



# RIPCORN REPORT



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

Number 98

Summer 2014

## DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE REGIMENT

Each year the 506th Infantry Regiment Association, in cooperation with the active units of the 506 Regiments of the 101st Division, honors current and former members (veterans) of the 506th Regiment who have been recognized for their service to the Regiment and/or continued distinguished service to the US Army, their communities and the nation.

This year eight Ripcord veterans were honored as part of a list of 34 recipients in a somber ceremony on 13 March 2014 held at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Our honorees included James Aanonsen (A 2/506), Gerald Cafferty (C 2/506), Fred Gilbert (D 2/506), Merle DeLagrange (D 1/506), William Pahissa (A 2/506), Steve Wallace (B 2/506), Jeff Wilcox (C 2/506) and R. Michael Womack (C 2/506).

The following Ripcord veterans were honored for HMOR in the same ceremony. LTG Sidney Berry, USA, Ret. (Posthumous), MAJ John R. Fox, USA, Ret., COL Jerry D. Rodgers, USA, Ret.

Congratulations, fellows! It is well deserved!! More photos and stories on pages 4, 5 and 6.



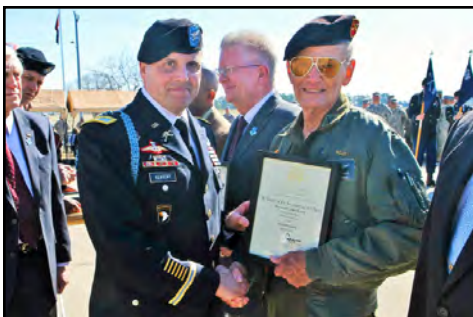
*Merle Delagrange D/1-506*



*Mike Womack C/2-506*



*Jerry Cafferty C/2-506*



*John Fox 163 Avn*

**2014 Ripcord Reunion  
Oct 8 thru 12, 2014  
Mrytle Beach, SC**

**Registration forms are in this issue on page 6 and 8**

# FROM THE EDITOR

A lot of good stuff has been happening with the Ripcord Association. It has been quite busy around here.



Author Chris Brady, whose father was in A/2-506, is writing a new book telling the story of Firebase Ripcord and the battles around the firebase. Chris has interviewed about 100 Ripcord veterans so far and is looking to interview many more. Get in touch with me at [frank@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frank@ripcordassociation.com) to schedule an interview by e-mail, phone or in person. Time is running out. I plan on another interview session here at my home in Mount Laurel, NJ in July or August.

The Ripcord Association is in the process of incorporating. Since 1985, starting with 12 members, we have just been a group of Ripcord veterans having get-togethers. We now have 527 Ripcord veterans and 110 Associate members and due to financial and legal matters, we must incorporate.

I am working on a more accurate list of those who were killed in The Battle of Firebase Ripcord. It is very time consuming and very controversial. I have gathered the names of every casualty in I Corps from March 12 thru July 23rd 1970, looking up each individual name and unit they were in. I am removing those not associated with the 101st and those not involved directly with Ripcord. I am also removing a lot of casualties that were in Operation Texas Star but not in Ripcord. (Ripcord was part of Operation Texas Star).

The documentary *The Ghosts of Ripcord* is still being worked with professional finishing touches. We are trying to get a figure on the cost to complete it and will keep you updated.

Unfortunately, as much as I tried to communicate with the producers of the movie (not the documentary) *The Battle of Ripcord*, it was to no avail! Many of our Ripcord members did not trust the production company to make this movie happen, but I kept trying. Seems they were right about this producer and his company. His movie about Ripcord will not be a reality, only a wishful dream.

Opinions expressed in submitted material are not necessarily those of the editorial staff. We reserve the right to reject any material deemed to be inappropriate. We also reserve the right to edit all submissions, but we will make every effort to maintain the writer's concept and meaning. Please be brief and concise.

## Donations *the life blood of our Association*

The following have given donations to the Ripcord Association since the last newsletter. These donations help keep the website and newsletters published to keep all our Ripcord members up to date.

Tom McGuire

Terrance Downey, FDC A 2/11 in memory of Burke (Buck) Miller A 2/11 FA

David Kenyon

Bill Williams

Joseph (Buffalo) Minias in memory of William H. Twigg

Jerry Rodgers

Rick Blythe

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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

## 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**

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## INCOMING MAIL

### Dear Lee and Frank,

I would like to take a moment to thank you guys for all your time spent to keep us informed and get us all together throughout the year. I truly appreciate all of your efforts to get our story out to the public and to keep the organization going.

Looking forward to seeing you all in October in Myrtle Beach!

