



# RIPCORD REPORT

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

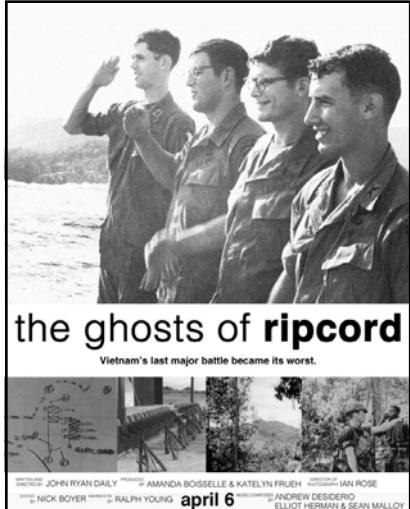


Number 94

Summer 2013

## The Ghosts of Ripcord Documentary

The first official showing of the documentary entitled "The Ghosts of Ripcord" has been in the making over the last two years through the collaborative efforts of director John Daily and Frank Marshall. While Frank will state he had little to do with it, the truth is he has been the agitator and prod to remind John that we would like to see this completed.



It started when John Daily did a batch of interviews of Vietnam veterans from Philadelphia. In those interviews he met Frank and heard the story of "Ripcord". After the good results of his first production, John Daily asked Frank if he could get enough people to interview about our battle. The needed interviews were easily arranged although some people traveled half way across the country to be heard. Meanwhile a request for funding was put on the "Kick Starter" web site and the results were so good John knew he had to put this story together. The results are an 80 minute documentary that John hopes to be able to sell to television.

In preparation for the showing, Frank sent out notices to the Ripcord Association thinking he would get 30 or 40 people to attend. He was soon overwhelmed by the response when over 100 people responded. Since there was limited seating at the National Constitution Center where the showing was being held, Frank had to put in a cut off number.

Suddenly, more rooms had to be blocked at the local hotel, admission tickets were needed to assure seating, lunch at the hotel was needed (Frank's house is not that big), buses to transport attendees to the center were needed and dinner and brunch seating at Prospectors had to be arranged. Frank Marshall and Fred and Carol Gilbert worked and managed to get this all done with a minimum of problems.

The viewers met at the hotel where a lunch was made available and everyone got time to chat and make new friends. Around 5:30 p.m. the two buses arrived and a half hour after leaving we were all wondering around the National Constitution Center in downtown Philadelphia.

John Daily gave a short introduction and then the film proceeded. It was well orchestrated and seemed pretty clear as to what happened and when. Overall, it is really well done and will get only a little fine tuning in the future.

Following the film we returned to the hotel and then to Prospectors for dinner. The next morning over 60 people got together for brunch at the same location before heading home.

As a weekend event, it was well done! The film lived up to our expectations! The presentation in the National Constitution Center was ideal for this event. The amenities provided by the Gilberts and Marshall made the event enjoyable to all who attended. We all hope John Daily is able to sell this product so we can see it on television in the near future. Hopefully, we will have a copy to show at the reunion even if we cannot give any out. See you all in Myrtle Beach!!



# FROM THE EDITOR

Ripcord veterans and their families came to Phila and New Jersey from all over the country for the premier weekend. It was absolutely fantastic. I want to thank John Daily and his partners in producing the finest documentary ever made on The Battle of Ripcord.

I have been involved with the Ripcord Association since 1985, and I have seen many production companies try to do a documentary or movie on our battle. Some have succeeded but many have failed. John Daily has taken the time and effort to work with the Ripcord veterans to make sure to get the facts right so the story could be accurately told.

John has a big future in the film making industry. His task was not easy, especially with so many different incidents that took place during the battle and different versions of the stories told. He persevered and respected the Ripcord veterans and their sacrifices. He also earned the respect from the Ripcord Association for all he has done to work with us to get the story of Ripcord told.

There will be some finishing touches and editing made to the documentary and then distributed to a TV network to be broadcasted (it would be great to see it on HBO or similar major network).

The finished and final DVD or copies of this documentary can not be distributed until a network picks it up so it could be a world Premier. This means we have to be patient and wait until it is broadcasted. We are hoping by end of the summer.

I would also like to thank Lynn Miller and her staff at the Marriott Residence Inn in Mt Laurel for their great hospitality, Rich Rachel and Cowboy Kenn at Prospector's restaurant and nightclub in Mt Laurel for all they did for the Ripcord veterans. They have a wall of fame dedicated to the Ripcord veterans with photos and posters.



Please continue to send your letters and comments to: [mail@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:mail@ripcordassociation.com)  
Everyone would love to hear from you.

