

# Ripcord Report

For friends and survivors of the Battle of  
Fire Support Base Ripcord, RVN, March 12-  
July 23, 1970.

No. 49 ..... Nov.-Dec. 1999

## Reunion '99 a splendid success

### Reunion roundup by Fred Spaulding

INDIANAPOLIS—Ripcord Reunion '99, held in Savannah, Georgia, at the Quality Inn & Suites could be considered a success. I only received three complaints, and that's a lot better than the year before.

We had 52 registered members for the reunion. Bob Smoker made it for the banquet Saturday night, and Jim Harris, the 2/506 battalion surgeon, arrived Saturday night, or perhaps I should say Sunday morning at 0045 hours. His son plays football for the University of Minnesota. Doc went to the game and afterward ran to the airport to catch a flight. Seven hours later he walked into the reunion hospitality suite. After all the backslapping and welcoming after almost 30 years, I forgot to ask him who won the game.

A few arrivals came early on Wednesday, but most folks came in on Thursday. There was a tour of historic Savannah on Friday—a long tour as it turned out—and lunch at Snappers Restaurant followed later by dinner at the Riverside Restaurant, one of the more picturesque places in Savannah.

Saturday we had to ourselves, and most people scattered all over the place on various sight seeing excursions. Saturday evening was the banquet, and there were 54 for dinner. The ladies were honored with a rose corsage and an extremely big thank you for standing by us, for always being there and for being such an integral part of our lives.

One highlight of the evening was a letter from Arlene. Arlene is Frank "Yo, Frankie" Marshall's "sweetie." She sent a sealed letter to me to be read at the reunion. For three days Frank kept asking me what was in the letter. The only thing I would tell him was that the last six words said "All my love to you Fred." The letter naturally pertained to Frank and all the guys who served at Ripcord. It was a beautiful letter, very well written and profoundly expressed. So much so that I had difficulty reading it without "tearing up"—but then again, I cry at grand openings of gas stations. Such is life.

(Continued on next page.)

### Getting ready for Ripcord Reunion '00

SHREVEPORT—Plans are in progress for a great 30-year reunion next year in Shreveport, LA.

A memorial ceremony will be held at the Caddo-Bossier Parish War Memorial. A granite block with the appropriate inscription will be laid at the memorial honoring all of those who fought and died in the Ripcord battle.

The ceremony will be quite impressive and efforts are currently being made to see if a pass in review of some sort honoring the members of the Ripcord Association will occur at the ceremony. Details of the ceremony and the upcoming reunion will be forthcoming in the next newsletter.

Any donations to help defray the costs of the granite block will be most appreciated. Mail all checks to Fred Spaulding at: 7702 White Dove Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46256-1750. Thanks.

Once I am more concrete about what I can arrange, I will furnish you the complete arrangements so that future newsletters can reflect what is ultimately planned.

Currahee—James H. Campbell

### Mark your calendars now.

**Reunion '00 will be in  
Shreveport, LA, October 5-9,  
which is over the Columbus Day  
weekend.**

**Hotel and travel information  
will be in forthcoming issues of  
the newsletter.**

Reunion roundup, from page one.

We also tried in some small way to say "thank you" to the commanding officer of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, Ben Harrison and his wife Carolyn with a bottle of champagne and two crystal glasses. The bottle had Ben's name and a replica of the Ripcord Coin etched into it and then painted. The crystal glasses had Ben's and Carolyn's names etched on them along with a two-star general's flag. I tried to get a three-star flag put on Carolyn's glass, but with the way the glasses are curved it couldn't be done. I don't think we have to worry about who is the "boss," or who has the most "stars" of that twosome.

We also don't have to worry about whose star shines brightest. As someone who had the opportunity to see the "big picture" at Ripcord, I can honestly tell you that we were all extremely fortunate to have had Ben Harrison as our commander during the final days of the Battle of Ripcord.

We've already started on the 2000 reunion. That will be our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle that so many of us would like to forget but can't. Frank Marshall is working on a list of all those who were killed from March 12 to July 23. Keith Nolan was able to provide a list of the 75 men who died during the siege of July 1-23, but we'd like to have the complete list for the entire period.

