



# RIPCORDER REPORT



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

Issue # 130

June 2022

## Ripcord Association Update *by Pete Meloro*

Here we are with spring winding down and summer approaching. In reality, we did not have much of a spring here in New Jersey, just a lot of wet weather. I really can't complain since my wife and I were fortunate to embark on our first vacation in over two years.



We spent the month of April in Italy and four days in Ireland, during the first week of May. In both countries, we visited with family who we were able to reconnect with over the last several years. Upon our return, I have been interacting with other board members to continue our work and preparation for our October reunion in Springfield, Missouri. To that end, I want to take this opportunity to announce that John Fowler (C 2/506) has joined our Board and he will serve the remainder of Lee's term. John has had prior experience dealing with Hotels and has taken point on our interaction with the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield.

During the last three months, we have spoken to Kathy Widjeskog on several occasions. She is doing

as well as can be expected. As I stated in our last Newsletter, she has a great support system of both family and friends. We will be visiting her in the very near future, just to say hello and let her know that the Ripcord Family is thinking about her and send our love.

I have received quite a few registrations for our reunion and they continue to arrive almost daily. I would encourage anyone who plans to attend the reunion, to arrange for their room at the University Plaza Hotel and forward the registration form to me. As stated in our prior newsletter, if you previously paid for the 2020 or 2021 reunion and did not request a refund, you should not send a check with your registration unless you change the number of attendees. However, please remember to send the registration form stating that you have previously paid. Those who did not previously pay, should include a check with their registration. Early receipt of the registration forms allows us to plan the event more effectively.

I hope this newsletter finds everyone healthy and enjoying the coming of summer. Be well and stay safe.

## 2022 Ripcord Reunion

**Sunday, October 16th through Wednesday, October 19th  
with departure on Thursday, October 20th**

University Plaza Hotel, Springfield, MO.  
Call Hotel 417-864-7333 for hotel reservations

Group Code: **RIPCORDER**

# Ripcord Book Project and Interviews

Jim Smither

## GVSU Veterans History Project

When I started conducting interviews with Ripcord veterans back in 2011, my purpose was simply to record the veterans' stories and make them accessible to the public in complete form. I had read Keith Nolan's book, and for the first several years of doing interviews, each time I thought I had something new, I dug around in the book and eventually found it. Over time, however, I started finding things that were not in the book, and several places where some of the stories were incomplete or incorrect. Much of this new information came from men who had not been interviewed by Nolan, many of whom had connected with the Ripcord Association after reading his book. Later books on the Ripcord campaign by Gen. Ben Harrison and Chris Brady also included valuable new material. Somewhere along the line, I realized that I needed to take a crack at writing my own book that would incorporate the new material and also engage the campaign on a more scholarly level than the earlier books and get military historians to pay proper attention to the campaign.

In order to do the job properly, I will need the help of as many Ripcord veterans as possible. I've interviewed about 100 already, and would like to interview any others who are willing to share their stories. I will be at the Ripcord Reunion this year and will be doing interviews there, and can also arrange individual sessions for people in the Great Lakes region, especially Michigan, northwest Ohio, northern Indiana and Illinois, and southwestern Wisconsin, and can conduct telephone interviews (or even Zoom sessions) as needed. The interviews that I record will be posted on our project's YouTube channel first, and then transcribed and posted to our online archive. If you are not sure that you want to create this sort of public record of your story but still want to help make the book as complete and accurate as possible, I can also talk with you off the record for purposes of clarifying or verifying accounts of events that you witnessed that I have read or heard from others. Once I get into the actual writing of the book, I will also want to share parts of the manuscript with people with knowledge of the events or issues discussed in those sections, so if you are interested in helping in that way, please let me know.

If you are interested in being interviewed and will be at the reunion this year, please feel free to contact

me in advance to set up a session. I'll be available all day Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and may have some time late in the day on Saturday or early Thursday as well. I'll also be drumming up business in the hospitality suite to fill any open slots. If you're interested in talking but not doing a full interview, let me know and we can try to connect while there. If you are not planning on attending the reunion but are still interested in sharing your story in some fashion, feel free to contact me as well.

I should also warn you that if you sign up for the reunion and have not done an interview yet, I may try to contact you and sign you up. Frank Marshall and I have agreed that he will share people's contact information with me, but only if they allow it. I understand that not everyone is comfortable with being interviewed, and don't want to harass anyone who doesn't want to be bothered.

The best way to contact me will be by email at [smitherj@gvsu.edu](mailto:smitherj@gvsu.edu). You can also leave me a voice mail message on my office phone, (616) 331-3422.

