

# RIPCORD REPORT

For friends and survivors of Fire Base Ripcord, 12 March to 23 July 1970, Republic of Vietnam

No. 40, March, 1995

Some days, knowing how to survive just isn't enough.

## A CRASH COURSE IN WAR

By Art Wiknik, Jr.

This happened within Co. A, 2d Bn., 506th Inf., in October 1969:

After recovering from a brief illness, I went to the Camp Evans chopper pad to catch a Chinook flight to the DMZ. Waiting there ahead of me was a new guy, Private Bernson. I gave him a token nod, then sat on a stack of C-rations. I sensed him staring at me, but when I glanced in his direction, he spun around to fumble with his equipment.

"F\_\_\_\_\_g cherry," I thought to myself.

Bernson looked so out of place; he was overweight, had frizzy hair, wore glasses, and his new fatigues still smelled of mothballs. He seemed more like a library clerk than a grunt. Yet, Bernson's goofy image reminded me of my first time going to the field: scared crapless and wondering how anyone could survive a year in the jungle. I felt him staring at me again.

"Nervous?" I asked, as I casually retied my boot laces.

"Boy, am I," he answered, obviously relieved that I finally acknowledged him. "Have you been here long? Are you a veteran ... er ... I mean, an old-timer?"

"I've been here seven months," I said, examining the horizon. Then I looked him in the eye. "So, I guess that makes me an old-timer."

"What's it like out there?" he asked, motioning toward the mountains. "I mean ... what does it take to survive? I've heard so many different stories that I don't know what to believe."

I didn't know what to say. No one had ever asked me before. I just assumed that cherries picked up on things and, if they watched and learned carefully, would become an old-timer like me. But there was an apparent sadness about Bernson that persuaded me to tell him what I'd learned. I just felt obligated to give him a crash course on the war.

## Three Wars in One

"The way I see it," I began, standing up, "there are three wars taking place. First, Mother Nature is after us. In the dry season, it's so hot that we won't move for fear of heat exhaustion. During the monsoon season it feels so cold because we're wet all the time. The weather can also delay

*continued on page 5*

## HILL 902: 1,000 FLASHES OF LIGHT

My account of July 1st and 2d, 1970.

By SP/4 Gary A. Steele

2d Platoon, Charlie Company, 2/506th Inf.

On July 1st on Hill 902 we observed Fire Base Ripcord being attacked by enemy mortars, rockets and heavy recoilless weapons.

From our position we could see many enemy positions that were firing on Ripcord. Capt. Hewitt directed mortar and artillery fire on the enemy locations. Some of these positions were escaping the aerial attack of our mortars and artillery, and continued to fire against Ripcord. At this point we had no choice but to fire on the enemy positions with LAWs and M-60 machine guns. I do know that we took out one recoilless gun. This action gave our position away to the enemy.

With night approaching, Capt. Hewitt asked for permission to move off Hill 902, since now the enemy knew our location. Having dealt with sappers for a long time in the area, we knew that they had to try to take us out. Lt. Col. Lucas ordered us to stay on Hill 902, to direct mortars on the enemy on July 2d, if and when Ripcord came under attack again.

With darkness approaching, and having a BAD feeling of what might be our fate that night, we broke down into three-man positions for our NDP (night defensive position). I seem to remember 13 three-man positions in the perimeter with the company CP in the middle. As for foxholes, there was little or no time to dig them. We laid out our frags, claymores and full clips of ammo. We settled in and waited to see what our destiny would be.

During the night, the enemy attack started with satchel charges and sappers. I don't know how many they threw at us, but they lit the night like the 4th of July back home. Later, in Japan, I met a GI who was on Ripcord that night and watched the attack. He told me "it looked like a thousand camera's light flashes going off for hours."

Some of our positions were blown up and penetrated, allowing the sappers in. They ran all over us throwing their satchels. We could only throw frags at the enemy. Right behind them came the infantry with RPGs and rifles. Those of us left opened up on them, and then we took the battle over, because now it was OUR TURN!

