

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

No. 58

August-September 2002

RIPCORD HAT HELPS ALASKAN BAR MAINTAIN WORLD RECORD

KASILOF, Alaska, July 5, 2002—The FSB Ripcord Association "donated" a Ripcord baseball hat to the Thunderbird Bar, increasing the number of hats the bar has accumulated to 23, 186. The T-Bird Bar is in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the largest collection of hats. Shown below are Ripcord veteran Larry Witte and Jonelle Hawkins.



Reunion 2002 will be in Colorado Springs, Colo., October 17-20. More information at: www.herolibrary.org/p8.htm
Notre Dame plays Air Force Academy on this weekend. Reserve your room now or there won't be any available!

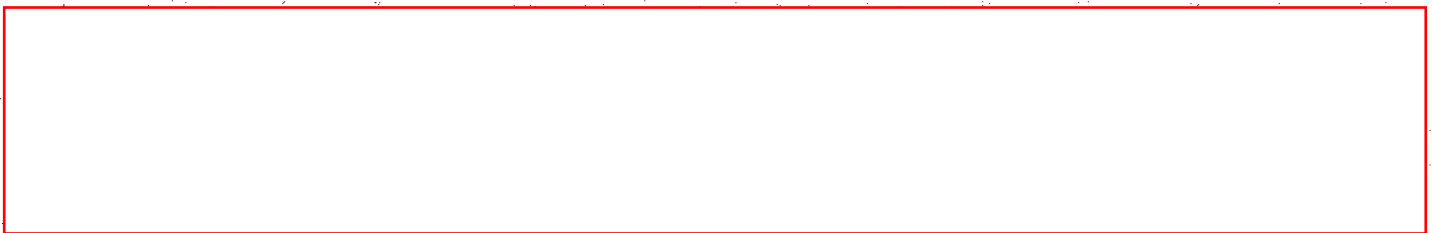


DONATIONS!

The association wants to say "thanks" to recent contributors, and these include the following stalwarts: **Bill and Sheila Williams, George Pourchot, John Knorr, Chuck Shannon, John Waterhouse, Gary and Cookie Roberson, Herb and Veronika Koenigsbauer, Bill and Sheila Williams (way to go), Tom and Janyce Rubsam, Wayne Spruill, Jon Chaffin, Mike Weber, Jim McCall, Tony Cox, D/1-506 Association, Bill and Sheila Williams, Charlie and Juanita Tipton, Dave Snyder, and Anonymous.** Hmmm ... over \$1,100 total. Cheers and a well-deserved tip of the Ripcord Steel Pot to you all!

And, a special thanks goes to "Ripcordette" Patty Radford for all her help in copying and mailing the newsletter. Patty, whose husband Gary served as a platoon sergeant in D Co., 2/506th Infantry at Ripcord, assumed copying and mailing duties after the Carlisle reunion.

NOTES and REMINDERS



MEMBERSHIP is closing in on the 500 mark. Send **NAME and ADDRESS CHANGES** to Chuck.

LZ KENT ISLAND

STEVENSVILLE, Md.—I don't know about you, but I'm getting sick and tired of all the Vietnam veteran wannabees and other fakers out there. Fred Spaulding reported that a trio showed up at the August memorial service for Bob Kalsu held at Fort Campbell. One guy swore he was in the 2/11th Artillery and, so he claimed, even drove an ammo truck to the firebase when things got so hot helicopters couldn't fly.

Huh? Drove a truck? To FSB Ripcord? I don't think so. There ain't never been a road to Ripcord, not then, not now, and it's my guess that it'll be a cold day in Vietnam when there ever is. Wonder what that dude was smokin'?

Oh, and while we're at it: Tell me one day during the siege that helicopter pilots didn't fly. Those guys carried a pair of brass ones, that's for sure.

What is with these phonies, anyway?

Speaking of wannabees, you all just watch: There will be dozens and hundreds of 9/11 World Trade Center and Pentagon wannabees floating around. In fact, some have already tried to collect donations based on the horrific tragedy. Shame!

**WATCH OUT FOR
WITCHES AND
LITTLE GOBLINS...**



Well, it's not Halloween yet, but by the time the next newsletter comes out it will be.

