



RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 121

March 2020



Unveiling of a NEW DIORAMA Fire Support Base Ripcord

South Vietnam, 1970

Saturday- March 28, 2020 10 AM-4 PM

SC Confederate Relic Room and Military

Museum- 301 Gervais Street

In the spring and summer, 1970 the 101st ABN was engaged in a savage campaign with NVA forces on the eastern edge of the A Shua 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.

Find out more, meet Ripcord veterans and learn how the Wildcat chapter of the Armor Modeling and Preservation Society designed and built a new detailed model of Ripcord. This diorama is an early introduction to the upcoming Vietnam exhibition that will open at the CRR in September 2020.

- 11 AM: Defending FSB Ripcord: what it was like and how I survived:
Frank Marshall, Craig Van Hout, Ray Hines
- 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, what does it mean to us today?

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

**Rooms are available at: The Fairfield Inn, 120 Blarney Road, Columbia, SC 29223. 803-760-1700.
\$99.00 a night (use the code: Ripcord Association till March 13) This hotel is
about 15 minutes away from the museum.**

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



February is rapidly coming to a close. Here in New Jersey the weather has been mild this year but it has rained most of the days. We have had no snow to speak of (ie. have to shovel) but it has been cloudy. All in all not a bad winter.

The next Ripcord Reunion is only five months away. At this time we have over 180 people signed up as coming with 22 first time attendees. If it keeps up we can see as many as 400 people attending! The list of attendees is in this newsletter and on our website where it is updated the first week of each month.

All I can say is get your registrations in as soon as possible and get a room. Be certain to check the hotel list we have on the web site and included in this newsletter if there are no rooms at the University Plaza or "Q" hotel. Plan ahead because it will be a great event!

Do not forget that next year we will be at the same place once more but it will be in October of 2021.

On other news the Diorama is proceeding well in Columbia, SC. They have put together a scale model of the Fire Support Base Ripcord hill with guns, wire, bunkers and ammo dumps based on photos and descriptions from the men who were there. It goes on display to the public on March 28th. Stop in and see it if you have a chance.

The 506 Association is looking for people to honor as distinguished Members of the Regiment. If you have someone in mind let them know. The contact is 1st LT Frank Toub at 3290 S. Senseney Cir., Clarksville, TN 37042 or frank.h.toub.mil@mail.mil. Requirements are found on the 506 Association website. The deadline for 2020 is February 29. However, it is done each year so if you can't make the deadline this year, they can use it for next year.

Well, I've got to get this out and order more things for the reunion. I hope to see many of you in July!! Those of you who have put off coming, bite the bullet and make your way to Springfield. We are all getting older and your friends would love to see you one more time. CURAHEE!!!!

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.

Donations

the life blood of our Association

The following have given donations to the Ripcord Association since the last newsletter.

Leigh Freeman C 2/506

Al Martin A 2/11 FA

Steve Gunn D 2/506

George Scott A 2/11 FA

Ken Lilley A & HHC 2/506

James Crawford HHC 2/506

Susan Rzoca

Dale Tauer D 1/506

Bill Hand B 2/506

Jerone Buffington C 2/506

Dave Cordetti in memory of Cloyd "Hutch"

Hutchison C 2/506

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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Important 2020 Reunion Information

2020 Reunion Date

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

Springfield, Missouri

Monday 20 July

to

Thursday 23 July

Leave Friday 24 July

(See page 12 of this newsletter for Registration form and more information)

UNIVERSITY PLAZA HOTEL

**333 S John Q. Hammons
Parkway**

**Springfield , MO 65806
(417) 864-7333**

or

**if the University Plaza is full
The “Q” Hotel
417-862-0070**

Where to Stay in Springfield in July

The Ripcord 2020 Reunion will be held at the
University Plaza Hotel

333 S. John Q. Hammons Parkway

This is about 3 blocks south of the Springfield Cardinals Stadium

The Plaza and “Q” Hotel are probably full.

Nearby hotels are as follows:

- **Tru Hotel 417-249-1400: 2 blocks south**
- **Vandivort Hotel 417-832-1515 3 blocks south east.**
- **Courtyard Hotel 417-869-6700 on Rt 44 ten driving minutes**
- **Best Western Rt. 66: 5 minutes away 417-866-1963**
- **Greenstay Hotel 3+ miles 417-863-1440**

At the intersection of Rt. 44 and Rt 65 (Glenstone Ave) are a wide variety of hotels available. They are about 12 minutes from the U. Plaza.

They include: Best Wester Coach, Double Tree, Americas Best, Oasis Inn, Fairfield Inn, Druary Inn, Econo Inn, Motel 6, Holiday Inn Hotel, Hampton Inn, Quality Inn, Home2 Suites, Candlewood Inn, and Comfort Inn and Suites.