If anyone can dig these up, "Yo, Frankie" ought to be able to.

Well, it's about time that I end this and get back to doing something that I most assuredly need to do and that is work on my golf game. For some strange reason, I seem to do better at it and it's much more enjoyable when I'm NOT playing with Jim Campbell. I'm not saying that Jimmy III is a bad golfer—I am saying that it is readily apparent that he will make you a bad golfer.

Before I close and "sally for the to face the dangers of the day," I have to say much thanks to all those who helped me in the hospitality room and the banquet. Here's a special thanks to Bonnie Martin, "Red" Judd, Susan Stanger and Shella Williams. A very big thank you to Susan Huggins who won the 50-50 drawing and gave the money back, to place in our memorial fund.

I've probably forgotten to say thanks to someone, and if I have I am profoundly sorry. It's not just one person who makes the reunion a success, it's everyone working together just like we did 30 years ago.

One last thing. Yes, Patty Radford, I will have enough regular cokes in Shreveport for Reunion '00. Once again, our Eagle Dustoff "was dusted off"—Fred Behrens did not win the clock raffle (nor did Al Martin).

See you in Shreveport—Rip Corder

## Fred's letter from Arlene

*This letter was sent to Fred Spaulding from Frank Marshall's friend Arlene and Fred read it at the banquet at the reunion.*

Dear Fred,

Wish I could have been there this year. I will really miss all the lovely people I met last year. Please give my warmest regards to all. Please read this to all when you feel the time is appropriate.

For all of you who have known Frank so many years, you know how many smiles this warm, kind man has brought to you many times through the years.

The man he is today is due in great part to the time he spent with all of you. The bond that was secured at that time gave all of you the strength and faith to go through life with dignity and integrity.

For what all of you gentlemen endured, no one will ever be able to comprehend, but we can thank you all and feel the utmost pride in the sacrifice you made.

I extend to all of you my deepest thanks and appreciation this evening for all you did and all you gave up during that time. We have all become enriched by having you in our lives. And I have had the good fortune of enjoying a gentle, loving and caring man in Frank.

My thanks and love to you all,  
Arlene

(All my love to you Fred.)



## Ripcord Reunion '99 attendees

Steve Wallace and Susan Huggins  
Al and Bonnie Martin  
Dan and Lydia Esposito  
Frank Bort  
Charles and Juanita Tipton  
Bill and Sheila Williams  
Lee and Catherine Widjeskog  
Terry and Susan Stanger  
Ben and Carolyn Harrison  
Gary and Patty Radford  
Jeff Wilcox  
Layne and Sandra Hammons  
John F. Moran III  
Bob and Bernice (Red) Judd  
Phil and Shari Tolson  
Tom and Janyce Rubsam  
David F. Rich  
Jim and Mary Campbell  
Ben and Lillian Peters  
Steve and Patricia Smith  
Paul Burkey  
Chuck Hawkins  
Fred Behrens and Mary Jane Terror  
Jerry "Doc" Cafferty  
Frank Marshall  
John Mihalko and son Jamie  
Fred Spaulding  
Jim and Marilyn Kilgore  
Bob Smoker  
James "Doc" Harris  
Herb and Veronika Koenigsbauer

## Donations, letters and correspondence

The Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord Association is now official, and has been so for over a year. Fred Spaulding is the keeper of the association checkbook. Your donations for support of the memorial fund, newsletter publication, and other association activities should be sent to Fred at:

7702 White Dove Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46256-1750

Please make your checks payable to Ripcord Association.

Please note that articles, letters to the editor (our Incoming feature), retrospectives and other correspondence of a general nature should be sent to the editor of *Ripcord Report*, Chuck Hawkins at:




Questions and comments concerning the newsletter and association activities are welcome at any time.

## Ripcord biographies, then and now

We plan to restart a feature in the newsletter to share past and current information about our members. Please send your biographical sketches to the editor.

Biographical sketches should include your outfit in Vietnam, the dates you were there and the dates of your service, your rank and any interesting facts about your involvement with FSB Ripcord. Tell us also what you did after Vietnam, your career, family and any comments that you wish to share.