## 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  
Lee Trembly  
Mike Doyle  
Lloyd Rahlf  
Randy House  
Wilburn Wall

Leigh Freeman  
Tom McGuire  
Don Kennett  
Al Martin  
Ruel Tyler  
Richard Seitz

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".  
Mail to:

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

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

## 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.com)

Editor: Frank Marshall  
Phone: 856-273-4426  
E-mail: [mail@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:mail@ripcordassociation.com)

Writer: Lee Widjeskog  
Phone: 856-451-1108  
E-mail: [leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com)

# JERSEY RAMBLING

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



Our reunion is coming up very rapidly and I know many cannot wait to get to Myrtle Beach this October. The site is lovely with the beach right out the hotel door. Breakfast is included with the room and as always the hospitality room will be available.

Since the last newsletter, Kathy and I have been busy with a visit to relatives in West Virginia, a visit from our grandson and daughter, a surprise birthday for our sister-in-law, a visit from Kathy's sister and husband and boys and a week of grandson watching in the Boston area during Patriots Week. Added to this was some volunteer work with NJ Fish and Wildlife, working on the house siding, covering the driveway with crushed concrete, the removal of 3 large trees and lots of wood splitting. Oh yes, we also attended the premier of "Ghosts of Ripcord" directed by John Daily and hosted by Frank Marshall and Fred and Carol Gilbert with the very able help of their friends and ours, Sam and Luree Rawlinson.

While all that was going on, I was contacted by Jose Sena formerly of A 2/506 in 1970. He is living in Santa Fe, New Mexico and working as a cabinet maker. I had been his platoon leader for a short time in 1970 before I was transferred to the rear. I remembered him because soon after I left the field, I heard he hit a booby trap and lost a leg and an eye. Upon hearing from him I learned that he had started his tour in Vietnam with the 1/327 but was transferred to the third brigade when his unit was being sent back to the states due to the cut backs that were starting to take place. After getting to the Brigade, he was sent to FSB Ripcord after July

18<sup>th</sup> and told to wait for a chopper to take him out to A 2/506. As it turned out then next chopper to come out to Alpha was during the evacuation on July 23. So, Sena left Ripcord on the 23<sup>rd</sup> during the evacuation with everyone else and joined Alpha at Camp Evans. He had the good fortune of surviving Ripcord only to hit a trip wire in October.

After talking with him and later, Dave Counts (Second Platoon machine gunner and Kit Carson Scout Handler), we decided to meet at The Wall in April when Jose would be visiting Washington, DC. We agreed to meet at the Lincoln Memorial at 11a.m. After Kathy and I arrived, I phoned Counts who was running a little late as he searched for a parking spot. I look around and saw a man with an eye patch among a crowd of others. He appeared to be old enough to be in Vietnam. I introduced myself and sure enough it was Jose and his entourage from New Mexico. He brought along his wife, grown kids, grandkids, a friend, brother, sister-in-law and niece. It was just great to meet them all! Soon, Counts and his wife arrived, and we renewed our friendships before we went to The Wall to pay our respects to the friends we lost in the war. In all it was a great visit! I hope to see both Counts and Sena at the reunion this year!

## Ripcord Association      New Members

Last Name	First Name	Unit
Balkenhol	John	C/159th ASHB
Brunette	Robert	HHB 5th Bn 4Arty
Hoehne	James	E/2-506
Kato	Jack	B/2-501
Kohmetscher	Lyle	B/2-501
Lucero	Eraldo	A/2-502
Nichol	Robert	A/2-501
Ort	Michael	Associate Member
O'Toole	John	Associate Member
Schwartz	Allen	326th Med bat
Vanderbloomen	Dale	D/2-501
Gassett	Lora	Ft Campbell Library

### We have:

- 841 members in our Ripcord Association.
- 627 are Ripcord Veterans
- 214 are Associate Members
- 274 receive newsletter via Postal Mail
- 568 receive the newsletter via e-mail
- 346 Facebook "Ripcord Association Group"



Bob Counts, Jose Sena & Lee Widjeskog A 2/506 at The Wall.

## Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



### Our Face book page keeps growing.

As always we continue to grow. We are up to 346. Most likely this will be higher by the time the news letter is published. We had a remarkable increase just after the premier of the documentary and the DMOR ceremony. I am so glad that friends and family are joining us.

I know I ruffled some feathers when I asked that only post about Ripcord. I would like posts to be of people, places around Ripcord, What has happened to everyone since then. Keep up the great posts and the pictures. We can always use more pictures of then, now and in between.

I'm sorry to say I won't be at the next 2 reunions. So I ask everyone there to take lots of pictures and post them on our FB page. I do plan on going to the Springfield reunions. I will see you then.

Lastly, if you know anyone who has joined our FB family, please get them to join the association also. Go to our Ripcord website and click on the membership page.

