



RIPCORDER REPORT



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

Number 86

Summer 2011

JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog

I awoke this morning thinking about Memorial Day. This is a day that is set to honor those who gave their lives for their country. It originally was set to remember those who died in the American Civil War and was first observed in Waterloo, New York in 1866. Over the years it has been used to honor those who have fought in all the wars of the USA since the Civil War. In 1971 it was made a Federal Holiday that is observed on the last Monday of May. The tradition is to decorate the graves of soldiers on Memorial Day formerly know as "Decoration Day".

For those of us in Ripcord, it is a good time to recall the lives of our fellow soldiers who have passed away or were killed in battle.

Odors tend to be remembered better than just about anything else sensed. After 40 years since being in Vietnam many of us cannot remember the names of the guys we lived with day in and day out for 6 to 12 months but we can easily remember the odor of fuel oil mixed with human waste, the scent of tear gas, diesel exhaust from the 2 ½ ton trucks, the smell of cordite (gun powder) from a fire fight, the fishy body odor of the NVA, the scent of decaying vegetation, the earthy smell of the jungle floor as you hugged it in an attempt to get flatter, the dried vegetation of a recently cut LZ (landing zone) and the putrid odor of decaying or burning flesh. These and others when encountered today cause your mind to go back in time and sometimes to feel very unsettled.

Now, fast forward to Memorial Day 2011. 0730 my wife, Kathy and I don our motorcycle jackets, helmets, boots and gloves as we head out to breakfast on the Honda. It is warm (79 degrees) and humid as we travel down the empty roads. The holiday has most people sleeping in or just starting the day later than usual.

Living in southern New Jersey we do not have the crowds normally associated with the Garden State. Passing by Parvin State Park we can smell the scent of honey suckle found along the openings near the road.

Inside the forest we can spot the mountain laurel in full bloom.

The roadways are full of sights and odors this time of day. The freshly plowed fields give off the smell of earth. A truckload of hay bales reminds me of growing up when my father and his friends stored hay in our barn for the milk cow. Corn is just coming up and stands a mere 8" tall at this time. The winter wheat is turning a golden brown and will be ready for harvest by the third week in June if the weather holds out.

As we pass along a low swamp we see the snapping turtle walking along the road in search of an open field to lay its eggs and catch a hint of the swamp water smell.

Moving down the road we pass a peach orchard that has been sprayed in the past few days as the smell of the chemicals and the carrier linger in the warm humid air.

In the distance we spot a bald eagle nest and behind it yet further away are the bright white church spires in the small community of Daretown. By now we

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Ripcord Reunion 2011

Oct 5, 2011 thru Oct 9th, 2011

will be held at

Indianapolis Marriott East

Indianapolis, IN

Registration forms are in this newsletter
and on our website

www.ripcordassociation.com

FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to thank everyone for all the letters to the Editor that you send me. This keeps the newsletter interesting and gives other members updates on how you are doing. Please keep them coming.

I retired from working in March of this year as I turned 62 years old, and I am hoping to spend a lot more time keeping the website updated. So, send me a lot of information pertaining to the battle of Ripcord to put on the site.

In April, we had a small gathering of Ripcord Veterans meet in Mt Laurel, NJ for dinner. It was an excellent time. More about this gathering is in this newsletter.

Our website, www.ripcordassociation.com is bringing in a lot of new members who just happen to google "Ripcord" and find out about us.

We have 717 members in our Ripcord Association.

535 are Ripcord Veterans

182 are Associate Members

220 Recieve newsletter via Postal Mail

497 Recieve the newsletter via e-mail

Our website has a list of all members and their units. go to www.ripcordassociation.com and click the membership roster.

You can always check out our website and get all the past Ripcord Report newsletters since 1985.

E-mail address

I need your e-mail address. If you are not receiving updates and information about the Ripcord Association via e-mail, you may be missing out on a lot of news. Please go to our website and update your information. contact me at mail@ripcordassociation.com or at my address below.

Biographies on our website.

I would like to put Biography of all Ripcord Veterans on our website. Please send me your biography for our website. Let me know about your Ripcord experience, and you can also tell us about your family and life after Ripcord. Send them to: biographies@ripcordassociation.com or at my address below.