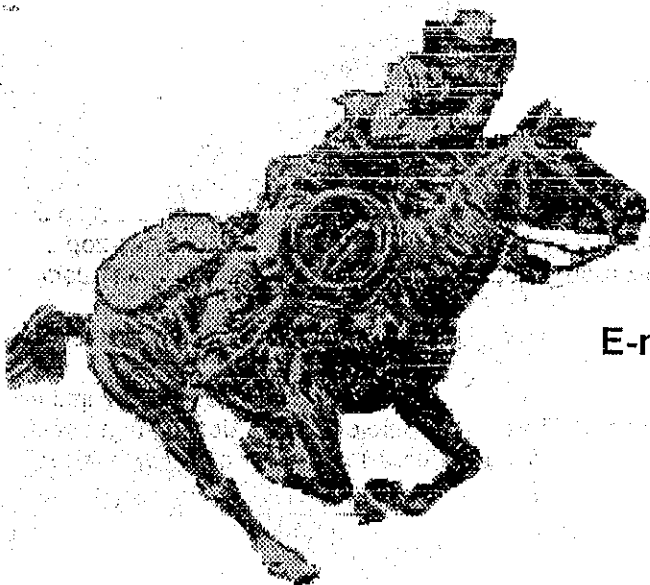
Speaking of "trick and treat," my guess is that we'll be treating Saddam Hussein to a change of address soon, that is, unless we want to wait around to see what trick he has up his sleeve for us. Special operations forces have already been inside Iraq on a number of occasions checking out the AO. Conventional forces have been poised and ready for weeks. But the national debate is just beginning to heat up, and there's a lot to be said for intelligent disagreement in a democracy. Will there be an October surprise? Stay tuned.

INCOMING...

from across the country and around the world

E-mail just isn't what it used to be

To all you pathfinders out there



I was there. I was a pathfinder; I knew them Pfc. Patrick Boham (call sign Boner). I was supposed to answer the radio that day but he was closer and said I'll get it. That was when the 81 motor round hit by the opening of the bunker.

He got it on the back of the head; also Pfc. Larry J. Pelt was in the bunker (not a pathfinder I think he was infantry and had 2 or 3 weeks left to finish his tour, his head was crushed by his helmet). He was just visiting to say hi.

I was the only pathfinder for that day till about noon or so I was replaced later that day. Trapper was the other Pathfinder. He got a sucking chest wound. I remember Colonel Lucas, and the artillery captain. I think he got a battlefield commission before Ripcord. I also knew Capt. Caberero and the other pathfinders like Prize Fighter, Howdy Doody and Hard Core (their call signs). Mine was Green Hulk. There was also Milk Man, another pathfinder; I think he was from Arkansas.

It's taken me almost 30 something years to even trust it. I finally registered with the V.A. and I am going to be evaluated for PTSD. It's been a long journey, but I am a survivor. I am an artist now (abstract is my thing now). If you know of any Pathfinders and have any E-Mail addresses, could you be so kind as to send them so I could get in touch with them. I am also a writer and filmmaker and at the moment I happen to be writing about my Vietnam experience.

Thank you,

Juan Farias

101st airborne pathfinder Vietnam 70-71

Call signs that I remember: Cochise, Smoke, Ziggy, Evergreen, Speedy Gonzales, Frito Bandito, Possum, Hawk, Rigger, Captain, Grease Gun, Zig Zag, Sherlock, Flip, there was also Capt. Hooper (Medal of Honor) he was there for a little while. Capt. Montana, Mr. Clean, Prize Fighter, Orange, Sunshine, Sergeant Beaver, Sgt. Crow.

I would love to go to your reunion. Unfortunately I cannot afford it so good luck.

From Hill 805

I was at hill 805 with Delta Company [2/501] and would like to be on your mailing list for the *Ripcord Report*.

Thank you.

Larry R. Mitchell

Lawrence, Kansas

And from an old redleg

Hi, I was wondering if you could send me any information on the reunion. Thanks, Rick Skaggs, Gresham, Oregon

I would like the quarterly newsletter, if that is possible. I was in A Btry., 2/11th Arty. I was a sergeant and alternate chief of section, 155mm howitzer. Thanks, Rick

And more **INCOMING**

Ripcord, accurate book, but ...

My husband, Gary Foster, was an E-6, in A/2-506. His CO was Charles Hawkins. He was in the battle at Ripcord on July 22, 1970. He was under Lt. Widjeskog. Our son brought him the book *Ripcord* home two weeks ago and his is almost finished with it, and says it is so very accurate. The only thing was, he was the guy in the book they called Whitecotten, and was a little upset that his name wasn't there. It has been very interesting finding your site on the Internet.