You may include photographs if you like. These will be scanned and used in the newsletter and returned to you if requested.  
Thanks



One of B/2-319<sup>th</sup> Artillery's 105mm howitzers firing on Ripcord. David F. Rich commanded the battery during most of the siege, until he was wounded a second time and medically evacuated.

Photo courtesy of Anthony C. Critchlow, SFC, USA, RET



# The Ripcord Coin and where it came from

Maj. Gen. Ben L. Harrison (USA, ret.) is the designer of the Ripcord Coin. He personally had this coin made and has presented the coin to each member of the Ripcord Association involved with the Battle of Ripcord who has attended reunions.



The face of the Ripcord coin shows a soldier armed with M-16 rifle superimposed between the dominant terrain of Ripcord, the fire base over the soldier's helmet, Hill 1000 to the west, Hill 805 to the east and Hill 902 to the south. The inscription reads "All gave some .... Some gave all" at the top, and "Together then .... Together again" at the bottom.

The obverse of the Ripcord coin shows the division crest in the center with the words "3<sup>rd</sup> Bde., 101<sup>st</sup> Abn Div" in the banner below. Below the banner are the dates 12 Mar-23 Jul 1970. The inscription at the top reads "In appreciation for combat service in the battles for Ripcord." The inscription at the bottom reads "Maj Gen Ben L. Harrison."



Counter battery radar on FSB Ripcord.

Photo courtesy of Anthony Critchlow, SFC, USA, ret.

# Incoming

## Letters from across the nation and around the globe

### Lost members and the Internet

I was on the Internet the other day looking at some Ripcord stuff when I ran across the *Ripcord Report* ad. I used to subscribe to the newsletter back in the mid-1980s when Chip Collins was involved with it. For some reason the report stopped coming in the mail, so I assumed it was shut down.

I would like to start getting the *Ripcord Report* again if possible.

I was with Echo Co., 2/501 (mortars) on Ripcord until the 18<sup>th</sup> of July.

Thanks,

Walt Smith

Columbus, Miss.

E-mail: ddd260@aol.com

### Indigestion and a contribution

This is a "keep the presses rolling" contribution on behalf of (deceased) Ripcord survivor 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Randy Thompson (D/1-506), who would have found great humor in watching the "indigestion" the 101<sup>st</sup> Association would undergo in attempting to "digest" the Ripcord Survivors. (Okay, so I'm a year behind in my reading—I'm just not in a hurry anymore.)

With best wishes,

Don Donner

Fayetteville, Ark.

### From Ohio

Sorry for the delay. We've been on the road since we came home from Virginia. Thanks again for the medallion.

Keep in touch and may God be with you and yours.

Currahee!

The Ranger

Lenny Long

Antwerp, Ohio

*Editor's note: Lenny Long, his wife Cindy, Ron Will and his wife Blenda and I met at Ron's place in the western Virginia hills for afternoon eats and fun chat. Lenny and Ron were both members of Recon/2-506. Former platoon leader Bob Seltz would have made the gathering except that his wife, Robyn, had just undergone minor surgery and Bob felt the need to stay close to the perimeter.*

### The ops officer reports

A short real mail note. I have inadvertently misplaced your e-mail address. So it is the old fashioned way! I want to make a small contribution to the *Ripcord Report*. I enjoy

receiving and reading each issue. I am planning to attend the reunion in Savannah in October. The only conflict this year would be health; with which I struggle all the time; but, I get by pretty well. My wife will attend with me. I spoke with Bill Williams last week and he implied if at all possible he would also attend.

Besides Bill I had another call from the past last Friday—John Moran. He was my driver, personal security the entire time I was S-3 of the battalion. He was evacuated from the fire base on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Apparently on one of the last hueys. He was not aware of the association. He would like to receive the report.

Hope all is well. Keith Nolan has kept me up to speed on the "book." He has undertaken a major project with much input. I read *The Price of Exit* last November. I thought it was well done, but I found the discussion about Hill 1000 disconcerting. Either I had already departed the fire base or I don't remember the same details, i.e., the recon patrol being ordered to attack the NVA mortar battery.

