

RIPCORD REPORT

Number 45 August 1998
For Friends and Survivors of Fire Support Base Ripcord, Republic of Vietnam
March 12-July 23, 1970

Nolan nears completion of Ripcord book

BLACKWELL, MO—Keith William Nolan, author of nearly a dozen histories of the Vietnam War, reports that he is "about 90 pages into writing" the Ripcord saga. "My research is basically completed," he said during a recent phone conversation, "now I have to find time to finish the writing."

Many members of the Ripcord Association helped Nolan with his research effort by providing first-hand accounts of their part in the battle, and making reference to others who had played important roles. Some members provided taped interviews, such as Herb Koenigsbauer, a former operations officer of 2d Battalion, 506th Infantry.

Koenigsbauer left the battalion, which was responsible for the defense of Fire Base Ripcord, in early July, just as the siege began, to take a position on the operations staff of the 101st Airborne Division. The new operations officer for the battalion was Capt. Bill Williams, who was wounded on July 10.

"Koenigsbauer wanted to return to the fire base," Nolan said, "but his tour as an operations officer was up, and they wouldn't let him back." Maj. Kenneth Tanner became the new operations officer for the 2/506th. Tanner was killed along with the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Andre C. Lucas, on July 23, the day of the withdrawal from the beleaguered fire base.

Nolan, who has recently moved with his wife to a place in the Missouri countryside, said that "Presidio Press is eager for me to finish the book."

Those members who wish to contact Nolan may do so at his new address.

Keith William Nolan

Reunion '98 plans set for Atlantic City, N.J.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN—Fred Spaulding, reunion coordinator and former S3-Air of 3d Brigade, has made arrangements for this year's reunion at Atlantic City, N.J., for the period October 19-22. Assisting Fred is Frank Marshall of Bensalem, PA, a former member of A Co., 2/506th.

Everyone should have received a "Ripcord Sitrep" in the mail a couple of months ago outlining reunion plans. If you haven't responded yet, now would be a good time to do so. Here are the details.

Fill out the form provided by Fred and mail it with your deposit or credit card information to: The Holiday Inn Boardwalk. If you don't have the reservation form, it is reproduced in this report.

Send a check or money order to Frank Marshall for the \$70 registration fee for the reunion. This money covers the hospitality room, refreshments and tour.

Deadline for reserving a room and registration is September 18.

A.S.A.P.



DON'T DELAY, MAIL TODAY!



A.S.A.P.

There has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefitted.—Sun Tzu, 400-320 B.C., *The Art of War*

You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war.—Napoleon I, 1769-1821

However absorbed a commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is sometimes necessary to take the enemy into account.—attributed to Winston Churchill, 1874-1965

Remember, gentlemen, an order that can be misunderstood, will be misunderstood.—Helmuth von Moltke ("The Elder"), 1800-1891

The cult of numbers is the supreme fallacy of modern warfare.—B. H. Liddell Hart: *Thoughts on War*, 1944

Bodycount!—Vietnam War

It is a law of life yet to be broken that a nation can only earn the right to live soft by being prepared to die hard in defense of its living.—Sir Archibald Wavell: *Other Men's Flowers*, 1945

Influence is founded on seven specific diplomatic virtues, namely: truthfulness, precision, calm, good temper, patience, modesty, and loyalty.—Sir Harold Nicholson, 1886-?, *Diplomacy*

A diplomat's words must have no relation to actions—otherwise what kind of diplomacy is it? Words are one thing, actions another. Good words are a concealment of bad deeds. Sincere diplomacy is no more possible than dry water or iron wood.—attributed to J. V. Stalin, 1879-1951

These pithy quotes and sayings come from *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* by Robert Debs Heinl, Jr., colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, 1966.