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

#### *Editor's note:*

*Anthony Critchlow has done a fantastic job for the Ripcord Association at monitoring and controlling our facebook page. There is a lot of daily activity and is very informative for all Ripcord veterans and guests.*

**Visit the  
Ripcord Association Facebook page at:**

**<http://www.facebook.com/groups/rip-cordassociation/>**

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

## Vietnam Photo project

Hello everyone, I hope that all of you are well. For those of you who don't know me, I have been working to honor and remember Vietnam veterans for the last 3 years. I have volunteered with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund on their Call for Photos project, and have located more than 1,500 photographs of men and women who lost their lives in Vietnam. I am also the author of All They Left Behind: Legacies of the Men and Women on The Wall.

I am honored to be able to say that I have begun work on my 2nd book project. This project, scheduled for release in late 2014, will be a photographic history of the Vietnam War as told through the words and photographs of the men and women who served there.

This project will require nearly 500 photographs and thousands of words. That's where you come in.

I would like this project to be veteran driven, and to do that I will need volunteers. If you have photographs from your time in the military, whether in training, on leave, or in Vietnam and would be willing to donate them for use in this project, please let me know and I will send you specifications for photos. If you would be willing to fill out a survey about your time in the military let me know and I will send the survey to you.

I will consider every photograph sent in, and will use as many as I can in this project. There are certain visual specifications that must be met, and certain guidelines that we have to follow. Sending in a photo does not guarantee that it will be used in the project.

Please contact me if you have any questions, or if you would like information on how to participate in the project. Please feel free to pass this information along to anyone you feel might be interested, or to post it on Vietnam-related websites and message boards. All responses are welcome.

*Thank you for your time.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lisa A. Lark*

*lisaalark@googlemail.com*

Check out Ghosts of Ripcord facebook page  
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/firebasefilm>

## The Ghosts of Ripcord update

*from John Daily*

The Ghosts of Ripcord premiered this past April 6th at the National Constitution Center. The event was incredible and we would like to thank all those who were in attendance for coming to Philadelphia for the screening.

This summer the filmmakers will be actively pursuing distribution and booking venues around the country to screen the film. Please keep checking our facebook page ([www.facebook.com/firebasefilm](http://www.facebook.com/firebasefilm)) for more updates including: the release of our second trailer, the launch of our official website in June, and different information for how and when you can see the documentary.

Thank you!

## Ghosts of Ripcord

*Reviews from the premier showing*

I was overwhelmed with emotions after viewing your film Saturday night. Actually, I haven't slept a whole lot since then, as so many memories have flooded back in. It is absolutely the best documentary I have seen, which so accurately relates the story of the guys on the ground.

Most such films come through the filter of those who were not actually in harm's way. Yours, so eloquently told by the veterans on camera, was spot on. It captured the gritty reality of that event, including the understandable bitterness about some of the tactical decisions that were made, which ended up costing lives, and the quiet heroism of those brave men who endured, and who took care of each other.

I was a pilot with the Lancers, Co. B, 158th Assault Helicopter Bn. As such, our role was solely to support the guys on the ground. If we could actually get in and out of Ripcord, or any of the "LZs" surrounding the FSB, without getting shot down, we were out of harm's way until the next sortie. Each trip in was an adventure in just trying to limit ours and the ground troops exposure to all of the weaponry the NVA could bring to bear, which was formidable.

The guys on the ground, however, had no respite from that onslaught. I salute them all, and you, too, for telling their story.

I could not be prouder of the number of times our

aircraft, with the telltale white dot on the tail boom, were included in the footage. I can now show my children, that "We were there".

You were being interviewed by a reporter after the showing, and although I really wanted to meet you personally to thank you, I didn't want to interrupt. I hope that either you or Frank will send a link to the article or interview the reporter will have written.

*Thank you, again.*

*Sincerely*

*Bill Walker*

*(Lancer 17)*

*Co B, 158th Aslt. Hel. Bn., 101st Abn, Div. 1970*

---

Maura, Ellen and I were extremely proud and honored to be included in this wonderfully staged premier showing of the Ripcord documentary. The venue of the Constitution Center was spectacular and appropriate. Having the opportunity to meet the long list of heroes in attendance was deeply moving.

The directors and producers of this film did a remarkable job of piecing together a highly complex story with almost no professionally developed content available. They also told the story without dishonoring anyone involved.

I hope that this documentary will be widely viewed and inspire our leaders to not repeat the historic tragedies of these battles. I was struck by talking to the veterans from 45 years ago, how much even one week of involvement in these events permanently changed their lives, and even to this day. Surely there are lessons to be applied to today's soldiers and costs that should be included in the calculations of the value of war.

The film lasted 80-minutes, with every minute coherent, compelling and heart-wrenching. The difficult transitions of period footage to current commentary was very well done and with powerful impact. The scenes and the accompanying emotion will stay with me long after the viewing.

Thank you again for telling this important story and for hosting the well-organized event for the premier showing. It was an honor to be included and a night that I will always remember and cherish.

