



# RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 128

Nov 2021

## Memory booklet update

by Lee Widjeskog

It all started in 2017 when I thought it would be a good thing to write a little about the men who died during the Fire Support Base Ripcord battle in 1970. I knew a few of the men and had heard stories about some of the others. However, there were 139 men who died in the Ripcord area of operations. There were still others who supported the Ripcord efforts but were not considered to be directly involved with the battle.

Using the computer and searching various web sites such as the Coffelt Database, the Virtual Wall, various unit web sites, old Ripcord newsletters, obituaries, books written about Ripcord, old newspaper articles, cemetery databases, people locator databases, high school yearbooks, ancestry websites, phoning and writing survivors and family members, I gleaned information about the men.

In some cases, due to lack of contact with families and the fact that the man who died was new to the unit and not well known, there was little information. Pictures were obtained from family members as well as the Virtual Wall and state memorial websites. As the information came in, it was put together and the booklet gradually came together.

After editing by Bill Heath, I planned to present it at the 50th Anniversary of the battle. With the cancellation I decided to continue adjusting it and find an inexpensive way to print it.

Frank Marshall was called in to help with the production. He found we could get it done commercially for about \$35 to \$65 per copy for the 500 copies we felt we needed. Our goal was not to make money but to provide it to the friends and families inexpensively. The Association could not afford spending \$60 per copy.

The majority of the cost was in man -power, not materials. In Frank's former life he had work in a print shop and thought he could do it himself. After talking to

a number of print shops and others he selected the papers and equipment needed for the project. He selected to Epson ET-2760 printer with large, re-fillable ink tanks. The printers have worked well but the work is mind numbing. Frank has now finished the 500 copies of the booklet and bound them all. This work has involved over 80,000 pages printed to make the 162 page booklet. Frank has worked long and hard to produce this book and his efforts have saved the Association at least \$40 per book. Our cost is less than \$5 each due to the many hours donated by Frank Marshall. He is "The Man"!

The booklet has an introduction about the time period in I-corps and South Vietnam as well as the aims of the 101st Airmobile Division units. This is followed with a description of the action during March 1970 when Lieutenant Dudley Davis and his Radio Telephone Operator Daniel Heater were killed on the first assault. The men are listed in the order of their getting hit even if they did not die until a day or two later.

Each month starts with a summary of the action that occurred in the Ripcord area followed by the deaths based on the day of the month. It goes from 12 March through 23 July 1970. The last three killed were Private Gus Allen, Major Kenneth Tanner and Lieutenant-Colonel Andre Lucas who all succumbed to the same 120mm rocket explosion.

People who contributed to the booklet should have received a copy by the time this article is printed. Others who wish a copy can get one by contacting Lee Widjeskog and sending a check for \$10 to cover the cost of printing, packing and shipping for each book. Send cash, check or money order to:

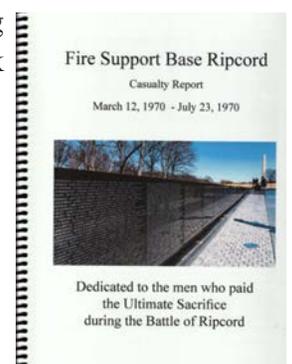
**Ripcord Association**

**493 Stillman Ave.**

**Bridgeton, NJ 08302**

**Payment made to**

**"Ripcord Association"**



## 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.

- Joe Jungles A 2/506
- Gary Watrous E 2/506
- Patrick Silbaugh Assoc. Member
- Steve Matsumoto A 2/506
- George Strasburg D 2/506
- Tom Swayne A 2/506
- Jerry Rodgers 326Med Eagle Dustoff
- Marcus Disbrow: friend of Ricky Scott
- Veronika Koenigsbauer in memory of Major Herbert Koenigsbauer, 3<sup>rd</sup> BDe and Michael Griffin HHC 2/506.

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.*



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Ripcord Association

**Visit our website at  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)**

Please continue to send your letters and  
send your comments or articles to:

[ltwidjeskog@aol.com](mailto:ltwidjeskog@aol.com)

or

postal mail to:  
[Lee Widjeskog](mailto:Lee.Widjeskog)

493 Stillman Ave  
Bridgeton, NJ 08302

Everyone would love to hear from you.

## **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**

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

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

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## 22 April 1970 Start

### April 22

1205: at 477134, **3Charlie 1/506** found the body of a NVA soldier killed by small arms fire the day before.