I got wounded five times that night. Still, I held my position, as did most of the men who were able. We were outnumbered by the enemy, and we fought bravely to repel them. That night, with many wounded and killed, many positions like mine were held by only one person. We would not give up and let them in, or out. When morning arrived, what was left of Charlie Company was still there, and the NVA wasn't.

I guess we won at a high cost. Charlie Company was basically gone. There weren't many men left not wounded or killed.

That was the end for me, because I was off to Japan for a month and then to Walter Reed for one year.

Being seriously wounded multiple times, I was retired on disability at the age of 20 from the Army in 1971. I am presently employed at the Bureau of Engraving in Washington, D.C.

When asked about the Vietnam War, I simply say that serving with Charlie Company and the 101st Airborne Division has always given me great pride.

Pointman forever, Gary A. Steele



# STAFF JOURNAL: LZ DUMFRIES



## Equal Time for Protesters

On page one of *Ripcord Report* No. 38 (January, 1995) we reprinted a letter from *The Washington Post* written by Peter F. Krogh, dean of the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. In sum, Krogh defended Dean Rusk's Vietnam policy, and argued that the larger policy of containment of communism led to the winning of the Cold War. The war in Vietnam, however frustrating, helped lead to that victory.

On January 25, *The Washington Post* printed a rebuttal to Krogh's position. As a service to *Ripcord Report* readers, that letter, titled "Vietnam: 'Irrelevant' Crusade," is reprinted here:

**The extraordinary letter from ... Peter F. Krogh states that we won the war in Vietnam [Jan. 11]. Wow! Tell that to the 57,000 listed on the Vietnam Memorial.**

**U.S. troops left Vietnam in 1973; diplomats and advisers left in 1975. We lost the war in every way imaginable: 57,000 lives, grotesque military expenditures, environmental degradation, neglect of domestic programs, especially public education, and national divisiveness that plagues us to this day.**

**To take Krogh's points in order:**

**First, official rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, it was a war not to contain communism but to display how us tough guys had credibility (peace with honor) and to fend off recrimination by appeasing the pack-dog right.**

**Second, while the Vietnam War was indeed lost at home, it was lost with equal vigor in Vietnam. Bombing escalation did not and could not prevail; we could never win.**

**Finally, the "global policy of containment" was an elaborate schema in U.S. policy that sent us out like the lone cowboy to keep order in an unruly world. Other countries, especially in Western Europe, wondered why we were squandering enormous resources on a cause so irrelevant and inconsequential.**

**DAVID S. ARNOLD  
Falls Church, Va.**

Hmm. I wonder if David Arnold has an ancestor named "Benedict," or if he might be related to Tom Hayden or if he ever

dated Hanoi Jane Fonda.

Well ... okay, that might be a teensy bit unfair. Everybody is entitled to an opinion, no matter how much they distort the facts to support it. But, would Arnold consider communism "irrelevant and inconsequential" if Khrushchev had indeed "buried the West" as he threatened?

By the way, Arnold's American bodycount for Vietnam is shy a thousand or so. But, hey, what's a little inaccuracy got to do with anything? I'm just glad Arnold sorted it all out for us. Now we can tell our young 'uns that we "vigorously" lost a war we "could never win" by being "tough guys" who fought only to "appease the pack-dog right."

Yep. I think that's about got it. Now we know what it was we did over there. Thanks, Mr. Arnold, for setting us straight.

I'll leave you with an observation: There are probably a lot more David Arnolds among our citizenry than there are Peter Kroghs. I pray I'm wrong.

Currahee,  
Chuck Hawkins  
Dumfries, Va.

*P.S., the astute reader will note the change in LZ location from Oakton to Dumfries, Virginia's oldest town. I will only say this: It was a heck of a lot easier changing locations in 'Nam than it is to change addresses here in the states 25 years later.*

This publication is the authoritative voice of history of the Battle of Ripcord, March 12 to July 23, 1970. Over 60 men died and nearly 350 were wounded on and around the fire base. The newsletter is dedicated to their memory.