*Sincerely,*

*Bob Gustafson*

*Proud brother-in-law of Peter Meloro, Ripcord*

## **Ghosts of Ripcord (reviews continued)**

I very much enjoyed attending the premier and the structure that you and other members of the Ripcord Assn. put forth, in setting up whole week-end. The only input that I would add is that John Daily had the number of 101st soldiers shown in the premier, who died in the battle, but did not list or show the number of wounded. I think it would add to the documentary if he would list that number....Doing that, recognizes the hundreds of members of Ripcord Assn. who were wounded during the battle, in addition to the ones who lost their lives. I think it would mean a lot to them.

*Respectfully,*

*Ruel Tyer*

*Associate Member D/2-506*



*Ripcord veterans and family at The Marriott Residence Inn for the Premier weekend.*

I understand the premiere went great. My nephew and grandnephew enjoyed it a lot, specially the company of you guys. Thank you.

*Ricardo Ruiz*

*2/320 ARTY HHB FA*

---

I thought it was well produced and the interviews were very personal.

*Mike Daily*

*101st Airborne*



*Christian and Elio Ruiz, George Murphy*

*Gary Radford, Doug Puffer*

I was at the premiere with my father, it was really such a tremendous experience, an amazing film. So glad I had the chance to be there.

*Sean Christopher Spruck*

---

The premier of The Ghosts of Ripcord was presented very well although missing a few of the fact of the entire Ripcord Story it presents a good overview in my opinion.

The Ripcord members interviewed in the documentary did an outstanding job; factual in their opinions; showed a great deal of emotion while telling their story which I would feel bought back a lot of fears and grief felt some 42+ years ago.

*James Fowler*

*D 1/506*

---

The documentary The Ghosts of Ripcord proved to be a production of professional quality and one of unexpected results. The content contained within the constrained time format added to the quality and interest of the material presented. An impressive and informative film considering the extent and impact of the subject matter. A film that shows a part of history that few know about, and should be viewed by everyone.

*Douglas L Puffer*

*D/2-506*

## **Ghosts of Ripcord (reviews continued)**

Great job on the documentary of Ripcord. Thanks to the Director and Producers for your work on this. It is an important contribution to the history of the Vietnam War and a cautionary tale for our country's leaders.

*Steve Gunn*

*D/2-506*

---

Well done! The story was well told. Good use of pictures, footage, excellent interviews and quotes from guys who could not be interviewed in person. The reader told those stories well. It was all nicely woven together and from my perspective accurately. It is impossible for a 90 minute documentary to tell every aspect of that 4 month event and depict every individual's experience, but in addition to the individual accounts, our collective story was told in a very comprehensive and personal way. Powerful and moving! I sure hope it gets wide showing/exposure. It deserves it. Our story deserves it. My gratitude to the production team!

*Bob Smoker*

*C/2-506*



*Ripcord veterans and family at The Marriott Residence Inn for the Premier weekend.*

Everyone who was on Ripcord has their own small personal experience of the battle, but after seeing The Ghosts of Ripcord documentary, I feel all of now have a much better understanding of the entire battle and all

that went on. I learned a lot I didn't know before. I thought John Daily did an excellent job of telling our story in the time they did. Great job!

*George D. Murphy*

*B 2/320 Arty*



*Maura, Ellen Gustafson, Chris Melero, Frank Marshall*

In every one's life on looks back to see what he or she has accomplished. In your case the documentary you did for us on Ripcord will always be a shining moment of many accomplishments to come.

For me it was a powerful film. It brought back some memories of the experiences I had at Ripcord and gave me a better idea of what went on. One realized that something was happening, but not the magnitude of the situation at the time.

By getting the story from all the units involved in the operation, was enlightening as well as you're getting the events of the situation first hand. I have never been more proud to have served with the Veterans of Ripcord.

If anything your film has given the Vietnam Veteran the respect he deserves by showing the sacrifices he made while over there.

John thank you for taking the time do this project and for your interest in us. You are now a member of Ripcord

Frank, you and Carol Gilbert did a great job of putting the reunion together. Frank, thanks for your efforts of getting this project started. I am sure it took a lot of effort and time to see this project go through

*Tim Newman*

*A/2/506*

Hi Frank,

I thought the Ripcord premier was very well done and powerful. Thanks for all the work you do for Ripcord. It's truly appreciated.

*Jim (Tiny) Aanonsen*

A/2-506

---

Thank u for keeping the battle of Ripcord alive. It should never be forgotten. Our family was amazed by the film. Thank u again.

*Freddie and Carol Gilbert*

D/2-506



*Fred and Carol Gilbert had the luncheon catered with the help from donations of those that attended*

What a wonderfully meaningful time. There were memories - there was closure for some - there were new friends for others - and old friendships were rekindled.

You are the premier organizer and words enough can't express my thanks. My wife needed to be there to understand what went on and our friends were simply overwhelmed.