1235: at 475135 **3Charlie 1/506** fired LAWs and later found a fresh body. No injuries.

1300: at 367163, **1&2Charlie 2/501** engaged NVA who then fled. Inspection showed one dead NVA and a blood trail.

1311: near **Re-Up Hill**, **Alpha 2/501** was hit by 50 mortar round but since they were moving at the time, no one was injured.

1325: **Bravo 2/506** at 343179, found four bunkers with house hold utensils and some medical supplies. Most was destroyed on site.

1407: at 388162, **3Charlie 2/501** detonated a booby trap while pursuing a NVA soldier. One man was wounded.

1430: **Alpha 2/501** while moving from the booby trap area, encountered bunkers and NVA. They employed ARA and artillery and linked up with **Charlie 2/501**. The bunkers were over run and one NVA was found. Numerous blood trails left the area.

1440: **ARA** over the 2/501 action received small arms fire and took a crew member to **Granite** for treatment and evacuation.

1745: **2Delta 2/506** found 5 bunkers at 343178. CS powder was dispersed in the structures.

**1/506** remained in the Rao Trang area. **2/506** remained around Ripcord. **1/501** continued to patrol around Jack and Evans. **2/501** stayed south of Ripcord between 902 and Re-up Hill.

### April 23

0335: **Alpha 2/501** at 362165 was hit with satchel charges. Contact broke at 0412 with one US KIA and two WIA. **PFC Gary Worley** died of multiple fragments.

0611: **Alpha 2/501** received satchel charges, mortar and RPG fire while on their NDP. Fire was returned and artillery employed on NVA locations. A sweep of the area found a variety of weapons and ammo as well as 7 NVA. Nine US soldiers were WIA from the action.

1228: At 382157, the **Recon Platoon of E1/506** was ambushed as SP4 Nicks led the unit. Firing from a bunker, three men were hit as the NVA fled the site. **Benjamin Nicks** died on route to the hospital.



*Gary Worley*

1350: From the previous location, **Recon** saw 13 NVA at 30 meters and engaged them with small arms fire. A sweep of the area found a 60 mm mortar unit which was sent to Camp Evans.

1450: **Recon 2/501** at the same location was engaged with small arms and RPG. After a half hour the enemy fled and 3 US were WIA.

While moving to a LZ at 382162, Recon was engaged with small arms. ARA and artillery were employed and a sweep at 1715 revealed 1 NVA dead and 2 GIs WIA. Throughout the day CH-47 loads came to **Ripcord**. Units remained in their areas of operation.

### April 24

Each day pre-planned air strikes are slated for the area surrounding Ripcord and other fire bases. Additional strikes are called in as the enemy is found.

**Delta 2/506** is rotating platoons onto **Ripcord** for one day chance to clean up.

0035: **Alpha and Charlie 2/501** near 368165, were engaged by NVA with satchel charges. They responded with claymores and hand grenades. First light revealed no results and 1 US WIA.

0040: **1Charlie 1/506**, at 476133, lost a man when he heard a noise. **Sgt. Ernest English** threw a grenade but it bounced back off vegetation and killed him. He was part of a 6 man team

1726: **2Delta 2/506** found and destroyed a 500 pound bomb.

1800: **Team B of Recon 2/506** found 20 bunkers and sections of copper wire with insulators along a trail at 342169. This trail runs from Hill 902 to **“Re-up Hill”**. The bunkers had been destroyed by artillery.

1800: **Team D, Recon 2/506** found an unused 2 foot wide high speed trail at 334168.

1800: **Team E, Recon 2/506** at 338170 also found wire, but no insulators.

Units remained in their areas as did artillery.

### April 25

1040: **3Alpha 2/506** completed a one ship LZ at 358191.

1200: At 435124, **2Bravo 1/506** engaged 3 NVA. A sweep of the area revealed bunkers, AA positions and



*Benjamin Nicks*



*Ernest English*

mortar rounds. All were destroyed in place.

1210: **3Charlie 1/506** found a dead NVA laying on the ground at 473137 who died 3 to 4 days prior.

1305: **3Charlie 1/506** found a grave of a NVA one to two days old at 477134.

1440: **Team B Recon 2/506**, near Hill 902 found a recently used high speed trail.

