



RIPCORDER REPORT



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

Issue # 115

August 2018

Ripcord Association Elections 2018

This year at our reunion it will be time to elect three people to the board of directors. So far we have three candidates: Peter Meloro (C 2/506), Frank Marshall (A 2/506) and Lee Widjeskog (A 2/506). Between now and the election at our annual meeting you may nominate any other regular members who might be interested. The two remaining board members are Bill Boles (D2/506) and Jim McCoy (D 1/506). Their term of office will be up next year. Voting will take place at the annual meeting. Anyone having questions or interest in running may contact Lee Widjeskog at 856-451-1108, ltwidjeskog@aol.com or 493 Stillman Ave. Bridgeton, NJ 08302



Pete Meloro



Lee Widjeskog



Frank Marshall

2018 Reunion Date

Please note that the normal dates of the reunion have been changed for this year!

2018 MYRTLE BEACH, SC

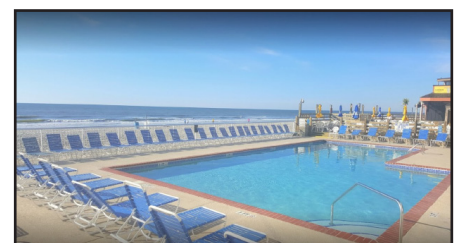
Wednesday Oct. 31 to Saturday Nov. 3

Leave Sunday Nov. 4

1-888-266-4375 for rooms
Group Code: Ripcord Association



Sands Club Ocean Resort



Sands Club Ocean Resort

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.

- Leigh Freeman C 2/506
- Frank Delfino HHC 1/506
- Murphy Majoria, Assoc. Mem.
- Gary Watrous E 2/506
- Ricky Hahn E 2/506
- Bill Hand B 2/506
- Gary Madsen D 1/506
- Ken Gainer A 2/506

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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



**Visit our website at
www.ripcordassociation.com**

Read the **Ripcord Report** on line
Daily updates ● History
and much more

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.



Join us on Facebook group
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**Visit our website at
www.ripcordassociation.com**

Please continue to send your letters and
send your comments or articles to:
ltwidjeskog@aol.com

or postal mail to:
[Lee Widjeskog](mailto:Lee.Widjeskog@ripcordassociation.com)
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
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Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ripcordassociation/>



Hellooo from I da ho. Well it's the middle of summer. Here we set surrounded with wild fires everywhere. This is typical here I'm afraid to say. I hope your summer is going better than mine.

Have you signed up for this year's reunion?? No! Well get to it. You'll have a good time there. My next one will be the 2020 reunion.

The trip back to Vietnam has been set back to this Fall or early into next year. Summer is when they take all the WWII vets back to Europe. I will keep everyone posted on our face book site. The organizer did ask our group to give then ideas on where we all wanted to go and see. I bet you can't guess what the number one place was. My suggestions were: Blaze, Birmingham, Bastogne, Mi Loc, Camp Evans and Ripcord. We all know Ripcord is out I don't think they will spring for the helicopter. I looked on Google earth at all these places and the Vietnamese have done a great job of removing all of these sites.

The wife and I have not done much this summer. I still hold down a part time job and that keeps me busy. We did take a trip to the Oregon coast earlier this summer and had a great time! Everyone keep safe for the rest of this summer.

Message from Jim McCoy

Board of Director
Ripcord Association



Each year I'm happy to see those family members at the reunion who had lost a loved one at Ripcord or one who died later in life. I would encourage everyone interested to make an effort to invite more of those families to our reunions so we can honor them and the incredible costly sacrifice their families have made to this great country of ours.

God Bless, Jim & Michelle

Grand Valley Veterans History Project



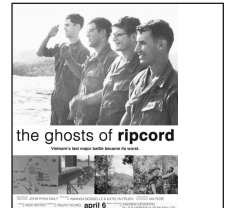
Jim Smither will be present once again to record the memories of those who are Ripcord veterans.

He has now done over 100 interviews with our guys and there are always room for more.

Once you are interviewed, you will receive a DVD for your use and the results will be archived and posted on the Grand Valley University website at www.gvsu.edu/vethistory. At this time they have been having some teething problems since the project has already out grown two different platforms.

Jim will arrive on the 31st or the 1st depending on how many have signed up ahead of his arrival. If you are interested in participating contact Jim at smitherj@gvsu.edu or call at 616-331-3422 and schedule a time during the reunion. Over the past 8 years we have enjoyed having Jim present and his interviews have always been well received and comfortable.