God Bless.
Dee Foster
Bronston, Kentucky

Editor's note: Lee Widjeskog and I share the sin of omission.

A great officer and a gentleman

Just had to send this note along to you after reading Keith Nolan's book *Ripcord, Screaming Eagles Under Siege*.

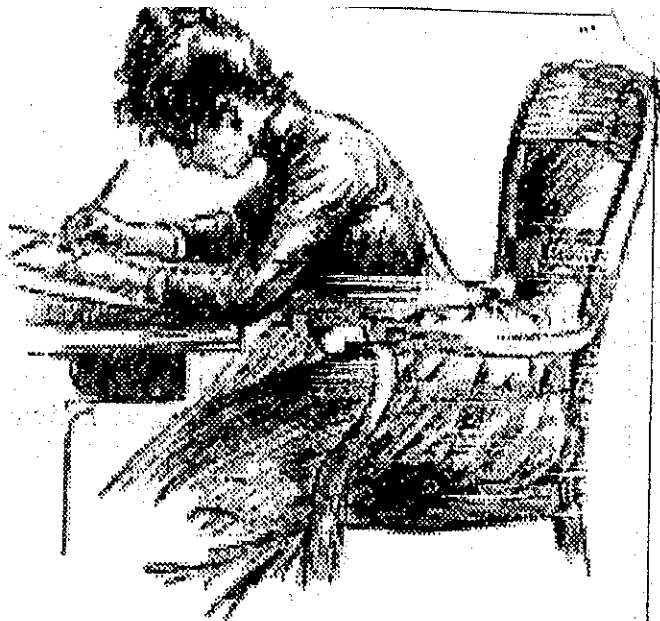
I have a vested interest in this particular event, as believe it or not, I was at Camp Evans during this time working in the 3rd Bde. TOC as the Base Defense duty sergeant. I worked for Cpt. Leo Radzienda, and also under Ben Harrison.

The main reason I am writing you is to tell you what a great officer and gentleman Jeff Wilcox was, and after reading the book, now I know the real story of his hassles with Black Spade.

Jeff Wilcox was a talented, compassionate, confident and tactically proficient officer, and although I did not serve under him directly, my dealings with him were professional, and even though I was only an E-5, when he would come into Base Defense, he always treated me in a professional manner, and respected my expertise gained through my training at Ft. Benning. My pal of 32 years, Peter Senft, who worked for Major Keoho in S-2, feels the same way. In fact, Pete tried to call Jeff Wilcox many years ago, but Jeff did not wish to speak of his experience in Vietnam. Good for him, but a super guy nonetheless!! Hopefully you will pass on my email to him.

When I went to 'Nam, I felt completely out of my element as I was not tough, very big, or particularly forceful. Never thought I was "soldierly" enough! I took on the job as Base Defense NCO, and did a good job to the utmost of my ability.

You gentlemen who survived the hellish Ripcord siege will forever be heroes to me!! As a famous Boston Globe columnist the late George Frazier would have said, you Screaming Eagles had "duende."



Please say hello to Jeff Wilcox and also Ben Harrison. The General may not remember, but soon after I came home, I resumed my civilian occupation with the postal service and he was at Harvard for a symposium and he came into my retail unit and I actually sold him some stamps!!

God Bless all of you...you are all heroes!!

Regards...
Frank Delfino

And another correction/clarification

I enjoyed visiting your Ripcord site. Can I suggest you change the Units Involved in the Battle reference from Pachyderms to 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion (Liftmaster)? All three Chinook companies of the 159th (Pachyderms, Varsity, Playtex) flew in support of Ripcord. For example, the Chinook referred to on page 81 of Keith Nolan's book was from Varsity - I know because I was one of its pilots.

Please visit the site I'm putting together for the 159th at - <http://www.geronimos.org/Liftmaster>. I've added a link to your site on the Liftmaster Links page. I hope you don't mind.

Thanks,
Tom Hirschler
Varsity 69-70
tah44@msn.com

Thanks for making the change. I look forward to seeing the changes you make to the history of Ripcord. As Keith Nolan says, it was an unrecognized turning point of the war.

Tom



Still more **INCOMING**

Way to go!

I just finished reading *Firebase Ripcord* by Keith Nolan for the second time. I was all of one year old when that event took place, but you guys did a helluva job. You should be proud of yourselves and what you accomplished. I actually stumbled upon this while looking for other works by Nolan on the Internet.

