



# RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 129

March 2022

## Ripcord Association Update *by Pete Meloro*

It has been a difficult several months for the Ripcord Family. In the past three years we have dealt with the Covid Epidemic and the cancellations of two reunions, the loss of both Ben Harrison and his wife Carolyn. However, nothing prepared us for the recent passing of Lee Widjeskog. As we all know, Lee and Kathy have been the bedrock upon which the Ripcord Association has thrived. Lee functioned in the capacity of Secretary/Treasurer but in reality, he did virtually everything for the Association throughout the year. The success of our Association and our Reunions is a tribute and testament to the hard work of Lee and Kathy.



This newsletter will include tributes to Lee that we will all recognize as a tribute to a true leader. He led his Alpha Company Platoon in Vietnam and he led the Ripcord Association with the same professionalism and dedication. There is an old cliché that is often heard after a person's death. It speaks to the individual being irreplaceable. For the most part, the comments are just words and not accurate. However, when it comes to speaking about Lee, nothing could be more accurate in defining his loss to our organization. He is truly irreplaceable!

My wife and I have visited Kathy at her home on two occasions since Lee's death. She is a strong person who, though grieving, assisted me in having our organization's financials transferred. She accompanied me to the bank to transfer the signing rights on our account from Lee's name to my name. Along with Frank Marshall we were able to pick up all Ripcord Association material and files. Upon completion of our work, Kathy handed each of us a container of "Pizzelle's" which she had baked. Though deep in grief, she continued to think of others. An amazing person! Thankfully Kathy has a

strong support system of family and neighbors led by her daughter Denise, son-in-law Ryan, son Brett and grandson Tyler. When Lee passed, Kathy asked that in lieu of flowers, any donations should be sent to the Ripcord Association. To date, we have received over \$6,000 in donations in memory of Lee. Quite a tribute!

Now for a few words about this year's Reunion. We will hold our reunion in Springfield, Missouri from October 16th through October 19th with departure on October 20th. We needed to change the original dates due to an issue with the availability of an appropriately sized hospitality suite. Please note the registration is also available online to register for the Reunion and the University Plaza Hotel. We know that many of you registered and paid the fee for the Reunion which was canceled in 2020. If you did not request a refund, all you need to do is send in the form to confirm your attendance but do not attach a check with the registration fee. All others include the fee with your registration form.

Due to changes in Hotel policy, we will not be able to bring our wine, beer and liquor to the hospitality suite. We will have a bartender each day at the hospitality suite for five (5) hours, likely from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM. The cost of the liquor, with the exception of the cash bar at the dinner, will be paid by the Association. We will be able to supply soft drinks and snacks.

It was Lee's intention at this reunion not to have raffles during the evening prior to our dinner nor at the dinner. He strongly believed that this reunion would celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The Battle for Fire Support Base Ripcord and we should maximize our time spent with each other. We will honor his intention. We will, however, have a 50/50 raffle to help offset the cost of the bar tab at the hospitality suite. We are also contemplating having a plated dinner rather than a buffet and will keep you informed of that decision when finalized.

# An Alpha Company Warrior Crosses Over

Our dear friend and comrade in arms Lee Widjeskog, died unexpectedly on Monday, January 10, 2022. Lee was many different things to many different people. He was a loving husband to his beloved wife Kathy, a devoted father to his daughter Denise Powers and his son Brett Widjeskog, and a doting grandfather to his grandson Tyler Powers. Lee was also survived by his siblings Linda Laning, Roy Widjeskog, Judy McCormick, Sue Widjeskog, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was a great friend to countless people who lived in the Bridgeton, New Jersey area. Lee was a magnificent warrior leader with the kindest of hearts who was devoted to those gallant soldiers who he served with and under him in the mountains of Northern I Corps in the Republic of Vietnam.



Lee's burial with full military honors took place on January 15, 2022 at the Cumberland County Veteran's Cemetery. We are comforted by words that reflect the outpouring of love, affection, respect and admiration of the many hundreds of people who knew and loved Lee and knew him as a person who treated all with dignity and respect.

