



RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 124

November 2020

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog



Welcome to the November 2020 Ripcord Newsletter. Here we are in the last two months of the year that never seems to end.

We continue to have the COVID -19 pandemic as an issue to deal with. It caused the cancellation of our 50th Anniversary of the Battle for FSB Ripcord and hopefully, it will not cancel the October 2021 reunion. However, the latest information from the CDC indicates that even when the vaccine is ready, we will have to continue practicing social distancing and wearing masks into 2022. I am certain we cannot have a reunion without being close to one another. We may have to get vaccinated and still wait until 2022. Time will tell.

We cannot reserve rooms at the University Plaza Hotel before the New Year, so hold your horses. In our next newsletter (February) we will know more about what restrictions will be imposed.

In other news, Bill Boles and Jim McCoy have been re-elected to serve on the Board of directors. Thank you gentlemen for your time and efforts.

In this issue I have done a synopsis of the events in the Ripcord area of operations and extended it to the east as far as FSB Rakkasan. Even though the Third Brigade covered a lot more of I Corp, we are primarily interested in the area from the A Shau to FSB Rakkasan and FSB O'Reilly down to FSB Kathryn for the synopsis. I drew this info from Robin Graham's (HHC 2/506) work as well as a write up by William Higgins of Charlie 1/506, Brigade summaries, various publications and comments found on the internet over the years. If additions or corrections are necessary let us know! I hope you enjoy it.

By the way, my wife, Kathy said to say "Hi !!" to all her Ripcorders!

Ron Hoskins E 2/506

Ronald Hoskins never had an easy life in his early years. Born to a share cropper family with two brothers and a sister, they lived in Arkansas and Mississippi. By the time he was 13 his father had passed away and it was necessary for Ron to quit school and start working. He chopped cotton, cleaned bar rooms and did whatever was necessary to make some money for the family. In 1966, at the age of 17 he joined the US Army in hopes of a better life.



He took Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Carson, Colorado. After he reached 18 years of age, he was sent to Korea for 13 months. Coming back to the states he went to Fort Benning, Georgia where he participated in a Physical Fitness Test competition. He had the best score for that July and received a seven day leave.

From Fort Benning, he was assigned to a unit in Germany in December 1968. While there he re-enlisted with the understanding that he could extend his stay in Germany. The Army, in its infinite wisdom gave him three additional months before sending Ron to Vietnam. Hoskins was trained as a mortar man but could end up doing any grunt work the Army wanted. He arrived at Camp Evans and was assigned to Echo Company 2/506 in early 1970. He well recalls going with a team of 10 troops to a NDP in February for 3 days. Due to weather conditions, the three days ended up closer to 14 days before they got out. Luckily there was not enemy activity in the area at that time.

April found Ron and the other mortar men from E2/506 on Ripcord responding to the Infantry request for support. It seemed we were socked in for three weeks, but he was there as the fortifications and wire were built. He recalls when Dennis Heinz of C 2/506 was killed by

(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 C2/506
- Terrana Vraniak 101 3rd Bde AVN.
- Jim Fairhall, Assoc. Mem.
In Memory of Roger "Chip" Collins B2/506
- Jim McCall D2/506
In memory of Rembert Rollison D2/506
- Richard Utecht, Assoc. Mem.
In memory of Bob Utecht B2/506
- Susan Davenport Metz
In memory of Leonard Moore, Mini Cav.

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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



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

ltwidjeskog@aol.com

or

postal mail to:

Lee Widjeskog
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Everyone would love to hear from you.

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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



Well, this year seems to be dragging along so slow. It's November and the year is almost over. Our Face book page continues to grow. It looks to me to be family members of our members. I do get a lot of people from foreign countries that want to join. Usually they get turned down. I ask everyone to answer a question as to why they want to join. If I don't get an answer 'they don't get to join. A friendly reminder if you recommend someone to join you must answer the same question. No answer no joining. We now have 962 members on our Face book page. WE continue to grow slowly. I encourage our members to post pictures of your time in Vietnam if you have any. I am sure everyone is getting tired of my pictures. As for Dennise and I we did not do anything this summer. The only time we left the house is to get food. I am looking forward to next summer. We are going to the Oregon coast for 2 weeks. Then on to Springfield in October with all of you. I need the break from this year. I will keep this short. Be safe out there.

