



RIPCORD REPORT

For Friends and Survivors of the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord
Republic of Vietnam • 12 March – 23 July, 1970



Number 73

Spring, 2007

REPORT FROM NEW JERSEY

It appears that Spring is just about here in New Jersey. We have had a number of fits and false starts along with sleet, ice snow, howling winds and even 80 degree weather. But now at the end of March it seems to have settled into regular Spring weather.

With this broken weather the male black bears have left hibernation in northern New Jersey. In that section of the state we have over 3,000 bears and mixed in with about 6,000,000 people stuffed into 2,000 square miles. As might be expected the bears are moving into the area that people think is theirs. Just recently a local 500 pound bear decided to walk into a house. It had been chased away a number of times but since the governor doesn't think we should hunt the fuzzy animals, the bear did not really fear humans. After it messed up the house it left. When it returned a few days later Fish and Wildlife employees were waiting and killed the bear with a well-placed shot. The homeowner is now happy but the local hunters felt they could have done the job if a season had been held. For an outdoor person, it is not always fun living in an urbanized state such as New Jersey.

Luckily our reunion will be in Missouri, a state that has pockets of urbanization but mile after mile of outdoor country! So when you visit you can do the Branson thing or you can try the local fishing, boating, canoeing, golf or shooting. There are a lot of options!

As we get closer to the reunion, **be certain to contact the hotel before the June 27th cut-off date. The CLARION HOTEL REGISTRATION NUMBER IS 800-756-7318.** Refer to the code **FIREBASE RIPCORD ASSOCIATION** to ensure you get the ripcord rate of \$68.95 before taxes. This rate is available three days before and after the reunion if you wish to stay and includes a buffet breakfast.

CURRAHEE!!!

Lee Widjeskog 856-451-1108

Make Your Reservation NOW! Next Ripcord Reunion July 19 – 21, 2007!



Clarion Hotel, Springfield, Missouri

This July we will meet in Springfield, Missouri from 19 July (Thursday) through the banquet on Saturday 21 July. We will meet at the Clarion Hotel for \$69 plus tax per night with breakfast included. We should all have a good time!!!

The reunion registration is important. The sooner I have your registration in the sooner and more complete our plans can be for this July.

Registered for Ripcord Reunion 2007

Fred Spaulding	Bill & Sheila Williams
Ben & Lillian Peters B 2/506	Lee & Kathy Widjeskog
Uwe & Diane Meyer B 2/506	Bob & Red Judd
Tommy & Judy Counts D 2/506	John (Pops) & Barbara Hedrick
Lisa Hill	Floyd & Diane Alexander
John & Joyce Richards	Tommy & Nicki Counts
Bill Boles	Dave & Aubrey Kreckel w/ Kale Weber
Chuck & Jean Holmen A 159th ASHB	Mike & Lura Renner
John & Debbie Sherba E 2/506 (Recon),	Dan Esposito
Bruce & Ramona Nelson	Audrey Wrightsell
2nd 319th Arty,	Ken & Constance Miller
Jim & Marylyn Kilgore E 2/506 (Mortars),	Robert & Charolotte Faddis
Mike & Liz Womack C 2/506	Dale Lane & Dianne Grote
Craig & Sandy VanHout	George & Mary Murphy
Bill Hand	Robin Graham
Jerry & Mariella Moyer	Chuck Hawkins
Poje (Joe Pojedinec)	Rick & Betty Kellogg
	John Beadle
	Buddy, Lisa, Ashley Ralley
	Kathie Mexill

Donations, the life blood of our Association

came from the following generous members during the past three months:

A big "Thanks" goes out to the following donors:

Harold Gaither, Mike Womack, Bill Williams,
Donald Cabrol, Bill Hand, Veronica Koenigsbauer

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

Lee Widjeskog,
493 Stillman Ave.
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

RIPCORD REPORT

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

Ripcord Report

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The First Time

No, . . . not that "first time"! I mean the first time I attended a Ripcord Reunion.

After I returned from Vietnam I was able to get a job with NJ Fish and Game. I did not think too often about the war, as I was busy with the family and the job. In the fall of 1976 I met another hunter along the marshes of Wildwood, New Jersey who was also hunting for clapper rail. We chatted for a few minutes and parted. The whole time I felt I knew this guy but couldn't place him. After walking 100 yards I realize it was "Doc" Sherba from Recon. I hollered at him and he remembered me so we talked a bit longer.