Cancelled

Ladies Auction / Raffle

Remember... There will not be a Ladies Raffle this year at the reunion. DO NOT bring gifts to raffle. Wait till 2021.

Thank You!

Lee & Kathy Widjeskog

Signed up for Springfield 2020

On page ? of this issue are the names of those that have signed up for the 2020 reunion.

You can also check the list on our website which will be updated daily.

www.ripcordassociation.com

INCOMING MAIL



Remembering Bob Zoller 1st Platoon, Charlie Company, 2/506 Infantry, 101st Airborne Div.

On an early May morning in 1970, Bob Zoller and a handful of Charlie Company new guys were put to work to build a bunker on Firebase Ripcord's southern perimeter. Bob, I, and the others were shown where to dig. We took turns with the picks and the shovels. In between the picking and shoveling, we watched the Army's Cobra gunships use its mini-guns and rockets to strike North Vietnamese Army—NVA--targets on a distant ridge.



About four feet down into the digging, we came across a large boulder. It was at least three feet in diameter. Bob and I took turns on the pick, trying to break it up. Captain Vasquez, Charlie Company's CO, happened by and took an interest in our efforts. After watching our lack of progress, he couldn't take it anymore, so he jumped down into the hole. Grabbing the pick out of my hands, he asked, "What're you? Some kinda city boy?" The Captain showed us how to swing a pick to break up an obstinate boulder. After the demonstration, Bob and I destroyed that rock.

On a sunny, very hot and humid 13 May 1970, Charlie Company left Firebase Ripcord in helicopters for a jungle landing zone. Bob was one of first platoon's M-60 Machine-Gunners.

Bob Zoller was a quiet, intelligent, compassionate, and generous young man with an ironic sense of humor. From him, I was introduced to the literature of J.R.R. Tolkien and its parody, Bored of the Rings. The various books and our discussion of them on the jungle trails and in the night defensive positions helped us to pass the time and to expand the mind.

On 6 June 1970, Charlie Company returned to Camp Evans, for a stand down period of rest and relaxation. Later that day, Bob shared out a care package that he had received from his folks back home in Ohio. It was the first time I'd ever seen or tasted a banana chip. I liked them so much that Bob souvenired me a big handful of them.

The next day, I began a three-week hospital stay in Phu Bai and Can Ranh Bay for surgeries on my leg and

convalescence for a severe jungle-rot infection, known as cellulitis.

On my return to Camp Evans on July first, the Charlie Company clerk told me I was going out to the Company's night defensive position on Hill 902 the next day.

While in the hospital, I had read a couple books that I wanted to talk about to Bob. I was looking forward to seeing him on Hill 902, so we could resume the conversation.

In the early morning hours of 2 July 1970, eight members of Charlie Company, including Bob Zoller, were killed in a battle with NVA sappers and infantry on Hill 902.

It's been almost fifty years since I've seen Bob Zoller, and I still miss him. When I see banana chips at the grocery, I always think of him.

Leigh Freeman

Omaha, Nebraska

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Hi Lee!

Happy New Year to you and your lovely wife ! Enclosed please find a donation for the cause !

Also, in my unit designation I would like you to add HHC as I was very fortunate to have spent half my time there.

Enjoyed the reunion last summer and am looking forward to 2020!

Regards, Ken Lilley

A & HHC 2/506

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Dear Lee,

I was very happy to get your correspondence dated 1/14/2020. I was not involved in Ripcord. I was in A 2/506 from 8/69 and was wounded in an ambush on 2/23/1970. The little S.O.Bs shot my thumb off which they reattached in Japan. Memory fails but I think I was in 1st platoon and as far as afterward I was in Ft. Carson. I think the decal you sent was very cool and from everything I heard and read Ripcord was a sob. Congrats on getting back to the world and hope you have a great reunion. I wish I remembered my platoon leader's name because he saved my ass by rocking a M60 and enabling me to crawl back and eventually medavac'd . Thank you for contacting me.

Sincerely,

Joe Bozec

201 Brandau Ln.

Simpsonville, SC. 29680

joebozec@gmail.com

INCOMING MAIL



Lee,

I was the senior company medic with Alpha 3/187 till May of 70. Then I was with the 2/506 as the Senior Battalion Medical Assistant to Dr. Harris. I spent some time with Alpha 2/506 when they were on FSB O'Reilly flying in on 1 July then leaving about 10 July. I flew to Evans to conduct sick call. However, I was back to Ripcord the day after the Chinook crashed onto the 105's. Since the aid station on Ripcord was burned out, I had to bring out fresh medical supplies and help out with the increasing number of wounded. I then left Ripcord on 22 July. I was working at 326 Medevac treating all the wounded that were brought in from the evacuation of Ripcord and Alpha 2/506.