Once again... way to go.

Djcottenball@aol.com

At Ripcord and O'Reilly, and definitely a "part of it!"

I worked at Ripcord from May '70 until the morning of the day the Chinook blew up on top of the ammo bunker next to my hooch.

I was part of a unit at the corner of the Pad, right up against the ammo bunker. The quad 50 and the recoilless rifle were within whispering distance of my hole. I was one of the guys who, during Week 1, had manhandled a 105 out of the battery and down to the rim of the hill so the gunner (who eventually got his face blown off at the same time a Pathfinder buddy of mine got killed) could do direct fire down the side of the mountain.

A couple of weeks later I went to O'Reilly with the 1st ARVN and spent a few weeks in real Hell, no resupply, no medics, no prisoners, and the orders to "hold until relieved." The local NVA were many of the same guys who'd stomped on Ripcord. Thankfully I rode a stretcher back to the States; a lot of our ARVN guys left in piles. (I'm not trying to minimize Ripcord. To steal from Bernard Fall, it was "Hell in a Very Small Place." I later apologized to the guy who'd relieved me at

Ripcord. I'd had no idea that things would turn so grotesque; I would have stayed if I'd known.)

I guess I'm trying to make the point that even though I missed most of the ground assaults and the 122 mortars during the final days at Ripcord, I caught enough grief between that place and O'Reilly both to feel like I was part of it.

So how do I join the Ripcord Association?

Thanks for your advice.

Dave Dike

Warrenton, Virginia

My name is Edwin Garvin. I was with A/2/501 from Oct 69 to Oct 70. At the Ripcord action I was the oldest grunt in my platoon. I was a squad leader and led our point squad off of 902 and also on the assault of 1000. I never knew there was a Ripcord Assn. Please put me on your mailing list. Also, how can I contact Keith Nolan. I could give him better information about our operations than he put in the book. I was on Reup Hill, Granite, etc. I served under 5 CO's and Capt. Goates was one of the best. I can be emailed at egg@dotplanet.com Thank you for any assistance you can provide.

Ed Garvin

REUNION NOTICE

IMPORTANT WARNING

Make your hotel reservations prior to the **SEPTEMBER 14 DEADLINE**, or there won't be any rooms available!

BE SURE TO MENTION "RIPCORDER!"

Notre Dame plays the Air Force Academy in football during the reunion weekend. It wasn't planned that way. In fact, Fred Spaulding was careful to coordinate the academy's football schedule with the hotel and the reunion. But, money talks and when a major television company offered to broadcast the game if it were played on **THIS** particular weekend ... well, you know the rest of the story.

Bottom line: Rooms in Colorado Springs will be sold at a premium for this period—the old supply and demand curve rears its head. Get your reunion room prior to the deadline, and save big bucks (assuming rooms are still available after the September 14 deadline).



Yep, you guessed it!

(MORE INCOMING)

An old aviator reports

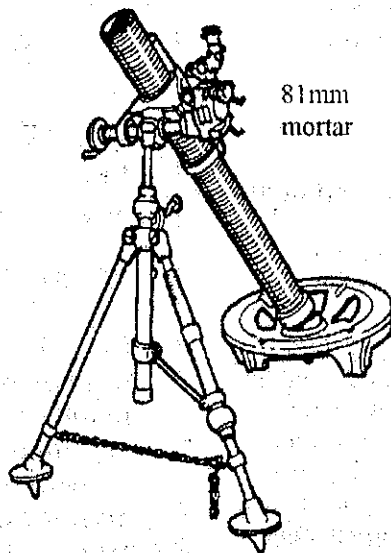
Finally got around to reading my copy of *FB Ripcord*. I've had it since your Shreveport Reunion, Lloyd Rahlf was kind enough to get me one and it has lots of the guys autographed including you. I'm honored to know you guys, maybe one of these days we can meet in person.

It's been lots of years, but now maybe I can get some answers. As I told you before, Randy House was one of our pilots, and still a good friend. I haven't seen him for a few years, but will again. He attended our Colorado Springs Reunion in 1992 (101st Reunion), which I co-chaired, he was stationed at Ft. Carson then. He did an excellent job of pulling things together during the evacuation of Ripcord. I can still remember the confusion as a nineteen year old.