We had a great breakfast Sunday morning with Mr. & Mrs. Doug Puffer and unfortunately between grandchildren in need, a horse in waiting, and dogs boarded out we simply left before the Sunday finale - and considering the Northeast extension it wasn't a moment too soon.

The snack at Prospectors with Steve Gunn was both sobering and a reminder of what went thru our minds over 40 yrs ago. I hope Steve will join all future

reunions.

As to the film - it was solid - it was a documentary and they did a damn fine job of presenting it for what it was, given their limited resources. One can only hope for a part 2. I would have liked to see the names of those who were KIA such as... This documentary is dedicated to those men who gave their lives, etc... Probably an additional 2-3 minutes of time at the end.

My best to you and your continuing efforts,

*Rick Blythe*

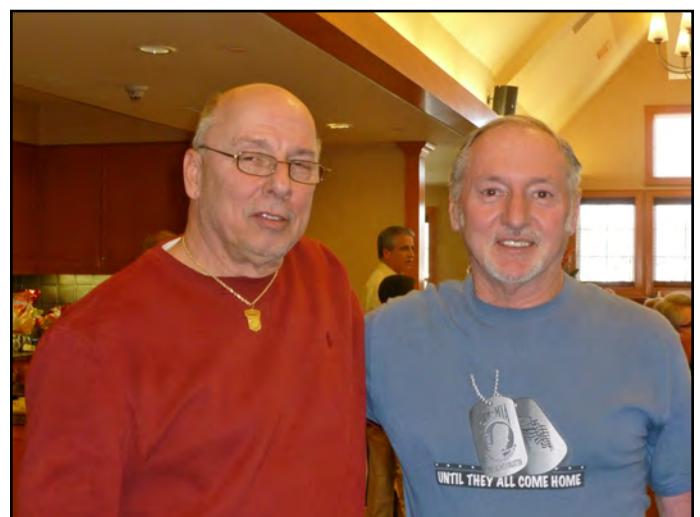
*HHC 2-506*



THE GHOST OF RIPCORD PREMIER was ....  
One word-Emotional Two words - Great Job  
My deepest respect to those who serve both, then and now. I am proud to be an American!!!

*Nadine Garrabrant*

*(Guest)*



*Frank Marshall, Dave Synder*

## INCOMING MAIL

To the Veteran Friends of SSG William Edward Jones: Would you have a photo of him for the Vietnam Memorial (VVMF)? His photo is missing from all the Major Vietnam Web Sites plus the new one being built in Washington DC called "Faces on the Wall". A High School Yearbook photo would be fine or a Newspaper or Book photo.

We are doing this for the new Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC that broke ground in November 2012. The photos will be displayed in this memorial once it is completed in 2014. Here is the link to that site: <http://www.buildthecenter.org>. We have been searching for photos of these Veterans since 2006 and we need some help. Some of these Veterans we don't have very much information on so we can try and track down a photo.

*Sincerely,  
Jim Reece,  
VVMF Volunteer.  
reecejim@yahoo.com*

---

My mother's cousin was Virgil Bixby, who was killed in action in this engagement. I never knew Virgil because he died in Vietnam 2 years before I was born, but I would like to know more about him, if anyone recalls anything. If not, I would still like to have membership in this organization, if you will allow it, simply to know more about the battle and the men who served with my cousin.

Thank you very much for your warm welcome. That would be something fantastic to receive pictures of Virgil should you come across them. It would be very cool to take them to the next family reunion.

*Thank you very much and God Bless.*

*Michael Ort  
Associate Member  
mort@kc.rr.com*

---

There is so much I can't remember, I do not wish to try and be part of something I wasn't involved in, but for the life of me I didn't know what month I went or left Nam until I checked my 214... It was May 26, 1970- April 26, 1971. I was with 101st Airborne Div., Co B, 2nd 501st Inf... Do not recall what platoon.

I do remember many good and bad times. Often worked the Ashau Valley area. Don't know how I could forget Ripcord, but I forgot many things I am just recently remembering.

All I ask for is help in knowing the truth. Thank you for this site.

*Jack Kato  
B/2-501st Inf  
Vietnam 70-71*

---

I would like to hear from others from Alpha Company that knew me.

*Robert Nichol  
Alpha Company 2/501  
Rnichol01@aol.com*

---

I served at FSB A4 (Con Thien) during the Ripcord siege. A close friend of mine (Mark Minch) was with the Artillery there. I went to visit him at FSB Jack shortly after the evac of Ripcord. To this day I'm amazed the dedication and bravery shown by everyone there.

*Robert Brunette  
HHB 5th BN 4TH Arty,  
1st BDG 5th Inf Div Mech  
rbrunette@att.net*

---

It was my distinct honor to save lives and serve with the 326 Med Bn. I crash landed on the side of Ripcord when a little bird told me we were on fire after being shot up on a hoist mission.