*Thanks so much!!*

*Dave and Sophie Kenyon*

### Dear Ripcord Members,

Kathy and I would like to thank all who contributed to the gift we received at the reunion! It was very thoughtful of you and we made good use of it as we traveled to Florida and home.

We enjoy putting the reunions together and are pleased if all have a good time! There is nothing more rewarding than to see fellows get together after years apart and renew friendships they had forgotten about or when guys attend and then come back a second year eagerly seeking other new and old friends. As a result of these reunions Kathy and I now have hundreds more friends than ever before. See you once more in Myrtle Beach!!!!

*Lee and Kathy Widjeskog*

### Dear Veterans,

I can't tell you how grateful I am for the money you have raised. As someone who wasn't aware there was going to be a reunion you can imagine my surprise when I received your letter. I can't believe how much support you have provided over the years to my trust fund. It makes going to college a lot easier and gives me the boost I need to start my career.

Many of you probably know that I (Anna Brit Nolan) am currently 14 years old and finishing off 8th grade. I'm doing well here in Oregon and am enjoying myself at my new school. The move has given me more opportunities as success and I couldn't be happier.

I am planning to major in either journalism or creative writing. Currently I am wrapping up a big project and plan to publish an e-book in August. Though I mostly write dark fiction, I sway to some general non-

fiction and maintain a blog where I post writing tips and musings.

*Thank you so much!!*

*Anna (also known as Emma)*

*Blog: Youngwritersanddemons@weebly.com*

### Walter Reed Army Hospital

For the April to December 2013 deployment of the 506th Regiment/4th BCT to Afghanistan, our 506th Association has provided support to our wounded troopers and their families at Walter Reed Army Hospital, assisting during their often lengthy recoveries. We visit them on a weekly basis.

This visitation program ministers often to unrecognized needs of both the wounded trooper and their family. When we walk into to the soldier's room for the first visit, we meet their mothers and fathers, their wives and children, aunts and uncles, younger and older brothers and sisters, and other family friends. Their needs during this difficult time of recovery are sometimes similar, but can vary greatly. By assessing the needs of each trooper and their family, we can provide the right level of assistance during our weekly visitation. Once they become out-patients, we sponsor community activities, such as spring and summer BBQs for the soldiers and their families, along with other opportunities for the soldiers and their families to leave the hospital grounds to attend concerts, sporting and other social events.

We provide each wounded soldier with a Currahee gift set which includes a Currahee flag, a Currahee baseball hat, a Currahee challenge coin, Currahee gym bag, and small Currahee regimental pins for their family members. We additionally provide financial assistance for the unexpected needs of the family, such as travel costs, child support and other related expenses while the family is at Walter Reed hospital. We have often assisted the soldiers in resolving problems that cause negative concerns and worries that work against the positive attitudes necessary for a good recovery from severe wounds. Lifting such burdens from wounded soldiers allowed them to fully apply their thoughts and energies to their recoveries.

We will continue to provide support to our wounded troopers and their families until the last one leaves Walter Reed hospital.

*Bob Seitz*

*B/2-506*

# 2014 Distinguished Member of the Regiment Awards

by Jeff Wilcox

Katherine and I had a great time at Fort Campbell! Thank you to Frank Marshall and Jim Campbell for nominating me for my Distinguished Member of the Regiment Award. I was humbled that the guys I led in Vietnam nominated me and that they attended the ceremony.

The fun started at Harper House. We had great reconnecting conversations at this event.

The next day we met in the lobby of our hotel. Frank Marshall showed up looking great in a suit, a cashmere overcoat and a hat. Tiny Aanonsen said, "Look, they sent us a limo driver!" I think that was one of the funniest comments we heard.



*Jeff Wilcox A & C/2-506 receives award*

We were assigned a young 2LT as our guide for the ceremony. He was 24, a year older than I was in Vietnam. He looked so young. I said to him, "Katherine is going to ask you, why aren't you in school?" He had read the Ripcord book.

Moving and touching does not nearly describe the ceremony honoring the soldiers killed in the last deployment. I welled up several times, especially when I saw a toddler in his mother's arms touching the name of his father who was killed.

Jim Campbell took us to the 1LT Kalsu Replacement Center where my photo's of Ripcord are on display. They are remodeling the center and I have sent them fresh copies. Jim told the tale of calling the athletic department at Oklahoma for a number "77" jersey. He was turned down flat. "We don't give jerseys to just anybody." What?? He knew that the quarterback from the undefeated Oklahoma team of the 50's was in his office building. He went down and spoke to the guy and, by the time he got back to his office, the athletic

director was on the phone saying, "Where do you want it sent!" Jim is a guy who gets things done.