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Lt. Col. Roy J. Young

My father, the late Col. Roy J. Young, served in Vietnam from the summer of 1969 to December, 1970. He was the battalion commander of the 2nd/502nd the last half of 1970, and I believe he was involved in the Battle of Ripcord. He retired as a full bird in 1973.

Sadly, he was killed in an Eastern Airlines plane crash in June, 1975. He never talked much about his experiences in Vietnam, which I fully understand. I was 19 years old when he was killed and we missed out on a lot of father/son talks, events, etc. I still miss him to this day and am proud of his service to our country.

I was hoping if there are any members of the Association who served with my dad in Vietnam, and that they would reach out to me to tell me what he was like, his experiences, etc.

Thank you.

Tate Young

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(Ron Hoskins E 2/506 continued)

a grenade struck while digging a fighting position.

Ron did not leave Ripcord until the June 9th stand down. By July he was once more on the hill but now they were receiving a lot of NVA mortar fire. He was wounded seven times but it was mostly minor until 23 July. He was hit and thrown up in the air. The medics quickly got him on a chopper and he went to 326 Med followed by 85th Evac and then two weeks later to Cam Ranh Bay where he spent a month in re-hab.

October 1970, Ron was back at Camp Evans and FSB Rakkasan. He took time to R&R in Thailand and after returning decided to extend. With that he received a thirty day leave so he returned home and bought a 1970 Pontiac Grand Prix. He noticed the speedometer went up to 140 miles per hour. Ron decided, late one night, to see if it could. He was on I-240 where he wound it out and buried the needle. Soon a policeman was pulling him over.

"Son, what do you think you are doing?" Ron replied, "The sign said 240 so I thought I would give it a go! But I couldn't reach it!" The cop checked his ID and saw he was in the service. Ron said he was returning to Vietnam next week and the patrolman let him off.

Returning to Camp Evans his new assignment was to run the movie projector at Camp Eagle. Thus his tour ended.

At the Seattle airport he received some guff about being a soldier, but he ignored it and reported to his assignment at Fort Hood, Texas a place he did not wish to be. He wanted to stay in the service but when his enlistment was up in 1973, the Army had no slots available for him. Following the service, Ron rotated jobs and wives on a regular basis as he sought the right one! He lived in Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida and held over 50 different jobs. He got his GED and attended two years of college. He took every US Postal Service test offered but never got hired. He had two boys along the way, but they went with his wife.

Eventually post-traumatic stress disorder came to a head. At one point, Ron had a nightmare as he slept and knew he had to get out of the "fox hole". He jumped up out of bed and ran right into a wall. Ron end up in the hospital. Following treatment and counseling through the Veterans Administration, Ron has recovered. The thoughts are still there but they are no longer in the forefront

In spite of the difficulties, Ron Hoskins feels his experience in Vietnam was good.

The 506 Units of the 101st Move Back to the Mountains

March 1970

In an effort to keep North Vietnam Army (NVA) units away from the coastal lowlands and the majority of the South Vietnam population, the 101st with the 1st Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division attempted to establish a string of fire support bases (FSB) near the Ho Chi Min Trail on the edge of the A Shau Valley. The plan called for a series of fire support bases to support the ARVN troops as they worked to destroy NVA supplies and troops in the valley. Bases were to be established at Ripcord, Bradley, Airborne, O'Reilly and Kathryn. Of those only Ripcord, O'Reilly and Kathryn were opened. However, Kathryn was too far away to be of much support to Ripcord or to reach most of the A Shau Valley.

