



RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 118

May 2019

FSB Ripcord Diorama

by Craig Van Hout

On Apr 13, 2019 Frank Marshall (A 2/506), Steve Wallace (B 2/506) and Craig Van Hout (B 2/506) made a road trip to Winnsboro, SC to see the progress being made on the FSB Ripcord diorama. The AMPS Central South Carolina "Wildcats" chapter of the Armor Modeling & Preservation Society (AMPS) has been contracted by the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room & Military Museum, Columbia, SC to construct the diorama to be included as part of an exhibit on the Vietnam War. The Relic Room is in the same building as the South Carolina Museum. The diorama will be 8' x 12' and 5' tall. The club members are pouring over all the pictures they can find to make the diorama as accurate as possible. If anyone has had any dealings with modeling clubs, you know what a stickler for detail these people are. Unfortunately, they cannot find an aerial photo of Ripcord. If anyone has an aerial view of Ripcord send it to Frank Marshall so we can forward it to the modelers. The modelers have a goal of completing the diorama by the end of the summer. The Museum has a tentative goal of opening the Vietnam War exhibit after the first of the year.



JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



Hopefully, everyone is enjoying the spring of 2019! Here in New Jersey we continue to have rain on a more than regular basis. Last year we had a record total rainfall which was over 50% greater than any year recorded in the last 150 years. I planted six birch saplings last year and they did very well. The grass grew so well that I was forced to purchase a new mower. Oh the fun of owning property!

Our grandson, who lives in Massachusetts, continues to be an avid baseball player. At twelve he plays in two leagues and loves to pitch. His main complaint is he is not very tall. I told him he will just have to be patient. In my gene pool and his there is a tendency to develop later in life. Most of my growth happened after 9th grade when I grew 6 inches in one year. I did not put on weight for years. In Vietnam I was 6'4" and weighed 160 pounds. If I turned sideways to the shooting, I was a small target! Hopefully my grandson will be patient and await developments because they will probably happen in a few years.

Ripcord KIAs remembered

As you may recall, I am attempting to put together a booklet of pictures and biographies of the 140 men we lost during the battle of Ripcord. I have contacted most of you by mail or e-mail over the past year or so. If you have information about those killed whom you knew, please get me the info as soon as possible. I am starting to do the write up and can always use further info. Some of the deceased have no family members left or I cannot track them down. Ergo, any info will be helpful so send it to me via e-mail, postal or phone. My contact points are at the end of this report.

(continued on page 3)

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
- Patrick Silbaugh Assoc. member
- Mike Bodner E 2/506
- Bill Hand B 2/506
- Ricky Hahn E 2/506
- Bob Wallace C 2/506
- Terry Singleton Assoc. member
- Murphy Majoria Assoc. Member
- Jim Fitzgerald 426 S&S
- John Fowler C 2/506
- Gary Cole B2/319 & C 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
Ripcord Association

**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
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

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Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



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



Are you getting ready for this year's reunion? I hope so. If it's your first one you will be happy you decided to come to one. I'm getting ready too, but for the 2020 reunion. I'm trying to decide on whether to drive or to fly to the reunion. This year it's time to take the grandkids to Yellow Stone.

Our face book page continues to grow. As of 5/14/2019 we are up to 783 members. We continue to grow every month. To all of our members please keep posting your Vietnam pictures. Please follow our room rules for content of your posts there.

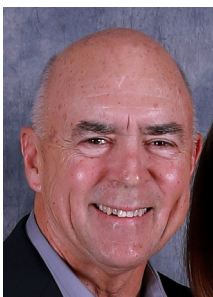
By the time you all read this. I hope you are all having good weather. Be safe this summer. I want to see all of you next year.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES

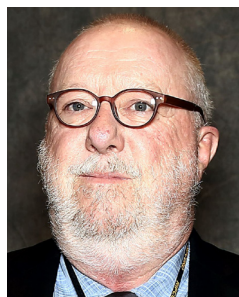
Jim McCoy (D 1/506) and Bill Boles (D & HHC 2/506) have been nominated for three year terms on the Ripcord Association Board of Directors.