1448: **2 Bravo 1/506** moving at 438124 were hit by NVA with small arms fire. Further contact was made at 1510 when hit by a squad from bunkers. Organic arms and artillery employed. Contact broke at 1530. Results were 2 NVA KIA and US casualties of four WIA and deaths of **Ronald Cline**, **Boyd Magee** and **Billy Sebastian** died out right and **Eudell Kotrous** who died on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

No major unit movement.



Ronald Cline



Boyd Magee



Billy Sebastian



Eudell Kotrous

#### April 26

Weather a problem for flights.

0555: A satchel charge was thrown into the **Ripcord** perimeter and bounced off a soldier's helmet. Response was grenades and claymores. Not injuries. A sweep produced no results.

0635: **2Alpha 1/506** engaged NVA at 5 meters and killed the same.

0930: **Command Post 1/1<sup>st</sup> Regiment ARVN** command detonated a booby trap at 281188 killing 2 NVA and capturing 20 blocks of explosives.

1325: **1Bravo 2/506** cut a one ship LZ at 365208.

1530: **2Delta 2/501** engaged 5 NVA at 369154 resulting in 4 NVA killed and the capture of rice and equipment.

2000: **1 Delta 2/506** reported possible headlights at 355165. 175mm artillery employed on the location. No results.

No unit moves.

#### April 27

Weather a factor.

0430: **Ripcord** received 2 incoming white phosphorus rounds from the north. One was determined to be a

105mm round.

1015: **1Bravo 1/506** was engaged by NVA 1 klick east of **FSB Maureen**. The NVA fled and 1 US WIA.

1310: **3Bravo 2/506** completed a LZ at 371202.

1345: **3Bravo 1/506** found and destroyed two bunkers at 438129.

1540: **1Delta 2/501** engaged and captured one NVA after he was wounded at 366155 south east of Ripcord.

1630: **1Bravo 2/506** completed a LZ at 362205.

Units as previous.

#### April 28

Weather continued to be poor. Many pre-planned flights and air strikes were delayed or cancelled.

1125: **Recon 1/506** at 435160, found a month old NVA body killed by artillery along with assorted personal equipment and weapons.

1430: **ARVNs** at 296187, north of Ripcord, engaged NVA. Results were 2 ARVN KIA and 16 WIA.

During this day **Raymond Susi, E2/506** died of injuries sustained from flying debris associated with a helicopter on Ripcord. Date of the incident is not certain.

Units unmoved.



Raymond Susi

#### April 29

0800: **2Charlie 2/501** found a cache at 364164 containing rice, ammo, mortar rounds, etc. and three buried NVA bodies killed 3 to 4 days prior. While there, the unit received 6 mortar rounds to no affect.

1000: Tactical aircraft fired on a mortar position killing 2 NVA near 351150.

1005: **1Alpha 2/506** found a NVA rucksack about a week old at 376189.

1100: Aircraft destroyed three bunkers and killed 2 NVA at 352152.

1139: During a planned explosion on **Ripcord**, a member of **C2/506** was hit in the head with debris and medevacked out.

1230: A **white team helicopter** carrying **Edgar Brenner and Jeffery Klaves**, was hit by 12.7mm machinegun fire and burst into flames as they crashed into a stream bed. **D2/501** moved to recover the men and took RPG and small arms fire. By the time the bodies were extracted 4 NVA were dead and 1 NVA WIA captured.



Edgar Brenner



Jeffery Klaves

1400: **2Alpha 2/506** completed a LZ at 372198.

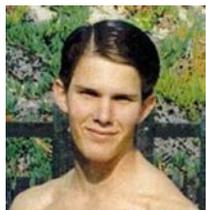
1405: At 272278, **4/1<sup>st</sup> Regiment ARVN** took fire from a NVA squad. They returned fire but still ended up with 3 WIA.

1610: **2Charlie 2/501** while at 364164 (near **Re-up Hill**), received 21 mortar round while cutting a LZ. This led to 2 WIA.

2140: **2Alpha 2/501** at **FSB Granite** was attacked from three sides by a NVA force using small arms, grenades, RPG and mortars. Contact was broken at 2345. Fighting continued off and on through the night. This was followed by more mortars and another assault on the 30<sup>th</sup> at 0730. This led to the deaths of **Robert Boggs, Dennis Hunter, Carl Patten, Ray Snyder, Linwood Walker, and James McGuire. Edward Bishop** was MIA and later declared dead. Seven others were wounded and 1 NVA body found.