12 March

In hopes that the base construction could catch an early end to the monsoon season, an attempt was made to establish Fire Support Base Ripcord. On 12 March 1970 at 1500 hours, this was done by inserting Alpha and Bravo Company's 2/506 Regiment into the hills near Coc Muen. At the same time, an ARVN unit was inserted in preparation for a combat assault. Hill 902 was prepped by aircraft and artillery on 11 March. As Alpha Company was enroute, a fly over inspection of the area caused command to make a change and instead dropped the Currahees onto Hill 927, Ripcord, which had not been prepped. Meanwhile, Bravo 2/506 was inserted on a ridge about 2 kilometers east of Hill 902 as originally planned.

Alphas first unit, 2nd Platoon, arrived without taking fire. As Fourth Platoon and the Command Post (CP) arrived, they were greeted with mortar and small arms fire. It appeared that the NVA had the Ripcord hill pre-registered and were able to hit most of the area. The Fourth Platoon fled the LZ and set up around the hill. McCoy and Westerfelt took positions near "Impact Rock" when they were hit with small arms and mortar fire. They were quickly evacuated.

Another GI was hit as well as a door gunner on the delivery helicopter as it was brought down. Shortly First and Third Platoons were delivered on site. During that first hour of action and assault, Lt. Dudley Davis of Fourth Platoon, was killed by mortar fire. His radio telephone operator (RTO) was also hit by shrapnel and medevacked to the hospital. His buddies remember

Daniel Heater giving the peace sign and smiling as he left the field. A small piece of fragment had entered under his arm and nicked an artery. By the time he got to the hospital he had died. Four others were sent to the rear due to wounds. By the time Alpha Company left the hill on the 15th they had lost 2 dead and 15 wounded. With those losses the Fourth Platoon was split among the remaining three platoons. That night Alpha 2/506 company established a NDP about 500 meters south of Ripcord in a fog.

While this was going on, D2/506 was securing FSB Jack and C 2/506 was patrolling 9 clicks northeast of Ripcord. That night, a listening post for Charlie 2/506 was hit with RPG and small arms fire, killing PFC Gerald Shanor and wounding four others. No NVA were killed.

While Alpha worked the Ripcord hill, to the east 13 clicks, Delta 1/506 was closing FSB Mooney while C 1/506 worked on establishing the closer, FSB Granite, supposedly for a very brief time.

Alpha 1/506 killed two NVA three clicks south of Granite while B 3/187 killed another 3 clicks southeast of Granite.



Dudley Davis



Daniel Heater



Gerald Shanor

13 March

During the night, First Platoon, A 2/506, fired a M-79 grenade at a suspected enemy soldier. It turned out to be a GI who had moved outside the perimeter after dark to check his equipment but failed to let anyone know. He was seriously injured but medevacked back to Camp Evans when the fog lifted the next day.

A re-supply to Alpha Company, drew small arms fire at the helicopter. No one was hit. One of the issues present was the lack of aerial vision above 1000 feet till late afternoon. This delayed support as well as supplies and medevacs if needed.

Alpha 2/506 platoons searched the south and east side of near Ripcord and set up to the east for the night. Bravo, Charlie and Delta 2/506 stayed and patrolled their areas

as yesterday. No contact.

The 1/506 units continued working on Granite and Mooney and patrolling the area east of the 2/506.

The ARVN 1st Div. killed a total of 9 NVA west of Triple Hill and Ripcord.

14 March

Early morning, 1st Alpha 2/506 fired a M-79 and had one man slightly injured when the round bounced back into the perimeter.

Alpha 2/506 next NDP was located about 400 meters east of Ripcord on the ridge towards Hill 805. Bravo 2/506 continued to work the ridge from Hill 902. Delta was still in the FSB Jack area.