**If you are interested in viewing the Ripcord interviews that I have conducted, you can access both our YouTube channel and online archive from the home page of our project website, [www.gvsu.edu/vethistory](http://www.gvsu.edu/vethistory).** Some of the interviews on YouTube are also in the main archive, but others are not. Note: If you use the search feature of the online archive, the system will search all of the university's digital collections, which can sometimes generate a lot of hits that aren't relevant. So, if you want to find John Smith's interview, you can put his full name into the search box, and then use the menu on the left to select just the Veterans History Project, and his interview will be the first thing to pop up. If you want to find Bob Leibecke's interview, he has a lot less competition, so the last name will be enough, and you won't need to narrow the search.



Grand Valley State University

## John Fowler joins the Firestore Ripcord Association Board of Directors

John will serve as Ripcord Association hotel liaison for this and future reunions. He brings several years of experience finding hotels and negotiating contracts for an industry association that held two conferences each year.

Please contact John 614-893-3418 with any questions you may have about hotel reservations or accommodations. Important! Room reservations must be made by September 14, 2022 to get the \$94/nightly rate. After that date, room reservations will be based on availability and will be charged at the standard room rate. Rooms set aside for Ripcord will go back into the hotel inventory. Please make your reservations as early as possible! *(John served as Platoon Sgt. in C 2/506 during the Battle of Ripcord.)*



## ATTENTION GOLFERS

Ripcord Reunions have been advertising to the attendees, a *GOLF OUTING* for years. Usually on the second day of the reunion. We would like to know how many attendees this year still want to play golf and if one of our members is willing to organize and arrange the details. In the past, we have had good groups attending. If memory serves, probably 12 to 20 golfers. The job of the organizer will have to find a Springfield Golf Course, schedule for Monday, October 17, 2022 and try to get back-to-back tee times. Then, let us know the cost of playing, any cart fees and if they have clubs to rent. As always, this is an additional cost, not covered by the registration fee. We know that we are getting older and fewer of us play, however, some of our children or grandchildren are wanting to play too.

What we need to know in advance is: *How many want to play golf this year?* As of this writing, 50 Vets and 36 wives/family members have registered and SIX have said they will golf.

Please call if you want to play and/or if you will be willing to volunteer to organize:

**BILL HEATH 1-520-518-6970**

*Signed Up:* Lin Bashford, Rex Flansburg, Bill Hand, Paul Hansmann, Tony Little and Ron McCrory.

## Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



Good day to all Ripcord members. We are now up to 1152 Facebook members. It's been a few months since Facebook made changes where anyone can join our room without our approval. I thought I would be spending all day deleting new members. I have found that very few people post on our page. I still delete people but only 1 or 2 every few weeks. If you are not in the know of the new policy, people can make posts in our room without being a member. So far this has not been a big problem.

My wife and I are looking forward to the reunion. We may have to start walking there soon, if the price of gas gets any higher. It's June and we are still getting snow and rain here. But, we need it because of the drought. I want to thank everyone that posts on our page. You are the ones that keep us going. Keep posting pictures of your time in Vietnam. Ripcord area photos are the best, but any of your Vietnam pictures will work. Please keep us informed of the passings of any of our Ripcord brothers. We have reached a time in our lives that this will be more common. Be safe everyone. Have a safe summer. See you in October.

## RIPCORD REPORT

**Ripcord Report** is a publication of the **Ripcord Association**, and is the authoritative voice of history for the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord.

### Ripcord Report

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

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## INCOMING MAIL

My name is Bill Aeschliman and I was an operator of the Radar Set AN/MPQ-4, a counter-battery radar primarily used to find the location of enemy mortars and larger artillery. I was with the 2/320th, part of the 101st Airborne Division during the year 1970. We operated on several fire bases. (So many I get confused remembering which ones and in what order.) Our radar was moved to FSB Ripcord sometime in July. We got incoming on all fire bases but not like Ripcord.

Our radar could only look in one direction at a time and it didn't take the NVA long to figure out a triangle mortar pattern. They would see us pointing in one direction and fire a mortar from our flank, where we couldn't see them. We would then turn the radar on that direction and they would fire from our other flank, making our radar useless except when they were firing from all directions at once. Battalion ordered us to pack up because we were being moved to FSB O'Reilly right next door. O'Reilly was an ARVN 105 howitzer battery and we could look down on Ripcord and see everything going on. Our radar was useless up there, too, because we couldn't tell the difference between our outgoing rounds and their incoming rounds. From there, I watched the closing of FSB Ripcord. My problem is that I haven't found anyone who can verify my radar being there in July 1970. Is there a roster of the gun batteries that were there and when? We were HHB 2/320th.

P.S. FSB O'Reilly was a tiny base so small we had to set up outside the wire. The most scary nights of all my tour. I called back to Camp Eagle and had them send me out an M14 rifle with a starlight scope. Hope to make it to the Springfield reunion.

.....

