

RIPCORD REPORT

Cover photo courtesy of Ruth and Merle Delagrange.

For friends and survivors of the
Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord,
RVN, March 12-July 23, 1970.

No. 53

March 2001

Welcome home!

Reunion 2000 in Shreveport ... a great time to be a soldier.



LZ KENT ISLAND

Shreveport, La. It ain't Kansas Toto.

STEVENSVILLE, Md.—It's been a too long now since the big 30-year reunion—a bit longer once this newsletter gets out. If you're like me, sometimes you rub your eyes and can't believe it all happened, that everything unfolded so perfectly. Other times you want to click your heels twice and, hopefully, return for just a brief moment.

Whatever your thoughts, Reunion 2000 is certainly a time to remember.

Ben Harrison (3rd Bde. CO) called it the "welcome home we deserved but never got." He's correct. The folks of Shreveport and Bossier City turned out to provide an awesome amount of support and media coverage.

It was more than that for the 200 or so of us who showed up, much more. The memories, thinking about those who fell in battle during the memorial service, the fellowship we share today, and friends old and new, all come together to make reunions a time of great blessing.

The 30-year anniversary of the battle was special.

It's impossible to mention everyone who had a hand in the success of the reunion—too many folks did too many terrific things to recount them all in a brief space. However, some mention of the more outstanding contributions is necessary:

- To the guys who volunteered to drive the vans to and from reunion events—thanks, it would have been a fire drill if you hadn't been so well organized and responsible.
 - To those ladies of Shreveport and Bossier City, especially Jim Campbell's wife Mary and her friends—we deeply appreciate your decorating skills and being the wonderful hostesses and representatives of your city that you were.
 - To Fred Spaulding and Jim Campbell, who did more behind-the-scenes work, preparation and organizing than one can imagine—Currahee! And a tip of the Ripcord steel pot to ya!
 - To Ben Harrison, who is going to be visiting Vietnam to try to learn about the North Vietnamese side of the battle.
 - To the citizens of Shreveport and Bossier City, with out whose support we would not have had the reunion we did.
- To the Louisiana Army National Guard, Barksdale AFB personnel, Centenary College Choir, Strathruadh Pipe and Drum Group, 101st Airborne Division color guard, and many other groups who supported the reunion ... including the volunteer van drivers!
- Keith Nolan and his family and many, many autographs.
 - And, to all of those who showed up and enjoyed the reunion in the spirit of fellowship and remembrance.

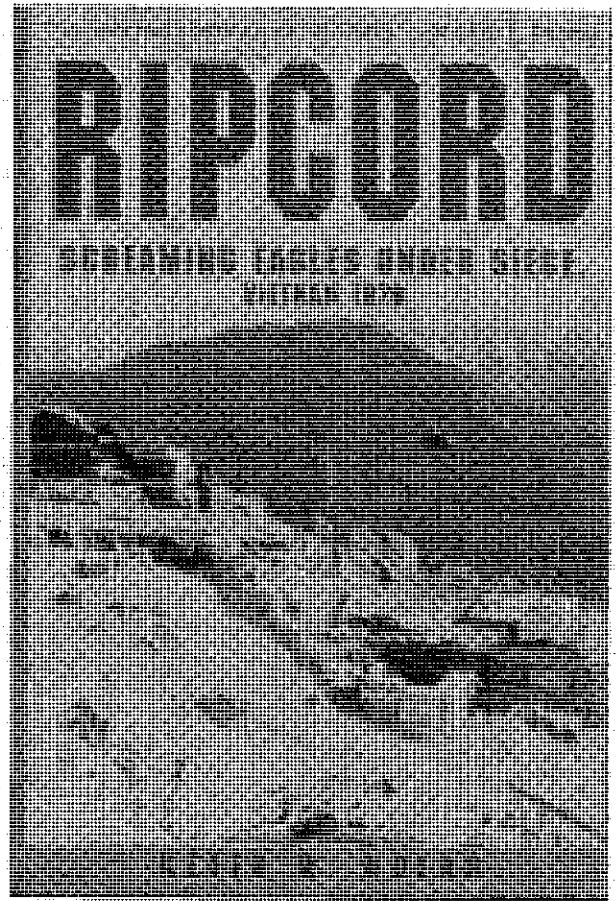
THANKS TO Y'ALL BELOW FOR DONATIONS

Danny Thompson
Bill and Sheila Williams
Bob and Judith Goldich
Chuck Shannon
Gary and Kathy Whitty
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Ronnie P. Parnell
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Wilburn Wall
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Sam Knipmyer
Kent Rowland
Bruce McCorkle
Chuck Hawkins