ARTICLES

Deadline for the Dec issue will be **Aug 1st 2011**
Please send all articles, photos, incoming mail to:

Frank Marshall

5 Taconia Ct

Mt Laurel, NJ 08054

or e-mail to: mail@ripcordassociation.com

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.

DONATIONS

Bill Williams

Jerry Rodgers

Bruce Brady

Wilburn Wall

Gary Madson

Merle Delarange

John Schuelke

Dale Tauer

Gary Hatley

Brian Eveleth

DONATIONS:

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

5 Taconia Court, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

www.ripcordassociation.com

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E-mail: mail@ripcordassociation.com

Writer: Lee Widjeskog

E-mail: leewidjeskog@ripcordassociation.com

have travel 15 miles and the traffic is picking up as we approach the community of Woodstown. We quickly pass through town and are soon going past small roadside stands offering strawberries or asparagus. A dead raccoon gives off an odor we are quick to pass over and forget. Luckily today there are no dead skunks in the roadway.

Finally we reach our destination in the town of Carney's Point where we buy breakfast. Once done we head home with a brief stop at a roadside market to buy some fruit. But it is warming up to over 85 now and we are hoping to get home before it gets any hotter. Riding on the bike is comfortable and cool but stoplights cause us to heat up rapidly in the high humidity. After a total run of 70 miles we have come full circle and are home! It was nice to get out and employ the sense of smell and sight a little more vividly that we do in the car or truck. Those senses plus hearing have not been used that efficiently since 1970. Then those who were grunts learned to employ the sense of smell, sight and hearing to the nth degree because it helped with your survival. If you leave the comfort of your car, you will find those senses come into play once more if you let them. So get out and walk, run, bike, or canoe but leave the I-pod and M3P player home and use the phone only if you need it. There is a world of things out there to stimulate your sense. It won't all be fun, but it will be interesting and generally better than the smells of 40 years ago! Enjoy the outdoors while you still can.

See you in Indianapolis

2011 Ripcord Reunion

Members signed up as of June 13, 2011

Bruce Brady & Korolyn Kruger A 2/506
Tex Campbell D 2/506
Dale & Sue Cooper C 2/506
Tommy & Judy Counts, Lisa Hill D 2/506
Merle, Ruth & Joshua DeLagrange D 1/506
Richard Doyle D 1/506
Kenny & Mary Grimm D 2/506
Bob & Red Judd B 2/506
David Kreckle A 2.506
Alfred & Sondra Martin A 2/11 FA
Uwe & Diane Meyer B 2/506
Bob & Anita Muhlhauser B 2/319 FA
Bill Mulvey A 2/506
George & Mary Murphy B 2/320 FA
Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506
Bill & Sheila Williams B 2/506
Alvin Wright E 2/506
Frank Marshall A 2/506
Fred Spaulding 3rd BDE S3 AIR

Newest Members to Ripcord Association

Joe Baggett	D/2-506
Miguel Valiente	HHC S2 S3 326 Eng
Andrew James	A/2-506
Thomas Vetter	D/2-506
James Stanley II	Cousin of James Steven Stanley
Robert Layton	B/2-501
Michael Alioto	B/1-501
Albert Burton	265th RRU
Lou Nakapalau	C/158th Avn Bn
James Rachel	HHC/2-506 A/2-506
Peter Georgean	HHC 2-506
Kenny Grimm	Son of Michael Grimm D/2-506
Stephen Skinner	HHB 2/319 FA
Curt Taylor	C/1-506
Frank Rankins SGM	B/2-319 Arty
Walter Smith	HHB 2/319th Arty

Proud to Serve My Country

Our own Cpt. Isabellino Vazquez will soon be publishing a book styled "Proud to Serve My Country". The book will tell the story of the performance of the gallant 65th Infantry in the Korean War, a regiment comprised of Puerto Ricans, as well as some stories about Cpt. Vazquez while serving in Korea and Vietnam. Cpt. Vazquez is the most remarkable man I have ever met in my life and was the epitome of what it is to be a "professional soldier". He is an "American Icon" to all that served under him. I look forward to reading this book with great anticipation when it is published. Thought you all should know about this book coming out.

Jim Campbell



INCOMING MAIL

Dear Ripcord Family

I have waited until Jenny had a couple of post operative appointments behind her to give you all an update.