Fourth Platoon C 2/506, four clicks north of Gladiator, at their NDP, blew claymores at NVA after being hit by satchel charges. Three dead NVA found in the day light and two GIs received minor wounds

The 1/506 continued working in the Granite area. A tunnel complex was discovered and Cecil Dobson of Bravo 1/506 suffocated while trying to search the complex near the Khe Ouaun River. Another man passed out but was revived when pulled out by Arthur Meara. Dobson did not make it.

Alpha 1/506 ran into an ambush leaving 2 men dead and 5 wounded 3 kilometers southeast of FSB Granite. Lt Gerald Hauswirth and PFC Lane Wiseman were killed and the enemy routed. Due to poor weather conditions and small arms fire, it took three attempts to medevac the wounded.



Cecil Dobson



Gerald Hauswirth



Lane Wiseman

15 March

Alpha 2/506 cut a landing zone (LZ) at the site of their NDP and were extracted at 1817 hours. They were placed about 6 kilometers south east of Ripcord on the same ridge that Bravo Company was working, but further east.

The battalion wanted to continue to pursue establishing Ripcord, but the weather did not co-operate. This made

support and re-supply very iffy.

While Alpha and Bravo worked the 902 ridge, E & D 2/506 provided security for FSB Jack. Seven kilometers to the north east of Ripcord, Charlie Company patrolled. Around 1900 hours 1st Platoon C2/506 received small arms fire and a RPG. Two men were wounded in this action.

Elsewhere to the east of the 2/506 AO, the 1/506 was busy closing out FSB Mooney to the east and opening FSB Granite further west, to help support any attempt to set up on Ripcord.

16 March

On the 16 of March, C 2/506, while on recon, 3 kilometers northwest of Gladiator, was hit by the NVA leaving James Stanley dead. The other 2/506 units saw no action.

Meanwhile, three kilometer southeast of Gladiator, Second Platoon of Delta 1/506 killed a NVA soldier while one GI was wounded. Shortly after, they killed two more NVA. By this time, C 1/506 was sitting on Granite along with a mortar section and A2/319 Field Artillery after leaving FSB Mooney.



James Stanley

17 March

With poor weather, the day found most units in their same positions or very close.

First Platoon D 1/506 engaged 1 NVA and killed the same. An hour later, as they checked out the area, they were hit by an ambush, which killed Carl Gilbertson and wounded two others. One more NVA also died. All this was about 3 clicks southeast of Granite. By this time, brigade had decided to keep FSB Granite open for longer than 10 days as originally planned. This decision likely reflects the increase in NVA activity the 1/506 has been encountering.



Carl Gilbertson

18 March

The 18th started cold, wet and foggy. The 2/506 units continued to patrol their areas with no contact.

Charlie 1 /506 secured FSB Granite with A 2/319's 105mm howitzers and Echo's 81 mm mortars. The

engineers were present with their dozer shoring up the defenses. It was becoming more permanent, but adequate defenses were still lacking.

Alpha and Bravo 1/506 were now working further east of Rakkasan without incident. Delta searched for NVA around FSB Granite.

As far as artillery went, A 2/319 was at Granite, B 2/319 at Jack, A 2/11 was at Jack. C 2/94 at FSB Nancy and C/34 on FSB O'Reilly.

19 March

There was again poor weather for air support. Units patrolled in their areas (A& B 2/506 just south of 902 ridge, C2/506 and Recon north of FSB Granite, and Delta 2/506 around FSB Jack).

Charlie 1/506 held Granite while D 1/506 patrolled southeast, but no major moves or contacts. Bravo was at Camp Evans for refitting and A 1/506 was out to the east. Brigade sent out warnings to expect attacks, but nothing was definitive.

20 March

At 0204 FSB Granite was hit by a NVA sapper unit. Before the attack, the commander of Charlie Company 1/506 (Capt. Moore) was checking the perimeter when he spotted and shot a sapper. The attack broke out! The NVA hit with mortars, RPGs and small arms fire. The fighting was heavy, but the US troops held because the attack came before the sappers were ready. By 0300 the enemy attack had lost momentum. Illumination from a CH-47 helicopter kept the area lit up and artillery response coordinated by FO Alvie Martin cut off the NVA. Two mortar men, James Kurth and Willie Walker died as they aided the wounded.