The Ghosts of Ripcord Documentary



There are still DVDs available of the feature-length documentary entitled, The Ghosts of Ripcord. To place an order please visit our official Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/firebasefilm>

You can also go directly to the link below to place an order more quickly.

<https://www.facebook.com/commerce/products/1414513478659718/>

You will receive your DVD in the mail within 7-10 business days from the time your order is received and processed. Any questions regarding past or future orders should be directed to our Facebook page's inbox or to our official email: firebasefilm@gmail.com

John Daily

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



The “Dog Days of August” are upon us! Here in New Jersey it has been an up and down summer of chilly days and alternately really hot days through July. August promises some hot and humid days but by the middle of the month it will probably be a lot less. Regardless, it’s great to be alive and kicking! The real hot and cold days help you be aware that you are still alive! If it is all the same what fun would that be? At least with the changes you have something to complain about and also to enjoy. You really can’t have one without the other! Hang in there, the weather will change again!

Our next reunion is quickly approaching! As a matter of business for the Association, there will be an election at the annual meeting in early November. There will be three openings for the board of directors. Frank Marshall, Peter Meloro and Lee Widjeskog have offered to run for another 3 year term. If anyone else is interested, contact me and I will ensure your name is on the list.

Things are moving along with the booklet for the 50th anniversary of the ESB Ripcord Battle. I still need comments about the guys that were killed. Those of you who have promised info please get it in to me as soon as possible. Others whom have received the request, think about what you remember about the different guys in your unit were like before they were killed and let me know. All this helps bring them to life in a fashion.

Elsewhere in this newsletter there is a copy of what Keith Nolan’s daughter said at her high school graduation. She is planning on continuing her education in college as she studies journalism. It seems hard to believe that she attended the 2000 reunion in Shreveport, Louisiana with her father as a toddler.

The hot weather has made me think about cold weather since it is not present. Years ago I got involved in the 50 mile Hike craze that was started in the Kennedy administration. As many will recall, President Kennedy was concerned about the physical preparedness of the nation’s youth. He discovered that the Marines would conduct a 50 mile march in less than 24 hours. Some of his cabinet members decided to try it and soon there were people all over the country trying to match the marines without the gear.

A friend of mine, Jeff Vanaman, saw me one day and suggested that we do a 50 mile hike. He rounded

up three other fellows (Pete, John and Steve) and we planned to take off from Bridgeton, NJ about 5 PM after school on Friday. Jeff said we needed to be first since another group was heading out on Saturday morning on a different route. We were all 16 or 17 years old and none had ever walked that far before. Jeff and I were in the high school marching band and I also ran cross country. The others were no better prepared.

This took place in February 23, 1963. Those days weather reports did not express wind chill or heat index. It was either hot, cold, really hot, really cold, windy, cloudy or clear. I discovered by reviewing the old newspapers, that the low for that day was 10 degrees Fahrenheit and wind at 15 to 20 mph out of the west. We left at twilight heading west!

Things went well the first 18 or so miles but by the time we reached the town of Salem, two of the guys were suffering from blisters. Going thru Salem we crossed a saltmarsh with the wind blowing in our faces. Trying to drink some water we found the Army surplus canteens had frozen up. Chocolate bars brought along for “energy” were hard and would not melt in our mouths since we were breathing through our nose and mouth both. At about mile 21 we lost our first walker. Steve’s feet were too badly blistered to go on so we stopped at a phone booth and he called his parents. This was about 11 or 11:30 PM.

The remaining stalwart four continued on. An hour or so later we reached the Delaware Memorial Bridge and reversed direction to head back. We stopped at an all-night diner and warmed up and drank a little. Here we lost the second fellow. Between blisters and the cold winds John called it quits. For the remaining three it was off to the finish before we cramped up too much.

On the way back we crossed the marsh again, but thankfully with the wind at our back. It was still bitterly cold and once in Salem I suggested we stop at the Salem County Jail. So at 3AM we knocked on the door and asked to warm up. The guard listened to our story and allowed us to lay in the hallway as we warmed up. We were all quite exhausted but once we stopped our legs began to tighten up. Fearing we took only an half hour break and then continued our trudge east toward our starting site. The rest of the walk was just putting one foot in front of the other and trying to not think about how tired and cold we were. The sun came up and lifted our spirits a bit if only for the appearance of greater warmth. I don’t think we could really tell.