Lee was raised near the little town of Rosenhayn, New Jersey. Following his graduation from Bridgeton High School, Lee attended and graduated from Colorado State University in 1968 with a degree in Wildlife Biology. Lee had his first date with Kathy on New Year's Eve 1965, and they subsequently married in 1968 in Bridgeton, New Jersey. Lee enrolled in the ROTC program while at CSU and was commissioned in the Army as an infantry second lieutenant upon his graduation. Lee then attended the Infantry Officers Basic Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, and after completion of the course attended and graduated from Airborne School at Ft. Benning. Lee then was assigned to Ft. Polk, La. as a training officer. After completing this assignment, Lee was assigned to the U.S. Army Jungle Training School for three weeks of jungle training. Lee received orders directing him to South Vietnam after completion of his jungle training. Lee arrived in South Vietnam on March 21, 1970 and was assigned to be the second platoon leader in Alpha Company,

2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry regiment, of the 101st Airborne Division. Captain Albert Burckard was his first company commander.

Shortly after his arrival in Alpha Company, Captain Burkhart turned over command of Alpha Company to Captain Chuck Hawkins, who would lead the Company during the remaining months of the Ripcord battle. The fighting in the Ripcord area of operation began to escalate in those days before July 1, 1970 and Lee adapted to his role as an effective combat leader during this period.

On the night of July 1, 1970, the siege of Firebase Ripcord commenced with the attack south of Firebase Ripcord by NVA sappers on Hill 902, which was defended by two platoons of Charlie Company. This was followed by enemy attacks in the Triple Hills area lying north of Ripcord and the attacks of Charlie and Delta companies on Hill 1,000 lying west of Ripcord. On July 10, 1970 Alpha Company combat assaulted into an LZ lying east of Ripcord and was ordered to move to Hill 805 to join with Delta Company of the 2/501st in defending Hill 805 from enemy attacks.

After a few days of fighting at Hill 805, Alpha Company was ordered down into the valley south and west of Hill 805 which developed into the fiercest fights of the Ripcord battle. On July 20, 1970 the first platoon of Alpha Company found and tapped into a ammo line connected from a regimental headquarters to a NVA mortar position. It was not long before all hell broke loose. These fights became fights for survival as Alpha Company was facing a determined enemy who sought to overwhelm the unit with superior numbers. The fighting spirit of the men of Alpha Company led by their officers Chuck Hawkins, Bill Pahissa, and Lee resulted in saving the company from annihilation by the enemy. The chaos of war was never more evident, yet the soldiers rallied around their commanders and fought to survive. This is the essence of combat leadership and training. The men who fought in these fights are battle tested warriors who know that life is precious and freedom is worth dying for. The magnitude of the Alpha Company fights resulted in 14 KIA's and 55 wounded soldiers. Six soldiers made it through these fights unscathed.

After the abandonment of Firebase Ripcord on July 23, 1970, Lee remained in the field with Alpha Company until late September when he was assigned as a supply officer for the Brigade Headquarters, which position he held until he left South Vietnam on March 20th 1971.

After Lee's tour in Vietnam was over, he returned

to the States and it was not long before he separated from the Army. He returned to Bridgeton, New Jersey to raise a family with Kathy. Lee was a man who loved the outdoors and soon went to work for the New Jersey Department of Wildlife and Fisheries where he worked for forty years. He loved his job which he performed with a passion to preserve the natural sanctuaries and wildlife in the state. Lee was an active member of Ducks Unlimited, The National Wild Turkey Federation and the Sportsman Federation. Lee especially enjoyed traveling with Kathy in the summers.

Lee recognized and appreciated that he was blessed in his marriage to Kathy—his soul mate and life partner. He delighted in her—she was the unfailing source of love, support, comfort, joy, happiness, and contentment. Kathy—he loved you—and he was thankful that you were a Proverbs 31 wife—loyal, trustworthy, industrious, engaging, compassionate, and selfless. You truly softened the sadness and magnified the joy in his life.

Lee was a soldier who loved soldiers and soldiering. He was a combat leader who was kind, considerate, bright, calm under pressure, and dedicated to the well being of his soldiers. Lee understood that leaders have special relationships with their followers, and importantly, special responsibilities to them. He understood and took seriously his responsibility to develop soldiers who were loyal to each other and steadfast in the face of the enemy, in the worst of circumstances. Lee understood that those whom he led needed a sense of worth, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and a sense of competence to prevail.