We kept in random contact and he told me about Chip Collins efforts to find out more about what went on around Ripcord. I heard about the newsletter and reunions but wasn't ready to revisit that part of my life just yet.

Around 1995 I started getting the newsletter when I got a call from Chuck Hawkins, my former company commander. After talking with him I felt it was about time to attend a reunion. I sort of planned to attend the one in Mobile, Alabama but found it conflicted with the banquet I was putting on for Ducks Unlimited. In 1998 the reunion was to be held in Atlantic City. Since it was only 40 miles from home I could not avoid it in good conscience.

Kathy (my wife) asked whom I knew. I said "...only Chuck, but I should see him"! So off I went. I arrived on mid-day at the Holiday Inn. I got my room and prepared to find the guys. I was nervous and unsure of what it would be like. I was hoping Chuck would be there so it would be easier to fit in. I headed to the floor where they were meeting (the Washington Room).

I got out of the elevator and strode past the Adams Room. I glanced in and saw a small gathering of "old guys", dismissed them as someone else and strode onto the Washington Room. I peered into a room, which held only a custodian. I asked about the Ripcord Reunion and he directed me back to the Adams Room with the "old guys". It was then I realized I was 52 and now one of the "old guys"!

Fred Spaulding (whom I did not know) was speaking as I walked in. When done he greeted me and introduced me around. I soon found that I knew none of these guys when I was in Vietnam (Chuck hadn't arrived) but as I talked to them I found they were all "friends" I had just met. Only Frank Marshall was present from Alpha 2/506, but we had all shared in the event that was Ripcord. I had a great time and will continue to go as long as I can.

The following year I convinced Kathy that it was not just a bunch of guys talking war but was a group of friends finding out how life has been since the bad days in Vietnam. She attended and found friends as well.

For new comers and old as well, when you arrive, all there will try to make you feel at home. With your help it will be that way for all that attend in the future. Everyone wants to meet the new people!!

See you in Springfield.
Lee Widjeskog, A 2/506

INCOMING MAIL

Dear Frank,

Hats off to Carol and Fred Gilbert for making our DC trip a wonderful experience! From the time our plane landed, Carol was there, always making sure everyone was having a great time. Her hard work made the trip so EASY for all of us.

We enjoyed our trip to the White House, the Wall, the Korean monument, the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington Cemetery. The changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was something to see.

Our trip was another great opportunity to spend time and get to know our Ripcord brothers and sisters better.

George and Mary Murphy

PS: Frank, stay off the White House fence!



Gathering in front of White House

Frank,

Judi and I had a wonderful time at the March gathering. It was our first Ripcord event, but it won't be our last. Everyone was very friendly and made me feel welcome. What a great group!

Our day in Washington DC touring the White House, visiting the Vietnam Memorial (where our group had its own laying of wreath ceremony), Korean War Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, and Arlington National Cemetery was thoroughly enjoyable.

Our thanks go out to Fred and Carol Gilbert for the great job they did in planning and organizing this memorable event.

Best Regards,
Richard and Judi Greenland
D 1/506

Frank

The Trip was fantastic my wife and I had a great time and our hosts Carol & Fred Gilbert did a fantastic job putting all together at just a short time. It was good to see some of the guys again. The wall was moving and I'm glad I was part of it.

Any one who was or has any apprehensions about attending any of these reunions as I was SHOULD DO IT. you'll walk away better for it.'

Tim Newman

A/2-506

Frank,

I wanted to thank Fred and Carol for putting this past weekend together. It was a meaningful, moving and cathartic experience for me. While I have not participated in the reunions, I have never been far from Alpha Company and most especially 1st platoon. I've often shared funny incidents with those close to me, but never the details of Ripcord.

I have two scrapbooks of pictures and clippings, etc. from Viet Nam, most are from or about Ripcord. I hadn't looked at them in years but since Bobby Lowe's nephew contacted me and our subsequent exchange of notes, I went through them and rekindled a lot of buried memories. Please share the pictures I sent you, with the association. I can send more if there is an interest.

There weren't many guys who were in the platoon when I took it over in November and were still with the platoon when I left in April. Four of those guys - Bobby Young, Charlie Steffler, Tiny Aanonson, and Bobby Lowe were my "pillars". I left Tiny Aanonson and Bobby Lowe behind when I rotated to the rear and sadly took Bobby Young, Charlie Steffler and Chris Daffler back with me on April 16th. That day is singed in my mind and haunts my soul to this day.