On July 21, I was shot down in an LZ while trying to evacuate wounded from D/1-506th. I was shot up and shot down nine times during my tour. The majority of times was in support of Ripcord operations. I guess the NVA just didn't like us even though we had those big red crosses, targets, on our aircraft.

To all those that served and those that didn't make it, your service was honorable and never to be forgotten! That's why we have the wall and organizations like this. Thank you for your service and welcome home!!

*Allen Schwartz  
326th Medical Battalion  
ajllamas@q.com*

## INCOMING MAIL

As an aircraft commander with C/159 (Playtex) I flew supplies (ass and trash) to Ripcord through the time it was active although I was not in on the initial insertion or the extraction. I think other companies did those.

There was a unit (105s) that was inserted on an FSB just before the rainy season and got stuck there for several months. I think it was Ripcord because after they were extracted several months later I remember when Ripcord was opened again in March. I thought I didn't know they had opened it again.

My understanding at the time was that the initial occupation was only planned for a week or so to shoot up the A valley and they got caught by the rain. I was notified by the ops sgt late one night about February that the guys on Ripcord could see lights out on the coast and assign a crew to pick up a load at Camp Sally and try to get into Ripcord.

I decided to fly the mission myself as aircraft commander but I asked CW2 Bob Sleigh, one of my top aircraft commanders, to go along as my copilot. This was highly unusual but Bob didn't hesitate. We got our gear, met our crew at the Chinook, and flew to Sally.

The helo was one with the upgraded engines so we picked up a double load. I think it was 16,000 lbs. of "C's".

We met an escort Cobra at the foothills and started flying blind to the West about five minutes at low level just below the clouds. With the gunship beside us we had to have our navigation lights on. Our escort did too. We were seeing so many flashes from the ground that it was obvious we would be hit so Bob released the Cobra to leave and we were able to turn the lights off. There wasn't much chance there would be anyone else out there with us. We didn't really want to be there either. The ground fire stopped when they couldn't see us anymore. After a while (the force be with us) said to turn right and after a few more minutes we knew Ripcord was close so Bob called up the pathfinder on the hill to ask if he could hear us. He did but said they were again in the clouds. Bob told the pathfinder to pop a hand flare. We could see the light from the flare ahead and above us and the trees going up into the clouds.

We made a level approach to the trees below the

clouds and hovered up toward the flare as the pathfinder kept one lit. Thus we were able to drop off what we thought were badly needed supplies.

We could not go back the way we came without crashing and had no choice but to make a vertical takeoff (ITO), not a normal thing for a Chinook. It was successful and we headed for Sally and requested a radar controlled approach to get down from the clouds.

As a crew, we discussed how the guys on Ripcord needed help and we all agreed we should try to get another load to them. We refueled, picked up a second load, and were again able to get it to Ripcord. By the time we made another ITO and refueled at Sally, I was so tired that I decided we had to go back to our base. This story was never reported because I was afraid of a court martial for the risk we took. We all would have done it again for the guys on the hill, they deserved everything we could do for them. They were America's finest.

So Frank, there is the whole story. I have always wondered how hungry, cold, miserable the guys on the hill were and if it was indeed Ripcord or what FSB it was. I would love to talk to that pathfinder who helped us stay alive with his flares. If anybody has any information on this I would be happy to hear it.

*John Balkenhol*

*C-159th ASHB*

*brenda1752@hotmail.com*

---

On April, 2012, I published my Vietnam War Memoir titled: Echoes of a Distant Past: Screaming Eagles, Vietnam War Memoirs, 1969-70. It details the 2/502's (O-Deuce) role in the Battle of Hills 714 and 882 during Operation Texas Star, and which was fought in the general area of Fire Support Base Veghel. This battle was fought during the latter part of April through the month of May 1970 on the high eastern mountainous jungle of the A Shau Valley, which was situated directly south of Firebase Ripcord. The Battle of Hills 714 and 882 resulted in over 200 US casualties; 30 of which, were KIAs from the ranks of the 2/502 (O-Deuce). This battle preceded the Battle of Ripcord, which culminated on July 1-23rd.

*Eraldo Lucero*

*2nd/502nd Infantry, Alpha Co.*

*marshallrio@aol.com*

I can't remember my last two months in country (time at AO Ripcord) so I'm looking for help navigating the Vietnam archive site at Texas Tech. Am reading Nolan's book but wondering what else is there. Thanks.

*Dale Vanderbloemen*  
D 2/501  
dale@catwoodstudios.com

---

initial responsibilities were to be personally attached to support the ground troops. Hence the confusion, but I would leave it as it is currently.

Bill and I had several opportunities to work together and I remember him fondly as a great guy and someone who missed his family a great deal. I sometimes carried a camera and I have a picture of Bill and Ross, his RTO on Hill 101, which I don't recall where that was.

I have another picture of a steel helmet that was on display at Camp Evans that was riddled by a direct mortar shell hit on our first attempt to establish Ripcord, on March 1st. It is believed to be Bill's helmet, as he was a KIA on that mission.