Jenny's surgery was a long one lasting from 11:30 am to around 5:30 pm but the stress was waiting the 3-4 days for the biopsy report. I am ecstatic to tell all of you that through your very generous and kind prayers for Jenny that all reports show that the cancer was at Stage 0 and that she has a 99% chance of it never coming back. With this said, Jenny will have to go for a yearly MRI to be on top of things.

Jenny is slowly recovering as the process of reconstruction (that will take probably into the first part of 2012 to complete with its different steps) is a very painful process. She's a real trooper though and the idea that she is cancer free keeps her very positive and motivated.

If I haven't told you "My Ripcord Family" enough then I will say it again. YOU ALL ARE SO FANTASTIC AND SUCH A COMFORT AND SUPPORT!!! It is such a wonderful feeling that I can always count on each of you to be there for me.

My sister Gerri and I are already mapping out our plans for the reunion in October. It will be so good to see each of you again and catch up on everyone's lives.

My heartfelt love and appreciation to all of you!

Jan Kalsu

jan@ripcordassociation.com

I was shot down on Huey leaving fsb gladiator while trying to support ripcord most were injured, I may have been the only one not injured. ammo bearer and medic went home. never heard status of door gunners or pilots. I carried a 60 at that time. We were first bird into LZ. Could not get second bird in for quite some time. I was not a regular prayer but did quite a bit that day. I never realized how many NVA in area until years later. glad i didn't know then.

michael dean joseph alioto

bravo 1st 501st

mdalioto@gmail.com

George and Mary Murphy have a friend that is looking for Ripcord members who knew Richard Conrardy KIA 7/2/70 and was in C 2nd 506th. Contact George at racenpace@sbcglobal.net and he will provide more information.

My name is Rudy Forsman, I was with D 2/506 on Ripcord in July 70. I'm trying to find Larry Smith, and Dennis Stortz from my platoon, any help you can give me I would be grateful.

Rudy.

formathwiz@aol.com

Hope to get some mail from the ones who knew me. My bunch made up of Peach-David Bratcher. Todd Guillick. Willie Mize. Ronnie Bowling , Turner, Arizantz. And so many more. There was Eddie Fox. Cookiemann dont know his real name..My mind went blank. God Bless each and everyone and yours. God Bless& Thanks for fighting for this great country.

David Glen Weir (TEX)

cannoncocker-19@hotmail.com

Hi there,

I'm conducting audio and video research for a History Channel production, and am curious if any of your members have film/audio from their time in Vietnam. I do notice that you have some wonderful film on your website. The film we're producing is "Vietnam in HD," and some of the firebases feature somewhat prominently in the script. Some vets might be familiar with our work on World War II, as we also produced WWII in HD for the History Channel.

We're searching for 8mm and 16mm film from in-country or the home-front between 1964-1975. We are also interested in any cockpit/ground audio recordings veterans may have and are willing to share. As a courtesy, we will transfer any film reels to DVD for veterans, something that we've found helps bring these documents out of the attic to be viewed again for, most times, - the first time - in years.

Might you be able to help; if so I can have Sonny, one of our NANVETS reach out to give you a call.

Warmest Regards,

Doc Kane

doc@roscommon.com

a Lou Reda Production

www.louredaproductions.com

I was medivaced from Fire Support Base Ripcord around the 22nd of July 1970

Frank Rankins SGM (Ret)

frankins@sbcglobal.net

I was initially assigned as an RTO with the 4/77th ARA. My LT and I did time on ripcord prior to its evac. Then I transferred over as a doorgunner and got to do the evac. Later we dusted it with CS.

Lou Kauhane Nakapalau

C Co. 158th Avn Bn

lounakapalau@yahoo.com

I was Forward Observer assigned to Company C 1/506 Infantry from Battery A 2/319 Artillery. Called in artillery and air strikes during the FB Ripcord action.

Curt Rodney Taylor C 1/506

akjt@verizon.net

INCOMING MAIL

I had a platoon in A/2/506 until late 1969. LTC Crowell moved me to the BN S-4 until my departure in June, 1970. Many trips from Camp Evans to Ripcord from March to June, 1970. I just found this website....brings back many memories...some very good...some not so good.