Financial supporters over the past year

Ken Hamilton, C/2-506
Paul Burkey, C/2-506
Frank Gonzales, E/2-506
Boy Lynch
Ben Harrison, 3d Bde
Charlie Tipton, C/2-506
Phil Michaud, B/2-319
Richard Blythe, HHC/2-506
Wayne Coe, 187th AHC, 1967-78
Bob Seitz, Recon/2-506
Vincent Kenyon
Tom Rubsam, B/2-506

Funds raised at reunion

Special thanks to all those at Reunion '97 who chipped in at the banquet. These stalwarts included:

Ben and Carolyn Harrison, 3d Bde
Bob Judd and Berniece Nielsen, B/2-506
Jim and Marilyn Kilgore, E/2-506
Layne Hammons, C/2-506
Tommy and Judy Counts, D/2-506
Ben and Lillian Peters, B/2-506
Raymond and Judy Williams, HHB/2-319
Tom Manbeck, C/2-506
Jim Campbell, C/2-506
Gary and Patty Radford, D/2-506
Terry and Susan Stanger, A/159 Avn
Fred Behrens, B/101 Avn
Tony Cox, D/1-506
Alfred and Bonnie Martin, A/2-11
Frank Marshall, A/2-506
Paul Burkey, C/2-506
Otis Livingston, 1/506
Fred Spaulding, HHC/3d Bde
Rod and Becky Thompson (parents of Randy Thompson, D/1-506)
Merle and Pat Delegrange, D/1-506
Ron Lloyd and Danielle Lamarre (good friends)

With the hope that no one was forgotten.

LZ Windy Hill

NOKESVILLE, VA—It's been some time since the last newsletter came out. Too long, in fact, and you have my apologies. But, to offer a weak explanation ...

Ya see, there was this gut-pull of a move last summer (note the new address). Then there was Monica and Bill splashed all over the news media and I had to stay glued to CNN for about three months straight ... arrrgggghh! Things got busier'n you-know-what at work, and I had (just had) to travel to Europe and Asia and ... hey, someone's gotta do the tough tours.

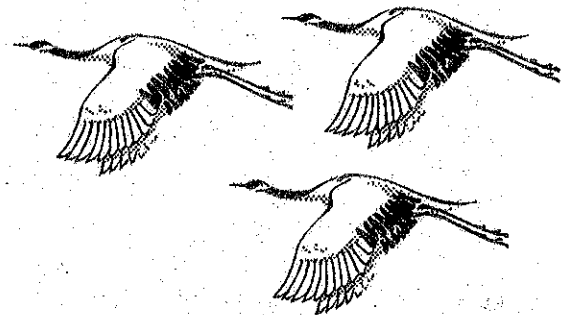
And, then ... MY HARD DISK CRASHED!

I know, I know ... "so what," you say, "just deal with it." So I am, kinda, sorta, mostly. Thing is, a lotta Ripcord stuff on disk got lost, so I'm having to work from hard-copy archives. Anyway ... you got the picture.

The good news is that my body fluids aren't on some woman's dress hanging in her mom's closet.

Hope you all enjoy this issue. Keep in touch. Oh, and one more thing ... SEE YOU AT THE REUNION.

Chuck Hawkins, LZ Windy Hill
Editor, Ripcord Report



Prototype CH-54s (Skycrane) in aerial formation.

Capital Beltway humor and hubris

This is from *The Washington Post*, Monday, Oct. 13, 1997, from Al Kamen's "In The Loop" column. I swear, I didn't make this up.

Card Sharp

A Loop Fan got a letter from Bill Clinton the other day with a card enclosed, showing a drawing of some children and a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt that "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Inside, the card reads: "May all your birthday dreams come true. Happy Birthday Hillary."

"When Hillary turns 50 on October 26," Clinton said, "I want to surprise her with birthday wishes from her supporters around the country." (She'll never suspect all the identical cards were an orchestrated effort.)

"Because Hillary has dedicated herself to protecting children and helping them follow their dreams, I think the card is especially fitting," Clinton said, going on about how much his administration has done for kids.

"But there is still much we can do for our children," he said. "And the best way you can help me fight for our kids is [Ready?] by electing more Democrats to Congress in 1998."

"... So, along with your signed birthday card to Hillary, I hope you'll include a generous gift to help our party build its campaign treasury for next year's congressional campaigns."

No flowers, just checks.



Reunion '97 was **OUTSTANDING!**

Will you be there for '98?

Short takes on the reunion festivities in October 1997 in Mobile, Alabama.

Yes, it was a hospitable suite

Most of us left the hostilities in 'Nam 27 years before. So, Reunion '97 was a time for being hospitable ... that's why the hotel gave us a special room on the top floor overlooking downtown Mobile. Or, was it because they wanted to make sure they could keep an eye on us? Hmmm. One never knows for sure.