That's it for now.

Currahee!

Herb Koenigsbauer (HHC/2-506)

Colchester, Vt.

### Harrison pressures Vietnamese

*Editor's note: In August, Ben Harrison tried again to establish contact with our former foes and elicit information from their side in the Ripcord fight. Here's what he wrote to me and Keith Nolan.*

Hope all is well with you and yours. I'm trying again for VN input to the book. I would like to say, "Look here, asshole, we've written twice and you have done nothing." But somehow that doesn't seem to be the Oriental way.

*And here's what Ben wrote more officially.*

Dear Senior Colonel Vo Dinh Quang,

I have just read the July 1999 issue of Friends of the Vietnam Center. Your personal efforts and those of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to bring to the American people a better understanding and appreciation for the history and culture of the Vietnamese people is greatly appreciated by those of us with an enduring interest in your country.

Keith Nolan, author of several books dealing with the war in Vietnam, is currently writing a book about the battles around Fire Support Base Ripcord in 1970. Ripcord is near Coc Muen, about 40 kilometers west of Hue and is believed to have been considered a critical area at that time for the

(Continued on next page.)

## Incoming continued...

People's Army of Vietnam. It is highly significant that this was the largest American retrograde movement with forces under contact in the entire war. It would be helpful, especially for historical accuracy and fairness to both sides in the battle, if we could learn about the strategy, plans and dispositions and battle results from the point of view of the People's Army of Vietnam.

It would also be of great interest if we could get the personal views of some of the commanders and soldiers of the battles around Ripcord. As the commander of American troops, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, at the time, it would be a privilege for me to personally meet with some of the People's Army of Vietnam participants of these battles.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Ben L. Harrison  
Belton, Texas

*Editor's note: So far, no answer.*

### Thanks

#### 1<sup>st</sup> letter

I would like some information regarding *Ripcord Report*. I served under Capt. Rembert Rollison during Operation Texas Star. Any information you have on Capt. Rollison, an e-mail or mailing address, I would appreciate as I would like to say "hi" to the Ol' Bear.

Respectfully yours, Curraheel  
Chuck Shannon

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> letter

Received the information I requested on Capt. Rollison and Ripcord. Thank you and here is a small donation for *Ripcord Report*.

Please send me membership information at the address shown above.

Curraheel  
Chuck Shannon (D/2-506)  
Canyon Country, Calif.

### Alice's adventure

Thanks for your continuing efforts with *Ripcord Report*. I'm really looking forward to Nolan's book.

Please note the address change. Also enclosed is a check to help you defray costs: Is the association a 501(c)(3) organization? If not, you might think about doing that, it might help you get some donations from some of the bigger companies.

When I was with the 101<sup>st</sup>, Sept. 70-Sept. 71, I took some 8mm movies, mostly in the rear area (1/506) and on fire bases, mostly Rakkasan and Jack. I have since had the 8mm transferred to video format. Thought you and the association might like to have a copy. Let me know. I've not made a copy for anyone before.

The same day I read the latest issue of *Ripcord Report* I came across the following that made me reflect on my time in Vietnam. Thought you might find this of interest.

*Alice too up the fan and gloves, and, as the hall was very hot, she kept fanning herself all of the time she went on talking. "Dear! Dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: WAS I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, THAT's the great puzzle!" And she began thinking over all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them.*—Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*

Curraheel  
Bob Lorbeer  
Sacramento, Calif.

### Citation

Would you like a copy of John Kreckel's DSC citation?

Airborne,  
Big Al Newman (FO's RTO with A/2-506)

*Editor's response: Al, thanks. Yes, please!*

### Ghostriders and pink ribbons

I find it difficult to address officers without using their rank. It was a pleasure talking to Herb [Koenigsbauer], I only regret that it took so long. Thank you for the newsletter. I enjoyed reading it and look forward to the next issue.

I was with A Co., 2/506 before I became Herb Koenigsbauer's driver. When were you with A Co.?