(Continued on page 5)

(Jersey Ramblings Continued)

Finally at about 10 AM we reached our starting point, the Bridgeton Junior High School, our trek was complete. In some respects it was like what many of us experienced when returning from “Nam. You just completed a long arduous journey that only those who were there can appreciate and when you arrive back in the world, there is no one was there to greet you right away. We made phone calls to get picked up by relatives and it was all-over but the memories.

Like “Nam, even once home it was not completely over. I got into a hot tub of water and fell asleep. My father carried me up to my bed where I slept and recovered. On Monday I was back in school and going about business as if nothing had happened. Sounds familiar?

See you all in Myrtle Beach!

• • • • •

Graduation Speech of Emma Nolan

Good afternoon class of 2018. My name is Emma Nolan. Some of you may know me as the Editor-in-Chief. Others as the girl crying in the corner because she got a bad grade on a Shadden’s essay. I wear many hats.

I think this is the part of the speech when I am supposed to insert some pop culture references. So here we go. Overall I think these four years have been good to us. For the first time, we were old enough to get angry about a presidential election but not old enough to vote. After almost a decade of waiting we finally got a new Harry Potter book. We enjoyed four super bowls worth of chip and dip. We binged more Netflix shows then I have time to acknowledge. After all we are a class that still shares 90s nostalgia memes but were also born around the year 2000.

Before I get started I want to thank the staff and faculty. One of the benefits of being in a small school is the opportunity to know your teachers, coaches and even custodians. I don’t think I have been to a school with a more caring staff and I know that I am not the only one to have been lifted up by their words of encouragement. Teachers, thank you for genuinely caring about your students. Thank you for your hours of unpaid overtime in and of the classroom.

I also want to acknowledge our academic

endeavors. This year the arts program revived our pep band and produced a student directed play. FFA went to national convention and continued construction on our huge metals and wood shop. Our newspaper and yearbook won a JEA Scholarship. Our varsity football and volleyball team made it to state playoffs for the first time in more than five years and the wrestling team won the state title.

I had these memories in mind when I was preparing this speech, trying to find the right words to connect with 60 people and their families. I think before I can do so adequately I need to tell you a little about my life.

It is easy to assume when you see me up here that I have it all: valedictorian, Editor-in-Chief, prom princess. Sometimes there is a gap between perception and reality.

Fact One: I was nine years old when my father and best friend lost his fight against cancer. Fact Two: 6 years ago I moved to Oregon from my hometown in Missouri. I started middle school here it was first year in public school since the 4th grade. Fact three: 4 days before my 16th birthday I entered the foster care system.

I chose to tell you this today because I know I am not the only one in this class who has struggled and persevered. I commend each and everyone of you because you made it not just despite everyone who told you that you couldn’t do it but against personal demons some of us will never understand. Thank you class of 2018 because when I walked through those front doors I knew that I wasn’t fighting alone. I admire you because many of you are first generation college students to be. I admire you because despite what was happening at home, if you even had a home, you still made it here everyday. I admire you because when you felt you had reached your limit, in the classroom or on the field, you kept pushing.

As I look at my graduating class before me I know that there will be many more hurdles ahead of us but I also know that we are stronger than we give ourselves credit for and that there will be many more happy days and victories ahead.

The memories we have made will stay with us but the fortitude we have learned will push us further than we ever thought we could go. To my peers and teachers thank you for being a part of my childhood.

To the community thank you for supporting all of us.

(Keith Nolan’s daughter gave this speech at her high school graduation. She is planning on continuing her education in college as she studies journalism.)

Firebase Ripcord experiences of Sergeant (E-5) James H. Morris

I was assigned to Delta Company, 2/506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, based at Camp Evans in I Corps, South Vietnam. Camp Evans was located about 20 miles north of Hue in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

My assignment at Camp Evans began in mid July 1970. During the first week we had mandatory training before being sent to the field. I remember sitting in the bleachers of one training session and I happened to notice a lot of helicopter activity coming from the mountains to the west of Camp Evans. As one chopper got close enough, I noticed something hanging about 30 feet below by a cable and wrapped in an O.D. bag. I then realized that the horizontal object was one of my dead comrades encased in a body bag.

This was my first encounter with the reality of war and a foreboding feeling came over me which I remember to this day.

During our days of training we heard reports that Firebase Ripcord located in the Ashau Valley was under heavy attack. I had no idea what a firebase was and certainly didn't want to go to Ripcord. I found out that my company was in the jungle surrounding Ripcord and I was supposed to eventually join up with them.