*Lt. Michael C. Doyle*  
B 2/506 - Platoon Leader E 2/506 - 81 mm Mortar  
Platoon- Ripcord S-3 Air 2/506 - Kathryn

---

I was on ripcord on the last day

*James Hoehne*  
E/2/506 recon  
dago52@hotmail.com

Would like to hear from others from Alpha Company that knew me.

*Robert Nichol*  
Alpha Company 2/501  
Rnichol01@aol.com

I Served with both Robert Layton and Robert Worrall  
B 2/501

*lkohmets@gtmc.net*

## Replies to last issue incoming mail

Hi my name is Phil Michaud and I knew Lt. Hall. I was assigned to the 319th as a Battery Commander during that period. Lt Hall was a member of Bravo Battery, but was assigned to the 506 Inf Bn as a forward observer. I was in command of A Battery from Jan 70 to mid-July 70 at which time I replaced CPT. Dave Rich on Ripcord. I stayed in command of B Battery for a few weeks and then returned to A Battery until Nov. I stayed in the Army and retired in 1994 as a Colonel. Hope this info clears up the issue.

*Warmest Regards,*  
*Phil Michaud*  
plmichaud1@comcast.net

---

William (Bill) Wall was attached to B Company 2/506, while I was Platoon Leader, in February '70, as an Artillery Forward Observer (FO). His Artillery unit designation is where he was officially assigned, but his

What a treat to read David Campbell's letter in the Spring 2013 Newsletter relating his membership in the Ripcord Association. I remember him vividly, having

personally flown with him as our flight medic.

His bravery is exemplified by their mission to evacuate the wounded soldiers of D/1/506 who were in the process of being over-run. He flew with 1st Lt. Alan Swartz as aircraft commander on 21 July 1970 to "The LZ just east of Ripcord".

We had been in the LZ three times and had received small arms, RPG and mortar fire. I had Sitreped Lt. Swartz on base leg. Despite my warnings, and those of the D Company radio operator, they elected to extract more of the wounded D/1/506 GI's. On the LZ, they took an RPG and were disabled.

We were able to evacuate the crew and a couple of more wounded on our fourth sortie. On our fifth sortie, our medic, Brent Law was KIA and our copilot Douglas Rupert was WIA and our ship was barely able to make it back to Camp Evans with five additional D/1/506 soldiers.

Their dedication to their D Company brothers was typical of David's devotion and was routinely displayed without regard for his own safety.

*Thanks so much,*  
*Laurence Rosen (and still proud to be "Eagle Dustoff 91" and honorary member of D/1/506)*

## 2013 Distinguished Members of the Regiment

The 506<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Assault Division honors persons who have made significant (meaning outstanding benefits to the entire Regiment beyond normal duties) contributions while serving in the Regiment and to a lesser degree contributions to the Regiment after their active service. This year ten of the honorees were involved in the battle for Fire Support Base Ripcord.

CSM Ryan L. Alfaro, (OEF)  
Paul Eugene Burkely (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
MAJ Jack Flaherty (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
Chaplain (LTC) LeRoy Fox, (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
LTG Randy House, (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
Charles Robert Lieb (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
Len Long (Vietnam)  
Frank W. Marshall (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
LTC James McCall (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
Michael Mullican (Vietnam)  
SGT Maxwell D. Ramsey, (OIF)  
COL James S. Roach (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
LTC Terrence M. Smith (Vietnam)  
LTC J. Cully Warren (Vietnam)  
Gary L. Watrous (Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
CPT Don Workman (Posthumous/Vietnam) (Ripcord)  
MAJ Donald E. Zahn, (WWII)  
HMOR:  
Mr. Junbauer  
Ms. Wenstedt  
Mrs. Robin Sink McClelland



*Gary Watrous receiving award from COL Valery C. Keaveny Jr*



*Little girl at DMOR 2013*

Photos by Kathy Watrous



*Gary Watrous, Capt. Hale, Charlie Lieb and Jim Campbell*



*Frank Marshall receiving award from COL Valery C. Keaveny Jr*

## Ladies and Gentlemen,

We were honored to host you this past Saturday for our Distinguished/Honorary Members of the Regiment Induction Ceremony. Thank you for all your past and present contributions to the Currahees. The Brigade Public Affairs Office took some great photos of the event, and videoed both the DMOR and Colors Casing ceremonies in their entirety.

The photos are available on the Currahee Facebook Page at the following link: [www.facebook.com/4thBCT](http://www.facebook.com/4thBCT)

The video for the DMOR ceremony is available on DVIDS at the following link: <http://www.dvidshub.net/video/286909/currahee-dmor-hmor-ceremony>

The video for the Colors Casing Ceremony is available at the following link: <http://www.dvidshub.net/video/286889/currahee-colors-casing-ceremony>

The Currahee Facebook Page will also provide frequent photos and updates from our upcoming deployment.