Ripcord was the major combat action for the 101st Airborne Division in 1970, and was the next to last significant battle of U.S. forces in the Vietnam War. In the end, 101st units conducted a brilliant fighting withdrawal, escaping the jaws of a North Vietnamese infantry division that had surrounded the scarred mountain top. What terrible price the enemy paid may never be known.

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## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR JANUARY / FEBRUARY

Joseph P. Shepherd, Sr.,

Gary A. Steele,

Loyd Rahlf



# INCOMING



## DOA

My December Ripcord Report arrived as a partial page in a Post Office body bag with apologies for mutilation.

If you could please send me another copy ...

Thank you,  
Randy Thompson  
Grand Canyon, Ariz.

## Correction

The Ripcord Report is great ...

One little correction. My unit is not right on the roster and should be as follows: George D. Murphy, P.O. Box 297, New-ark, Ill. 60541, Bravo Btry., 2d Bn., 320th Artillery.

Here's a little something for the cause. Hope to see you in July.  
Balls of the Eagle!  
George Murphy

## From Tom Shepherd's Dad

Enclosed is a check to help cut the cost of postage and printing. Received my recent issue of Ripcord Report and found it very interesting.

I found out today that Dr. Ralph Orcello (he is the head heart doctor at the Elizabeth General Hospital here) is now over in Vietnam touring some of the areas. I gave him one of Tommy's maps of Vietnam, which is now posted in his office in the hospital. I sure would like to get a better map if I can get one.

Just as soon as he finishes his tour, I'll try to get some of his input. Dr. Orcello served in Vietnam during the war.

Wishing your great paper continued success ...

Sincerely,  
Joseph P. Shepherd, Sr.  
Elizabeth, N.J.

Mr. Shepherd served with the 69th Infan-

try Division in Europe in World War II. His son, Tom, was a medic with Charlie Company, 2/506, and served at Ripcord. One of many heroes in the battalion, he was wounded on Hill 902 the night of July 1-2, 1970. Tom passed away in 1991, after a civil career dedicated to helping disabled veterans.--Editor

## Bad Rap, Good RAP

Airborne! My name and address: Bradley N. Jimerson, P.O. Box 152, Steamburg, N.Y. 14783.

I was given Ripcord Report's address by a Vietnam brother. I was in B/2-501st Inf., 101st Abn. Div. from Dec. 13, 1967 to (WIA) Mar. 13, 1968. I flew from Ft. Campbell, Ky., to Vietnam. First trained at Cu Chi (III Corps), then flew to Camp Eagle (I Corps).

I was wounded at Hue.

Do you have any members from that time? Here is a rap poem I made in 1988.

I am a veteran and what can I say  
'cept I am airborne all the way--  
Now during my tour, 67-68

I was wounded by a mortar that did  
not wait--

Lost left eye by metal from a strong  
exploded shell

then was flown to Da Nang 'cause I  
was not well--

A doctor there said, "He's out, not  
going back"

(At least not sent home, home in a  
sack)--

By chopper they sent me to a hospi-  
tal ship

where the doctors operate and don't  
want to slip--

Those that patched me, first cut  
through my skull--

to take metal out so I would heal well--

They kept me on the ship for 'bout  
15 days

then they flew me back home ...

(USA!) to stay--

In Letterman General Hospital, Cali-  
fornia state

months of re-learning 'cause my  
reading was late--

Then, well enough to live-in with  
Mom and step-dad

Like other Nam vets, was happy but  
sad--

August 68 on a wonderful day  
with hospital retirement along with  
pay--

Today I am happy in happy tears  
'cause God gave me 26 extra years

...  
So far! (1994)

Airborne all the way to God.  
Bradley Norris Jimerson  
U.S. 56702634, Sgt. E-5  
B/2-501st Inf. (101st Airborne)

## Banshee Blues Brothers

I've been receiving Ripcord Report for  
some time and have enjoyed it im-  
mensely. A friend of mine, George  
Murphy, was with B Btry., 2/320th Artil-  
lery, and was on Ripcord on July 23d. He  
was actually on one of the last slicks to  
leave the fire base.