July 21, 1970--Camp Evans

I received orders to report to the chopper pad at Evans for possible deployment to Ripcord. Once I arrived at the pad it was late afternoon and we had to sit and wait on our turn to fly. I was a new man in country (aka cherry) with my new jungle fatigues and stood out like a sore thumb. I would notice anybody with worn and tattered uniform to get a sense of how they conducted themselves. I tried to get some comfort knowing if they had survived for some time maybe there might be some hope for me amid all the chaos. This one Sergeant stood out, even though I did not know his name, I looked up to him. After a while I was told to get on the next Huey (aka Slick), soon as it touched down I jumped aboard and we were airborne in seconds. The Sergeant did not get on our flight. The Slick's doors were removed and there was clear view of the jungle 1000 feet below. Almost to our destination the chopper suddenly turned around and headed back to Evans. I was confused as I heard the pilot say that it was too hot to land at Ripcord. It didn't take me long to realize he was not talking about the weather. Once at Evans we disembarked and waited on

further orders. My no name Sergeant was still waiting. Just before dusk we boarded another bird and headed to Ripcord, we were told that the bird would only hover and we must run and seek cover as quick as we could. Soon as the bird was low enough to the lower landing pad, I jumped and ran like hell. The explosions sounded like World War III, I didn't know if was incoming or outgoing. Once all the birds had stopped coming, things settled down to a degree, by then it was almost dark on this ominous place called Ripcord.

I was told to seek shelter in a bunker about halfway to the summit. There was about four of us huddled in the bunker not knowing what would happen next. Without any further instructions we tried to sleep, but that was impossible due to the constant explosions. Every time a howitzer was fired near our bunker the concussion would knock dust from the ceiling of the bunker and give everybody a shower. The bombardment continued all night without ceasing.

July 22, 1970--*Firebase Ripcord*

My first sunrise on Ripcord after a night of terror, we were still in our bunker awaiting instructions. By around 9 a.m. the first choppers began arriving from Evans bringing more troops. Soon a chopper came in on the lower pad, the same pad only hours earlier I had landed on, a loud explosion was heard and the chopper tilted to one side. An NVA mortar round had hit its target. Our bunker was about 100 meters from the pad. I knew there must be some casualties. The medics ran to the scene to aid the victims. A short time later two men carrying a stretcher with a covered body ran past our bunker toward the summit.

A short time later we were told to proceed to the summit. This was my first encounter with Lt. Col. Andre Lucas. He had a plan to build an "FO" (Forward Observer) bunker on the summit to direct air strikes around Ripcord. Our job was to fill as many sandbags for the construction of the bunker. During our work to fill the sandbags, I noticed the dead soldier that had been killed at the lower pad attack. My buddy and I were instructed to move the body to the side as to not interfere with the work. I said that I would grab the legs if he would grab the shoulders. I couldn't help but notice the blood soaked blanket covering his head. I was mortified to touch the body and noticed that rigor mortis had begun since it was a very hot day. I then realized that the dead soldier was the unnamed Sergeant who I seen at the pad at Camp Evans the day before. My first thought

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(experiences of Sergeant Morris continued)

was why him, for the evening before I was at the exact same place he received his fatal wound. I later learned his name was Stanley G. Diehl and he was returning from R&R and he was also in Delta Company, 2/506th Infantry.

In the early afternoon a group of us were standing near the garbage trench, when a mortar round hit in the trench and exploded, luckily nobody was injured. I believe the trash in the pit helped to contain the shrapnel. The incoming mortar attacks were becoming more frequent.

A little while later a Chinook was attempting to land on the summit, I was within 50 feet, I heard several shots sounding similar to 50 caliber machine gun. The engine on the Chinook immediately started to die and my first instinct was to dive into the nearest foxhole. I was waiting on the fuel tanks to explode, because they were a likely target, if they had I would have been a crispy critter. Thankfully they did not, but the Chinook was abandoned.

I noticed the outbound flights were trying to remove as many supplies, gear, etc. as possible. The howitzers and mortars were firing as fast as possible. I even stood behind a 155 mm as it fired on straight line to a nearby mountain, for an instant I could see the shell before finding it's target. For the most part removal was impossible due to the incoming mortars and the amount of supplies. I did not know it at the time but this was a prelude to the evacuation.

Just after dark a mortar round hit near the summit. I walked by the summit aid station and peered in to see medics working feverishly on an injured comrade. Evidently the soldier had been hit in the crotch area by shrapnel and the medics were struggling to stop the profuse bleeding.