One question I'd like to get answered - We pulled troops off of Ripcord that day (several sorties on my ship) and we also picked up troops on the ground. I was

always under the impression that we were west of Ripcord on a valley floor, but according to the book maybe not.

I remember the hard time we had getting down in (hover hole), and the trouble we had landing. There were logs or stumps that it looked like you expected us to land on, but they were either a mess or knocked over. We hovered at about 5-6 feet, and I pulled most of the guys up. During this time, we kept hearing about the 51 cal fire overhead, etc., and my door gunner was essentially useless and frozen (not helping). Can you pinpoint where this was? It sounds like there was only one group of guys still out that morning according to the book, and it was probably your group. I remember someone saying that these troops had been dropped off earlier that day to take the pressure off of Ripcord, does this make sense? Anything you can supply would be appreciated. I'm also Dave Wolfe's crew chief mentioned in the book that looked over Ken Mayberry's bird after being mortared.



81mm mortar

I'm also going to send you a link to an article that was written and published in the Vietnam Magazine by Tom Marshall (also the author of *The Price of Exit* and a good friend). This article is located on the 101st Website <http://www.screamingeagle.org/ripord.html> You've probably seen it before, you are also mentioned in

it. Anyway, I wanted you to read this story and give me your opinion on whether we could ever find the guy that gave me the note "Thanks for Saving Our Asses" that we passed to the pilots (discussed in the story). My bird got shot to shit that day also.

My helicopter had hydraulic problems at Ripcord in May, we thought we might have to spend the night there for a while, but we got the problem corrected. Whew! On May 18th, one of my best friends (Carlton Gray - door gunner) and both pilots crew were lost near Ripcord on a log mission that is also mentioned in the book. They found our crew chief sitting on a tree stump days later in a daze with head injuries. He was evacuated. Gray and I had a big party planned for two days later to celebrate our birthdays.

I've been to several of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Reunions, and in fact am going to the one in Las Vegas over the 4th of July. Several Phoenix pilots will be there, but not a larger turnout by far. Ken Mayberry is going for sure, I talked to him last week. Tom Marshall is also registered. One of these days maybe we can get a bunch of them to come to one of your reunions or vice versa. I was amazed to see so many of the Ripcord veterans were living in Colorado, one here in this town (Greeley) I'll try to look up. Jim Kwiecien is also a friend of mine; he's a member of the Rocky Mountain Eagles Chapter that I founded in 1989. We get together several times a year; he hasn't attended many lately though. He lives in Manitou Springs.

Well, didn't mean to write a book myself. Please help if you can, or please try to put me in contact with someone that can. Sorry for asking so many questions. Thanks.

Larry G. Frazier
frazierlg@ctos.com
<http://www.screamingeagle.org>
C/158th Avn. Bn. Phoenix
Camp Evans March 69- Oct 70

More incoming... cont.

Who was whom?

My name is Bernie Davies and I served with D Battery, 2/320th Field Artillery, joining them in September 1970 and serving until September 1971. My recollection of hearing about Ripcord is that it was Alpha Battery, 2/320th Field Artillery, not 2/319th Field Artillery. Can you clarify this matter for me? Also you have a wonderful website and I look forward to getting the book and to getting more chapters on your website. Thank you.

o0o

Thank you for your quick reply. I would like to receive the Ripcord report. I have had a super Thanksgiving holiday. Your e-mail just added to it. There is so much I am thankful for, including the privilege of serving with the 101st and making it home all right. I hope you had a good holiday as well. I look forward to keeping up with your website, the report and getting the book. Thank you.

Bernie Davies
(No address provided)

Editor's note: It was Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 319th Artillery that had the 105s on Ripcord.

Let's go to the video tape!

Looks like the wife and I will be coming to this years reunion. We are both looking forward to it. Just one small request. Could you contact who ever has the videos of the visits to the ripcord site bring there video? We've only been to the Shreveport reunion and the video was not there.