He made an investment in his followers because they were special to him—and as a result, he was special to them. In leading his men in the most difficult of battles what emerged was a powerful bond between the leader and the led—a bond that tied spirits together in mutually caring, mutually productive and mutually protective relationships. Lee's call for commitment, integrity, dedication, and sacrifice on the part of those he led was honored because Lee, by example, was himself committed, honest, dedicated, and willing to sacrifice.

Lee had a wonderful sense of humanity. As a combat soldier he had the "human touch". In an environment of stress, fatigue, hardship, and sacrifice—by his calm and inspired leadership—Lee instilled confidence in his soldiers that they would endure, that they would succeed, and that they would prevail, despite the overwhelming conditions facing him and his soldiers.

Lee attended his first Ripcord reunion at Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1998 and he and Kathy became active members of the Ripcord Association. His willingness to become involved led to he and Kathy assuming many duties at the reunions and afterwards culminating in his assuming the position of President and Treasurer of the Ripcord Association in 2006. They both worked tirelessly to see that the Ripcord Association members would be an effective group with an active membership. Lee saw that the Ripcord reunions were a good time for all attending and made every effort to sustain the good will and camaraderie enjoyed by the members. His dedication to the soldiers of the Ripcord Association was an inspiration to us all.

The nation has lost a great patriot, soldier and warrior. We mourn his passing. May he rest in peace in the Valhalla section of heaven with those great warriors with whom he served so gallantly and who have preceded him. May the good Lord bless this kind, wonderful man who was a great friend to us all and a magnificent human being.

*Currahee,  
Jim Campbell  
C/2-506*

## 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: **RIPCOLD**

**If you already paid!**

**We know that many of you registered and paid the fee for the Reunion which was canceled in 2020. If you did not request a refund, all you need to do is send in the form to confirm your attendance but do not attach a check with the registration fee. All others include the fee with your registration form.**

## Major General Benjamin Harrison

Ben Harrison, born on July 23, 1928, passed away peacefully on January 22, 2022 at the age of ninety three in Katy, Texas.

Ben attended Arkansas State College while still a junior in high school and transferred to the University of Mississippi as a sophomore in 1945. He enlisted in the Army at age 18 and became a regular army Private First Class after one year. After completing airborne training, he returned to the University of Mississippi. While there, he met Carolyn Algee Harrison. In 1951, Ben graduated from Ole Miss and married Carolyn. On September 29, 2021 they celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary.

In addition to his undergraduate degree, Ben earned an MA in Psychology from the University of Missouri and an MBA from Auburn University.

Ben Harrison had a remarkable 29 year career in the Army ultimately rising to the rank of Major General. He was notable for his contributions to the tactics of modern warfare involving the integration of helicopters with infantry and armor forces for both rapid deployment and subsequent support. General Harrison was an early advocate, theorist and practitioner of these tactics (commonly referred to as “air assault”) that are critical to modern military doctrine as practiced in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, two Silver Stars, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Legion of Merit in addition to numerous other US and foreign decorations.

General Harrison commanded the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in 1970 during the last major US ground battle of the Vietnam War. This battle has been documented by Keith Nolan in his book, Ripcord Screaming Eagles Under Siege Vietnam 1970. After command of the 3rd Brigade of the 101st, he was the Senior Advisor to the Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division, ARVN during the Lam Son 719 Operations into Laos, In two tours, he flew 1842 combat hours and was the only officer in Vietnam to command a Combat Aviation Battalion for 12 months.

General Harrison was a prolific writer on military doctrine and management with dozens of publications in military journals. Based on his experience as a



Brigade Commander in Vietnam during the Siege of Fire Support Base Ripcord, he wrote a book about the last major battle of the Vietnam War to include the North Vietnamese perspective. The book was based on documents from each side of the Vietnam War and his research from several trips to Vietnam included discussions with former North Vietnamese (NVA) senior leaders and his Ripcord counterparts.

General Harrison began attending the Ripcord Association Reunions in 1987 and designed a Challenge Coin to be given to each member of the Association. He was engaging and often the life of the party at the reunions. Who can forget him jumping on a table and dancing. He was a true leader and friend to the enlisted men during the war and at the reunions.

*Respectfully,  
Peter Meloro*



## Memorial Service for Ben Harrison

by Bob Layton

On March 18, family, friends and Ripcord veterans gathered in Belton, Texas for a memorial service for retired Major General Benjamin L. Harrison who passed away on January 22, 2022. In 1970, then Colonel Harrison commanded the 3d Brigade of the 101st Airborne during the siege of Firebase Ripcord and in later years was a fixture at the Ripcord reunions.