I, as a matter of record, was aboard my  
freedom bird that particular day, having  
spent my full tour with B Troop, 2d  
Squadron, 17th Cavalry. I served as a  
rifeman, platoon RTO, pointman and  
grenadier for the Banshee Blues ("Out  
Front").

The Banshee Blues opened several fire  
bases in Quang Tri and Thua Thien prov-  
inces during my year in country. Just a  
few days ago I spoke with a fellow cav  
member, Al DeInnocentis, who remem-  
bers trying to come into Ripcord on or  
about the 23d. They were, of course, get-  
ting shot up and couldn't land.

I personally captured a .51-cal. Chicom  
*continued on page 4*

**INCOMING (mail call) con't**  
machine gun from a hill top near Ripcord on July 2d. A snatch mission they called it. No volunteers could be found. I was less than three weeks short of coming home, but someone had to do the dirty deed. We got it, without recourse, and two weeks later I left the troop and headed for home.

We knew the NVA were coming through. They found us on June 22, after we found one of their hospitals--must have p\_\_\_\_d them off. Eleven Banshee Blues were wounded that day. Fortunately, it wasn't worse, but sadly, one Blue was killed--my friend from Georgia, Sgt. George Wall. He and I had gone through AIT together at Ft. Polk. We'd spent the entire year together, traipsing through the mountains, reconning, recovering downed birds and pilots, alive and dead. For all intents and purposes, we were going home together. I pulled bunker guard at Camp Eagle the night before this particular mission. I did not go out on the mission he was killed on. "There,

but for the grace of God, go I." Sorry. I'm babbling.

Murphy mentioned to you that I was an engineer. No, sir. I HB20. Please keep the Ripcord Report coming this way. I really enjoy it.

Brothers in arms,  
Larry J. Allen  
Sandwich, Ill.

#### Banshee Blues, Part II

Since my recent letter I have been in touch with several Banshee members who are not on the Ripcord Report mailing list. Two in particular were not only involved at Ripcord, but were also transferred to (Recon Plt.) E Co., 2/506th, for the remainder of their time in country. Walt Massinger and Garret (Spike) Rierson were two of only a few men who came back to B Troop after a mission into Laos, June 21-24, 1970. That mission was a catastrophe.

I spoke with Garret the other night and

I'm sure he would like to hear from some fellow Ripcord survivors. He's still quite bitter about the outcome, believing that a number of bodies were left behind. This has bothered Garret for some time. So please, make contact with this man. Inform him of the upcoming reunion.

As for me, I'm on another mission. A gathering of Banshee members is planned for Sept. 15-17 in Kokomo, Indiana. So far I have made contact with 22 members, most of whom plan on being there. This, as you know, will mark 25 years we were all together in another world, half-way around the World.

Keep the reports coming. God bless.  
Brothers in arms,  
Larry J. Allen  
Sandwich, Ill.

Ripcord Report welcomes new members:


Garret Rierson                      Walt Massinger

## MILITARY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**admiral**--The highest rank in most navies, including the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. There are four degrees in the U.S. Navy: fleet admiral, a rank given during or just after World War II to William D. Leahy, Ernest J. King, Chester W. Nimitz and William F. Halsey; admiral (equivalent to general); vice admiral (equivalent to lieutenant general); and rear admiral (equivalent to major general); all known as flag officers. (The rank of commodore, also a flag officer, is equivalent to brigadier general.) The word admiral apparently originated before the 12th century with Arabs who combined *amir*, commander; the article *al*, and *bahr*, sea, in *amir-al-bahr* which was shortened by the Sicilians to *amiral*. Near the end of the 13th century the English commander of the Cinque Ports was given the Latin title *admirabilis*.

**admiral of the blue, admiral of the red, admiral of the white, admiral of the yellow**--By 1620 the English commander at sea was known as the admiral. The English fleet at this time comprised three squadrons. Ships of the squadron in the center flew red ensigns, and their commander was known as admiral of the red. The van squadron ships flew white ensigns, and their commander, a vice admiral, was known as admiral of the white. The squadron in the rear flew blue ensigns, and their commander, a rear admiral, was known as admiral of the blue. Those passed over for promotion to admiral were made rear admirals on the retired list. The common expression was "yellowed," and they were called admirals of the yellow, a fictitious squadron.