I returned to my foxhole on the summit and settled in for a long night. It was a sight to behold. Ripcord was lit up with flares almost all night, howitzers, mortars were firing in a constant rhythm. Soon I heard this God awful sound cutting the air over my head, I just knew it was the end. I found out later the sound was a shell from a 16" gun fired from the Battleship New Jersey anchored in the Gulf of Tonkin. I can remember thinking that as a cherry, I did not believe what I was seeing and hearing. I thought to myself the people in the world wouldn't believe it either.

July 23, 1970--Firebase Ripcord

The next morning, which I expected to be another

long day in hell, we received word that an evacuation of all personnel was planned for today. The plan was to make our way to the lower pad for pickup. Everything was so chaotic that there was no clear direction on where to go. As I snaked my way down from the summit toward the lower pad, I passed through a mortar pit. The floor was covered in blood and I was shocked to think if any could survive that much loss of blood. Another incoming mortar hit nearby, I continued down the path and came upon an officer lying on his back with his legs mangled by the explosion. I can still hear his moaning from the pain. The medics were already working to save his life. At first I did not recognize him to be LTC Lucas because his helmet was off, but then I saw the silver oak leaf, I was shocked. Another soldier lying nearby was apparently dead. I was directed to evacuate as quick as possible.

I left the gruesome scene and continued down the path. I met some brave soul, bleeding from the head, he said the lower pad was too hot, and directed me to a nearby bunker where some men were already inside. There was an opening nearby big enough for a chopper pickup. While waiting in the bunker on the next chopper, we discussed how to board the chopper, we knew it was not going to sit down. I was concerned that my full rucksack would not allow me to jump on the hovering chopper. I left everything behind but my M-16. Soon our chance for escape came when a bird appeared in the opening, we all ran like hell. Once aboard I closed my eyes thinking a mortar round would soon follow. Once airborne I did not open my eyes until we were safely clear of Ripcord. Some minutes later we landed in Camp Evans, the most welcome site ever.

I wanted to record my experiences on Ripcord as a remembrance to all the men who died or were wounded during the Battle of Ripcord. My hope is that all the brave men who fought on Ripcord will never be forgotten.



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A GREAT WARRIOR REMEMBERED

Over the last 25 years, numerous books, magazine articles, newsletters, television shows and commentaries have been written addressing the Ripcord Battle and the soldiers who fought in it. One such soldier who has often been overlooked for his exemplary service in the Ripcord Battle was Colonel William J. Bradley, Jr. Colonel Bradley had a storied Army career prior to taking over command of the Third Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division in December of 1969 as the Brigade Commander.



Colonel Bradley was 5 foot 10 inches tall and weighed about 165 pounds. He was a “mustang” who entered the Army in 1943 and served as an enlisted man in the infantry during World War II. He served in the European Theatre arriving in October of 1944 and rose to the rank of Sergeant at the age of 20 when the war ended in 1945. During his enlistment he was captured by the Germans during the Ardennes Offensive and was a POW during the remainder of the war. He escaped from the German POW camp on three separate occasions but each time was recaptured. His service in World War II gave him a unique perspective of what it is like to serve as an enlisted infantryman in combat against the enemy, and it instilled in him a complete understanding of the rigors of the campaign trail and what soldiers are required to do when faced with the difficult conditions encountered by them.

Not long after the end of World War II, Colonel Bradley attended the West Point Prep School and entered West Point in July of 1947. He graduated from West Point with the Class of 1951 and was immediately commissioned into the infantry. In 1953, Colonel Bradley was posted to the Seventh Infantry Regiment, Third Division, in Korea where he served as a junior infantry combat officer from 1953 to 1954.

After his return from Korea, he served in the 504th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and was later assigned as an instructor on the staff of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 1959, he was selected to attend the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Upon completion of the Command and General Staff College, Col. Bradley was assigned to the British Staff College followed by an assignment to the Army Standardization Group with the United Kingdom until 1964. Colonel Bradley then

attended the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia, and on completion he was selected as a Battalion Commander in the 82nd Airborne Division. Colonel Bradley led his battalion in the Dominican Republic Insurrection in 1965. After returning stateside from this campaign, Colonel Bradley attended the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and was assigned to Headquarters Strike Command until he was sent to Viet Nam.