Robert Boggs



Dennis Hunter



Carl Patton



Ray Snyder



Linwood Walker



James McGuire



Edward Bishop

### April 30

0645: **2Delta 2/501** engaged and killed one NVA. The others fled. 3 US WIA at 360155.

0655: **1Bravo 1/506** near **FSB Maureen** was engaged by NVA. This left 3 WIA. Bravo Troop 2/17 Cav. Came to assist the 1/506 near the Rao Trang and made a strafing run at the NVA. While doing so they were hit with an RPG and burst into flames in a fiery crash. Killed were **Davis Staton, Capt. John Sensing and Robert Masseth**. Their bodies were retrieved a few days later.



Davis Staton



John Sensing



Robert Masseth

0730: As daylight increased, the NVA reasserted their assault on FSB Granite using RPG from the south and west leaving 18 WIA. A sweep of the area found 17 NVA KIA and one NVA POW. At 1327 hours they received mortar rounds leaving 8 more WIA. An hour later they got 20 more mortar rounds. Finally at 1830 when a Chinook landed they received 1 more WIA. During the course of the day 2 men were killed, **Robert Shannon**(A2/501) and **Larry Jones** (E2/501). **Dennis Johnson** (E2/501) was wounded this day and died two days later in the hospital.



Robert Shannon



Larry Jones



Dennis Johnson

1140: 5 clicks North West of **FSB Bradley**, **1/1 ARVN** were hit with mortars and RPG. 6 KIA & 22 WIA. 14 NVA killed.

1200: **2Delta 2/501** received fire from NVA at 366165. 2 WIA.

1230: At 398148, **Recon 2/501** were engaged by NVA. Return fire caused them to flee. 3 WIA.

1328: One mortar round hit near the 105s on **Ripcord**.  
 1351: 5 mortar rounds hit **Ripcord**.  
 1410: **Bravo 2/501** while conducting a sweep around **FSB Granite**, found 2 dead NVA.  
 1755: at 375194, **2Alpha 2/506** found 2 bunkers and assorted RPG equipment. To be destroyed the next day. During the action that day, a door gunner (**PFC William Meister**) with 101 Aviation was killed by small arms fire as his chopper aided the troops in need. The helicopter did not go down.



*William Meister*

Unit locations:

**1/506 Rakkasan** & the Rao Trang  
**2/506 Ripcord** and the nearby hills.  
 1/501 FSB **Jack** & Rocket Ridge,  
 2/501 **Granite** & Coc  
 A Bo. Artillery: A2/319 –**Rakkasan**,  
 B2/319 **Ripcord**,  
 C2/319 **Granite**,  
 C 4/77 **Evans**,  
 A1/39 **Evans**,  
 B 1/39 **Nancy**,  
 A2/11 **Granite**,  
 A 2/94 **Barbara**,  
 C-34 O'Reilly,  
 C-11 **Ripcord**.  
 E2/506 now had 6 mortar squads on **Ripcord**.

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## INCOMING MAIL



Hi Lee,

I was saddened to read that Larry had passed away, my condolences to his family. We were friends and fellow Medivac Pilots in the 326th Medical Battalion, he gave a lot to save a lot!

I was the aircraft commander of the second Dustoff helicopter assisting in the evacuation. We got shot down in the LZ that morning, trying to rescue wounded men of Delta 1/506 from the Hill 605. The NVA didn't waste any time bringing my helicopter down. I was

fully loaded and was just lifting off when I got hit. The aircraft plummeted straight down, hitting the ground and bouncing up & down violently, throwing all the wounded and my crew into the LZ. I eventually got thrown out while trying to maintain control of the aircraft. I ended up in a fox hole with one of your troopers, he had an M-60, I believe he was from California.

When I saw Larry coming back for another load of wounded I low crawled back to the LZ, where my helicopter was still running. Brent Law ran past me, jumped in my stricken helicopter and shut off the fuel flow switch which shut the engine down. Later, I was in Charlie Medic getting sewn up when they carried in Brent & Doug. I could tell Brent was gone, Doug's left forearm was smoldering and barely attached on his shoulder.

We determined that one round came through the chin bubble hitting Doug in the left upper arm almost tearing it off. The round continued through a crease in the armored seat striking Brent who was stationed directly behind. It hit off the edge of Brent's chicken plate and penetrated into his chest killing him instantly.