Source: *Dictionary of Military Terms*, H. W. Wilson Co., New York, 1986



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101st Veteran  
and  
Ripcord Association Member

*Continued from page one ...*  
**CRASH COURSE IN WAR**

resupply and we may go hungry for a week. We slosh through muddy ditches and rice paddies, fight our way through thick jungle, and spend each night fending off bugs."

"What about the enemy?" he asked, thirsty for more information. "How bad is that part? Is there a lot of fighting?"

I laughed to myself, remembering how seldom we'd actually engaged the enemy. I scooped up a handful of pebbles and sifted them through my fingers before speaking again.

"That's the second war," I said, tossing a stone. "In my seven months here we've only encountered enemy soldiers eight or nine times. That may not sound like much, but being in the field is a psychological battle; we are constantly at risk. It's tough knowing that someone is out there, somewhere, aiming to kill you. Although we usually come out on top, like when we kicked the crap out of the North Vietnamese on Hamburger Hill. Still, we lost 84 guys in that battle. That was six months ago, and the North Vietnamese aren't eager to fight face-to-face like that anymore. Instead, they observe our habits and strike when it's to their advantage, either by ambush or booby traps."

"Geez," Bernson moaned, rolling his eyes, "how do you keep from getting killed or wounded? There's got to be a secret to surviving all this."

"You could be a 'ghoster' like me," I said, grinning at the personal irony. "But, seriously," I continued, "the key to surviving is common sense and alertness. It's that simple. You have to think about the consequences of your every move. You have to think ahead to what could happen if you do something stupid, or don't pay attention to details. That means you have to watch where you walk, sit, sleep, and even where you crap. There is no relaxing. A grunt's job is 24 hours a day. We may go for a month without enemy contact and, when we least expect it, the enemy could have something waiting for us."

"You said there were three wars," Bernson said quizzically. "What could be worse than the weather, bugs and the enemy?"

"The third war is a vicious war," I

grumbled fiendishly. "It's the one between the lifers and the grunts. A grunt's goal is to make it home alive. A lifer's goal is to win the war regardless of the cost of lives or limbs. Lifers love the war for the power it gives them over people's lives. I've met only a few good ones. The rest are arrogant pricks who rarely feel what the grunt feels. Sure, lifers are out in the bush too, but they don't usually go on recon or man listening posts, they never walk point or carry the machine gun, and the only guard duty they pull is radio watch within the safety of the center of the perimeter."

I probably told Bernson too much too fast. He looked suicidal. I only wanted to educate him, not blow his mind.

### **Only One Good Day in the War**

"Now that you've told me all that bad stuff," he said dejectedly, "is there anything good about being here?"

I brushed my hands against the seat of my pants before sitting down to ponder his question.

"The only good day in Vietnam," I said sternly, "is the day you get on a freedom bird and go home. But it's a long year, and the only way to get back to the world is to just finish your time. Most grunts make it home without a scratch. The guys who get screwed up usually did something stupid, like listening to a lifer. But don't worry, you'll be alright. We have a lot of good men out there, and everyone looks after one another. Hell, before long, you'll be the one teaching new guys how to survive."

### **Friendly Fire, Body Bags, and Rebels**

A Chinook landed at the chopper pad and we climbed aboard. The hour-long ride to the DMZ was ominous, but it always felt that way when I was returning to the field. We landed at the Mai Loc base camp and separated, heading to two different supply choppers going to the company LZ. The slick I was in landed first. After the supplies were unloaded, a body bag was gently put in.

I went to find my friend, Sandborn, who told me that the dead GI was a cherry who had gone outside the night perimeter to relieve himself, but didn't bother telling anyone. He got lost in the dark and

thrashed around in front of one of the other positions. Our guys, assuming he was an enemy, had killed him. Friendly fire is a tough way to die, exactly the type of situation I'd just finished warning Bernson about.