During the spring of 1970 the 2/506 was in Camp Evans on a stand down. The companies were outside of Evans sighting their weapons and calling in gunships, generally doing refresher training. One evening, just as the perimeter bunkers were being manned for the night, I drove the captain of A Co. from the TOC to outside the perimeter wire (by the back gate) to check on A Co.'s progress returning to Evans. The captain and I were talking about what we would do when we went back to the states. He was drinking coffee. He told me he was going to Washington, D.C., study law and become a lawyer.

We were well outside the perimeter, A Co. was at the top of a small hill we were driving up. I then saw the dirt in the road start to be kicked up! Now, from my recollection we didn't say anything for the next few seconds, but several things happened at the same time. I hit the "kill" switch on the jeep and we each dove out of the jeep on our respective sides as the jeep, still in gear, bucked to a halt. I realized I was on the wrong side (the hill side) of the small incline so I scrambled over the road next to the captain. I was very

(Continued on next page.)

Incoming continued...

impressed by the fact that he still had his cup of coffee. I asked him if he had spilled any and he said "No." I then asked him if he saw where the shooting was coming from. He said, "Over there in those bunkers," pointing toward Camp Evans. We went back, found the guy, and took him to the provost marshal's office. A Co. returned without incident.

Are you this captain?

Are you in contact with anyone who flew with the Ghostriders on July 23, 1970? Do you know if they have a Web page? The Ghost rider chopper that picked me up that day had huge pink ribbons tied to the door gunner gun stanchions.

Looking forward to Savannah.

Thanks again.

John Moran (A & HHC/2-506)

West Hills, Calif.

*Editor's note: Nope, I wasn't the captain John Moran was with at the time. We discussed this at the reunion and figured it had to be the guy before me, Albert Burkhardt.*

### Support Platoon leader found

During a recent conversation with Terry Van Meter about our experiences in the 506<sup>th</sup> Infantry during the Vietnam War, I told him about my being on FSB Ripcord and he then told me about the Ripcord Association. I had been assigned to HHC/2-506 as Support Platoon leader, and I had operated out of FSB Ripcord from April 15 through July 15, 1970.

I am interested in joining the association and would appreciate receiving information about it.

Sincerely,

Robin Graham  
Manhattan, Kan.

Pastor Bob

Is the Michael New Legal Defense Fund a worthy cause?

Also, if there is ever a need for the services of a pastor, please give me a call.

Bob Smoker (C/2-506)

Red Lion, Penn.

### Who's packing your 'chute?

Disregard all the e-mail addresses and go straight to the message. You might want to use this in a future *Ripcord Report*. How's it going? Do you have an e-mail address? If so, get it to me.

Jerry Rodgers (Dusoff Pilot)  
Burke, Va.

Here's what Jerry sent.

*Ever thanked anyone for doing something for you? Or maybe, like a lot of us, we don't say thanks to the people we often should. Take this story.*

*Charles Plumb, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent the next six years in a communist prison. He survived that ordeal and now lectures about lessons learned from that experience.*

*One day, when he and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, and a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Nam from the carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"*

*"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.*

*"Oh, I was the one who packed your parachute," the man replied.*

*Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man smiled and said, "Yep, I guess it worked."*

*Plumb assured him, "It sure did work—if your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."*

*Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about the man who had packed his parachute. Plumb kept wondering what the man might have looked like in a Navy uniform. "I wondered how many times I might have passed him on the Kitty Hawk. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said good morning, how are you, or anything, because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."*

*Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands the fate of someone he didn't know.*

*Now Plumb asks his audiences, "Who's packing your 'chute?" Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that we all need many kinds of parachutes. We need mental, emotional and spiritual parachutes as well.*

*While a prisoner of war, Plumb called on all of these supports before reaching safety. His experience reminds us all to prepare ourselves to weather whatever storms lie ahead—and to recognize and appreciate all of those people who pack our parachutes every day, for they are the ones who truly deserve the credit for our survival.*

*Is there someone you need to thank for packing yours?*

### Quick note of thanks

So glad to see Jerry Wise's letter in *Ripcord Report*. Since his address was not complete, please fill it in for us. Also enclosing a check for printing and postage. We hope to attend the Savannah reunion.