Thanks. See you in Colorado
Anthony Critchlow

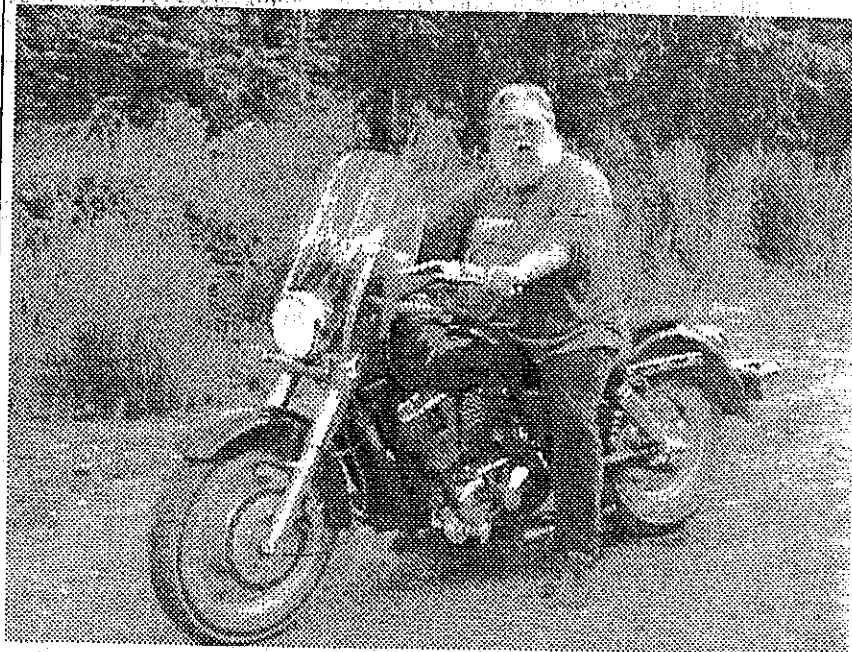
Friends of the association

I am writing for my husband, Terry Williams. He is a Vietnam vet (1970-71) and brother-in-law to Jerry Moyer (Ripcord vet). We are interested in information on the Ripcord reunion. We have a place to stay and would like to know what activities we could participate in and how to register, etc.

Thank you,
Julie Williams, Juliew@ccp.com

THERE'S A BAR IN ALASKA

KASILOF, Alaska—No, not that kind of "bar," the other kind where you drink beer, listen to the juke box and see who can tell the biggest fish story. Oh, yeah, Alaska has plenty of those other kinds of bars too—grizzly, Kodiak brown bear, black bear ... hey, even way up north are the nanooks—enormous polar bears.



Anyway, This particular establishment is the Thunderbird Bar, and it comes complete with a totem pole outside—at least I think that's what it was. Larry Witte took my daughter, Jonelle, and me there for a kind of ceremony on July 5. (We were up for Mom's 81st birthday and decided to hang around a few days. We also visited Mike and Marty Mueller in Anchorage, and Gabe Rollison's widow, Marty, in Eagle River. She's doing well and sends her regards to the association.)

The Thunderbird Bar has been accumulating hats for some time now. It seems that one day a few years back someone remarked that the bar had to have the largest collection of hats in the world. Well, they counted; sent in the total with certified verification, witness signatures, court rulings and what ever else Guinness (they make beer, don't they?) needed to include it in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Sure enough, Thunderbird Bar came out in top spot. The hat collection has been growing by leaps and bounds ever since. There's even a counter to keep track these days, just so they don't have to count them over again sometime.

Oh, the ceremony? Larry pulled up on his dusty Alaska gravel road pot hole buster (seen above), Jonelle and I crunched into the parking lot in a rented tin can with wheels, we had some beer and pretzels, shot the bull with the bar tender (an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam era), and presented him with the hat. Then the bartender rang up the score—No. 23,186—and we took a few digital pictures to prove this major accomplishment to the association membership.

Chuck Hawkins—Editor

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Ben Harrison's Speech at the Memorial Ceremony for Bob Kalsu at Fort Campbell, KY, August 9, 2002

Major General and Mrs. Patreaus, Jan and Bob McLaughlin, Bob Kalsu Jr. and Jill Horning, relatives and friends of the Kalsu family, distinguished guests, Ripcord Association members, fellow soldiers and veterans, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my privilege and honor to join you today on this solemn occasion as we gather at the home of our great division to remember and honor the selfless sacrifice 32 years ago of one of our division's heroes, First Lieutenant James Robert Kalsu. Lt. Kalsu, the commander of Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, located on Firebase Support Ripcord, died on 21 July 1970 while leading his troopers during one of the many enemy bombardments of the besieged firebase that day.