There was a Navy reunion of some sort going on next door, and we all got along just fine. And, down the hall and through another doorway, was the hotel lounge. And the barmaid got better looking as time went by. Ask Tom Manbeck (C/2-506) ... on second thought ... hey, just kidding.

Good to see old friends and new ones

John Mihalko (Recon/2-506), who has attended each and every Ripcord Reunion, made it in from Colorado. Layne Hammons (C/2-506) arrived from Louisiana for his first, as did Tommy Counts (D/2-506) and his wife Judy from Tennessee. Jim Campbell (C/2-506) drove in from Louisiana for his second reunion.

A couple of D/1-506 currahees showed up from Indiana, Tony Cox and Merle Delegrange and wife Pat. Bob Judd (B/2-506) and Berniece Nielsen from Michigan made the reunion a planned stop on a tour of the eastern U.S. Jim and Marylin Kilgore (E/2-506) made it a relatively short trip from their home in Alabama.

Florida couple Ron Lloyd and Danielle Lamarre joined their friends Terry and Susan Stanger (A/159 Avn) from Indiana. Terry was on the Chinook that was shot down on July 18. Paul Burkey (C/2-506) came down from Ohio, and Fred Spaulding (3d Bde), who sorta honchoed the affair, arrived from Indiana.

Ben Peters (B/2-506) and his wife Lillian joined us from Georgia, and Ray and Judy Williams (HNB/2-319) left the West Virginia country to be at Mobile. Gary Radford (D/2-506), who returned to what remains of FSB Ripcord in 1996, and his wife Patty made it from Pennsylvania, as did Frank Marshall (A/2-506). Fred Behrens (B/101 Avn), a frequent reunion goer, came down from Virginia.

Otis Livingston, who commanded 2/501, arrived from South Carolina. Ben Harrison (3d Bde CO) and his

wife Carolyn made it from Texas. Ben gave the keynote address at the reunion banquet, which will be published in a subsequent *Ripcord Report*.

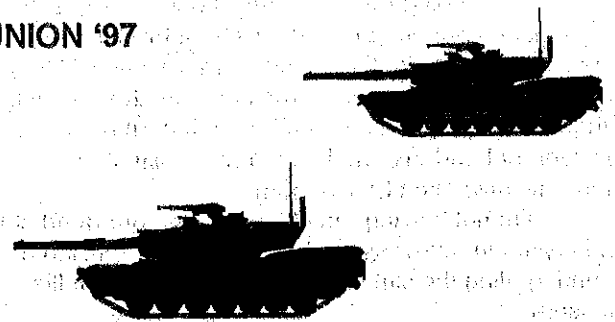
It was a special pleasure to have Rod and Becky Thompson join the reunion. Rod and Becky's son, Randy Thompson, served with distinction in D/1-506 during Ripcord. Randy worked for the Park Service in the Grand Canyon until his untimely death two years ago.

Is it real, or is it a ...

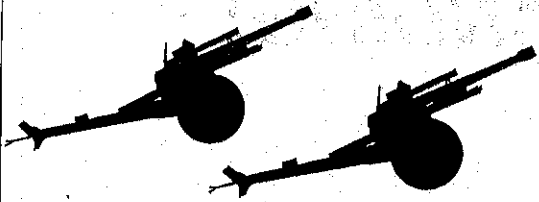
Frank Marshall, never known to be shy or retiring, showed up at the reunion with hair. Last time we saw Frank, he didn't have much foliage on his noggin. Fact is, with a little polishing, Frank's dome would'a made a good navigation marker in Mobile Bay.

Well, now ... Frank's faux hair looked sooo good that those who didn't know him though it was real. Yep. Frank fooled 'em all. That is, until he decided it was time for show and tell the last night of the reunion. At first, some of the ladies thought the hairpiece was alive, but when no one shot it, folks figured it was okay. Thanks, Frank. Will we have a repeat performance this year?

REUNION '97



TANKS ... FOR THE MEMORIES.



Sound Off!

Commentary, opinion, beefs and gripes ... and maybe a tall tale or two.

A story to live by

by Ann Wells (*Los Angeles Times*)

My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie."