By the time it was over (0410), C 1/506 had lost Dale Blake, Harold Harris, Ronald Leonard (medic), Mike McGuire, Gary Stacey and Tinsley Wells. James Davis was to fly out earlier in the week to meet his wife and new born at his Hawaii R&R. Due to the poor weather, he was still on the fire base when the assault happened. Jim never made it to his R&R or back home.

The 326 Engineers, who had a section working the base, lost Robert Thompson and Dennis Morrill. Overall 11 men died and 30 were wounded.

In the afternoon, third Platoon of Bravo 1/506 moved in to help shore up Charlie Company.

The 2/506 units patrolled west of Granite and uncovered bunkers and trails while D 2/506 worked around FSB Jack.



James Kurth



Willie Walker



Dale Blake



Harold Harris



Ronald Leonard



Mike McGuire



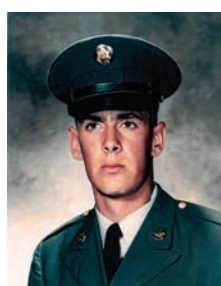
Gary Stacy



Tinsley Wells



James Davis



Robert Thompson



Dennis Morrill

21 March

After the hectic day on the 20th, the 1/506 remained in their positions. B 3/187, opcon to the 1/506, patrolled around Granite.

A continuation of the poor weather had the 2/506 troops patrolling in their respective areas. Plans were afoot at Brigade to move onto Ripcord but weather was the issue.

22 March

Another foggy, cold morning followed by wind and a

cold rain. Typical monsoon weather in the highlands. Alpha, Bravo and Charlie 2/506 used the day cutting LZs. No contact. Delta remained near and on FSB Jack and Recon worked the Granite area.

All of the 1/506 units except Alpha, worked the Granite area with no contact.

Charlie 1/506 on Granite was probed during the night. Artillery was employed and no further contact was made.

A sniper team was set about 300 meters from Granite. The last contact was at 1938 hours. About 30 minutes later a 105mm round hit a tree near the team and created an air burst. This killed FPC John Sams and wounded two others. No contact was made with the team until PFC Anderson staggered into the Granite perimeter at first light and reported the incident. One of those wounded, Donald McKee, died two days later in the hospital in Japan.

The only change in artillery support is that now B 1/39 with the heavy guns, is now on FSB Barbara



John Sams



Donald McKee

23 March

Once more the weather was an issue. 2/506 units have not moved far. Third Platoon A 2/506 engaged three NVA with negative results. Earlier, Recon spotted NVA north of Gladiator but did not engage.

All of 1/506 worked around FSB Granite. Bravo 1/506 found a three day old NVA body with equipment in a camp site. No recent sign.

24 March

Weather cancelled any major moves. All was quiet in the 2/506 area. East of them. 1/506 patrolled but encountered nothing.

Meanwhile, 2/17th Cav, working 3 klicks northwest of FSB Maureen, spotted and killed four NVA.

25 March

Weather was still the same old story. Wet, cold cloudy

and tough flying.

Charlie 2/506 four klicks north west of Granite had a RPG fired at their position. A helicopter was damaged, but there were no casualties.

Alpha 2/506 cut a new LZ and the other units patrolled as in the past few days.

The 1/506 continued to work the FSB Granite area without contact.

26 March

The weather showed signs of improvement, but was still an issue.

At 1100 hours Fourth Platoon B 2/506, as they moved through the jungle, were engaged by the NVA. This was in the vicinity of what became known as "Re-up Hill". Marvin Shell found a foot print and as he waited for his LT to come forward, the NVA opened up, killing him.



Marvin Shell

The 1/506 maintained their patrolling without any contact.