Any other nominees should be submitted to Lee Widjeskog at 493 Stillman Ave. Bridgeton, NJ 08302 no later than 1 July 2019.

Nominees must be Ripcord veterans and a member of the Association. Voting will take place during the annual meeting on 27 July at the University Plaze Hotel in Springfield, MO



Jim McCoy



Bill Boles

(Ramblings continued)

I have received a lot of replies from people who remember our KIAs and others. The information is very helpful in getting a picture of what we have lost when these young men were killed. Some we knew very well, but often we had not had time to develop bonds with our comrades before they were killed. Many families were shattered by the loss and others bore down and carried on but never forgot. Losing children or husbands early is never easy for the people affected. When we, as soldiers, develop bonds with the guys in our fire team or squad and then have them die is never easy. It often leads one to wonder why we were spared. Those who have experience the chaos of combat know that no matter how good or bad you are, survival can be just a matter of luck or fate. Knowing that does not make it any easier.

I plan to have the booklet ready for the 2020 reunion so be certain to get me your information.

Future Reunions

We continue to plan for the future reunions. As most of you are aware, next year (2020) will mark 50 years since the battle of Ripcord. We anticipate a larger than average group of attendees. For that reason we will hold it at the University Plaza Hotel. They were selected because they are in the middle of the country and so reasonably accessible to most of our members. Secondly, this facility can handle whatever number we throw at them. Most of our other venues not have that kind of flexibility. This is really important since we have no way of knowing two years in advance how many people will be coming. The room charge is also reasonable and includes breakfast. They allow us to supply the hospitality room with our own beverages and snacks and not have to purchase them from the hotel. Their food service is excellent and has a place to hold our banquet on site. The community is very gracious when it comes to veteran groups and they go out of their way to assist us. In 2021 we will hold one more reunion at this location, but it will be held in October. We decided to stay one more year in Springfield, because we may still have a lot of people attending the year after the 50th. For 2022 we may well be back in Myrtle Beach but that is as yet undecided.

Lee Widjeskog

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INCOMING MAIL



Cloyd “Hutch” Hutchison

Hutch signed up to attend last year’s reunion but had to cancel at the last moment. He signed up again for this year but died before he could make it.

Hutch was a member of C 2/506 during the Ripcord battle and served two tours in Vietnam. Following his service he moved to southern California where he worked as a welder and millwright. After his divorce he returned to his home town of Kanosh, UT to care for his parents. He is survived by his son Darryl.

Regretfully he was not able to renew his acquaintances with his Ripcord comrades before his death.

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To the family and friends of Chuck Van Cleve

As a newly arrived 2nd Lieutenant in Vietnam, I was assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Battalion 506th Infantry. One of the first people I met upon arriving in the field outside Firebase Jack was Chuck Van Cleve. Chuck was a “veteran” and over the next couple of months became my friend and mentor. He guided me through that initial time in the very different and very scary world of an infantry platoon leader.

I have always remembered his kindness to me. At night we often sat and talked about family, home, our future plans and our present situation. His advice and gentle suggestions helped me tremendously. As a platoon leader you can’t be friends with your men. Chuck was my sounding board, my confessor and an inspirational, professional Army officer.

I missed him greatly when he left Delta Company and devastated when I learned that he had been wounded and evacuated. Departing friends are very common in the Army but almost 50 years later, my memories of Chuck are still very vivid and I’m thankful, that for a short time, we were together and helped each other survive and made a very hard life somewhat easier.

He was indeed a hero and my life has been richer for having known him. May Chuck rest in peace. I offer my deepest condolences to his family.

Jack Flaherty
Former Platoon Leader
D/2-506th Infantry

I was a newbie learning the AO when we made a number of deliveries to Ripcord.