He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure on it was still attached.

"Jan bought this the first time we went to New York, at least eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the occasion."

He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the mortician. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment, then he slammed the drawer shut and turned to me.

"Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him and my niece attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning to California from the midwestern town where my sister's family lives. I thought about all the things she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special.

I'm still thinking about his words, and they've changed my life.

I'm reading more and dusting less. I'm sitting on the deck and admiring the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden. I'm spending more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I'm trying to recognize these moments now and cherish them.

I'm not "saving" anything; we use our good china and crystal for every special event—such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, the first camellia blossom.

I wear my good blazer to the market if I feel like it. My theory is if I look prosperous, I can shell out \$38.49 for one small bag of groceries without wincing. I'm not saving my good perfume for special parties; clerks in hardware stores and tellers in banks have noses that function as well as my party-going friends.

"Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see and hear and do it now. I'm not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrow we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. I like to think she would have gone out for a Chinese dinner, her favorite food. I'm guessing—I'll never know.

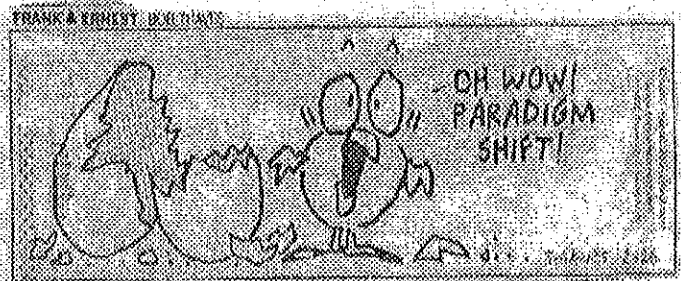
It's these little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew that my hours were limited. Angry because I put off seeing good friends whom I was going to get in touch with, someday. Angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write, one of these days. Angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I'm trying very hard not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives.

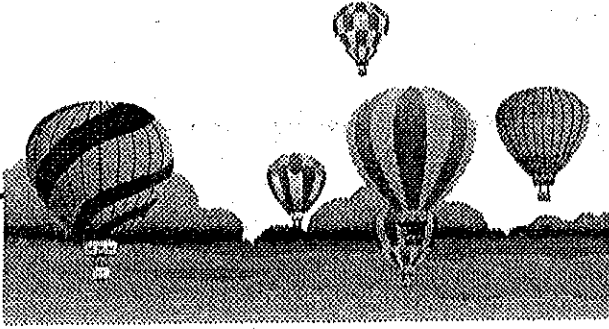
And every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it is special. Every day, every minute, every breath truly is ... a gift from God.

With special thanks to Joe Bulger, an old and dear friend, who passed these words of life along. You, dear Ripcord friends and survivors, might want to pass them along to someone else.

For a fun and interesting visit on the Web, you may want to check out Joe's site at: <http://www.halcyon.com/jbulger>

Enjoy.





2.7 million vets in Web database

Dick Johnson's MIE website gives you access to a database of 2.7 million DoD personnel who served in Vietnam! (Dick Johnson is the author of *How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Ever Was in the Military*, and a very nice fellow indeed.)

<http://www.militaryusa.com/enhance/enhance.html-ssi>

I understand its origins are with the agent orange class action people. Remember, you enter a name (be sure not to use any commas) and it gives you anyone with that name or close to that name, branch of service, rank, MOS and race. That is all it gives you ... from that point on it is your problem if you're looking for someone. (Yahoo's People Search might be a good second step.)

This is a very handy tool for finding the whole names of many we've forgotten. It is also a great way of identifying phonies!

Mike M-60 Kelley
Sacramento, CA

Still troubled over 'Nam

I'm currently taking a course on the Vietnam War and have been reading the book *Where the Dominos Fell: American and Vietnam, 1945-1995*, by James S. Olson and Randy Roberts. I was very ignorant of the war when I was in it and admittedly very naive.

What this book is telling me is very troubling to me because it makes me wonder if the anti-war people may have been right in their opposition. It was not 'til years later that I began having second thoughts about the nobility of the effort. I am not at all questioning the nobility and valor of the men with whom I served. Your opinion will be greatly appreciated.