Fire Support Base Ripcord was a barren hilltop located in a mountainous jungle area east of the Laotian border and near the northern end of the A Shau valley. This was an enemy base area just south of the border with North Vietnam. The 101st Airborne Division mission was to strike at the enemy supply bases and sanctuaries near the northern end of the A Shau valley and to interdict the movement of North Vietnamese troops and supplies coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail towards the populated areas of South Vietnam. After four weeks of repeated air assaults and bitter fighting, Fire Support Base Ripcord was established on Hill 927 on 11 April. The 105 and 155 artillery batteries located on Firebase Ripcord provided the means to strike the Ho Chi Minh Trail and support the infantry soldiers fighting along the enemy trails and ridgelines in the jungle around the firebase.

The effective fire missions of the two artillery batteries located on Ripcord caused the North Vietnamese Army B4 Front ordered the 324B Division to seek the total destruction of the firebase as its sole priority and objective at the time—its first ever full division mission. The 324B Division launched a coordinated siege with three infantry regiments supported by artillery and antiaircraft battalions. With the 304 North Vietnamese Division in support, the 324 Division was able to concentrate all its forces in attacking Ripcord and our American troops. Ripcord was defended by approximately two hundred soldiers on the hilltop and an average of six hundred soldiers operating in the field in the Ripcord area. The 23-day siege of firebase Ripcord commenced on 1 July 1970, and ended on 23 July 1970. All troops and equipment were withdrawn from the firebase and from field locations on the 23d. It was the largest helicopter evacuation of American troops under direct enemy fire during the entire war in Vietnam. Massive air and long range artillery immediately began to strike the large

concentration of enemy forces around the old firebase.

The enemy siege of the firebase had resulted in repeated daily enemy mortar, rocket and machinegun attacks. Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery on Ripcord was totally destroyed on 18 July when an ammo re-supply Chinook was shot down and exploded directly on top of this, our only 105 battery. The 155 artillery battery on Ripcord then assumed increased responsibility for providing fire support to the embattled infantry units who were constantly engaging the enemy on the ridges and in the valleys surrounding the firebase. As with all situations of this sort, combat leadership became the most important element for survival and mission accomplishment. No man on the hill was better suited to step up and lead his men in the battle than 1st Lt. James Robert Kalsu, the perfect man to be in command of the lone operational artillery battery left on the besieged firebase. Where did he come from? How did he get there? What kind of man was he?

Bob Kalsu was the only child of Frank and Leah Kalsu. He was raised in the Oklahoma City area where his competitive nature and drive to succeed were exhibited at an early age. He played everything... All kinds of games, including bowling, card games, checkers, jacks, golf and football, always with the great will to win. Although highly successful in high school athletics, he did not have an over inflated ego. He was a devout Catholic who understood the importance of family. Those values so important to develop character were instilled in him as a young man.

After graduation from high school, he attended the University of Oklahoma on a football scholarship. While attending this college football powerhouse, Bob Kalsu chose to enroll in ROTC where his leadership qualities were recognized as he advanced through the system to the rank of cadet colonel of a battalion. He worked hard as a football player to be the best he could be. During his senior year he captained the Orange Bowl winning Oklahoma team and received All-American honors.

During his last year in college, Bob made the most important decision of his young life, marrying Jan Darrow. She brought great happiness to his life and he to hers. His daughter Jill was born after Bob entered the Army and became the apple of his eye. His son, James Robert Kalsu Jr was born two days after Bob's death on Ripcord. How proud Bob would be of his children and grandchildren today.

After graduation from college, Bob Kalsu was drafted by the Buffalo Bills as an offensive lineman and reported to them in the summer of 1968. After a few games of his rookie year, he worked his way up to the starting lineup for the remainder of the season. Bob proved once again that he was a team player and earned the respect of his teammates as he was named the team "Rookie Of The Year." His future could not have been brighter.

Up to this point in his life, what is so recognizable in Bob Kalsu was that he was a leader in everything that he did and wherever he went. His exemplary character was non-negotiable. He was

devoted to his faith, his wife and family, and to his friends. This great devotion extended to his country as well. Upon taking the oath of an officer in the Army after his graduation from Oklahoma, he reaffirmed his commitment to serve his country in time of need.

One must ask why a young man would choose to give up this idyllic world for the dangers of serving as a citizen soldier in a far off and remote land where death or injury were a constant reality. The answer is a simple one. For Bob Kalsu, it was not a matter of choice. Bob Kalsu was a man whose character and integrity were such that once having taken an oath to serve his country, he was honor bound and fully committed. It is this sense of duty and honor that we revere today, and that was then and remains now the core value of our great Army.