On Thursday, we attended a dinner of the C Co guys who came along after us. There was a moving reading of the names of the soldiers killed in Vietnam, followed by a bell ring for each of them. Afterward we went to the American Legion Post. This is where the young 'uns were present and were "adopted" as Big Brothers by the Vietnam veterans. Bob Leibecke has declared this his "sacred mission." This is where Glynn Hale, Charlie Lieb, Jim Campbell, Ken Pitetti and I received our framed guidons. They give it to the officers and platoon sergeants who attend for the first time as a tribute to those who brought them back alive.

They had a raffle and Katherine said these guys should have their own game show. Lots of laughs. One of the young 'uns picked a T-shirt from the raffle and said, "A small will work for me." Steve Bago shouted, "Condom that is."

On Friday we attended the Currahee Rendezvous Ball in Nashville. We thought we might be put in the back at the old folks table and, instead, we were seated with the C Co. CO, XO, 1st SGT and Platoon SGT and their wives at a table in front. We had terrific conversations with them and found them very respectful and in awe of what the Vietnam veterans went through. The XO had read the Ripcord book, too. One guy specifically mentioned their night vision gear and how they can see everything that moves. I always say that is the one thing they have that I would have given anything to have in our day.

In addition to my DMOR certificate, I was given two coins, a framed C Co guidon, a C Co hat, two Currahee ball glasses, and a black spade from the centerpiece at the ball presented to me by the CO. I have had great difficulty putting the "coulda, shoulda" behind me for my actions in Vietnam. I have this stuff on the mantle and I am letting it in and putting it in the past.

I was in a Vet Center rap group in '81 and felt  
*(continued on page 5)*



*Jeff and Katherine Wilcox*

(continued from page 4)

hopeless about my future. One of the guys declared that he was never going to smile again as a tribute to his dead buddies. In that moment I realized that I was going to live the life I would have wished for my dead comrades - full of love, friends, happiness, prosperity. I declared myself a "Living Memorial" and am working every day to be that.

We learned when we were working professionally in the veterans community in the early '80's, that being together with people who shared your experience is healthy. We also proved that, when you take something on together, it is an even more powerful experience. I suspect that Kathy and Lee Widjeskog, Frank Marshall, Fred Spaulding, Red and Bob Judd, Anthony Critchlow, Bob Leibecke, Mary and George Murphy and Bob Seitz and others in the Ripcord community doing things in their local area are getting tons of satisfaction from taking on a purpose that is larger than themselves.

I am working on a project to network support for the West Michigan Veterans Assistance Program (WMVAP), an all volunteer non-profit consisting of veterans, spouses and friends. They are dedicated to assisting homeless and about to be homeless vets and families in our region. They fill in the gaps in available services. There are about 200 homeless vets in Grand Rapids MI alone and many more spread throughout the six county region that WMVAP serves. Estimates range up to thirty percent of homeless nation wide are vets. One in five are women veterans. Many of them are alcoholics/mentally ill and a great many are just down on their luck. Twenty-two vets are committing suicide daily! WMVAP is dragging wounded from the battlefield of hunger and homelessness.

Now that we are retired, this is our mission. We would like to see reports in the Ripcord newsletter from other vets and families who are taking on projects that make a difference for veterans and families in their communities. We can share ideas, commitment and cheerleading!

Jeff Wilcox

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



*James (Tiny) Aaonsen A/2-506*



*Fred Gilbert D/2-506 receives award*



*Bill Williams accepts award for Steve Wallace B/2-506*



*James Campbell accepts award for Paul Burkey C/2-506*

**RIPCORD REUNION 2014  
MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA**

- Yes, I'll be there!  
 Yes, I'll attend and have not received a Ripcord Coin.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT IN 'NAM \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_+

Will a family member(s) or guest be sharing your accommodations [ ] yes [ ] no?  
How many including you? [ ], If yes what are their names? (For name tag purposes only).

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Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_  
TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT IS PROVIDED BY COMPLEMENTARY AIRPORT  
SHUTTLE. MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR PICK UP AT LEAST 48 HOURS BEFORE  
ARRIVAL! (1-888-265-8864)

Registration fee of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed for # \_\_\_\_\_ Adults and # \_\_\_\_\_ children under 18.  
\$40 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below!

**DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:**

Before June 30, 2014, \$75 per adult  
July 1 through 31, 2014 \$80 per adult,  
August 1 through 31, 2014 \$85 per adult.  
After September 1, 2014 \$90 per adult

Your registration fee covers the cost of the hospitality room, snacks and beverages, and dinner on Saturday.