In December of 1969, Colonel Bradley was selected to be the Third Brigade Commander of the 101st Airborne Division, whose headquarters was then located at Camp Evans. As the Third Brigade Commander, Colonel Bradley was charged with preparing and carrying out the plans for the assault into and occupation of Firebase Ripcord. Major Tex Turner, the Brigade S-3 and head of operations, was directed to prepare the plan of attack and ensuring that it was executed pursuant to Col. Bradley's approval. Major Turner was an incredible soldier in his own right, and he proceeded with the able assistants on the brigade staff to plan and see to the execution of the initial assaults into Firebase Ripcord and operations conducted thereafter. In April of 1970, Firebase Ripcord was finally secured and operations were conducted continuously in the Ripcord AO prior to Colonel Bradley's rotation back to the States in the latter part of June 1970, at which time he was replaced by then Colonel Ben Harrison.

Over the last 20 years, I have heard both Major General Harrison and Fred Spaulding (who served on the Brigade Staff with Colonel Bradley) speak with great admiration of the unique leadership qualities of Colonel Bradley. Major Tex Turner offered the following comments about his service with Colonel Bradley:

“I was Colonel William ‘Brad’ Bradley’s S-3 Operations Officer from late December 1969 to late June 1970. I was by his side all the time unless he had retired to his hooch. He and then Colonel Bill Dyke, the Division G-3, were the very best leader warriors with whom I ever served in combat. Colonel Bradley took good care of his soldiers and did his very best to ensure they had what they needed to accomplish the mission. He always told his commanders and staff to consider the mission first, but heaven help us if we didn’t equally consider his soldiers. The soldier never came second for Colonel Bradley because he was a true grunt who knew what it was like to serve in the foxholes on the

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(Warrior remembered continued)

‘front lines.’ He constantly worried over the fact that he had to keep his troops and units in the jungles for over 90 to 100 days without relief at Eagle Beach, the division safe area, for R&R. He reluctantly accepted the mission of returning to Firebase Ripcord for the third time without adequate forces to hold it. He did his best to convince the Division Commander that returning to Ripcord with only one battalion wouldn’t be successful. Colonel Bradley always disliked the fact that, as a brigade commander, he couldn’t directly join the fight with his troopers on the ground. He was not the kind of soldier who wanted to watch a firefight from the air. He wanted to be on the ground in the fight. To put it in succinct terms, Colonel Bradley is best described as ‘165 pounds of twisted steel and dynamite’. I loved Colonel Bradley like a brother. His course on earth has run, may it be said, ‘Well done Colonel Bradley: Be thou at peace.’ “

In March of 1970, I had occasion to meet Colonel Bradley in the field. One morning, after an engagement by one of my ambush teams with an enemy sapper unit the night before, Colonel Bradley flew into the LZ located not far from the ambush location. The LZ was then occupied by Captain Vazquez and a detachment of Charlie Company soldiers from the 4th Platoon. My soldiers told me that upon Colonel Bradley’s arrival at the LZ, he proceeded to move around the perimeter and talk with the individual soldiers securing the perimeter of the LZ and thanked them for performing their duties as good soldiers. I was not present when he landed, but was told to come to the LZ from the ambush position, whereupon I then met Colonel Bradley and spoke with him for several minutes. He wanted to know all about the specifics and manner in which the successful ambush had occurred. My first impression of him was that he was a tough, hard-core professional soldier who knew what he was talking about. He spoke in glowing terms of the soldiers who had performed so magnificently that night, and asked me to thank all of them for him for the wonderful job they were doing. Colonel Bradley made soldiers feel good about themselves and what they were doing, and their response to me was that he was a leader who cared about his men and understood what was being asked of them. He was the only soldier above the rank of Captain that I knew while in Viet Nam that ever spoke in such positive terms to the magnificent soldiers that I commanded. I thought to myself that this is the kind of man who loves soldiers and loves soldiering.

Colonel Bradley returned to the States in June of 1970 and retired from the United States Army in 1971. During his illustrious career, he received three CIB’s, a Silver Star, Bronze Star with “V” device, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf cluster, Master Parachutist Badge and numerous other awards for exceptional meritorious conduct in the performance of his duties. On his retirement from the service, he entered into the real estate business in Florida for many years until his retirement. William J. Bradley passed away on April 18, 2002.

I have often wondered what makes a great combat leader. Countless Army publications have attempted to define leadership and the qualities needed to be an effective combat leader. I know that all soldiers want to be commanded by a competent leader who cares about them as individuals and not just cannon fodder. Colonel Bradley was such a man and leader. He was a “soldier’s soldier.” He understood the complexities of war, and what it takes to fight them. Duty, Honor, Country was his creed. He exemplified what combat leadership is all about.