After the second resupply chopper landed, GIs milled around the LZ helping to move supplies. Then disaster struck. As the chopper lifted off, a malfunction caused it to tilt sideways and ram into a tree. A rotor blade broke loose and reeled toward a group of GIs, whirling like a huge sword. It struck two men, killing both instantly.

Doc Knudson, our platoon medic, was cut in half. Alongside Knudson lay another man who had met the same gruesome fate. It was Private Bernson. A chill ran through me that I had never felt before. Doc Knudson's death was horrifying, but after telling Bernson how to survive, I was devastated.

It was bad enough for a GI to die at the hands of the enemy, but when we killed our own in accidents, especially two days in a row, it was difficult to accept. As the bad news circulated, some men moaned and hollered over the senseless deaths. A small group added to the chaos by throwing down their weapons and yelling "We quit!" and "F\_\_\_ this war!" Others joined in, but the mutiny turned from bitterness to mourning when several men began to openly weep.

The platoon leaders moved to break things up, but Captain Schaefer, in contempt of military protocol of emotional repression, gave us time to grieve for the deceased. The first ever outlet, unleashed after months of hidden anguish.

Our rebellion lasted less than an hour. We made our stand, then abounded our sentiments and gradually rejoined our platoons. Men could be heard in a resigned grumble saying "F\_\_\_ it. Don't mean nothing." We knew we weren't going to change anything. The war would not stop on account of us. We realized that we could not allow ourselves the luxury of compassion. Instead, we continued to numb ourselves to the cold reality of death.

*Art, a Hamburger Hill veteran and long-time member of Ripcord Association, excerpted the foregoing from a book he is writing. Nearly completed after 10 years, Art is looking for a publisher. Any leads? -Editor*

## EDITOR'S HISTORY CORNER

Dept. of the Army  
HQ, 2d BN (Amb) 506th INF  
APO San Francisco 96383  
Unit History, March 1971

*Continued from No. 39*

### THE 'OFFICIAL' HISTORY OF 2/506TH FOR 1970

Capt. Peters and Bravo Company were now in their 10th day on Ripcord. They and a few replacements who had not been able to join their units in the field had existed almost solely in their bunkers. Enemy fire had increased to such an intensity that men moved outside their foxholes only on the most urgent of missions. Resupply by helicopter was hazardous and always brought heavy bargages from enemy gunners. Much credit must be given to the men of Echo Company who manned their mortar tubes constantly in support of the companies working near the fire base, and to Capt. Dave Rich and his valiant artillerymen who conducted their fire missions in the face of the most intense enemy fire.

The men of Bravo Battery, 2d Bn., 319th Artillery, faced a task that no one envied and they performed it well. But even the most courageous men reach a point where they must either seek cover or die. Such a point was reached on 17 July when the enemy launched six separate mortar attacks. This time the mortars were 120mm regimental mortars. It was the first time in over 18 months that this weapon had been used in the 101st Division area of operations.

Ripcord had been holding its own until 18 July when the fourth CH-47 Chinook helicopter was shot down by rapid enemy small arms fire over the fire base. It crashed and burned on top of the main artillery ammo dump. As burning JP-4 flowed into the dump, 400 rounds [of artillery ammo] began to cook off and explode. The explosions, which continued for eight hours, destroyed all six of Bravo Battery's 105mm howitzers, two 106mm recoilless rifles, a counter mortar radar set, a VHF radio, several bunkers and a CP on the southern portion of the fire base. The perimeter, however, remained intact. A crippling blow had been dealt the fire base and the enemy increased their efforts against the hill.

Meanwhile, in the valley southeast of Ripcord, Alpha Company was experiencing some success.

On the 19th, the Alpha Company CP initiated contact on two NVA. The enemy died without returning fire. A thorough search of the bodies yielded a wealth of intelligence information. Fortunately, Alpha Company had an interpreter; with the help of the interpreter valuable tactical information was transmitted quickly to Lt. Col. Lucas on the fire base.