**Registration fee due no later than October 3, 2014.**

Make your check payable to "RIPCORD ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

If you have questions call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 5 October 2013

**AGENDA**

Wednesday, October 8: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)  
Thursday, October 9: Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)  
Friday, October 10: Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7PM)  
Saturday, October 11: Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.  
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.  
Sunday, October 12: Homeward bound  
Thursday golf outing (not included in the registration fee). Check here if you will play [ ].

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY AND BY September 8, 2014**

**CALL 1-888-265-8846**

**ASK FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS AND REFER TO THE GROUP  
CODE: RIPCORD**

## Update on the new Ripcord Book

by Chris Brady



Thanks to all those who have reached out to share their stories with me. We're nearing 100 interviews and the response has been nothing short of amazing. Your stories deserve to be heard and I'm privileged to be able to share them. If you have not been contacted and would like to share, please email me at [cbrady@windstream.net](mailto:cbrady@windstream.net) or contact Frank Marshall at the Ripcord Association for more information. I'm also collecting photographs. Should any be used, those providing the photographs will be credited. Email the photos to the same address mentioned earlier.

This project is dedicated to the men who fought at Ripcord. It's about your time there, what you endured and the bonds that were made.

Thanks again-Chris

## Anna Britt Nolan Trust

by George and Mary Murphy



Dear Fellow Members of the Ripcord Association,

Anna Britt Nolan is finishing her first year of high school—just amazing when you think she was just 9 years old when Keith passed away. Before we know it, she will be looking at colleges and using her trust fund towards her education. Any donations to her trust fund by members of Ripcord are greatly appreciated by the Nolan Family. Let's all do what we can to make this possible for Keith's daughter!

*Thank you,*

*George and Mary Murphy*

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## Ripcord Oral History Interviews

Over the past couple of years, Mike McGregor and I have recorded nearly forty oral history interviews with members of the Ripcord Association, both at the Indianapolis and Myrtle Beach reunions, and locally in Michigan, where we are based. Most of these interviews have been digitized and posted on our website ([www.gvsu.edu/vethistory](http://www.gvsu.edu/vethistory)).

Anyone interested in scheduling an interview at the Myrtle Beach 2014 reunion can contact me by email [smitherj@gvsu.edu](mailto:smitherj@gvsu.edu) or phone 616-331-3422. For those not going to the reunion, I can also make house calls to interview people in lower Michigan, northern Indiana or the Chicago area.

***Dr. James Smither, Director***

***Ripcord Oral History Interviews Conducted By  
The Grand Valley State University Veterans  
History Project***



## Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



We continue to grow. As of May 19, 2014 our memberships is up to 413. I want to thank all members for their posts and comments on our Facebook page. You are the Driving force to keep our page moving forward. If you have any pictures of Ripcord or your time in Vietnam please keep posting them.

Congratulations to all of this year's distinguished members of the Regiment of the 506th. It was my honor to serve with all of you and to serve you in Vietnam. Its spring time I'm hoping it is a kind one for you.

Here in Boise Idaho we had a mild winter this is typical spring is rainy this is typical also. I'm looking forward to a good summer with the grandkids.

*Enjoy your spring and summer.*

*Anthony*

## Ripcord Association Membership Roster

The Ripcord Association membership roster has been updated on our website. We have 637 members. There are 527 Ripcord veterans and 110 Associate members. Please go to our website under the membership roster page and if your name is under the "Not verified" list, that means I have not received your updated information. Fill out the membership application on the website and hit submit. It is easy to do.

# Firestore Ripcord Association October 8-12, 2014

Hotel Reservation form for  
Sands Ocean Club Resort  
9550 Shore Drive  
Myrtle Beach, SC 29572  
Phone: (888) 265-8846  
Group code: RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION

Group Room Rate: Sunday thru Sunday \$75 per day + \$2.14 access charge per day + tax.  
(Breakfast included)

A deposit for the first night's room and tax or a Credit Card Number is required to guarantee this reservation.\*  
Room rate is available three days before and after the group-blocked dates.  
Tell them you are with the RIPCORDER ASSOCIATION when you register.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Rooms \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Room needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Although we cannot guarantee special requests, every effort will be made to meet your request.

Deposit Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Signature Authorizing Hotel's Use of Credit Card: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*PLEASE NOTE: Those guests sending a cash deposit should be aware that a credit card imprint and valid , state issued ID will be necessary upon check in. Should you wish to pay for your stay with cash, a credit card imprint and valid ID will still be required upon arrival to secure your accommodations. All cash payments are accepted upon departure.**

Check-in time: 3:00 PM

Check-out Time: 11:00 AM

To confirm reservations, return form to the hotel or call by September 8, 2014.  
We look forward to seeing you in October!