Curtis Bodin, A/101 Avn

• • • • •

Thanks Frank, I enjoy hearing from my buddies from the hill (Ripcord). Those were the days. Tell Al Martin and big Dave Snyder Ole (Lightning) from gun#1 in our unit (A-2nd-11 Arty I said stay (on-time). I was one of the last GI’s that left Ripcord.)

Johnny Morgan, A/2-11 Arty

• • • • •

Been with the Ripcord Report from the beginning. Has been a comfort for years. I belong to Vietnam Veterans support group chapter one, Stubenville, Ohio.

Mike Bodnar, E/2-506 Snipers

• • • • •

What a great family we have here! I love you guys!

Joseph Evans, A/2-506

• • • • •

Proud to be a part of Ripcord History and more proud of the ground pounders who humped Ripcord A/O”

William Combs, A/159 ASHB

• • • • •

Jackie and I really enjoy the Ripcord Report. We read it from cover to back when it first arrives.

Robert Wallace, C/2-506

• • • • •

Fired support from FSB Gladitor as we were the closest battery.

James Spinks, C Btry 2/319 Arty

• • • • •

I replaced a wounded Sgt Johnson on a 105, then after abandoning Ripcord I was assigned to Infantry

Gary Cole, 2/319 Arty, C/2-506 Inf

REMEMBERING CHUCK VAN CLEVE

I first met Chuck on July 1 1970 on Hill 902 which was about 2 or 3 km from Fire Support Base Ripcord. Chuck was the FO for Delta company, 2-506 Infantry of the 101st Airborne, but had been sent over to Charlie company when Charlie's FO had gone on R&R.

Chuck's actual unit was B Battery, 2-319 Artillery whose battery of 105's fired in direct support of 2-506 Inf from Ripcord. As a FO, Chuck was the fire support coordinator for the Company Commander of whatever Infantry company he was assigned to. At that time I was platoon leader of first platoon and my fighting position on Hill 902 was approx 25 meters in front of the company CO where Chuck was located with CPT Thomas Hewitt, Charlie's CO. At approx 0400 Charlie's defensive position on Hill 902 was attacked by a NVA Sapper Company accompanied by additional NVA Infantry.

Chuck was on radio watch at the CP manning two radios, one on the company net and the other on the Artillery net for B 2-319. CPT Hewitt was instantly killed by a RPG blast and Chuck was injured by shrapnel in one of his hands. Realizing the situation, Chuck immediately assumed command of the company.

He was the right man at the right place at the right time. At this point I was on the radio myself and over the course of the next two hours, Chuck and I were in constant communication on the radio.

The attack was vicious, with the enemy showing enormous discipline of fire with small arms; but the Sappers relied on satchel charges thrown into our defensive positions supported by direct fire from RPG's. Chuck called in artillery support, communicated with air support and issued orders as necessary. He and I exchanged SITREPS. With a badly wounded hand, he continued to man both radios, and fired his M16 at a sapper advancing on his position, neutralising the threat. At the beginning of first light, I basically low crawled to the CP to link up with Chuck. His hand was being bandaged by the company medic and was in some pain. Together, we walked the NDP to survey the damage and shore up the defenses. The ground was covered with un-exploded satchel charges, numerous dead NVA and KIA Americans. The company's perimeter had been penetrated and the company almost over run. Chuck, I, and others, carried the KIA's to the incoming helicopters from Ripcord when they started arriving with senior officers and some reinforcements.

For his actions, Chuck was awarded the Silver Star. I saw him a little later at the direct support medical company at Camp Evens, Charlie Med, then lost contact for the next 45 years.