Colonel Bradley was the kind of soldier who performed his duties to the fullest and inspired those soldiers he commanded to be the best they could be under the toughest of conditions. Colonel Bradley should be remembered for what he was – a consummate warrior who loved the soldiers who served under him and did the best he could to support them in battle. We were indeed all most fortunate to have served under him during the first three months of the Ripcord battle.

Currahee,

First Lt. James H. Campbell

INCOMING MAIL



Dear Lee,

I wanted to let you know my husband, Dale Vanderbloom (D /501) died on July 14, 2015. Ironically the day he was to be discharged from Vietnam – instead he was diverted to Ripcord for several days.

Although he spoke of death, I don’t know names.

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Kathy Stathos

5-25-18

Eagle Dustoff Helicopter Shot Down Near Fire Support Base Ripcord

(By Jerry Rodgers, Eagle Dustoff, 326th Medical Battalion, 1970-71)

I was a medical evacuation pilot in the 326th Medical Battalion, Air Ambulance Platoon (Eagle Dustoff), 101st Airborne Division in 1970. I had been in Vietnam for only a few weeks when one of our medical evacuation helicopters was shot down in the vicinity of Fire Support Base Ripcord while on a medical evacuation mission, extracting a wounded soldier with a hoist and jungle penetrator on 26 May 1970. All four members of the crew were killed. I had met the crew and talked to them only an hour or so before they were killed. The crew consisted of Aircraft Commander WO1 Edward Terry O'Brien, Co-pilot WO1 Bruce Elliot Graham, Crew Chief SGT David Keith Johnson and Medic SGT William Edward Hawkins. The crew responded to a call for an urgent medevac in the area around Fire Support Base Ripcord. A recon team had come in contact with NVA, and a member of the team had been injured, requiring medical evacuation. The Aircraft Commander hovered into a position at tree-top level directly above the patient, and the Crew Chief had lowered the jungle penetrator (a cylindrical shaped device with seats that unfold) by a cable attached to a hoist in the helicopter. The patient was about 6-8 feet off the ground when the un-armed aircraft bearing large red crosses was hit by an enemy Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG). The helicopter burst into flames, crashed and burned, killing all of the crew. Before the chopper crashed, the crew cut the cable (through a cartridge activated cutter) and let the patient fall to the ground. This last-minute action probably saved the life of the patient, who was later evacuated by another Dustoff crew. It was an arduous task for the recon team to recover the bodies from the remote location and hump them to an area suitable for a helicopter to land and pick them up. I was co-pilot of the crew who flew out and picked up the bodies a couple of days later. It was only a year or two ago that I found out who the patient had been when I was asked if I had information about the crash that I could provide in an effort to get him his Purple Heart that he had never received after all these years. I along with several others provided statements to the Department of the Army to support his award which he finally received in 2016, 46 years after the incident. Eagle Dustoff has a proud legacy of dedication, courage, and sacrifice in saving

lives. During my tour 1970-71, the platoon, which consisted of about 40 pilots, crew chiefs and medics, lost 19 men killed in action, with many others wounded in action. Others died before and after my tour. All of them died as heroes.

Ripcord Association Membership

821 members in our Ripcord Association
656 are Ripcord Veterans
165 are Associate Members
206 receive newsletter via Postal Mail
615 receive the newsletter via e-mail
725 on Facebook "Ripcord Association Group"

Please go to our website and update your membership to keep getting important information about our Ripcord Association

Ripcord Association Newest Members

Richard	Parris	HHC 159 Avn ASH
Louise	Utecht-Lusty	Associate Member
Jerome	Minahan	C/2-506
Serge	Duron	Associate Member
Alan	Graham	377 FA Aviation
Brian	Bozart	C/2-501
James	Gardner	Associate Member
Jennifer	Gardner	Associate Member
Angie	Worley	Associate Member
Tammy	Taylor	Associate Member

Myrtle Beach 2018 Sign Ups (3 Aug)