The service was conducted with an understated elegance led by the pastor of the 1st Methodist Church of Belton. Words of remembrance were offered by the General's son-in-law and a childhood friend. Both attested to his love of family, friends, and the joy he brought to, and took from, life. His credo for a good life was noted: "Work as though you will live forever, party as though you will die tomorrow". Following the service, interment occurred at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen, Texas.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the day was the interaction with family members at the reception. Ripcord veterans were able to share experiences of the battle and also provide insight into the General's leadership and courage during that period of his life. Of special value to the family was the confirmation that the General was indeed an accomplished table dancer at the reunions!

The veterans of Ripcord were indeed fortunate to have had his leadership during a trying period.



## Good Afternoon Frank,

I was saddened to receive your email regarding Lee. I never met Lee but communicated with Lee several times about Ripcord. My thoughts and prayers are with his family. Lee sent me a copy of the Fire Support Base

Ripcord Casualty Report in December. I was going to send you and Lee an email thanking you and Lee for all of the hard work and time you put into compiling the information for the Report. Excellent job and well done, Thank you!!!! I also know my old friend Paul Burkey would have appreciated the effort you guys put in regarding the Ripcord Association. So thank you for that as well!!

I would imagine at times it was somewhat difficult for you to put the report together. As I read the report it stirred many emotions from anger and tears to being very grateful and everything in between. Anger that all of these brave, brave, brave young men lost their lives. Sad and tearful as I thought about some of the information and details described in the report as it brought back many memories. Grateful and so very thankful I survived and was able to have a very fulfilling life. Oh, I struggled and still do at times like many of us have. But so blessed I'm still here.

Thanks again for all you do for the Association.

Frank, health and happiness to you and yours.

*Rick Walsh*

C 2/506

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## Anna Britt Fund Update

With all the sad news we've had already this year at the Ripcord Association, I thought some good news might be in order. Anna Britt is scheduled to graduate college this summer, if all goes according to plan. (I'm almost afraid to say anything for fear of jinxing it. With this crazy pandemic, you never know—so let's all pray everything goes according to plan!) She will have a degree in journalism.

Thanks to all the years of auctions at our Ripcord reunions, the funds of which were donated to Anna's trust fund, she will graduate college with NO student loans to repay! She also has a job already with a social media company and is planning to continue working there after college. How many college graduates can say that these days!

I'm sure my husband George, Keith Nolan, Lee and all our other lost Ripcord brothers are up there smiling and raising a toast! I am so proud of all of us for making Keith's dream of a college education for his daughter come true. I salute all of you!

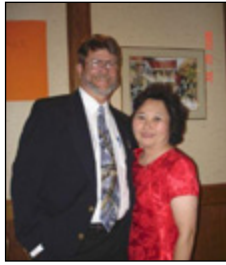
*Hugs,*

*Mary Murphy*

## Note from Kathy Widjeskog

To Ripcord Association,

I am most grateful for all the love and support you have shown me, and my family, on the passing of our beloved husband, father and grandfather.



Your warm thoughts and prayers, the many special memories of Lee that you shared, and your generous support of The Ripcord Association which was of greatest importance to Lee will be cherished always.

*With great love and appreciation*

*Kathy and Family*

## Ripcord at 50

With the final plans coming together for our delayed 50th year reunion, we are hoping that all of us can reconnect. I hope ALL of you will make plans to come!



Every reunion I've attended has me wanting for the next one! We meet so many interesting people each year! On the flight home, my wife Michelle and I discussed all the fun we had and the friendly men, women, and families we were blessed to meet! During the year, I try to listen to the oral interviews some of the guys have done with GVV and encourage anyone to give their story too.

I encourage any of you to write about your experience coming for the first time, so Frank can put it in our newsletter. I know I was amazed the first time I came and walked over to the table I was directed to with more of the Delta guys. After saying hello and introducing my bride, Michelle and I sat down and within a couple of minutes the group started talking about something that happened over there! And just like that any apprehension was gone! All the concerns I had meeting for the first time went right out the door and have never returned! I hope most had that favorable first time too! October is right around the corner and this year, more than ever, will be a great time to support this growing group!