And special thanks to Lloyd Rahlf, Jim and Mary Campbell and Fred and Bonnie Martin for many, many reunion pictures.

Let's go fishing.





Rembert G. Rollison

The "G" stood for Gabriel, but most of us called him Rollie when we knew him as the commander of Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry in 1970. To some he was "sir" or the "Old Man," and friends and family called him Gabe. We were all touched in some way by his fighting spirit, his professionalism, and his quick Georgia wit. Rollie could make your day—in more ways than one, if need be. He brought "scunion" on the enemy (a word he coined) whenever he had the chance.

Rollie loved Andre Lucas—Black Spade, the 2/506 battalion commander—with the kind of abiding and passionate faith that only soldiers in combat truly understand. He wept when he learned of Lucas' death on July 23, 1970 as Fire Base Ripcord was being evacuated. But Rollie didn't have much time for tears. He and Delta Company were on a mission to rescue the survivors in Alpha Company who had been ravaged by an enemy battalion the afternoon before.

Later—years later—the tears and the emotion over Lucas' death were still there. "I wish it had been me instead of him," he would say, "I wish to God it had been me."

God's will is sometimes obscure to us. The man who saved so many, who pulled others out of tight spots time and again, finally met a foe he couldn't defeat.

Cancer claimed Rollie's life at 0438 hours, Wednesday, October 4, 2000. He died with dignity and with his wife Marty at his side.

Gabe, we will miss you my friend. Give our best to the other Currahees up there, and have a tin of coffee brewing for the rest of us when we join you.

A hero is one who knows how to hang on one minute longer. —Norwegian Proverb

When the will defies fear, when duty throws the gauntlet down to fate, when honor scorns to compromise with death—this is heroism. —R. G. Ingersoll: Speech in New York, May 29, 1882.

Reunion photos ... a touch of class!



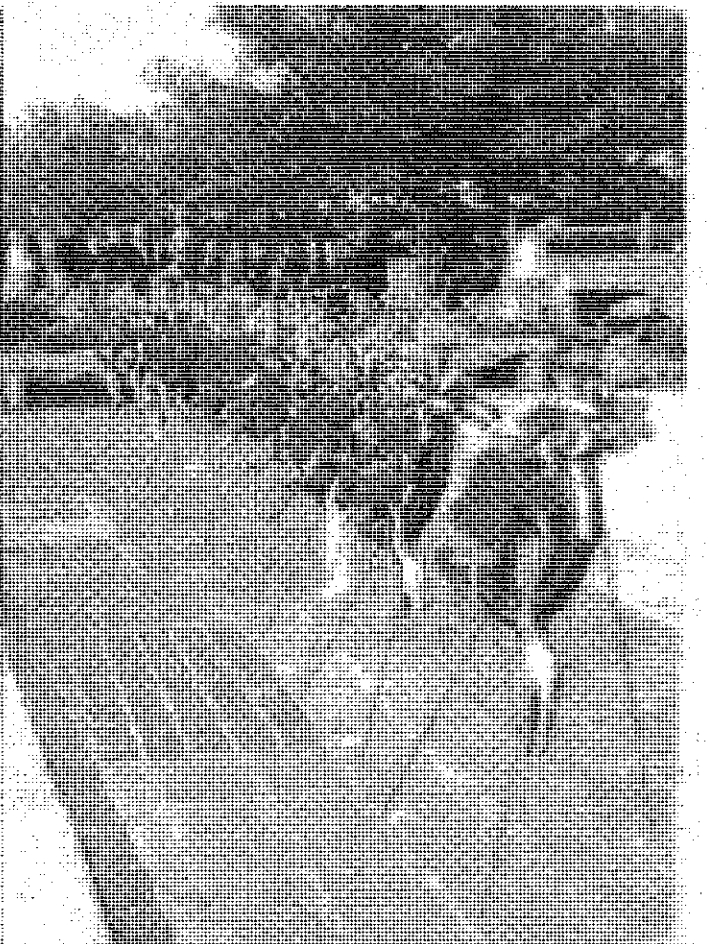
Eben Harstein and Lloyd Babb ... Triple Threat is always Ser