I was able to locate Chuck in about 2013 through the help of journalist Chris Brady who went on to write the book, "Remembering Firebase Ripcord" where you can read a more detailed account of Chucks heroic actions. We emailed each other and were able to get together on several occasions, including a Ripcord reunion in Myrtle Beach. It was my pleasure to nominate Chuck for Distinguished Member of the Regiment, 506th Infantry in 2016. I was able to meet his family at the awards ceremony at Fort Campbell, where his award was presented by COL Bob Seitz. We stayed in touch, especially in working with Ken Pitetti to formulate as accurate as presentation as possible on the events of Hill 902.

Chuck was my battle buddy, reunited after many years and a true friend, born of battle. I will miss you Chuck. RIP. Currahee.

Respectfully

Bob Leibecke

former platoon leader C 2-506 IN

Chuck passed away from complications from surgery March 26 2019. His funeral was May 4.



Ripcord Association members Chuck Van Cleve and Robert Leibecke are pictured after receiving their 2016 Distinguished Members of the Regiment award from the 506th Airborne Infantry Association

Springfield 2019 Attendee List
signed up as May 18, 2019

- Floyd & Duane Alexander A2/506 & B 2/319 FA
- Bob Anderson A 2/11 FA
- Robert & Michele Barrowcliff A 159 ASHB
- Lin & Pinkey Bashford D 2/506
- Timothy & Elaine Lanier-Bohan Pathfinder
- Bill Boles D 2 /506
- Bruce Brady & Karolyn Kruger A 2/506
- Paul Buhr A 2/506
- Linda Byles & Patty Taylor B 326 ENG
- Tex Campbell D 2/506
- Howard, Diana & Bobbi Colbert, Adam, Jase & Jacki Horton C 2/506
- Dale & Sue Cooper C 2/506
- David Cote B & E /506
- Tommy & Judy Counts 7 Lisa Hill D 2/506
- Merle, Ruth & Josh DeLagrange D 1/506
- Lawrence & Debbie Fieser & Susan Nelson C 1/506
- Rex & Carol Flansburg D 2/506
- Nicholas & Andrew Fotias Pathfinder
- John & Debbie Fowler C 2/506
- Ricky & Janet Hahn E 2/506
- Elwood & Johnnie Hall D 2/506
- Bill & Lynn Hand B 2/506
- Paul & Laure Hansmann B 2/506
- John & Barbara Hedrick E 2/506
- Raymond Hines 2/319 FA, LNO 2/506
- Terry Hodges D 1/506
- Chuck & Jean Holmen A 159 ASHB
- Donald & Linda Holthausen C 2/506
- Jim Joyce Pathfinders
- Robert & Red Judd B 2/506
- Rick & Betty Kellogg B 2/506
- Dale Lane, Diane Grote, Jeff & Sarah Watkins A & HHC @/506
- Leonard Larson A 2/320 FA
- Robert Layton B 2/501
- Tony & Koleen Little D 2/506
- Murphy & Phyllis Majoria Assoc. Mem.
- Gene & Star Marshall B 2/319 FA
- Al & Sondra Martin A 2/11 FA
- Jim & Michele 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
- Clem Neiderer HHC 2/501
- Bruce & Ramona Nelson B 2/319 FA
- Robert Pagano & Rachel Springer B 2/506
- Troy & Barbara Porter C 2/506 & 3rd Bde Air.
- Ray & Sheila Potts B 2/319 FA
- Douglas Puffer D 2/506
- Charles Schilero & Joann Schmidt D 2/506
- Marc Skinner D 2/506
- Joe O. Smith B/326 ENG & D 2/506
- Dave & Lisa Snyder A 2/11 FA
- Fred & Micki Spaulding HHC 3rd Bde
- Robert Tarbuck & Paige Corkhill C 2/506
- Charles Tipton C 2/506
- Leland & Debra Trembley 3rd BDE Air Cav.
- Robert & Jackie Wallace C 2/506
- Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506
- Mike & Liz Womack C 2/506
- Ron Zahn A 2/11 FA

Robert Hays D-1/506

A native Texan that seemed anything but a cowboy, Robert, Bobby as we knew him was a serious, quiet, Conscientious Objector Medic. I met him on Ripcord as we were preparing to move outside the wire. We were relieving 2/506th while they were on Stand Down in mid-June, 1970. He approached me and said "LT, they told me to go with you." After brief introductory comments, I noticed he wasn't carrying a rifle, which was not unusual for medics but it also triggered an internal "Oh man, a CO". As time went on, I found him to be very serious about his convictions, which were rooted in his deeply seated religious beliefs.