*God Bless*

*Jim McCoy*

*D/I-506*

*Association Board Member*

## Ripcord Association has a new President

My Name is Bill Boles and I have been named the new President of the Ripcord Association and I want to take this opportunity to let our members know that I look forward to working to keep the Ripcord Association moving forward.



## Ripcord on Facebook

*by Anthony Chritchlow*

2022 sure has not started off good for our association. I hope everyone had a good Christmas. I'm looking forward to a better year after the first 2 months.



I'm not sure if everyone knows of the facebook changes. I no longer have a say in who can join our group. It's open to people just popping in and putting their trash ads on our page. We can stop all of this if we go private. I will leave that up to our association leadership to decide. We now have 1,121 people in our group, you are no longer called members.

I'm looking forward to this year's vacations. One with just the wife and I, and one with the family. I'm also hoping for a Ripcord reunion this fall. I'm sure Frank will keep us informed.

Everyone stay safe.

## 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)

### **Editor: Bill Heath**

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### **Design & Layout**

Frank Marshall

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## A 2/506 GET TOGETHER Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

After our annual reunions were cancelled because of the pandemic, some of us still yearned to meet in a safe environment. As we continued to age and lose fellow veterans, Frank Marshall and I talked about putting together a small gathering of just Alpha guys. But where, when and how could we do this? First, was looking for a location. After much leg work and discussion, Frank found a wonderful resort that would work with us in Myrtle Beach, where he and his wife Dee live, and close enough to the airport so a car rental wasn't necessary. Then, what date would work out for good room pricing and fair weather. We chose Friday, March 4th and Saturday, March 5th but many arrived on Thursday.



With a list of 55 Alpha names from a list compiled from previous reunion attendees, some with addresses, phone numbers or emails, we began to reach out. We tried calling, then emails, and finally I sent letters out. Many of our brothers have kept their info current but unfortunately many have not. If we were unable to reach you, please send to Frank or me your updated info so we can contact you in the future, if you are still interested in the Ripcord Association. About 25 members were unable to attend for a variety of reasons, but 17 were in attendance and 18 family members. Some had not seen each other for 52 years. Incredible! The remaining individuals did not respond or we could not get in touch with. In attendance were Capt. Burckard, Lt. Noll, and members of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th platoon and LZ cutters.

This was a safe and wonderful time together. The DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Myrtle Beach Oceanfront right on the water, five minutes from the airport and surrounded by restaurants, was the cleanest and most friendly toward our group that I can ever remember attending. This event was hosted by Frank and myself, plus donations from the attendees. No funds were used from the Ripcord Association.

We all can not wait to resume our regular Reunion schedule with ALL our Ripcord family.

**BILL HEATH**  
(520) 518-6970  
laketam1@yahoo.com

## GET TOGETHER THOUGHTS

Knowing Chuck Hawkins reputation for valiant combat leadership and strong commitment to the Association, I was a bit anxious and somewhat reluctant about attending our recent "All Alpha Company" mini-reunion. But I recalled I was the last "Ripcord" Alpha Company CO around and so I dutifully drove the 300 miles down from Virginia. At our "get-together" event, I was truly honored to talk with and be recognized by many of my former comrades-in-arms. We shared so much that I had forgotten and I also learned things I had not even known before.

Although I commanded Alpha for barely 4 1/2 months, from Fire Base Jack and then out into the Ashau Valley area including the 12 March and 1 April combat assaults, I have always regretted that I was not able to take part, as most all of you did, in that final fight that ended on 23 July.

The reminiscences we shared with each other in Myrtle Beach are now a part of the memory I have of our collective experience. I very much treasure the relationship I share with each of you and hope to attend future gatherings.

*Sincerely and respectfully,*

*Albert P. Burckard jr.*

*Cpt. A-2/506th, 3rd Bde., 101st Abn. (Airmobile)  
19 January - 31 May 1970*



Back row: John Wright, Capt Burckard, Lt Noll, Jim (Tiny) Aanonsen, Jerry Manemann, Billy Helvey, Mike Goens, Paul Buhr. 2nd row: Carl Dykstra, Don Keifer, Frank Marshall, Dale Lane, Bob Wright, Bruce Brady, Bill Heath. Seated: George Westervelt.



