121 our job description was best given by Lt. Col. Otis W. Livingston, Jr. Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. "Ripcord was just another exercise for us. We were the swing battalion. We bounced from brigade to brigade, getting inserted into whatever area was hot at the moment." The easiest way to get to the photos is from my website <http://wilburn-wall.com> You can also see my personal story there. I am a member and receive your newsletter. I haven't been using any email until recently and prefer to keep receiving material through the mail. Please include these links on your website and printed newsletter so I can share this with other members and contribute to the ongoing effort.

*Wilburn Wall*

*Charlie Company*

*2nd/501st Infantry*

*101st Airborne Division*

*liberty1887@gmail.com*

# INCOMING MAIL

## Mr Marshall

I was in Vietnam from Jan 1970 to Oct 1970 when I stepped on a landmine and lost both my legs below the knees 4 days after my 21st birthday. I was in the 1st/327th and was on Firebase Birmingham in July 1970 when we heard about Firebase Ripcord being overrun. I was an NCOIC of a sniper team at the time but subsequently went to being an NCOIC of a recon team when I stepped on the land mine. I spent time at the rear medivac unit in Vietnam then to Camp Zama, Japan then to Valley Forge Army Hospital where hundreds of amputees were rehabilitated. I was there close to a year.

When we first heard about Ripcord, every man started putting new ammo in their magazines, new grenades, new bandages, taped everything secure put one dog tag in a boot and another around their neck for identification purposes. No one spoke, but we thought we would be sent to RIPCORD to help rescue our brothers in arms. Much to our amazement, concern and consternation we were told no one was going to help get you guys out. We were abandoning our brothers in arms. The sadness and anger were palpable. If they were going to let a whole firebase go down, what would happen if a 5 man sniper team got in trouble?

It was sickening and the secrecy that followed made me think I was out of my mind.

All I can say is: "I'm sorry".

I believe this is an indelible black mark on the 101st Airborne to let good men die. In May 1970 we went into Cambodia and some bright General decided to set up an indefensible firebase at or near the A Shua Valley. Then for purely political reasons they let you down. It is the only loss of the Vietnamese war by the Americans. I can still feel, see the B-52s the morning they wiped Ripcord off the map.

To this day I feel a sense of helplessness, sadness and anger.

*Eugene J Toni*

*Commander, MOPH #353*

*www.purpleheart353.com/*

To read more letters and comments written to the editor, go to our website and click member comments. **[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)**

Dear Frank and all of my Ripcord family,

I too have been reflecting on all of you during this time as it was 41 years ago on the 21st that both Bob and David were killed together. I thank God that you all were Bob's family while on Ripcord and prayed for all of you and the memories that you hold deep in your hearts as I placed flowers at Bob's grave.

It is just after midnight on the 23rd as I type this as I am waiting to call Bobby at 12:45 am and wish him a very Happy 41st Birthday before I then will go to bed thanking God for the gift of our daughter and son and grandchildren to allow Bob's and my love for each other go from generation to generation. I've given these days the name "The Agony and the Ecstasy" (Bob's death and the birth of our son.)

My love and Gods blessings on each of you brave men.

*Jan Kalsu*

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you to all the veterans and blessed be all those who have reached out to their comrades and made the ripcord assn an unparalleled success. I know it has changed the lives of so many brave men who survived that terrible time in our history.

Take care and God Bless

*JoAnn Meier*

\*\*\*\*\*

I have been at a National Pathfinder Ass. reunion in Las Vegas this week. There was three of us that was on Ripcord (we haven't seen each other for 41 years ) an not a one of us thought of the anniversary of Repcord until I got this email. I am on the road heading home and had to call these guys right away, THIS WAS REALLY WIERD !!!!!!!! We are all three also going to be in Indy in October, see you then.

*Benny "Milkman" Mulkey*

*101st Pathfinders*

\*\*\*\*\*

ALL who participated in "Ripcord" will be in prayers at church and Novena this week,,,esp the deceasd..

*Mike Daley*

*101st Abn*

*Vietnam*

*mdirtdart101@aol.com*

# INCOMING MAIL

To Editor

Until I was in Iraq(2003), I never knew about Ripcord. While there I read Keth Nolan's book and found a quote I could relate to in "my war". You all were great. I also understand the S&S guys never really get their just dues. Being a link in the S&S chain in Iraq, I know with out the beans, bullets, and fuel, all you guys on the front can't do your job. Thanks to all those who helped you guys in the front do your job. After reading "Hell on a Hilltop", I then better understood the odds you all ere up against. You guys didn't loose, you stood your ground and the NVA paid a heavy price. Again thanks to everyone of you who were there.

*Mikel W. Dawson*

\*\*\*\*\*

Frank,

My name is Tom Pack and I was a member of Bty B 2/319 and was on ripcord some of the time. I was transferred to a unit down south on about July 10, 1970. I Never could find out why but it was hard to leave My friends and comrades at such a time. I still have the clipping from the stars & stripes about the the last day. It was the only information I could find after I left. I was on a gun crew with Eugene Marshal & Floyd (Andy )Anderson. I don't remember much anymore as I never have told anybody about it much less talked about it. I just figured nobody knew or cared till I found Your Website. It brings back some of the memories, some god and some bad. Thanks for keeping this going. I will always be grateful to all the grunts that fought around us.