Becky Thompson (mother of Randy Thompson, D/1-506)  
Biloxi, Miss.

# Memories, truth and Windy Hill reflections

By Chip Collins

**The founder of the Ripcord Association offers some commentary, thoughts and ideas on what it meant to be a soldier at Ripcord, then and now.**

BIRCHLEAF, Va.—I had the opportunity to visit Chuck and Glenda Hawkins at LZ Windy Hill recently. They live in a cozy northern Virginia retreat, with a spectacular view of the Blue Ridge, deer that come calling early in the morning and late of the evening, and colorful sunsets that light up even a world weary soul like mine. It was an evening to reflect with my two long-time friends and later enjoy Glenda's excellent efforts in the kitchen.

As it often happens when we get together the conversation touched on anything and everything, including Ripcord and the association. Chuck asked if I would consider doing an article for the newsletter. I had written retrospectives and a book review or two during my brief stint as editor of the newsletter. Recalling my frustration with getting members to participate and their significant others, I agreed I would. Later, I came to the conclusion that what I should offer the group would be to relate some of the thoughts we touched on that evening.

Chuck and others have often asked how it was that I knew the right thing to do was develop the association across unit and service lines. Actually I didn't know. It was just luck, something that happened. I had set out to organize a reunion of Bravo Co., 2/506 people. But the people I heard from were just about anyone but Bravo. One early contact was an English professor named Jim Fairhall, who had served in a sister battalion. Jim was fascinated with Ripcord and wanted to interview survivors for a possible book. We needed more contacts than the two or three people that represented the association and newsletter at that time. Our collaboration brought many early members into the association.

**Having said for many years that the association's development was luck, I am now less sure.**

Having said for many years that the association's development was luck, I am now less sure. It has been such an unusual experience that I'm not sure some sort of divine intervention was at work. Maybe someone greater than we understood the men of Ripcord's need for the after-conflict friendships and brotherhood we have benefited from since 1983. Regardless of how it happened, I'm glad it happened. Our collection of over 370 survivors and friends of the fire base is testament to something special at work.

Chuck and I tried to define, as we have on other occasions, what it is that makes the association tick. I know that I had feelings very early on about the Battle of

Fire Base Ripcord. I knew somehow that it was different and in some way critical. I always knew that, deep down, somewhere in the gut level. There were a lot of other indications that was the case. Like the high-ranking noncoms that waited for us afterward at Camp Evans and asked that we watch what we said to reporters. Or when I left Vietnam and got dead silence from departing grunts anytime I mentioned where my unit had operated.

Partly because of its uniqueness there is a sense that Ripcord's story may end up as one of the definitive stories of America's Vietnam experience. That isn't something that just Chuck and I share. I have heard it from many others in many ways as time has passed and the men of Ripcord have come together across the country. The basic elements of America's experience in Vietnam, good and bad, right and wrong, came together around the Battle for Fire Base Ripcord as it had a tendency to do during large battles, but with significantly different consequences.

**Ripcord's story is one that its association, unbound by traditional unit lines of after-action remembrance have been uniquely situated to tell.**

Our history in Southeast Asia is forever linked to Ripcord, its surrounding hills and valleys, and the experiences we as soldiers shared before departing the area forever. Ripcord's story is one that its association, unbound by traditional unit lines of after-action remembrance have been uniquely situated to tell. I believe history will ultimately record that we told it honestly and well.

I don't pretend to understand everything about what has driven the association, but I believe a large piece of it has had to do with our collective search for the truth. And truth is so complex. When we were young, we tended to see truth in shades of black and white. Older and wiser, we recognize that it is not simple at all. It has many shades and layers and almost always has to do with the beholder's perspective. In our search for truth we have gradually come to understand the need to sift through the layers and not to take the subtle shades for granted.

(Continued on next page.)



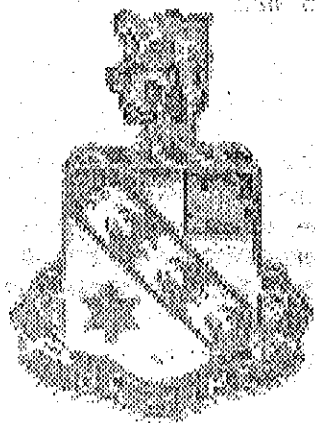
Collins, from previous page...