Thanks for still being here.

Jim Rachel

jim@rkcpas.net

Lee,

Please send me a hardcover copy of Ripcord. My daughter in-law picked up my copy while visiting over the Thanksgiving holidays and got so interested in it that she asked where she could get her own copy. Of course, I was glad to accommodate her wish.

I'm glad Chuck and Nolan hooked up for this book, even though I strongly disagree with his treatment of my unit.

The story documents the courage and integrity of a group of US soldiers answering the call of their nation when it definitely was not "Cool" to do so. I'm still proud of "my guys", as I am sure you are of yours.

Best Wishes,

John Smith

Mr. Widjeskog:

As I think Jeff Wilcox may have mentioned to you a while back, I'm interested in conducting oral history interviews with Ripcord Veterans for archiving purposes. I'm a history professor at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, and run the GVSU Veterans History Project, which conducts and archives oral history interviews with veterans. We post our interview videos in our own online digital archive (see our website, www.gvsu.edu/vethistory), and share materials with the Library of Congress for their national Veterans History Project.

I interviewed Jeff several years ago, and thanks to him found Keith Nolan's book, which I have now used several times in my college classes. I have also brought Jeff into those classes (that REALLY gets the students' attention) and use his interview video as homework.

What I would like to do, if it's OK with your group, is to attend the reunion in Indianapolis and record some interviews with whoever is willing to talk to us. I would either come by myself or bring along a second interviewer (Mike McGregor, who was with the 1st Cav in Vietnam in 67-68) if it seems like there would be a reasonable number of people willing to be interviewed. If I am to do that, it will help to have some sort of invitation from the group to

attend, and perhaps some info about it posted on your website and facebook page to encourage people to sign up.

The interviews are conducted in an open-ended format, and we don't press people to talk about things that they don't want to talk about. We don't have any political agenda beyond giving the men who served in Vietnam credit for doing as well as they did in what was often a bad situation. I don't have the impression that Keith Nolan archived his interview materials anywhere (if he did, do you know where to find them?), and it would be good to have each man's full story available, rather than the smaller parts that made it into the book. Each veteran who does an interview will receive a DVD copy of it, and the videos will be posted in our archive for the benefit of students and researchers. The association may also have copies of the interviews to use however they see fit. On our website, we post detailed outlines of each interview that are linked to the time codings in the videos, which makes it easy for people to search the database and find whatever they're looking for.

So if you think some of your people would be interested in this, please let me know, and I'll get things organized on this end. Thank you for your time, and I hope I get the chance to meet you in October.

Dr. James Smither, Director

Grand Valley State University Veterans History Project

Mackinac Hall D-1-230

Allendale, MI 49401

616-331-3422

**Currahee Rendezvous 2011 - Fort Campbell, KY
Tuesday, November 8, 2011 to Friday, November
11, 2011**

**2012 Currahee Reunion - Columbus, GA
Wednesday, May 2, 2012 to Saturday, May 5,
2012**

**Schedule of Events and additional/updated
information:** [www.506infantry.org/reunions/
2011rendezvous_schedule.html](http://www.506infantry.org/reunions/2011rendezvous_schedule.html)

**Hoyt Bruce Moore, III
themoe_a1506@msn.com**



Ripcord Veterans gather in Mount Laurel, NJ

On April 9th, 2011, there were eleven Ripcord Veterans and some of their spouses that met in NJ. for dinner at Prospectors Steakhouse and night club. It was a great time by all. The manager of prospectors, Rich and the DJ Cowboy Kenn made our evening a very special event, along with all the bartenders, waiters, waitresses and even the patrons that were there that evening went out of their way to thank us in a very special way. We even had a visit from the past Commanding General of Ft Dix to welcome us. To look up the story wrote in the South new Jersey Courier Post about our gathering, or to see the photos taken by Cowboy Kenn go to our website www.ripcordassociation.com and click the links to their website.