### AN/MPQ-4

AN/MPQ-4 was operating in KU-Band counter battery radar system used to locate enemy mortars and small artillery units, as well as to correct the fire of friendly mortar and artillery fire. It used a rectangular single curved parabolic reflector fed by a Foster Scanner to scan a required sector of 25 degrees. The transmitter was a self-oscillating magnetron type. The projectile traces were displayed on a B-scope. The radar provided quick identification to pinpoint enemy mortar positions in map coordinates, enabling artillery units to launch counter attacks.

The radar can be set up in less than 15 minutes. All the equipment is mounted on two two-wheel trailers. One trailer carries the primary radar equipment, while the other one carries the primary power supply (a petrol engine generator set) and auxiliary equipment such as the cable set and spare parts.

The radar was introduced in 1958 and remained one of the primary US counter-battery systems into the late 1970s. It has been replaced by the AN/TPQ-36 then. This type of radar was also produced under licence in Japan as the Type 92 mortar locating radar J/MPQ-N1.



*Before Chinook crash*



*After Chinook crash*

## Ripcord Ring

At a previous Ripcord reunion a couple of people asked about getting a ring for Ripcord. Tony Little of D 2/506 talked to a jeweler and they designed a ring. After a few reviews and minor changes they produced the ring you see in the photos.

### New Prices...

Standard size 10 or smaller

Sterling Silver \$289.00 (size 10)

14k Yellow Gold - \$1659.00 (size 10)

10k Yellow Gold - \$989.00 (size 10)

If size 11 or larger

Sterling Silver \$309.00

14k Yellow Gold - \$1709.00

10k Yellow Gold - \$1019.00

The attached pictures are Silver and Yellow Gold.

This was a labor of love for Tony, I know he wears his proudly.

To Order :

Call: 931-359-8199

Text: 931-909-2505

or Email: [tillisjewelry@gmail.com](mailto:tillisjewelry@gmail.com)

Ring Size :

Metal: Yellow Gold 14kt or 10kt

Silver

Black Enameled - Yes or No

Tillis Jewelry is offering these rings at a discounted price about 30% off. The ring can be created with out without black enameling.



## A Month In Time 52 Years Ago

*By Bill Heath, Editor Ripcord Report*

As my family and I celebrated the Father's Day weekend together, I was wondering what I was doing back in 1970 on that day. Having kept a diary from my time in Vietnam, I looked up, Sunday June 21st, and saw that I had a work day in S-4 and a movie that night. It had been two months since I received a rear job and left Alpha Company, the end of nine months in country and 15 months since joining the Army. The following week, I left from Camp Evans with Sgt Bill Wagnon (A 2-506) to go on R&R to Tokyo, Japan. Japan was having "Expo 70", the World's Fair. Bill and I returned to Camp Evans on 8 July and went back to our jobs.

Two weeks later, Bill was wounded and in the hospital, never to return to Vietnam. He had lost his sight and now lives in Arizona.

On 21 July, just one month after Father's Day, I and other men from the rear area were gathered up to be airlifted onto Ripcord as reinforcements. We tried to land but were unable to because of intense enemy fire. We returned to Evans. We tried a second time a few hours later, and encountered the same problem with 51cal fire and incoming rounds. We finally arrived on Ripcord at 2130hrs (9pm) after the helicopters turned off their lights, so the NVA gunners could not see us as well. I had been praying not to die that day because it was my little brother's birthday and that date would be a future reminder of my death. Our group remained on the firebase that night, the 22nd and left during the extraction the 23rd. We had helped gather equipment into cargo nets for removal at dawn. First, everything had to be removed. Then the soldiers would leave. All this while under mortar and artillery fire. I witnessed the incoming round that killed PFC Gus Allen, Major Kenneth Tanner and Lt. Colonel Andre Lucas. The base and the landing zones were ablaze so helicopters hovered briefly over some bunkers and we took turns leaving. Back at Evans, we consoled each other and went back to our company areas. I went over to Alpha to see my friends and check on their condition after their battle on the 22nd. That was extremely hard on me to know they had 14 KIA and all but 6 wounded. I had been dodging mortar rounds on Ripcord and not helping Alpha.

The following day, the 24th, there was a USO show for everyone. That was a lot of JOY and SORROW in just one month.