27 March

Alpha and Bravo 2/506 continued patrolling their areas. Charlie 2/506 flew to Camp Evans. D 2/506 left FSB Jack and was placed in a blocking position for 1/506 near FSB Granite.

Bravo 2/506 engaged NVA two separate times without results. They located trails and sleeping positions that showed signs of use.

Brigade added 5 companies to the area around FSB Granite as blocking force in response to Intel that indicated possible NVA concentrations.

28 March

Weather is finally clear. Brigade is now looking at Gladiator as a new fire support base for the Ripcord assault. Charlie 2/506 supplied a 10 man security team for Brigade Commander Col. Bradley, as he inspected the potential site.

Bravo 2/506 reported heavy trails and sleeping positions. Still working the ridge to Hill 902.

A mortar unit was attached to A 2/506.

Near Granite, the blocking companies helping 1/506, continued to search, but without any success.

29 March

Charlie 2/506, a mortar section and B 326 Engineers moved to FSB Gladiator to establish the base.

Alpha and Bravo each cut LZs. Delta 2/506 continued as a blocking force near Granite.

Alpha 1/506 moved to FSB Rakkasan with E 1/506. Charlie 1/506 went to Camp Evans while Bravo and Delta 1/506 patrolled.

30 March

Weather is no longer an issue for a while at any rate.

Alpha 2/506 had one man wounded by 81mm mortar fire. D 2/506 moved to 3 clicks west of Gladiator and later had two men wounded by 81mm fire.

Recon went to Eagle Beach and Charlie 2/506 secured Gladiator.

The 1/506 was in position similar to yesterday. The blocking companies have moved out of the area of operations, but no contact was made.

31 March

Delta 2/506, north of Hill 605 spotted NVA at 100 meters at 0400. They employed artillery and illumination. Secondary explosions were reported and D2/506 investigated the site after dawn finding bunkers but no NVA.

First Platoon Bravo 2/506, working with a tracker dog team near "Re-up Hill", was hit by NVA when the dog did not alert. In the exchange of small arms fire and grenades, three GIs were killed and three wounded. No NVA bodies were found on the blood trails. Those killed were Lt. Harry Hayes, Sgt. Thomas Shriner and PFC Newton Tapp.

Charlie 2/506 maintained security on FSB Gladiator now manned by B2/319 Field Artillery and mortar units. Alpha 2/506 continued to patrol in the area as yesterday. The 1/506 worked on Rakkasan with A 2/319 FA and patrolled near there and Granite. No contact was made. Artillery support was B 2/319 at Gladiator, A 2/319 at Rakkasan, A 2/11 at Jack, B 1/39 at Barbara and C/34 at O'Reilly.



Harry Hayes



Thomas Shriner



Newton Tapp

INCOMING MAIL



Greetings from Europe:

My name is Andoni Garcia. I am seeking information about what someone may remember about any of the following soldiers who died on 30 July 1970 while in Vietnam. This is the date I was born and I am putting together a short book about these men who died as I was born. If you have any remembrances of them you would like to share with me, I can be reached at agh3007@yahoo.es

The following and the when they died:

Americal Division

David Andrew Allen

Donald Eugene Auten

Clyde James Ball

Jerold Franklin

Edison Amos Harkins

William Joseph McPherson

Richard Allen Pomerinke

Dale Ervin Sathoff

Timothy Michael Springer

Edward James Whitton

173rd ABN

Harold Utah Hayes

108 Artillery Group XXIV Corps

Forrest Hughly Hollifield

220 AVN Co., 212 AVN BN 1st AVN Dong Ha

Lee Raymon Peters

101 Airborne Div.

Vincent Pinaula Moreham D 1/501 INF

Clyde Lewis Tensley A Co. 426 S&S

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Hi Lee,

Thanks for your great work on the Ripcord Report!

Enclosed is a donation in memory of Roger D. "Chip" Collins, B2/506.

Regards,

Jim Fairhall

To All members.

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