Following Vietnam I returned to college and became a physician's assistant. Then attended LSU, New Orleans by way of a scholarship, did anesthesia training in San Diego and completed schooling at Stanford with a Neuro surgical Anesthesia Fellowship from Mayo clinic. I am still working at 73 in Roanoke, VA.

Looking forward to seeing al at Springfield in July.

Jim Crawford

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Dear Sir,

I apologize for the tardiness of my response to your letter re: Victor. I misplaced your letter and kind of forgot about it. No, I was not acquainted with him personally. My only knowledge of him is what I learned from Keith Nolan and official records. Victor and I were the same age, had the same birth month and had been in that place for about the same amount of time, he was in Company B and I in Company D.

My only personal interaction with him was on the Ripcord Firebase. What I believe to be my first encounter with Victor was when he was one of three soldiers from Company B that took over my 'hole' on the firebase when Capt. Rollison volunteered us to go after Hill 1000. I showed them where the claymores, hand grenades etc. were located upon my exit from that bunker. That was probably on July 6, 1970. The morning of July 10, we returned to the firebase and



while standing around the top of the hill, mortars began falling. You may recall that a bunker for guests had been constructed around the SW (?) corner of the top plateau. That bunker filled quickly with people and room soon ran out. Some of us remained out in the open with nowhere to go. Previously, I had been in the same situation with a fellow named Ron Virgilio and we ran into what turned out to be the ammunition bunker. At that time I said to Ron, let's get out of here because if a mortar blows up in the doorway it might ignite the whole place, we will be blown to bits and nobody will ever know what happened to us. This time I said to 3 others (Mike Sablosky, Michael Walker and ?) let's try the bunker that was used to serve hot chow down on the lower level. Four of us scurried off and found the bunker unoccupied with plenty of room.

We stood near the front doorway bullshitting waiting for the mortars to die down. After sometime I ran back toward the top of the hill to see what was planned next when another mortar hit the top near the TOC. I ran back down to the chow bunker and we all waited. During that wait, I was standing closest to the front door when a fellow came running in. A coffee urn was sitting on the countertop and the guy got a couple cups of coffee. He turned to leave and I thought I recognized him as one of the guys that took over my hole on the firebase. I moved out of his way so he could leave the bunker, he was in the doorway when an explosion threw us all across the bunker against the back wall. When I was in the aid station, I heard Capt. Rollison say it looked like the guy took a direct hit. Until Keith Nolan wrote the Ripcord book I wondered everyday who that guy was that saved the rest of us. I firmly believe that at the split second Victor filled that doorway with his body he shielded the rest of us from the bulk of the shrapnel. Sablosky, Walker and I all received multiple shrapnel wounds and I was sent home from my wounds. I forget who else was in that bunker with us but if not for Victor we all would have died that day. I do think about that whole sequence everyday and how just as easily you could be inquiring about me instead of Victor.

That's about all that I can tell you about my experience with Victor Defoor.

I don't know you or ifl ever saw you around in those Vietnam days (11/24/69 to 07/ 10/70) but I remember a nice fellow I met in the hospital that had been a radio operator in Company A. I think of you when I ride Route 55 on the way to New Jersey shore.

Patrick McCloskey D/2-506

Signed up for Springfield 2020

- Floyd & Diane Alexander A 2/506 & B 2/319 FA
- Sonny & Judy Arkangel B 2/506 & S3 Bde.
- Marc Aronson B 2/319 FA
- **Edward & Mary Ann Ban A 159 ASHB
- Robert & Michele Barrowcliff A 159 ASHB
- John Beadle & Noreen Labide A 2/11 FA
- Bill Boles D & HHC 2/506
- Frank & Bud Bort C 2/506
- Bruce Brady & Karolyn Kruger A 2/506
- Chris Brady Guest
- Sam & Janet Brown B 1/506
- Jerone Buffington C 2/506
- Cherlyn, Sue Burdette & Steve Bell Guests A 2/11FA
- Jim & Mary Campbell C 2/506
- Tex Campbell D 2/506
- Tom & Linda Chase 163 ASHB
- Ernie Claxon HHC 2/506
- **Ronald & June Cochran A 2/11 FA
- Dale & Sue Cooper C 2/506
- Dave & Connie Cote B & E 2/506
- **James Crawford & Kelley Laughlin HHC 2/506
- Anthony & Dennise Critchlow HHC 2/506
- Merle, Ruth & Josh Delagrange D 1/506
- Michael & Christine Dicken B 2/506
- Jonelle, Troels & Sloan Erichsen Guests
- Lawrence & Debbie Fieser A & C 1/506
- Mike & Lee Foreman B 2/506
- **Leland & Vicki Gagnebin 3rd Bde Air Cav.
- Martin & Lea Glennon A & HHC 2/506
- **Kae, Shirley, Jason, Amy & Aaron Goodwin B 2/506
- Robin Graham HHC 2/506
- **William & La Vern Green A 2/11 FA
- **Michael Griffin, Medic HHC 2/506
- Steve & Cindy Gunn D & HHC 2/506
- Bob & Maura Gustafson Guests
- Elwood & Johnnie Hall D 2/506
- **Gene Haltenhof C 158 ASHB
- Bill & Lynn Hand B 2/506
- Paul & Laura Hansman B 2/506
- **Richard & Linda Hanson D & HHC 2/506
- Richard & Linda Hawkins Guests
- Chuck & Jean Holmen A 159th ASHB
- Donald & Linda Holthausen C 2/506
- Jim & Kathy Howton Pathfinder
- **Raymond & Nell Hudzinski D & HHC 2/506
- Buzz Ireland C 159th ASHB
- Bob & Red Judd B 2/506
- Gary Kelly A 2/506
- David & Sophia Kenyon B 326 ENG
- Greg Kiekinveld B 326 ENG
- **Lyle Kohmetscher B 2/501
- Bob Leibecke C 2/506