# The Ripcord Association History

The Ripcord Association and newsletter were the brainchild of Chip Collins (B 2/506). After returning from Vietnam and re-starting his life in “TheWorld”, Chip found a need to talk to others who served in the Ripcord AO in 1970. Gradually, Chip began to make contact with men he served with during Ripcord. By 1983, he was producing a small, irregularly published newsletter in which Ripcord Veterans related their experiences during the Ripcord siege. He soon heard from others and the newsletter grew in size and distribution. By July of 1985, Chip Collins was putting out a newsletter on almost a monthly basis. Soon Bill Heath (A 2/506) assisted Chip by taking over the publishing in 1985 thru 1988. Through the newsletter Chip met John Mihalko of E 2/506 Recon. John and Chip shared a feeling that there was a story that needed to be told and soon enlisted the aid of Jim Fairhall who offered in the 1980’s, to do a book about Ripcord .

Meanwhile, other veterans of Ripcord were getting together for reunions in small, scattered groups around the country such as A 2/506, E2/506 Recon and D 2/501. Chip Collins and John attempted to set up a reunion at Fort Campbell for 1986, but things did not quite jell and there were concerns the Ripcord guys would get lost among the bigger 101st reunion. Finally, later that year, John Mihalko, Chip Collins, Chuck Hawkins and Frank Marshall organized the first official Ripcord Association Reunion with the help of VFW Post 5351 in Whippany, New Jersey. Thirteen veterans from the Ripcord Battle, along with various wives and girl friends, attended. The veterans included Ray Blackman, Fred Behrens, Rick Blythe, Dick Cable, Chip Collins, Jim Fairhall, Chuck Hawkins, Bill Heath, Frank Marshall, John Mihalko, John Sherba, Tom Sheppard and George Westervelt.

Moving along on the wave of success from the first event, a second reunion was organized by Chuck Hawkins and held during October 1987 at the Westpark Hotel in Rosslyn, VA outside Washington, DC. General Berry and General Harrison both attended and the highlight of the reunion was a very emotional visit to “The Wall”.

Changes were occurring in the newsletter. By 1987, Chip had Ray “Blackie” Blackman (D2/501) on board as the co-editor with Bill Heath still publishing it. In 1989, Ray assumed the duties of editor as Chip moved onto another stage of life. Late in 1989, Chuck Hawkins (C, A 2/506) assumed the mantle of editor and publisher.

In 1994, Frank Marshall (A2/506) assumed the duties of publisher and John Mihalko and Ray Blackman assisted Chuck as Contributing Editors.

Try as Ripcord Association members might, the next reunion did not happen until 1995 and finally took place in Golden, Colorado. Again John Mihalko, who had recently moved into the area, organized it.

Since the Colorado reunion the events have become annual affairs with Fred Spaulding going around the country to find suitable hotels that met all our needs.

The next was Fredericksburg, Virginia (1996) with another visit to the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial. Then Mobile, Alabama (1997), Atlantic City, New Jersey (1998), Savanna, Georgia (1999). Shreveport, Louisiana (2000) included a moving dedication ceremony, excellent speakers and a lot of hard work by Jim Campbell and Fred Spaulding.

In the year 2000, Keith Nolan, at the urging of Chuck Hawkins and Sid Berry, whom Keith got to know while writing his first book, Into Laos, took the shared remberances of the Association and put it into book form, The Siege of Firebase Ripcord.

The year 2000 also saw the start of the Ripcord Association website: [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com). It was created and managed by Frank Marshall, who is also doing the membership roster.

The next reunion was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (2001) followed by Colorado Springs, Colorado (2002) and Charleston, South Carolina (2003).

In the Colorado reunion, the “Ripcordettes” (Wives of Ripcord veterans) held their first meeting (without the men). The ladies would hold raffles or auctions of items donated to the Association by the ladies.

Bob and Redd Judd handled all the merchandise that was set up at the tables and spent the entire reunion selling merchandise. Between the Ripcordettes and the Judds, the reunions were run very smooth and succesful.

In 2003, Lee Widjeskog took over the reigns of running the reunions, while Fred still found the locations. Along with Lee’s wife Kathy and the help of the Ripcordettes and the Judds, the reunions were run very smooth and succesful.