As Alpha drove deeper into territory held by the enemy, Delta Company, 1st Bn., 506th Infantry, became OPCONed to our battalion and was inserted on an LZ two kilometers east of Hill 805. They were met with extremely heavy mortar, small arms, RPG and heavy machine gun fire. Capt. Don Workman managed to move his company six hundred meters off the LZ into a defensive perimeter. His position, due to mounting casualties, soon became

vulnerable. Capt. Workman, with several men killed and more than half the company wounded, called for assistance.

Capt. Rollison and Delta Company were alerted and 30 minutes later they were combat assaulted into another LZ near Delta 1/506. Charlie Company, now commanded by Capt. Kenneth Lamb, combat assaulted right behind Delta Company and secured the LZ in preparation for the extraction. As Delta Company's lead elements tumbled from the lift birds they ran into a hail of small arms fire. Quickly returning fire they drove the enemy off but not before several [of the enemy] had been killed and a .51 caliber heavy machine gun had been captured. The next few hours of the afternoon were hellish as Capt. Rollison and his men pushed toward Capt. Workman's beleaguered infantrymen. Just as darkness closed on the LZ the final lift helicopters had extracted all three units. Casualties in Delta 1/506 were heavy, but our own Delta and Charlie Companies experienced light casualties.

*Continued next issue ...*

### MORE ABOUT DELTA, 1/506

The combat saga of Delta Company, 1/506th Infantry, is another of the incompletely told stories of the Battle of Ripcord. Contrary to the 2/506 unit history, D/1-506 combat assaulted into the Ripcord AO on 17 July, as the 2d Bn., 501st Inf., was being extracted. D/1-506 was initially inserted northwest of Ripcord, near Hill 1000, and then combat assaulted east of Hill 805 two days later. That was when they ran into "deep serious."

Apparently, the tactical plan was for Delta, 1/506, to work up the backside of Hill 805 and root out the enemy from their fighting positions, just as had been attempted by the 2/501st on Hill 1000. Alpha Company, 2/506th, was supposed to link up with D/1-506 for this purpose. But, as we know, that link up never occurred.

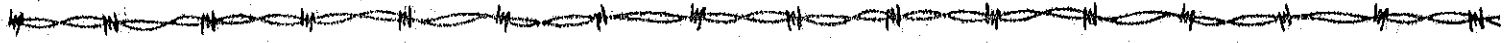
What purpose, then, did Delta's presence in the Ripcord battle serve? There are two good answers:

1. They kept the enemy off balance, unsure of American intentions, while critical command decisions were made concerning the conduct of a fighting withdrawal from the fire base.

2. Their presence diverted valuable enemy resources away from Alpha, 2/506, at a time when that outfit was gathering critical intelligence about the enemy.

Delta, 1/506, fought with guts and courage, a credit to the 506th regimental motto: Currahee--stand alone. They did, and their brother Currahees stood with them.

**RIPCORD REUNION '95  
INFORMATION IS BEING MAILED TO YOU AT  
THIS TIME!  
PLEASE RESPOND IMMEDIATELY!  
WE ARE EXPECTING A LARGE GROUP TO  
JOIN US  
COME SEE EVERYONE AGAIN!**



## VIETNAM, 25 YEARS AGO

On Mar. 9, 1970, U.S. Marines turned over control of I Corps and the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam to the U.S. Army. Responsibility rests with 150,000 troops of the Army XXIV Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. Melvin Zais.

On March 10th the Army accused Capt. Ernest Medina and four other soldiers of committing crimes at Song My in March 1968. Charged ranged from premeditated murder to rape and the "maiming" of a suspect under interrogation. Medina was the company commander of Lt. William Calley, who along with others was charged with murder at My Lai 4 in Song My village.

On the 11th approximately 20,000 demonstrators rallied in Cambodia to protest the presence of Communist forces. Embassies of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and of North Vietnam were assaulted, resulting in heavy damage.

The following day Cambodian Premier Lon Nol gave an apology for the attacks, but also issued an ultimatum that Communist troops must leave Cambodia in 72 hours. Cambodian demonstrators continued to rampage in the streets of Phnom Penh, the capital.