- **Marvin Leis D & HHC 2/506
 - Tony & KOLEEN Little D 2/506
 - **David Lockwood & Ingrid Hietzke A 2/11 FA
 - Walter & Kathie Lyssy HHC 2/506
 - Mike Mackey & J. Paul Meyer C 159 ASHB
 - **Jerry & Donna Manemann A 2/506
 - Stephen & Maria Manthei C 2/506
 - Gene & Star Marshall B 2/319 FA
 - Alfred & Sondra Martin A 2/11 FA
 - John Mason D 2/506
 - **Diane & Joe McCarville C 2/506
 - Jim & Michelle McCoy D 1/506
 - Ron & Linda McCrory E 2/506
 - **Doug & Mimi McVay A 2/506
 - Mary Meagher & John Hoek Guest
 - Peter & Chris Meloro C 2/506
 - Thomas & Annette Militello A 2/11 FA
 - **Mark & Diane Minch B 2/319 FA
 - Benny & Teresa Mulkey Pathfinder
 - Clem Neiderer HHC 2/501
 - Bruce & Ramona Nelson B 2/319 FA
 - Tim Newman A 2/506
 - Robert Pagano & Rachel Springer B 2/506
 - **Charles Parson B 2/506
 - Tom & Barbara Peacock D 2/506 & A 2/501
 - Ray & Sheila Potts B 2/319 FA
 - **George Pourchot D 1/506
 - Vincent & Charlotte Priola B 2/506
 - Doug & Iris Puffer D 2/506
 - Mike & Lura Renner a 2/11 FA
 - Jerry & Luci Rodgers 326 Med.
 - Charles Schilero & Joann Schmidt D 2/506
 - **Art & Eileem Schmidt A 159 ASHB
 - Chuck Shannon D 2/506
 - Everett Slaughter, JR B /506
 - Joe O. Smith 326 ENG & D 2/506
 - Dave & Lisa Snyder A 2/11 FA
 - Fred & Micki Spaulding HHC 3rd Bde
 - Terry Stanger & Carol Keilman A 159th ASHB
 - Robert Tarbuck & Paige Corkhill C 2/506
 - **Glenn & Linda Tatsuno C 2/506
 - Dale & Janet Tauer D 1/506
 - Craig & Sandy Van Hout B 2/506
 - Steve & Susan Wallace B 2/506
 - Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506
 - Bill & Sheila Williams B 2/506
 - John & Kathy Williams Guests
 - Diane Wilson Guest
 - **Robert & Gina Wright A 2/506
 - Ron Zahn A 2/11 FA
- ** First reunion**



RIPCORN REUNION 2020 SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

[] 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 2020, \$75 per adult
Mar. 1 through May 9, 2020 \$80 per adult,
May 10 through June 20, 2020 \$85 per adult.
After June 20, 2020 \$90 per adult.

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

Registration fee due no later than July 14, 2020.

Make your check payable to "RIPCORN ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

Questions? Call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 14 July 2020. (After call 609-774-6951)

AGENDA

Monday, July 20: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)

Tuesday, July 21: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)

Wednesday, July 22: Hospitality 1200 Hours. Hot hors d'oeuvres 1730 hours

Thursday, July 23: Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room (1100 hrs)

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

Friday, July 24: Homeward bound

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

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY
BY June 18, 2020**

CALL 417-864-7333 for Univ. Plaza Hotel

If the Univ. Plaza is full call 417-862-0070 at the "Q Hotel" a block away
Ask for HOTEL RESERVATIONS and mention the
GROUP CODE: RIPCORN
(Price is \$92 per night plus tax: breakfast is included.)