## Registered to attend the Springfield Reunion as of June 14th

- Bob Leibecke
- Troy & Barbara Porter
- Bill Boles
- Kenneth & Saralyn Gainer
- Michael & Christine Dicken
- Rex & Carol Flansburg
- Jerry & Donna Manemann
- Ronald & Patricia Virgilio
- Tony & Koleen Little
- Everett Slaughter Jr
- Merle & Ruth Delagrange
- Joe & Diane McCarville
- Marc Aronson
- Alfred & Sondra Martin
- Greg & Kristi Kiekintveld
- Trisha & JD Rodger - Guest
- George Pourchot
- Lin & Pinky Bashford
- Tommy & Judy Counts
- Kurt & Kaleb Bashford - Guest
- Lisa Hill - Guest
- William & Linda Heath
- Mary Meagher & John Hoek
- Jerone Buffington
- Bill & Lynn Hand
- Dan Brockmiller
- Robin Graham & Ann Halligan
- James & Michelle McCoy
- Ronald & June Cochran
- David & Ingrid Hietzke Lockwood
- William Tex Campbell
- Lyle Kohmetscher & Pam Stone
- Dale & Janet Tauer
- Brian Pautz
- John & Debbie Fowler
- Janet Hahn (Ricky Hahn)
- Ron & Linda McCrory
- Janice Allard
- David & Sophia Kenyon
- Peter & Chris Meloro
- Paul & Laura Hansmann
- Frank Marshall
- Ronald Zahn
- Paul Buhr
- David & Lisa Snyder
- Douglas & Iris Puffer
- Lawrence & Debbie Fieser
- Bob and Betty Worrall
- Dale & Sue Cooper
- Rudy & Linda Forsman



## 2022 Ripcord Reunion

Sunday, October 16th  
through Wednesday, October 19th  
with departure on Thursday, October 20th

University Plaza Hotel,  
Springfield, MO.

Call Hotel 417-864-7333  
for hotel reservations

Group Code: **RIPCORD**



# RIPCORDEREUNION 2022 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.

**Do not send a check if you paid for the 2020 reunion and did not request a refund!**

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 May 15, 2022	\$75 per adult
May 15, through July 15, 2022	\$80 per adult,
July 15, through Aug 15, 2022	\$85 per adult.
After Aug 15, 2022	\$90 per adult.

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

**Registration fee due no later than Sept 1, 2022.**

Make your check payable to "RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION" Mail your check with this form to:

**Peter Meloro, 107 Maple Drive, Spring Lake Hts, NJ 07762.**

Questions? Call Pete at 732-947-1664 or Frank Marshall 609-472-0970

## AGENDA

**Sunday, October 16:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)  
**Monday, October 17:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)  
**Tuesday, October 18:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Hot hors d'oeuvres 1730 hours  
**Wednesday October 19:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room (1100 hrs)  
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1700 hours done by 2200 hours.  
**Thursday, October 20:** Homeward bound  
**Monday golf outing (a separate fee).** Check if you will play [ ] .

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY**  
**BY Sept. 14, 2022**

**CALL 417-864-7333 for Univ. Plaza Hotel**

Ask for HOTEL RESERVATIONS and mention the  
GROUP CODE: **RIPCORDER**  
(Price is \$94 per night plus tax: breakfast is included.)

# 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, and all our Ripcord members up to date.

### **Donations from November 29th thru January 6th**

- Michael Bodnar
  - Jane Mitschke
  - Gary Kelly
  - Jay Wetherby
  - Terry Unger
  - Randy House
  - Marc Aronson
  - Ken Gainer
  - Alan Schwartz
  - Mike Goens
  - Robert Wright
  - Steven Cooper
  - Ray Hudzinski
  - Nick Solar
  - John Nardi
  - Joe Smith
  - Lee Gates
  - David Lockwood
  - Frank Hills
  - Gene Haltenhof
  - Steve Skinner
  - Terry Singleton
  - Don Wood
  - Larry Sand
  - Charles Lieb
  - Mike Dicken
  - Rick Walsh
  - Rick Skaggs
  - George Scott
- Joe Kormos
  - Gerald Duman
  - Gib Rossetter
  - James Royall
  - Alan Alexander
  - Jimmy Howton
  - Mary Meagher
  - William Spych
  - Richard Blythe
  - Joe Minias
  - Doug Hazlet
  - Donald Thies
  - Richard Drury
  - Jeff Winter
  - Jim Roach
  - Patricia Shime
  - John Koozer

### **Donations in Memory of Tom Chase**

- Lorraine Hlavin
- Mike Sasso
- Jim Roach
- Russell Dixon
- Lief Family
- Nick Solar
- John Patton
- Henry Schaefer

### **Donations from May 1st**

- Michael Leiviska
- Louise Lusty

- Don Shaughnessy
- Walter Smith
- Frank Selinsky
- Charles Parsons

### **Donations in Memory of Lee Widjeskog**

- Ted Fujimoto
- Al and Sondra Martin
- Dale & Janet Tauer
- John & Debbie Fowler
- David & Lisa Snyder

### **Donations in Memory of General Harrison**

- Dale & Janet Tauer
- Randy House

### **Donation in Memory of Bob Zoeller**

- Joe & Leslie Stamm

### **Donation in Memory of Michael Griffin**

- Gary Watrous

Checks payable to:  
"Ripcord Association".

Mail to:  
**Pete Meloro**  
107 Maple Drive  
Spring Lake Hts, NJ 07762