On March 16th communists still remained in Cambodia, and officials of all parties met to discuss Communist military forces in Cambodia. The session did not go well.

Back in the United States, on March 17, the results of a war crime investigative panel headed by Lt. Gen. William Peers, led to the formal accusation of 14 officers for suppression of information relating to the incident at Song My. Charges included dereliction of duty, failure to obey lawful regulations and false swearing. The Peers Report reiterated the list of atrocities and concluded that a "tragedy of major proportions" occurred at Song My. The report concluded that the higher up the chain of command details of the incident went, the more watered down they became.

A bloodless coup on March 18 deposed Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk while he was enroute from Moscow and Peking (Beijing). Lon Nol, as premier and defense minister, and First Deputy Premier Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak assumed governmental control.

On the 19th, the Cambodian National Assembly granted "full power" to Lon Nol, declared a state of emergency, and suspended constitutional guarantees of public assembly and freedom from unwarranted search and arrest.

On March 20th, in the first coordinated allied-Cambodian military operation of the war, a Cambodian commander called for South Vietnamese artillery directed by U.S. aerial observers. The action helped to defeat a 150-man Viet-Cong attack on an outpost near the South Vietnamese district capital of An Phu.

On March 21, in Peking, Sihanouk agreed to accept leadership of the Cambodian Communist Party.

Viet Cong terrorists struck the village of Hocman, seven miles northwest of Saigon, on March 22d. Fourteen women and children, attending a Buddhist meeting, were killed, 20 others were wounded.

On March 23, in Peking, Sihanouk issued a public call for arms against the Lon Nol government in Phnom Penh. He also announced the establishment of a National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK). North Vietnam, the NLF and the Pathet Lao immedi-

ately pledged their support for Sihanouk and the new organization. Two days later, North Vietnam recalled its diplomats from Phnom Penh.

After several days of consultation with the Cambodian government, South Vietnamese troops, supported by air and artillery, advanced into Cambodia on March 27-28, in the first such major military operation of the war. Fifty-three communists of a 300-man force were reported killed, while two flights of U.S. helicopter gunships flew in support. Three South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and seven wounded. U.S. and South Vietnamese officials disavowed knowledge of the operation.

On March 29 North Vietnamese troops attacked an American base near the Cambodian border. The Communists report 75 dead, while U.S. losses were 13 killed and 30 wounded.

On March 31, the 101st Airborne Division's Operation Randolph Glen draws to a close.

Source: The World Almanac of the Vietnam War, John S. Bowman, gen. ed., Pharos Books, New York, 1985.

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**EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!**

### REUNION '95 UPDATE

**WHEN:** ARRIVE ON 19 JULY, DEPART ON THE 23D

**WHERE:** RAMADA HOTEL, 14707 WEST COLFAX,  
GOLDEN, CO 80401  
EXIT 262 OFF I-70, EAST ON RT. 40 TO  
HOTEL ON LEFT

**PHONE RESERVATIONS:** 303/279-7611,  
MENTION RIPCORN ASSN.

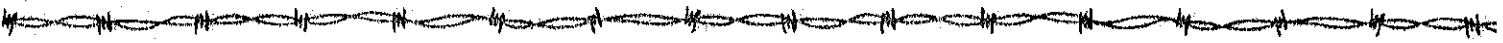
**DAILY ROOM RATE:** \$68 (we're working on lower rates)

GROUND TRANSPORTATION FROM DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS AVAILABLE THROUGH GOLDEN WEST COMMUTER TO THE HOTEL.

A REUNION REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION SHEET WILL BE SENT TO EACH ASSOCIATION MEMBER SHORTLY. PLEASE PLAN ON SENDING A \$50 FEE PER ADULT TO THE ASSOCIATION SO THAT WE MAY ESTABLISH CREDIT TO PAY FOR BANQUET, BUFFETS, AND OTHER REUNION ACTIVITIES.

RIPCORN BEER STEINS AND RIPCORN COFFEE MUGS AVAILABLE.

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**Twenty-Five Year**  
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**July 19 - 23, 1995**  
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