The newsletter had another changing of the guard in the Fall of 2003. Frank Marshall has taken the reins of editorship with Lee Widjeskog (A 2/506) as the Contributing Editor, Pattie and Gary Radford (D2/506) handling the mailings and Dennis Bloomingdale (B



2/506) taking care of the publishing.

Reunions were taking place every year, Des Moines, Iowa (2004); Indianapolis, IN (2005); Charleston, South Carolina (2006); Springfield, MO (2007); Laughlin, NV (2008); Myrtle Beach, SC (2009); Ft Worth, TX (2010).

In 2010, the Ripcord Association started a group on facebook and Anthony Critchlow, Ripcord veteran of HHC 2/506, continues to monitor and update it with over 1,100 followers.

Reunions were held in Indianapolis, IN (2011); Indianapolis, IN (2012); Myrtle Beach, SC (2013).

John Daily produced Ghosts of Ripcord a documentary with interviews of Ripcord Veterans, which premiered in Philadelphia in the summer of 2013.

In 2015, the Ripcord Association became incorporated as a 501c organization. Elections were held and Peter Meloro (C/2-506) as President, Frank Marshall (A2/506), as Vice President, Lee Widjeskog (A/2-506), as Secretary/Treasurer, Bill Boles (D/2-506) and Jim McCoy (D/1-506) as Trustees.

More reunions were held, Myrtle Beach, SC (2014); Springfield, MO (2015); Springfield, MO (2016); Laughlin, NV (2017); Myrtle Beach, SC (2018); Springfield, MO (2019).

In 2020, Lee Widjeskog took over as Editor and Frank Marshall, managed the publishing, handling the mailings and membership.

Bob and Redd Judd have decided after many years of doing all the merchandise sales at the reunions, it is time to pass the torch and have someone else attend to the merchandise sales. The Judds have raised a lot of money for the Association with all their work.

At the present time, after the passing of Lee Widjeskog, Bill Heath is the Editor of The Ripcord Report newsletter and Frank Marshall will continue the publishing, manage handling the mailings and the membership. Bill Boles will assume the position of President for the Ripcord Association and Peter Meloro has assumed responsibility of Secretary / Treasurer.

Due to covid, the 50th Anniversary reunion was cancelled in 2020 and also 2021. The 2022 Reunion will be held in Springfield, Missouri.

The Association has 696 active members, of which 545 of the members receive the newsletter by email or our website. Our website has been a large factor in obtaining new members who “google” ripcord and find us.

There have been two TV shows that have featured

the story of Ripcord, War Stories with Oliver North and National Geographics Inside the Vietnam War.

However, the best part of the association is remembering friends you made during the tumultuous times of FSB Ripcord and the new ones you discover at the reunions.

## Changes in Website and Emails

by Frank Marshall

After 22 years, it was time to change the website host and server. Our website is now with Dreamhost. I am still the webmaster and apply all the inputs and design.



The emails that I use have also been switched to this new server. I will be sending out emails with the newsletter, and any updates or information we need to pass on to members. Due to the large amount of spam and how our emails are sent, I had to change my email address. You may be getting different email addresses from me, until I get it fixed.

All the emails I send to you will have “Ripcord” in the subject line. I will be sending you an email as a test to see if you receive it. **Please take the time to reply.** I need to know if you are receiving it so I keep you up to date with Ripcord information. I have over 600 emails I send out and it is not easy, because I will not use one of the email marketing programs. I do not want to give out your email to anyone.

When other members want information on a member or to get in touch with them, I will not give out your membership personal information. I will send you their information and if you want to contact them, you may do so.



*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.*

## Fire Support Base Ripcord

### Casualty Report

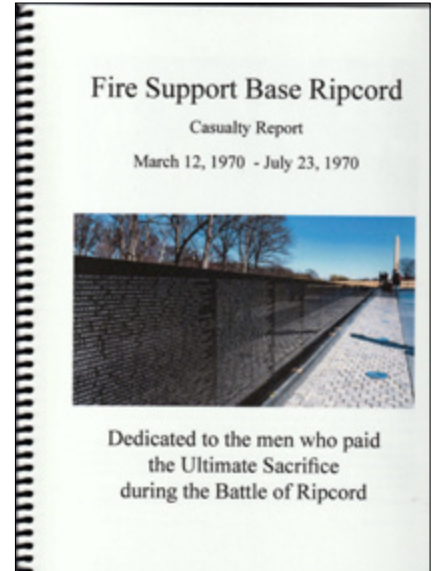
March 12, 1970 - July 23, 1970

A 158 page spiral bound, color booklet, is dedicated to the men who paid the Ultimate Sacrifice during the Battle of Ripcord. The Association recognizes the 139 men who died, with individual stories of their early life, goals and their final days. Information was gathered from family, friends and comrades. The men are listed in order of the date they died and their photos accompany the stories.