Once, when my son was about 3 years old, we were having dinner together. Sitting in his high chair, he looked up at Leslie and me, and with a big smile said "You make me happy in my heart". When I think of Alpha Company, I am always "happy in my heart".

I left the field before the worst of Ripcord and didn't suffer through nearly as much as you guys did. I remain in awe of your collective courage and devotion to each other. In WW II, the 101st were described as "Hard chargin', cold, steely eyed, airborne troops". Alpha Company continued that reputation every bit as well as any unit in the history of the division. You all truly did, and do "Stand Alone Together". Currahee!

May God continue to Bless you all.
Tim Joliet

INCOMING MAIL

(Letter from Brian our connection to The White House Tour after receiving our Thanks)

Again, it was the least I could do. The military, especially the Army, wouldn't be what it is today if it weren't for the vets of the Vietnam war. I truly believe, and I borrow a quote from Bernard of Chartres, he used to say that "we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness on sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size." What an honor to be around hero's, I can only hope that they came away with an event that was worthy of their accomplishments.

While we live in today, we only do so by the sweat, blood, and tears of these men and the women that have stood beside them throughout their life.

Brian Wells
MSG USA WHMOWHCA

Dear Sir.

I would very much like to be on the member list. I filled out your info sheet from the web page some weeks ago. I also donated money so your newsletter would not cost the association nothing to send it to me. I know it all takes time, your time, I just don't know if I fell through the cracks. I'm very proud of the fact that I had a hand in the battle. I joined the army out of high school and I volunteered for Vietnam. Even though we pulled FSB Ripcord, it took guts from all of us to go and do it. God Bless everyone of us and the 101st Airborne.

Kirby D. Schaffer A / 159, gunner CH-47.

Hello,

I just want you to know, thanks to the Ripcord Association I got to meet my old platoon officer from Vietnam, Capt. Whitacre. We have sent e-mails back and forth. We both live in Texas and not that far away by Texas standards that is. Thank you. I'm going to try to make the reunion next year.

Kirby D. Schaffer A / 159, gunner CH-47.

Lee

Please send me a hardcover copy of "Hell on A Hill Top". I flew a few missions into Ripcord during April 1970. I darn near got hit with a Mortar while trying to place a Bulldozer there. I aborted the approach on very short final, flew thru a brown cloud of explosion dust as I struggled to regain altitude and flew the dozer back to Camp Evans. I don't remember if I ever got it placed on Ripcord as I was released for other missions. But, I do remember multiple missions to Ripcord in early April. On April 13th,

1970, my Chinook took a direct hit from a 120mm mortar on short final into FSB Fuller with a sling load of HE and Mogas. We crashed into the pad. The door gunner was killed and the rest of the crew had serious injuries. Varsity also lost at least one Chinook on Ripcord and lost at least 4 aircraft during 1970. Two with the entire 5 man crew.

Thanks
CW-2 Bill "Oscar" Mayer, 1969 -1970
Aircraft Commander CH-47 B & C /159th

On behalf of the entire staff at the SpringHill Suites by Marriott Arundel Mills/BWI, I would like to take this opportunity to express to you what a pleasure it was having your group stay at our hotel. Everyone attending the Ripcord Association 101st Airborne gathering was absolutely wonderful. The staff truly enjoyed their time speaking with and helping those attending this event.

Again, we would like to thank you for choosing our hotel for your sleeping accommodations and social gatherings. Your group is always welcome and we would love to have you back in the future. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have served our country and to those that continue to do so. We support and thank you!!

Your friends at the SpringHill Suites!



From an Internet Guestbook:

Name: Patricia A. (Pat) Coltrain, older sister of Robert J. Brown, Jr.
Address: Cincinnati, OH 45205
Email Address: sweetpea45205@yahoo.com
Tour Years: served between 68 and KIA in July 1970
Comments: I am looking for vets who may have served with my brother. Because of a fire in parents home we have no pics or records of Bob's service. If you knew him please get in touch and share with me.

GOT BOOTS?

Opinion and commentary by Chuck Hawkins

The Gathering, 2007



HANOVER, MD—Forty-two FSB Ripcord veterans, family members and friends met here during March 9-12 to enjoy a special tour of the White House and to honor fallen brothers at the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial—the Wall-in Washington, D.C. The gathering marked the 37th anniversary of the opening shots in the 19-week battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord in Vietnam that culminated

in a fighting withdrawal on July 23, 1970.