It was truly humbling experience to host all of you, and we look forward to continuing to honor the Currahee tradition on our next Rendezvous with Destiny. Please let me know if you need anything. Currahee!

*Respectfully,  
John Palmer  
CPT, AR  
Brigade Adjutant  
4th Brigade Combat Team  
101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)  
(270) 412-4726*



*Fred & Micki Spaulding, Frank Marshall, Jim Campbell*



*Jack Flaherty, Frank Marshall, Gary Watrous*



*Jim McCall, Gary Radford, Tex Campbell, Wayne Spruill*

## DMOR: Requirements

1. Must have served with 506<sup>th</sup> Regiment
2. Shown or displayed a duty to Regiment/unit/ company/platoon/soldier, etc above and beyond
3. Honorably discharged
4. Must be nominated by an Association member

## HMOR

1. The only difference is that an HMOR did not have to have served with the Regiment.

## **Robert F. Sink Memorial Library Fort Campbell Kentucky**

I would like to thank the Ripcord Association for inviting us to your newsletter. We are honored and look forward to this long and joyful relationship.

The recent events at Fort Campbell permitted Larissa Dougherty, my assistant, and I to meet several more Currahee brothers and their families and to help celebrate the induction of Distinguished and Honorary members to the Regiment. Of course, our name sake's daughter, Robin, was especially meaningful to us. She will be visiting Campbell again to catalog and assist in creating another display here of her father's artifacts. We have a small display of Gen. Sink's medals, his West Point jacket, "Strac bowl", and riding boots. Our goal is to display as much of his history and memorabilia as possible.



Our facility was opened in 1966 and dedicated to the memory of Gen. Robert F. Sink in 1967. We house a collection of over 70,000 pieces which not only include books but also books on CD, music on CD, DVDs, and Blu-Rays. We subscribe to approximately 200 magazines, which are patron advocated, to include children's publications like Sports Illustrated-Kids and National Geographic-Kids. Our current director, Mr. James E. Moore hails from North Carolina and has been with the Army Library System for over 30 years. He earned his Master's in Library Science (MLS) from UNC-Chapel Hill.

We are located at 38 Screaming Eagle Blvd just across the street from Garrison HQ; which used to be DV HQ for those of us who remember the original HQ. Please feel free to stop by anytime you are in town or

just passing through. You're welcome to ask for me personally if you visit and you are welcome to contact me directly. I look forward to seeing you all again and most definitely meeting more of my Currahee brothers at the upcoming Ripcord Reunion in October.

We appreciate the 506<sup>th</sup> and Ripcord Association members who attended our open house. Our, your, library is thankful for your service to our country.

We are always here for you.

We will never forget.

We will always stand alone.

Together. Currahee!

Contact info:

[lora.gassett@us.army.mil](mailto:lora.gassett@us.army.mil),

(270) 956-3352/798-5729

### **Future Ripcord Reunions**

#### **2013 Ripcord Reunion**

**Myrtle Beach, SC**

**Oct 9 - 12, 2013**

This year's reunion in Myrtle Beach will be one of our largest reunions, so make your reservations for the hotel Now to be guaranteed a room

#### **2014 Ripcord Reunion**

**Myrtle Beach, SC**

**Oct 8 - 11, 2014**

#### **2015 Ripcord Reunion**

**Springfield, MO**

**Oct 7 - 10, 2015**

**RIPCORD REUNION 2013**  
**MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA**

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

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

**DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:**

Before June 30, 2013, \$75 per adult  
July 1 through 31, 2013 \$80 per adult,  
August 1 through 31, 2013 \$85 per adult.  
After September 1, 2013 \$90 per adult.

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

**Registration fee due no later than October 4, 2013.**

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 5 October 2013

**AGENDA**

**Wednesday, October 9:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)

**Thursday, October 10:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)

**Friday, October 11:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7PM)

**Saturday, October 12:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.  
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.

**Sunday, October 13:** Homeward bound

Thursday golf outing (not included in the registration fee). Check here if you will play  .

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY AND  
BY September 9, 2013**

**CALL 1-888-265-8846**

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

# **Firebase Ripcord Association October 9 – 13, 2013**

## **Hotel Reservation form for**

Sands Ocean Club Resort

9550 Shore Drive

Myrtle Beach, SC 29572

**Phone: (888) 265-8846**

Group code: **RIPCORD ASSOCIATION**

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

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

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

**Tell them you are with the RIPCORD ASSOCIATION when you register.**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Rooms \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Room needs: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Deposit Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Signature Authorizing Hotel's Use of Credit Card: \_\_\_\_\_

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

All cash payments are accepted upon departure.

Check-in time: 3:00 PM

Check-out Time: 11:00 AM

**To confirm reservations, return form to the hotel or call by September 9, 2013.  
We look forward to seeing you in October!**