BOGUSAT ... Beach of guys standing around a table.



A general's helicopter pilot and a general's aide ... what more need be said?



We associated.

Reunion '01, October 10-14, 2001, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

More reunion photos ... it ain't the quantity, it's the quality!



Fred Spurling and Kent Howland ... Nice haircuts guys!



Herb and Veronika Koenigsamer



Left: Rocky Bleier and Charlie Tipton. Long-neck beer for Charlie and Gray "Horsing Wild" Goose for Rocky.

Below: Bob Kaber's children, Bob and Jill, and their stepfather, Bob McLanahan.



Reunion '01, October 10-14, 2001, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Still more reunion photos ... no one missing in action here!



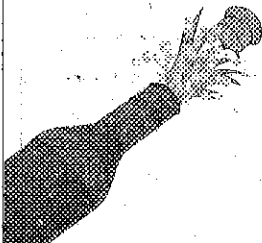
Cluck Norris and crowd after the memorial service.

All smiles at the hospitality center.



Author Keith Williams Nolan and daughter Anna Brian watch 101st Color Guard

Some of guy inscribing "the book."



Reunion '01, October 10-14, 2001, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Still more reunion photos ... saving the best for last!



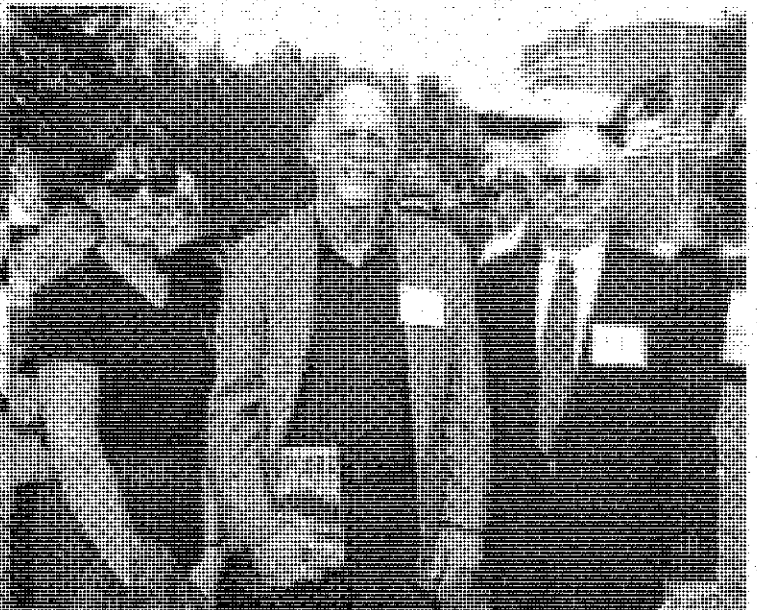
Don Johnson, Chuck Norris, bodyguard, Layne Minnick



A Co.: Chuck Hawkins, William Edinger, Frank Marshall, Jim Nell, George Westervelt, Jeff Wilcox, Lee Widjeskog



Carolyn and Don Harrison



Super Duce ... Jim Crawford and Jim Harris

Reunion '01, October 10-14, 2001, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

INCOMING ...