To order a copy, please send a check for \$10 to cover the cost of printing, packing and shipping for each book, made out to: Ripcord Association. You may also send cash or money order to:

Ripcord Association  
107 Maple Drive  
Spring Lake Heights, NJ 07762

A complimentary copy will be given to members that attend this year's Ripcord Reunion!



### TO ALL MEMBERS

Please continue to send your letters, comments and articles to: [newsletter@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:newsletter@ripcordassociation.com) or postal mail to: Frank Marshall  
567 Circle Drive  
Surfside Beach, SC 29575

Everyone would love to hear from you.

Everyone is WELCOME to join our website at:

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

**MEMBERSHIP IS FREE !**

584 are Ripcord Veterans

112 are Associate Members

Total Of 696 current Members

For our membership request form, download at:

[www.ripcordassociation.com/membership-form](http://www.ripcordassociation.com/membership-form)



## 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 hor d'oeuvres  
on Tuesday night and dinner on Wednesday.

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

Make your check payable to "RIPCORDEREUNION 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 doers 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: **RIPCORDEREUNION**  
(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 that were received after the November newsletter thru the end of December, will be in our next newsletter.**

### **IN MEMORY OF LEE WIDJESKOG**

- Jim & Irene Aanonsen
- Joseph & Anne D'Agostino
- Tom & Angela Kusmiesz
- Leatha Weatheby
- Don & Linda Holthausen
- John Koozer
- Chris and Todd Sparks
- Darryl & Ricki Rae Reina
- Marc Aronson
- Edward & Cari Wild
- Stephen Manthei
- Bill & S.B. Williams
- Brian & Margery Rowe
- Russell & Maryanne D'Agostino
- Tony & Kathie Brago
- Diane Hollenback
- Ronald & Linda McCrory
- Allan Maier & Peggy Stretch
- Fred & Linda Edwards
- George & Sheila Potts
- Dolores Eisele
- Tom Wehman
- Francis Riley
- Dennis Bloomingdale
- William Stansley
- Kenneth Gainer
- James & Barbara Beebe
- Mary Murphy
- John Reilly Jr

- Monica Wynne
- Peter & Chris Meloro
- Gene & Christine Haltenhof
- Linda & Christopher Laning
- Paula & John Montana
- Robert & Betty Worrall
- Allen & Wilma Jackson
- Jim & Michelle McCoy
- Raymond & Kathryn Porutski
- Frank & Dee Marshall
- Laurence & Judy Laning
- Lew & Anna Chipola
- Carl Lillvik
- Janet Goodwin
- Maryann & Russell Dixon
- Mary Ann & Michael Maslanik
- Susan Predl
- Alan Alexander
- Donald Thies
- Don Wilkinson
- David & Cheryl Corradetti
- Lin & Alberta Bashford
- Thomas & Barbara Peacock
- Ron & Linda McCrory
- Kenneth & Julia Husted
- John & Beverly Obrien
- Joseph & Helen Connolly
- Network for Good
- James Kilgore
- Anthony & Edith Petrongolo
- Stephanie & Michael Coleman
- Jim & Mary Campbell

### **IN MEMORY OF TOM CHASE**

- George & Sheila Potts
- Kathy & Ronald Fryberger
- Pamela Eubanks
- Ron Kimmel
- Cheryl Marie Halupnik
- Carol & David Hesketh
- Mike & Karen Sasso
- Russell & Maryann Dixon
- Lief Family
- Nick Solar
- John Patton
- Henry Schaefer
- Lorraine Hlavin

### **IN MEMORY OF GENERAL HARRISON**

- Mary Murphy
- Joseph & Helen Connolly

### **GENERAL DONATIONS**

- Charles Parsons

Checks payable to:  
**"Ripcord Association"**.  
Mail to:  
**Pete Meloro**  
**107 Maple Drive**  
**Spring Lake Hts, NJ 07762**