This crew went above and beyond to save as many lives as they could that day. They came under intense enemy fire every time they came in but returned five times to evacuate as many wounded soldiers as they could.

*Goodbye old friend,  
 Allen Schwartz, Major (Ret) MSC*

.....

Dear Lee,

I just read, with great sadness that Michael Griffin has passed away.

I met Mike in The Villages, Florida where we both lived. An article was done in the local paper about 10 years ago showing us looking at the "Ripcord" book with LTC Lucas and Herbert Koenigsbauer picture. Hope you are well.

*All the best,  
 Veronika Koenigsbauer*



# INCOMING MAIL



Hi, Lee:

Yesterday I received your Casualty Report about Fire Support Base Ripcord Battle. I have started to read about the lives of the men who died there. I am grateful for your work.

I can only imagine the incredible very personal emotional toll it has taken upon you in compiling this historical account.

And I am grateful that you allowed me to provide you some information about my Wisconsin Ripon College friend, Rickey "Rick" Scott.

In your cover letter in the Report (page with photo of the 3 soldiers at the Wall} you reached out to family members. I also did that with Rick's sisters. Over a course of several months, I think I left 3 or 4 messages asking for an opportunity to talk with them about Rick. They never returned a single phone call. The last time I made the effort, I promised to not call again if they didn't respond. They didn't respond and I kept my promise to not call again..

I am wondering if you ever had contact with the sisters? Thank you for your incredible honoring of the men who gave their young lives. In my mind's eye, Rick is not my age of 72 but instead he is my young buddy sipping a beer at the local park making plans for the weekend. Please find a donation enclosed.

Sincerely,

Marcus Disbrow

*\* Editors Note: One sister responded*



Lee:

Thank you and all involved in the publication of the "Fire Support Base Ripcord Casualty Report, March 12, 1970 - July 23, 1970." It is a beautiful tribute to those who, in Lincoln's words, "... gave the last full measure of devotion " on, around and above that battle scarred mountain top. May this publication help preserve the memory of these brave soldiers who died in service to their Nation.

Enclosed find a donation to the Association. Best wishes and God Bless.

Eagle Dustoff 1970-71

Jerry Rodgers

## Ripcord Association Membership

699 members in our Ripcord Association

583 are Ripcord Veterans

116 are Associate Members

147 receive newsletter via Postal Mail

552 receive the newsletter via e-mail

1017 on Facebook "Ripcord Association Group"

**If your contact information has changed, please go to our website and update your membership to keep getting important information about our Ripcord Association**

**Membership is FREE!**

Everyone is welcome to join.

[www.ripcordassociation.com/membership-form/](http://www.ripcordassociation.com/membership-form/)

## To All members.

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

# 2022

## Ripcord Reunion

We have booked the time period  
of 5 to 8 October 2022  
with the University Plaza Hotel,  
Springfield, MO.



# Symposium: Fire Support Base Ripcord (draft as of 7/29/21)

## South Vietnam, 1970

**Saturday- March 26, 2022 10 AM-4 PM**

**SC Confederate Relic Room and Military  
Museum- 301 Gervais Street**

In the spring and summer of 1970, the 101<sup>st</sup> ABN was engaged in a savage campaign with NVA forces on the eastern edge of the A Shau Valley. FSB *Ripcord* was established on a mountain with the plan to interdict NVA supplies and troops into South Vietnam. The base came under a month-long barrage of enemy mortar and automatic weapons in July until it was evacuated on 23 July. There were more than 143 KIA and several hundred WIA, but the American public did not hear this story because of a media blackout.

Meet Ripcord veterans and learn how the Wildcat chapter of the Armor Modeling and Preservation Society designed and built a detailed model of Ripcord.

11 AM: Defending FSB Ripcord: what it was like and how I survived:

Craig Van Hout, Ray Hines, Lee Widjeskog

2 PM: Researching and building a diorama of FSB Ripcord, 2018-2020:

Mike Roof and two members of the building team discuss the research and the detailed construction methods

3:30 PM: Lt. James Lawrence- The meaning behind the sacrifices

Lt. James Lawrence, a Citadel graduate and veteran of the Battle of Ia Drang, November 1965, will examine his role in the first big battle of South Vietnam and suggest some parallels it has with the campaign at Ripcord.

**Through the day living history members will display uniforms, equipment and weapons of the Vietnam era in the glass atrium outside the museum's entrance**