I cannot attend the reunion this year ... another wedding. Last year it was my son being married. This year I am officiating at the wedding of a former church member in Vermont.

Bob Smoker
Red Lion, PA

INCOMING

What a mess

Airborne!

Thanks for the latest issue of *Ripcord Report*. I read it with interest from cover to cover. I had heard rumor of the organization, but never really knew the extent of the outfit until I was contacted by Keith Nolan. He was given my name by Herb Koenigsbauer, an old Army buddy and still a good friend.

I submitted my report to Nolan—plus photos, documents and a cassette tape of my recollections of Ripcord. I relieved Dave Rich as battery commander on Ripcord on the 16th of July and stayed in command until the evacuation. What a mess!

I hope to meet some of you someday. I retired three and a half years ago to the north woods and I'm having a great time. I winter in Florida, so I drive through your LZ. Maybe we can have a visit.

Again, airborne all the way!

Phil Michaud
St. Augatha, ME

P.S., I don't know what dues are, but enclosed is a token check for paper and postage.

Only yesterday

Thanks very much for the *Ripcord Report*. I enjoy reading it very much. It sure brings back a lot of memories. Sometimes it seems that time was only yesterday, and again so long ago.

I am sending some support for the newsletter. I should have done this sooner and have no excuse for not doing so. I guess I'll owe some pushups.

I've been keeping in touch with Layne Hammons and Lt. Campbell. I've changed jobs since Reunion 96. I got rified in November 1996. I now work at range control at Ft. Bragg. I'm a fire and ground controller. I control all ranges, artillery firing and all drop zones. This is all run by radar. Well, I go for now. I'm not much on writing.

Charlie Tipton
Springlake, N.C.

Hill 1000 ... still trying to get it right

Ben Harrison, 3d Brigade commander during Ripcord, expands on earlier controversial remarks

What really happened on Hill 1000? Was C Co. commander Jeff Wilcox saint or sinner? Was 2/506th CO Lucas too eager to pay an overdue butcher's bill? Or, was the battalion, and C Co. in particular, stuck in a tough spot with no good answer?

BELTON, TX—In the November 1994 *Ripcord Report* you published an article where I gave a brief account of the siege of Ripcord from the brigade commander's viewpoint. Apparently it was too brief in certain areas, especially dealing with the assault of Hill 1000 on July 8 by Charlie and Delta companies of the 2/506th.

I stated, "The early July attacks by Delta and Charlie Company, 2/506, were very disappointing, resulting in several friendly casualties and the refusal of Charlie Company's commander to lead his men up the hill. He was relieved of command, but at Lt. Col. Andre C. Lucas' request, I did not court-martial him for cowardice."

Keith William Nolan is trying to fully develop the story of the July 8 Hill 1000 fight and has multiple inputs. I will be very interested in how the details flesh out.

I joined Lucas at the base of Hill 1000. He told me in private that Capt. Wilcox refused to resume the attack. Lucas was bitter about Wilcox's act of cowardice noting that he was a West Point graduate. He wanted him relieved but not court-martialed. I agreed to let Lucas handle it.

Recently, Jim Campbell, the only other officer in C Co. on July 8, gave me his detailed account of events on that fateful day. As Nolan is expected to fully cover them, I will give only a brief summary of Campbell's remarks re the relief of Wilcox.

C Co. was given the mission of taking the westernmost knoll of Hill 1000 and D Co. the nearer objective, the easternmost knoll. Wilcox led his badly understrength company of 29 men up Hill 1000 and over mostly barren hill top the last 500 feet. Upon reaching the westernmost knoll—their objective—they came under heavy fire; mostly from the westernmost knoll. Direct enemy fire caused casualties, but no fatalities. D Co. was pinned down to the east, well short of their objective.

From his helicopter, Lucas ordered Wilcox to cross the open terrain of the saddle and take the easternmost knoll. Wilcox suggested that his company lay down a base of fire across the open area to support D Co.'s continuation of the attack to take the easternmost knoll.

Campbell reports that Lucas instructed Wilcox to carry out his order to attack. Wilcox led his troops out into the open saddle and received heavy direct fire killing two men and wounding others. Campbell monitored a radio transmission from a LOH pilot advising Lucas that a large number of enemy were moving through the jungle around the back side of C Co.