In many ways our search is for truth as it relates to us and to others. The more we can come to understand what happened, the more complete we seem to become. I know from my own experience that coming home after Ripcord made me feel that a large chunk of me was missing. Learning the truths about Ripcord and our entire experience over there has been a long and arduous process, but the more I know, the more I sense that something less is missing.

While touching on truth, I wanted to reflect on an issue that I hope that we all have come to understand. Each of us has our nest of snakes to sort through, but I don't think I ever encountered the first coward on and around that hill. It took courage in the most extreme to will yourself off whatever path to hell that the chopper carrying you decided to drop you off on. I met people I didn't think did their job well, but life has taught me that is normal. My sense of truth about the people we knew there is much as it is in any difficult place or situation. People did pretty much the best they could under the circumstances. Ripcord's history, its truth, bears out that doing the best we could was really not that bad at all.

**The men of Ripcord ... have been men of vision and valor...**

I compare my memories and feelings for the men of Ripcord to the end of a favorite movie, Lonesome Dove always moves me, because it is a story of enduring friendship in spite of extreme hardship and adverse circumstances. At the end of the movie the newspaper reporter trying to get a quote from Woodrow Call says, "They say you are a man of vision." Instead of the response he expected, Woodrow then experiences a vivid, painful recollection of the people he had shared hardship with. That was his sense of being a man of vision. The men of Ripcord, all of you, have been men of vision and valor and I remember you that way.



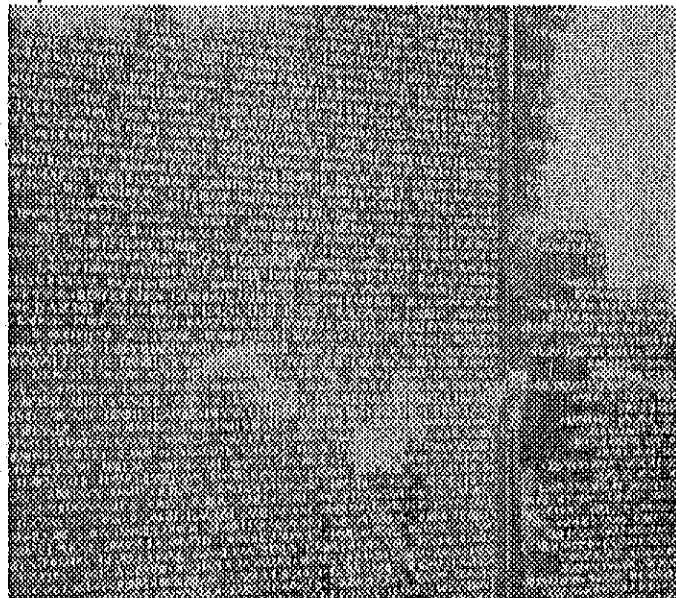
**Crest of the 11<sup>th</sup>  
Artillery Regiment.  
Motto: On Time.**

## Financial contributions from

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Lenny and Cindy Long  
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Dan and Lydia Esposito  
Becky and Rod Thompson**

**Thanks, and at tip of the Currahee steel pot  
for your support.**

### Ripcord veterans at The Wall



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And more...

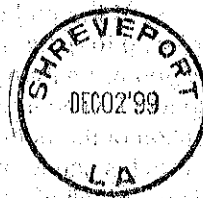
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
TO ALL**

"The Communists insist on these things: this government must be overthrown; all troops, all aircraft, all navy belonging to the United States, and all equipment, must be withdrawn from all of Indochina; there must be no military or economic assistance by the United States to South Vietnam. That's what they insist on. So—how do you get that? You go to the weakest thing in the whole set up, the will of the American people and the will of the American government."—Gen. Creighton Abrams; from *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*; Lewis Sorley, Harcourt Brace and Co., New York, 1999.

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

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Chuck Hawkins, editor

Address correction requested.



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