- Jim & Irene Aanonsen A 2/506
- ***Wayne & Loretta Ball A 2/506
- Bill Boles D 2/506
- Bruce Bond 58th Inf.
- Bruce Brady & Karolyn Kruger A 2/506
- Chris Brady Assoc. Mem. & author
- Paul Buhr A /506
- Jim Campbell C 2/506
- William (Tex) Campbell D 2/506
- Dale & Sue Cooper B 2/506
- Tommy & Judy Counts & Lisa Hill D 2/506
- Merle, Ruth & Joshua DeLagrange D 1/506
- Michael & Christine Dicken B 2/506
- Russ & Mary Ann Dixon B 2/319 FA
- Carnell, Chad & Kim Evans B 2/319 FA
- ***Dennis & Rena Figley C /506
- Rex & Carol Flansburg D 2/506
- ***Nicholas & Andrew Fotias Pathfinder
- John & Debbie Fowler C 2/506
- Fred & Carol Gilbert D 2/506
- Michael & Debra Goff B 2/17 Cav
- Ricky & Janet Hahn E 2/506
- Bill & Lynn Hand B & E 2/506
- Paul & Laura Hansmann B 2/506
- Terry & Judy Hodges D 1/506
- Chuck & Jean Holmen A 159 ASHB
- Don & Linda Holthausen C 2/506
- Steve & Melinda Huggins E 2/506
- Dale "Buzz" Ireland C 159 ASHB
- Bob & Red Judd B 2/506
- ***Garry Kelly A 2/506
- David & Sophia Kenyon 326 ENG
- Greg & Kristi Kiekintveld 326 ENG
- ***Mike Kreutziger D 2/506
- Dale Lane & Dianne Grote A 2/506
- Robert Layton B 2/501
- Bob Leibecke C 2/506
- Walter & Mary Lewis B 2/319 FA
- ***Tony & Koleen Little D 2/506
- Murphy & Phyllis Majoria Assoc. Mem.
- Frank & Dee Marshall A 2/506
- Alfred & Sondra Martin A 2/11 FA
- ***John Mason D 2/506
- Jim & Michelle McCoy D 1/506
- Ron & Linda McCrory E 2/506
- Peter & Chris Meloro C 2/506
- Uwe & Diane Meyer B 2/506
- ***Thomas & Annette Militello A 2/11 FA
- Leonard & Carole Moore Mini-Cav.
- Clem & Susan Neiderer HHC 2/501
- Robert Pagano & Rachel Springer B /506
- Tom & Barbara Peacock D 2/506
- George & Sheila Potts B 2/319 FA
- Doug & Iris Puffer D 2/506
- Steve Pullen B 2/17
- Gary & Patty Radford D 2/506
- Edward & Anna Ramon 1st AVN.
- Sam Rawlinson Assoc. Member
- Kent Rowland C&D /506
- Chuck Shannon D 2/506
- Jim Smither Assoc. Member G.V.S.U.
- David & Lisa Snyder A 2/11 FA
- Fred & Micki Spaulding HHC 3rd BDE
- Dennis & Jane Stortz D 2/506
- ***George & Paulette Strasburg D 2/506
- ***John Tamburini B 2/319 FA
- Bob Tarbuck, Paige Corkhill & Rob Tarbuck C 2/506
- Craig & Sandy Van Hout B 2/506
- Bob & Jackie Wallace C 2/506
- Steve & Susan Wallace 2/506
- Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506
- Ron Zahn A 2/11 FA

2018 FSB RIPCORDER REUNION SIGN UP SHEET

At the Sands Ocean Club Resort, Myrtle Beach, SC

☐ 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) be attending? If yes what are their names? _____ (For name tag purposes only).

Arrival Date _____

Registration fee of \$ _____ is enclosed for # _____ Adults and # _____ children under 18.
\$35 for children under 18. For adults see below !

SIGN UP FEES

Before June 30, 2018, \$75 per adult

July 1 through 31, 2018 \$80 per adult,

August 1 through October 1, 2018 \$85 per adult.

After October 1, 2018 \$90 per adult.

Your registration fee covers the cost of the snacks, beverages, hot hors d'oeuvres on Friday night and dinner on Saturday.

Sign up fee due October 26, 2018.

Make your check payable to "RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

Questions? Call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 26 Oct. 2018. (After call 609-774-6951)

AGENDA

Wednesday, October 31: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)

Thursday, November 1 Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)

Friday, November 2 Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1800 hours (6PM)

Saturday, November 3 Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.

Dinner with cash bar starting at 1700 hours done by 2200 hours.

Sunday, November 4 Homeward bound

Thursday golf outing (a separate fee). Check if you will play [☐].

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY

BY October 1, 2018

CALL: 1-888-266-4375

Ask for HOTEL RESERVATIONS and mention the

GROUP CODE: RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION

(Price is \$62 per night plus tax: breakfast is included.)