As the platoon medic, he was part of my CP group. As we settled in for the evening on our first night in the bush, I heard him rustling around in the dark but paid little attention to it. The next morning, I was surprised to see him putting on his clothes and boots. His response to my obvious question was, "But LT, I don't like to sleep in my clothes." This guy had no business in the jungle! He never really seemed to grasp the gravity of the situation he was in. On another occasion we came upon him as we were returning from a RIF, lying on his back reading his Bible, way outside the perimeter. His explanation that time was "I don't like to read the Bible in there with them." I must admit, he was often subjected to challenges to his religious lifestyle, but he stuck with it. Unfortunately, his religious isolation probably kept him from making friends in the unit. He also had little opportunity to apply his MOS. We spent most of the next month on Kathryn and saw no close combat.

On the morning of 21 July, he became one of the first victims of the mortar attack. Thinking he was probably cowering in whatever cover he could find, I yelled for him to "get over here" when the call went out that we had someone badly hurt. One of my guys then said "Sir, it is Doc." He had already turned an ashen gray/white and it was obvious the end was near for him.

Fast forward twenty-five years. The internet was in its infancy, but I made contact with PVT Hays' family in Weslaco, TX. We exchanged a few phone calls and letters. Imagine my shock and surprise when I received a newspaper clipping of his exploits on the football field (he was from Texas, after all). He was an all-city

selection and his coaches were very complimentary of him. I could not imagine the Bobby that I knew even attending a football game, much less playing the game! I also linked up with a few of his friends and confirmed that his religious convictions were indeed very genuine, not just some convenient ploy in an attempt to avoid military service. My respect for him grew, as did a little remorse, for considering him less of a soldier because of his CO status. In some ways, he demonstrated more courage than we gun-totin bad-asses, and for that I say again – Currahee!

John H. Smith

2019 Reunion Date

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

Springfield, Missouri
Wednesday July 24 to Saturday
July 27
Leave Sunday July 28

(See page 8 of this newsletter for Registration
form and more information)

UNIVERSITY PLAZA HOTEL
333 S John Q. Hammons
Parkway
Springfield , MO 65806
(417) 864-7333
<https://upspringfield.com/>

RIPCORDEREUNION 2019 SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

[] Yes, I'll be there!

[] I 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 _____ Departure Date _____

THE HOTEL PROVIDES FREE TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT.

Registration fee of \$ _____ is enclosed for # _____ Adults and # _____ children under 18.

\$35 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below !

DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:

Before March 1 2019, \$75 per adult

March 1 through April 30, 2019 \$80 per adult,

May 1 through June 22, 2019 \$85 per adult.

After June 22, 2019 \$90 per adult.

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

Registration fee due no later than July 17, 2019.

Make your check payable to "RIPCORDEREUNION ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

Questions? Call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 18 July 2019. (After call 609-774-6951)

AGENDA

Wednesday, July 24: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)
Thursday, July 25: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)
Friday, July 26: Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1730 hours
Saturday, July 27: Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room (1100 hrs)
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1700 hours done by 2200 hours.
Sunday, July 28: Homeward bound

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

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY

BY June 21, 2019

CALL 417-864-7333 or E-mail at www.upspringfield.com

Ask for HOTEL RESERVATIONS and mention the

GROUP CODE: RIPCORDEREUNION

(Price is \$92 per night plus tax: breakfast is included.)