The event, which was outstandingly successful, was made possible by the initiative, hard work, and attention to detail of Carol and Fred Gilbert (D/2-506), two new members of the Ripcord Association who attended their first reunion in Charleston, S.C. last July. Frank Marshall (A/2-506) got the word out via e-mail and the association newsletter, and the rest is history.

Fred Gilbert walked point for Gabe Rollison's Delta Company, 2/506, when it came to the aid of Chuck



Chuck Hawkins and Gary Radford laying wreath

Hawkins' Alpha Company, 2/506, on the last day of the battle. But this time it was Carol Gilbert, Fred's wife of 37 years who led the way in making arrangements for this special gathering of eagles.

Brian Wells, a neighbor of Fred and Carol's and an active duty soldier serving at the White House Communications Agency arranged for and directed a private tour of the White House. Sam Rawlinson, another friend and neighbor and the transportation officer at Fort Meade, and his wife Luree, pitched in to arrange transportation and provide support for the White House visit, the tour of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, and finally, to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

The group held a short memorial service at the Wall, and gathered close as Gary Radford (D/2-506) and Chuck Hawkins laid a wreath and Bob Smoker (C/2-506) offered a prayer.

Some folks came from as far away as Los Angeles, California (Richard and Judith Greenland, D/1-506) for a first time meeting with Ripcord veterans, and George Westervelt (A/2-506) a long-time association member, came in



Brian Wells, Fred Gilbert, Sam Rawlinson, Carol Gilbert, Luree Rawlinson

from Watkins Glen, N.Y. Diane and Floyd Alexander (B/2-319 & A/2-506) drove from Illinois, and Tim Newman (A/2-506) and his wife Susan made a first-ever meeting with Ripcord friends coming from upstate New York.

Like Tim and Susan, other folks enjoyed their first time meeting with other Ripcord veterans, including Rich and Joanne Meier (A/2-11), Thomas and Annette Militello (A/2-11), and Tim Joliet (A/2-506), his wife Leslie, and son Paul. Everyone also enjoyed seeing Gary Radford and his sons Gary and Brian, who drove down from Pittsburgh, and also Tex Campbell (D/2-506), Ken Miller (3rd BDE Air Cav) and Wayne Spruill (B & E/2-506). Richard Frazier (A/159 ASHB), who flew helicopter support during the battle, and his wife Linda joined the happy throng, as did Lee Widjenskog (A/2-506) and his wife Kathy. Artilleryman George Murphy (B/2-320) and his wife Mary added their usual good cheer to the gathering, as did Randy Baldwin (A/2-506) and James (Tiny) Aanonsen (A/2-506) and his wife Irene.

All who attended this special gathering were pleased

(Continued on next page)

with the opportunity and agreed that they hoped to be able to attend the annual Ripcord Reunion in Springfield, Missouri in July. Some, however, like Gary Radford, find it difficult to get away during the summer months for Ripcord events, and were thankful to have the opportunity to

meet old friends that the special gathering offered.

We were also pleased to meet Fred and Carol's son and daughter-in-law, and I'm sure I speak for everyone in thanking Fred and Carol again for all they did to make this event a special memory



Ripcord Vets in front of the Soldiers Statue

Attendance of Ripcord Gathering 2007 in Wash. D.C.

Fred and Carol Gilbert D/2-506
 Gary Radford and sons D/2-506
 Tex Campbell D/2-506
 Richard and Judith Greenland D/1-506
 Wayne Spruill B & E 2-506
 Rich and Joann Meier A/2-11
 Thomas and Annette Militello A/2-11
 Robert and Jean Smoker C/2-506
 George and Mary Murphy B/2-320
 Ken Miller 3rd Bde Air Cav
 Richard and Linda Frazier A/159 ASHB
 Chuck Hawkins A/2-506
 James and Irene Aanonsen A/2-506
 William Baldwin A/2-506
 Tim, Leslie and Paul Joliet A/2-506
 Tim and Susan Newman A/2-506
 Frank Marshall A/2-506
 Floyd and Diane Alexander A/2-506
 Lee and Kathy Widjeskog A/2-506
 George Westervelt A/2-506
 Sam and Lurree Rawlison (guest)
 Biran Wells (tour guide)

Commemorative painting in honor of 1LT Bob Kalsu.