On his arrival in South Vietnam in mid-November of 1969 Bob was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division Artillery where he served as an artillery officer on several of the division firebases located in the southern part of the division AO. When things heated up in the Ripcord area of operation up north, the best of men were needed on the big guns, and Bob Kalsu was assigned to serve as the executive officer of the 155 battery located on Firebase Ripcord. After a brief period in this capacity, he assumed command of Alpha Battery, Second of the 11th Field Artillery, when the battery commander was wounded and medevaced to the rear. It was during this critical period on Firebase Ripcord that Bob Kalsu assumed the role that would best utilize his great character and many talents. It was a role that he had unknowingly prepared for all of his life, that of a great combat leader.

"He feared absolutely nothing." That was the way Lieutenant Kalsu was described by his fellow artillery battery commander, Captain Phil Michaud. Those gallant soldiers who served on the firebase during this period, (many of whom are here today), recall with great pride how Bob Kalsu repeatedly exposed himself to incoming enemy fire to ensure that the outnumbered grunts in the bush received the much needed fire support from the battery to survive the vicious battles that were occurring daily.

Bob Kalsu was a natural leader who led by example. Those on the firebase remember the big bare-chested white guy moving around the open area of the 155 battery talking, joking, working with and inspiring his men. They also remember Specialist 4 David E Johnson, a black member of the battery, who was almost the same size of Bob Kalsu, and who would

challenge his commander to a contest to see who could hump the most 97 pound 155 shells from the ammo storage bunker to the guns before giving out. Each of the two men would place one round on each shoulder with a third round placed between the two across the back of their neck and the race, with each carrying three hundred pounds was on. The remaining members of the battery would take bets on who of the two giants could hump the most rounds before giving out first. Both of these two dedicated soldiers and good friends would die together from the direct hit of an incoming mortar round during an enemy barrage.

As the conditions on the firebase deteriorated from the constant enemy bombardments, leadership became the most important factor in the battle to the men on the hill. Combat leadership can be nurtured and developed, but great combat leadership requires a core value that comes from within and does not come simply from rank or authority. Bob Kalsu possessed and exhibited all of the core values and qualities in a man so necessary to lead men in combat.

Today, we honor the memory of Bob Kalsu, the warrior. Today on this ground, Bob Kalsu receives his greatest accolade as he is honored as a soldier and great combat leader by his division and his Army and by his former comrades in arms, who like him, answered the call of their nation in time of need, and who best appreciate, respect and admire the qualities of a great combat leader like Bob Kalsu, and who best understand the great sacrifice made by him. We honor him, and mourn his passing.

With the dedication today of this magnificent building in his honor, the memory of Bob Kalsu will extend beyond his family, friends and comrades in arms. It will extend to all of those magnificent soldiers who come in the future to serve in our great division, as every soldier who reports in to Ft. Campbell as a "Screaming Eagle" will pass through this building and thereafter know the story of the great combat leadership qualities exhibited by 1st Lt. James Robert Kalsu under the worst of conditions.

God Bless Bob Kalsu and all of those splendid soldiers who died with him in the Ripcord battle. God Bless the Kalsu family. God Bless all of our veterans. God Bless the men and women serving today in our armed forces. God Bless our great Army. God Bless those "Screaming Eagles" serving in our magnificent division, and God Bless America.

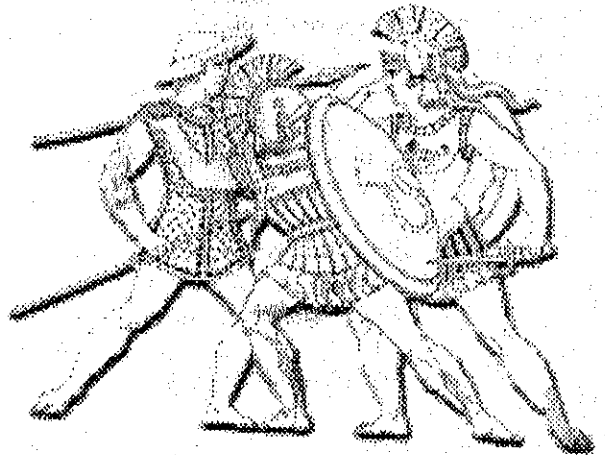


DOG DAY OF SUMMER DAY ISSUE

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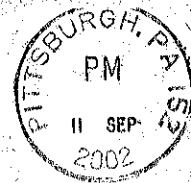
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