Those that attended our dinner :

Frank Marshall Mt Laurel, NJ A/2-506
Fred & Carol Gilbert Odenton, MD D/2-506
William & Pam Baldwin (Baldy) Corinth, MS A/2-506
Dennis & Priscilla Bloomingdale Phila, PA B/2-506
Peter & Chris Meloro Spring Lake Heights, NJ C/2-506
John Reilly Randolph, NJ A2-11
Dave & Cheryl Cordetti Gibbstown, NJ C 2/506
Lee & Cathy Widjeskog Bridgeton, NJ A/2-506
Tom Swayne Heislerville, NJ A/2-506
Joe & Barbara Baggett Atco, NJ D/2-506
John & Debbie Sherba Green Creek NJ E/2-506



*back row left to right: Joe Baggett, John Sherba, Dennis Bloomingdale, Frank Marshall, Lee Widjeskog, Dave Cordetti, John Reilly
front row left to right: William Baldwin, Fred Gilbert, Peter Meloro, Tom Swayne*

ANNA BRITT NOLAN TRUST FUND

Just a reminder—the reunion in October will be here before we know it. Now is the time to think about what you might be able to bring to contribute to the raffle for the Anna Britt Nolan Trust Fund.

Mary and I are continuing our efforts to find other Vietnam Veterans groups who Keith Nolan wrote about who might be interested in helping raise funds for Keith's daughter, Anna Britt. Unfortunately, we have met with little success so far, but we are continuing our efforts in this regard.

We were just thinking the other night that there are more than 700 members of the Ripcord Association now. Wouldn't it be great if every member would donate \$5.00 a year to Britt's Trust Fund. Just think how fast that would grow and help ensure that Keith Nolan's daughter can someday go to college. We realize there are already members who donate on a regular basis—and we would not expect them to do more than they are already doing. But if you have never given to the Fund, perhaps now is the time to think of making a donation—no matter how large or small. Just \$5.00 from every member would make a huge difference in the growth of the fund.

By the way, we were just speaking with Keith Nolan's mother, Ulla, the other day and she tells us that Britt's current passion is to learn Japanese. She continues to do well in school and, like her father, loves to write. We are sure Keith is smiling down on her and very proud.

George and Mary Murphy

Check out our website
www.ripcordassociation.com

Update your Membership information
Read all the History of FSB Ripcord
Read the Biographies of Ripcord Veterans
Read past Ripcord Report newsletters
See the facts about Ripcord
Much, much, more information at your
Fingertips.

Hotel Registration 2011

Firebase Ripcord Association Reunion, October 5 - 9, 2011

Hotel Reservation form for
Indianapolis Marriot East
7202 East 21st Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219
Phone: (800) 228-9290 (Central Reservations)
317-352-1231 (Direct Hotel Reservation)
Group code: **RIPCORD**

Group Room Rate: \$82 per day + 17% tax.
A deposit for the first night's room and tax or a Credit Card Number
is required to guarantee this reservation.

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.*

**THIS IS A NON-SMOKING HOTEL (SMOKERS SHOULD GET A GROUND FLOOR ROOM SO
THEY CAN STEP OUTSIDE.)**

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: 4:00 PM (1600 hrs) Check-out Time: 12:00 PM (1200 hrs)

To confirm reservations, please return form to the hotel or call by September 5, 2011.

We look forward to seeing you in October!

Ripcord Reunion Registration 2011

Firebase Ripcord Association Reunion, October 5 – 9, 2011
Indianapolis Marriot East, Indianapolis, IN

Yes, I'll be there!

I have not attended a Reunion since 1997 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).

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____

NO COMPLEMENTARY TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT AVAILABLE.

Registration fee of \$_____ is enclosed for #_____ Adults and #_____ children under 18.
\$50 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below !

DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:

Before June 30, 2011 – \$75 per adult

July 1 through 31, 2011 – \$80 per adult

August 1 through September 1, 2011 – \$85 per adult

After September 1, 2011 – \$90 per adult

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

Registration fee is due no later than September 30, 2011.

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 30 September 2011

AGENDA

- Wednesday, October 5:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)
- Thursday, October 6:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)
- Friday, October 7:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1900 hours (7 PM)
- Saturday, October 8:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1730 hours done by 2200 hours.
- Sunday, October 9:** Homeward bound

Thursday Golf Outing (not included in the registration fee) Check here if you will play

HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY AND BY SEPTEMBER 5, 2011

USE THE OTHER FORM OR CALL 317-352-1231 or 800-228-9290,

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