Just made contact, this week with Squad Leader who was wounded same time as me. It's been 30 years since I last saw him on that trail in Nam. He was totally unaware of what all happened after we were wounded in June 70 so I filled him in a little and told him about Nolan's book. Also trying to get him to come to reunion in October. Was just cruising around the Internet when I found a lady in Arizona that works for a TV station. Her bio said she had attended U of North Dakota (where he was from). Emailed her and it turned out my squad leader is her brother. She hooked me up with an address and phone number. His name is Duane Bommersbach. He didn't have any pictures from Nam and I had a couple of him that I took. Got my hands on a flatbed and have since sent him pictures via email. Another interesting thing is that when I started taking photos out of an album to scan, I found I had written the names of the people on some of the pictures. Names that I couldn't remember after 30 years. Anyway here are a couple. These were taken at Evans about the 1st or 2nd week of June 70. STANDING: Sgt. Gillespie, STANDING IN DOORWAY: Rich Thomas, M-60 SEATED L to R: I don't know, Doc Rose (Medic), SSG Fowler, & Sgt. Bommersbach. Currahee Mike Womack

A Profound Effect

I got to Vietnam on April 5, 1970, and got to A/2-502 a week or so later, just as Co. A came in for stand down after Hill 882 and 714. I DEROSed April 7, 1971.

I am enclosing a check for a book and a hat. I would also appreciate any maps of the AO. I don't know about your unit, but enlisted men in ours were not informed about what was going on, or where we were. It would be nice to at last see where the hell we were.

I didn't know about your organization until an article appeared in the Anchorage paper about local heroes (Gabe Rollison and Mike Mueller). I am so glad to know that so many others remember events from 30 years ago, which have had such a profound effect on me all this time.

Thank you very much,
Richard H. Rolland
Wasilla, Alaska

We'll get caught up with more incoming in future issues.

Also, stay posted for some "crossfire" exchanges regarding "The Book." Keith, we ain't done with it yet!

Reunion '01 will be in Harrisburg, Oct. 10-14. Details will follow shortly.

Lt. Gen. Sidney B. Berry's Letter to Reunion 2000

28 August 2000

James W. Campbell



Sincerely,

Sidney B. Berry
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army, Retired

Dear Jim:

Thank you for all you have done to facilitate my coming to the mid-October Ripcord Reunion in Shreveport. I regret that I will be unable to attend.

Indeed, my presence at the Ripcord Reunion is not essential. I made my principal contribution on 22 July 1970 when, as acting division commander, I decided that we should withdraw from Ripcord.

All credit belongs to you infantrymen, artillerymen, engineers, and aviators, who followed orders, fought battles, endured hardship, sacrificed life and limb for one another, and forged a legacy of valor. The American Army team of ground and aviation soldiers reached its peak effectiveness during the Ripcord campaign, most notably on 24 July 1970.

There is no group of men for whom I have greater respect, admiration and affection than soldiers of the Ripcord campaign. You fought the last major American action in the closing phases of a lengthy war of ill-defined objectives that growing numbers of your fellow citizens neither understood or supported. Yet you served your country well under trying circumstances.

I salute all Ripcord veterans, living and dead. I thank God that our country has men of your quality. May this always be so.

Please make my views known to the Ripcord veterans and their families who gather in Shreveport.

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1970 - 2000

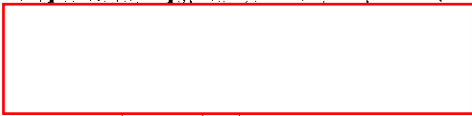
30-Year Anniversary



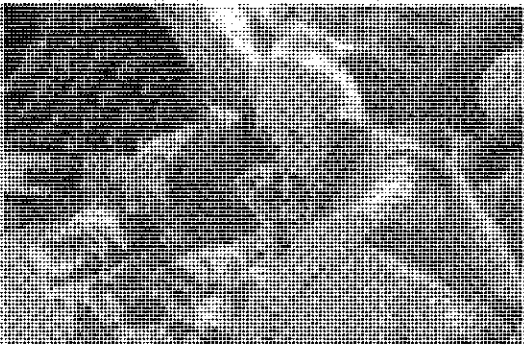
After the memorial service.
Courtesy Lloyd Rahlf

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

Ripcord Report



Address correction requested.



**They're shooting at me, so ...
I thought I'd phone home.**