1LT James Robert "Bob" Kalsu was born 13APR1945. He was an All-American Tackle at the University of Oklahoma in 1967 and a member of the University of Oklahoma Army ROTC program. Bob was chosen in the 8th round of the 1968 professional draft by the Buffalo Bills. During the '68 season, Bob started 8 games for the Bill and was named the Bills' top rookie for that season.

Following the 1968 football season, Bob began fulfilling his ROTC commitment to the US Army (not required for a professional athlete). He was commissioned as a 1LT in the Field Artillery. He arrived in Vietnam in November 1969 with C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, 101st Airborne Division. He was killed in action by mortar fire on 21JUL1970 at Fire Support Base Ripcord near the A Chau Valley. Two days later, on 23JUL1970, his wife, Jan, gave birth to their second child, a son. Hours after delivering Bob Jr., Jan was informed of the death of her husband. On 13APR2000 1LT James Robert "Bob" Kalsu was inducted into the Football Hall of Fame. On 23JUL2001, he was memorialized on the cover of Sports Illustrated.

We, in the Sooner Battalion, would like to immortalize this great and accomplished man here at the University of Oklahoma. In order to do so, we need to raise

funds. Any and all donations will be accepted. The estimated cost is \$20,000. This will include preliminary and refined sketches, the actual oil painting, and 500 prints of the original. All efforts will be put forth in order to make sure significant donations are recognized by giving the donators a free print of the original. I thank you for your time and interest in this matter. If you would like to make a donation or have any questions, comments, or other interests in this project, please feel free to contact me at (918) 812-4203 or pauljackson@ou.edu

You may also contact LTC Kennan Horn at (405) 325-0303 or KHorn@ou.edu.

To Send a Donation for the commemorative painting in honor of 1LT Bob Kalsu. Make checks out to the **OU Foundation** and mail to the armory at:

OU Army ROT,
 290 W. Brooks
 Norman, OK 73019
 CDT Jackson Sooner Battalion S-1

Please check out these websites which give true testament to 1LT Kalsu's character.

<http://www.virtualwall.org/dk/KalsuJR01a.htm>

Hotel Registration 2007

Firebase Ripcord Association July 18-21, 2007

Hotel Reservation form for
The Clarion Hotel Springfield
3333 South Glenstone Ave.
Springfield, MO 65804
Phone: (800) 756-7318 Facsimile: (417) 883-5720
Group code: FIREBASE RIPCORD ASSOCIATION

Group Room Rate: \$68.95 plus \$8.23 tax per room per day which includes a breakfast buffet.
A cash deposit for the first night's room and tax or a Credit Card Number is required to guarantee this reservation. For those paying with cash, the required deposit is \$77.18.
Room rate is available three days before and after the group-blocked dates.

Your Name: _____ Telephone # _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____ No. of Rooms _____

Roommate Name(s): _____

Room type preferred: King / Smoking King / Non-smoking
 Double Queen / Smoking Double Queen / Non-smoking

Suite & Other Special Requests: _____

** 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: 12:00 PM

To confirm reservations, please return form to the hotel or call by June 27, 2007.

We look forward to seeing you in July!

Reunion Registration 2007

Firebase Ripcord Association Reunion, July 18-21, 2007 Springfield, Missouri

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/Time _____ Departure Date/Time _____

If applicable, Arrival Airline: _____ Flight # _____

Transportation is available to and from the airport. Please provide the hotel with advanced notice.

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 March 12, 2007, \$75 per adult

March 13 through May 1, 2007 \$80 per adult,

May 2 through June 25, 2007 \$85 per adult.

After June 25, 2007 \$90 per adult.

Your registration fee covers the cost of the hospitality room, snacks and beverages, the Friday bus trip to Branson and the dinner on Saturday.

Registration fee is due no later than July 12, 2007.

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 14 July 2007

AGENDA

Tuesday, July 17: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours (for early birds)

Wednesday, July 18: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)

Thursday, July 19: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)

Friday, July 20: Bus trip, show and dinner in Branson.

Saturday, July 21: Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.

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

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY AND BY 27 JUNE 2007

USE THE OTHER FORM OR CALL 800-756-7318 AND REFER TO THE
GROUP CODE: FIREBASE RIPCORD ASSOCIATION.