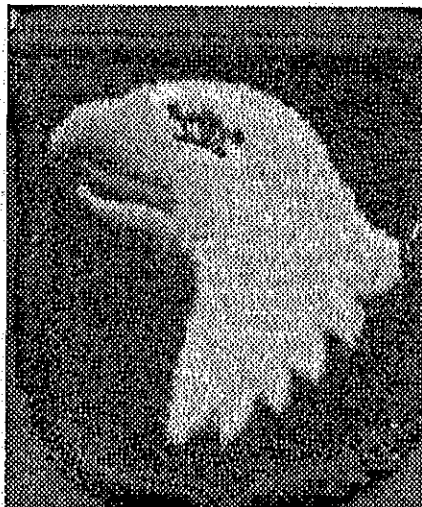
Right after this report of additional enemy moving, Lucas ordered C Co. to withdraw to the base of Hill 1000. Wilcox led the evacuation of the dead and wounded from their exposed position in the saddle of Hill 1000 while taking more casualties.

Jim Campbell gave me an eyewitness account of repeated acts of bravery and heroism by Capt. Jeff Wilcox on July 8 on Hill 1000. Campbell saw the refusal of Wilcox to resume the attack on Hill 1000 late on the afternoon of July 8 by his badly battered, wounded and exhausted understrength company as a genuine and justified act of concern for the well being of his troops. Campbell said he and Wilcox thought they would resume the attack up Hill 1000 the next morning, and were surprised to learn instead of their movement to FSB Ripcord.

I did not know the size and condition of Charlie and Delta companies or the details of their previous actions that day; only that Lucas characterized Wilcox as a coward and wanted him relieved of command.

A court-martial of Wilcox may have done him a favor.

Sincerely, and Curraheel
Ben L. Harrison
Maj. Gen., U.S. Army, retired



**ROOMS ARE BEING HELD AT
THE HOLIDAY INN BOARDWALK
FOR
RIPCORN ASSOCIATION
October 19-22, 1998**

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE _____

Package Price

One adult in the room pays \$323
Two adults in the room pay \$410 or \$205 per person
Additional room nights midweek are \$69 per night plus tax
Please indicate additional midweek room nights _____, if any.

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

Number of Rooms: _____ Person(s) sharing the room (print name):
1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____

Check Room Type: King _____ Double _____ Handicap _____
Smoking _____ Non-Smoking _____

Credit Card Number: _____
Expiration Date: _____
Signature: _____

In order to guarantee availability and group rate, please reserve all guestrooms prior to:
SEPTEMBER 18, 1998

BANQUET MENU SELECTION

(Check one and the number of meal(s) for you/your group.)

BEEF _____, HOW MANY _____ CHICKEN _____, HOW MANY _____

Check in time is 3:00 p.m., and check out time is 11:00 a.m. Cancellations must be received 72 hours prior to arrival to guarantee deposit refund. All reservations must be guaranteed to a credit card or first night's room rate deposit is required (make checks payable to Holiday Inn Boardwalk).

Send this form, with your deposit or credit card detail and signature to: **Holiday Inn Boardwalk, Chelsea Avenue and Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey 08401**

Please use one reservation form per room. **THANK YOU!**

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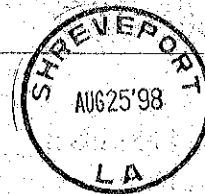
Ripcord Report is a publication of the Battle of FSB Ripcord Association, and is the authoritative voice of history of the battle.

Nolan continues work on Ripcord book

Keith Nolan reports that he is about 90 pages into writing the story of Ripcord. He's pretty much finished with the research, but if you've not contacted him and have some things to tell, now would be a great time to do so. Keith's number and address are on page 1.

You will want to read Keith's latest book, *A Hundred Miles of Bad Road*, which is a first-person account written with Dwight Birdwell. *Bad Road* tells of Birdwell's tour with the 3/4 Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division, in 1967-68. Of Cherokee heritage, Birdwell joined the Army after an impoverished upbringing in rural Oklahoma. He earned two Silver Stars and was wounded three times. Check it out at your local book store. It's a really good read! You won't be disappointed.

Ripcord Report
c/o Hawkins



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Summer 1998

28th Anniversary Issue