*Tom pack (Pack-o)*

*B 319th Arty*

*jtapack@msn.com*

\*\*\*\*\*

Frank,

I thank you and all of our brothers who fought and gave it their all. I was a pilot with the Comancheros A101AVNBN on this date. I was a newbie during this time for first flight was an orientation flight with our check pilot and we went into Ripcord on a supply drop. I must have looked like a deer in the headlights during

that mission. I thought to myself what the hell have I gotten myself in to here! I guess you could say that I got baptized in grand style. Thanks to all who served, God Bless America, may all of the sacrifices made not be in vane.

*Curtis Bodin*

*CW2 A101AVNBN*

*70/71 Camp Eagle*

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Frank,

It was a pleasure to spend a couple of interesting days getting you guys off that dam hilltop. Needless to say, it was the 23rd that was the worst for me and my crew.

Sorry about leaving my helicopter illegally parked on top.

Wish I had a picture of that.

*Steve M Morehead*

*B/159th Avn Bn*

\*\*\*\*\*

Hello all:

I would have liked to been able to have done more, I had it easy.

As a "little bird", I experienced "eyeball to eyeball" contact with the bad guys, but could not stop them, kept running out of fuel and bullets. I felt bad leaving to refuel and rearm, because I could see what was going on, and I knew it would not stop and wait for me to get back.

God bless you guys, you had balls the size of basketballs, I wish I could have done more.

*Mike Goff*

*Banshee 12 (B trp. 2/17 Cav)*

\*\*\*\*\*

I was just a young boy, on July 22nd 1970. I do remember the impact it had on our family, to learn that my cousin (John Babich) had died that day. Our family was very close. I always think about, what if, John had made it to the 23rd of July and would he and I be having a beer together today. July 22nd is a tough day for me, my father also died on this date in 1984...

*Frank Babich*

*babelec@yahoo.com*

# INCOMING MAIL

To Editor

I was just a ten year old kid in the Summer of 1970, a "graduate" of the 4th grade and playing baseball in the WBBA... Warminster Boy's Baseball Association. That July my family lost my cousin Sam in a traffic accident. I was devastated. I thought the world of Sam and looked up to him. He was a US Navy Vietnam Vet, having served on the carrier Enterprise during a deployment off the Vietnam coast from Dec. 1965-May 1966.

I recently read the newspaper I have saved with an article about Sam's accident. In the entire paper there is just one small column mentioning Vietnam and the fact that 8 US servicemen were killed when two helicopters were shot down near the Cambodian border. That's it. Just a few paragraphs of general news. You guys were fighting and dying at Ripcord, but no mention in the paper about Ripcord, the 101st, the A Shau VAlley... nothing.

As I've mentioned to you in prior email I've taken a strong interest in the men of Ripcord since reading Keith Nolan's excellent book. I'm a regular reader of the Facebook page and the association news. I still find myself amazed and in awe at what all of you experienced and accomplished in Vietnam while I was spending the innocent summer of a ten year old here at home.

I'm glad you survived to spend an extra 41 years of living... wishing you many more!

Dave Moyer

## Newest Members to Ripcord Association

Zapert	Val	A/1-501
Waymire	Kerry	
Hopper	Dave	A/2-506
Malloy Jr	Herbert	B/158th Avn
Powers	Don	A/158th Avn
Taylor	Thomas	B/159th ashb
Senft	Peter	HHC

We have 722 members in our Ripcord Association.

541 are Ripcord Veterans

181 are Associate Members

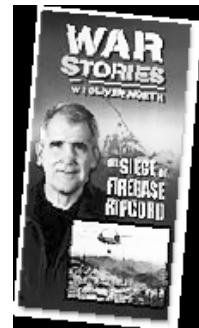
233 Recieve newsletter via Postal Mail

490 Recieve the newsletter via e-mail

## Now Available on DVD

### War Stories with Oliver North "The Siege Of Firebase Ripcord"

On this amazing episode of "War Stories with Oliver North" you will meet some of the men who survived this horrendous carnage. Men like "Doc" Cafferty, who woke one night to find dozens of enemy soldiers inside his perimeter. You'll also hear the vivid memories of a man whose friend who went MIA.



### Video on Sale

If you would like to purchase a copy of the show, you can call  
1-800-933-0760

or visit FoxNews on the web  
at [www.foxnews.com/warstories](http://www.foxnews.com/warstories)  
and go to the  
"Own An Episode of War Stories" link.



Visit the Ripcord Association website  
at:  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)

The website includes:  
History of the Ripcord Association  
History of FSB Ripcord  
Biographies of Ripcord veterans

Member Roster  
Newsletter Archives  
and  
much, much more

# Ripcord Reunion Registration 2011

## Firebase Ripcord Association Reunion, October 5 – 9, 2011 Indianapolis Marriot East, Indianapolis, IN

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**NO COMPLEMENTARY TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT AVAILABLE.**

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, 2011 – \$75 per adult

July 1 through 31, 2011 – \$80 per adult

August 1 through September 1, 2011 – \$85 per adult

After September 1, 2011 – \$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, 2011.**

Make your check payable to "RIPCORD 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 2011

### **AGENDA**

**Wednesday, October 5:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)

**Thursday, October 6:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)

**Friday, October 7:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7 PM)

**Saturday, October 8:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.

Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.

**Sunday, October 9:** 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 5, 2011**

USE THE OTHER FORM OR CALL 317-352-1231 or 800 -228-9290,

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