



# RIPCORN REPORT



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

Number 96

Winter 2013

## The Reunion at Myrtle Beach 2013

The year 2013 saw the friends and survivors of the Battle of Ripcord come together for a second time at lovely Myrtle Beach! While the weather did not cooperate as well as we might have liked, it seems that everyone enjoyed their time there.

This was without a doubt, the largest number of people we have had attending the reunion! We had over 230 people signed up and attend, almost 60 more than a year ago!

First time attendees included Earlston Andrews (D 2/506), Keith Bowman (D 2/506), Thomas Chase (163 AVN CO), Robert Counts (A 2/506), Richard Dare (B 2/506), Russ Dixon (B 2/319 FA), Alvin Dodd (D 2/506), Mike Foreman (B 2/506), John Fowler (C 2/506), Mike Goff (B 2/17 CAV), Steve Gunn (D 2/506), Mike Hennessy (D 1/506), Jerry Hill (A 2/506), Don Holthausen (C 2/506), Ron Hudson (1/39 XXIV COR

FA), Steve Huggins (E 2/506), Buzz Ireland (C 159<sup>th</sup> ASHB), Greg Kiekinveld (B 326 ENG), Avril Koger (A 2/506), Leonard Larson (A 2/320 FA), Walter Lewis (B 2/319 FA), Tom Peacock (D 2/506), George Potts (101<sup>st</sup>), Vincent Priola (B 2/506), Steve Pullen (B 2/17 CAV), Jerry Rodgers (326 Eagle Dustoff), Jose Sena (A 2/506), and Harvey Tyer (D 2/506). Additionally, many wives, girlfriends and kids also made this their first event!

The hospitality room was well used as acquaintances were renewed and new ones established.

Jim Smither from Grand Valley State University continued to conduct interviews with the veterans for the archives. Friday evening once more found the hospitality room filled with hot food appetizers. Once everyone had eaten, the Ladies Raffle began! When

*(continued on page 6)*



# FROM THE EDITOR

I have been a little busy with all that is going on here at the Ripcord Association. I am updating the Ripcord membership roster, creating a journal about Ripcord, working with the producers from The Ghosts of Ripcord documentary and I have been speaking to producer of the proposed movie The Battle of Ripcord, hoping that the movie can become a reality. I also have been reaching out to the media in every city across the country to interview Ripcord veterans.



If you received a form with your postal delivery of the Ripcord Report newsletter, please fill it out and mail it back to me. We have 875 members in our Association and we have not done a major update on your information in a long time. I have received 494 member updates thru the internet, e-mail and some from the reunion. We have 270 members that are not on our e-mail list and still receive the newsletter via postal mail and I am sending the form to them.

If you do not fill out and update the membership form, **you will be removed from our roster** and will not receive any updates or the newsletter. Sorry, but without your information updated, we have no knowledge if you are receiving the newsletter. You can also fill out the membership form on our website. [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com) and go to the membership form.

I am also gathering a lot of information from everyone about Ripcord. I am putting a detailed journal that includes every person and unit, that was involved, what they did and where they were at day by day. You can send me all the information you have and I will add it to my journal. Send your info to: [frank@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frank@ripcordassociation.com) or via postal mail to: Frank Marshall, 5 Taconia Ct, Mt Laurel, NJ 08054. I am doing this for any future interviews and documentaries, so I can give them the most accurate information possible.

I have been giving names of Ripcord veterans to the media, newspapers and TV for interviews. Some of the media has made calls to the names I have given them. As a grunt from Alpha company, I only know what I did within my squad, so like a lot of us, can not give all the info. In fact, I don't think anyone of us knows everything about the battle. So, please call your local media and get the name of Ripcord out there. Share the media with more of the men that you were with and let's

get a lot of attention on our story about Ripcord, so that our families and legacys will have the history of the Battle of Ripcord and that you were part of it.

The son of Bruce Brady A/2-506, Chris Brady is a journalist in PA and has done an excellent story on Ripcord that went into a lot of newspapers throught the country on Veterans Day being picked up by the Associated Press. The Standard Journal of Milton, PA [www.standard-journal.com](http://www.standard-journal.com) also runs a 16 page magazine insert that featured Ripcord as the main story, "Out of the Shadows".

In this issue of Ripcord Report is an update from John Daily and the producers of the documentary "The Ghosts of Ripcord". The letter from John explains in detail about all he has gone thru to make this documentary and expected work needed to complete it.

I want to thank all the members that give me the support and information needed to continue my endeavors to get our story of Ripcord out there for everyone to recognize us and what we went thru. I am proud and honored to have shared this experience with the best soldiers ever.

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.

## RIPCORD REPORT

**Ripcord Report** is a publication of the **Ripcord Association**, and is the authoritative voice of history for the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord.

### **Ripcord Report**

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# Progress Report

## Ripcord Oral History Interviews

### Grand Valley State University

#### Veterans History Project

Submitted by Dr. James Smither, Project Director

Our trip to Myrtle Beach in October was our third visit to the Ripcord Reunion, and our busiest yet. This time around, we had a large number of volunteers sign up in advance, which helped with our scheduling and enabled us to work more efficiently. The early signups also made it clear that we needed to run two cameras rather than just one, so I set up co-interviewer Mike McGregor in his own suite to use as a second studio. I also invited my wife, Dr. Janet Coryell of Western Michigan University, a specialist in American women's history, to come along and interview Carol Gilbert. That experiment went very well, so we are now expanding our call for volunteers to include wives of the veterans, especially those who already knew or were married to their husbands before they left for Vietnam. You see a lot of coverage of the home front for World War II, but very little for Vietnam, outside of antiwar protests, so we want to restore some balance and add the wives' side of the story where we can.

We will put out a new call for signups for interviews at the reunion this spring/summer. In the meantime, I am also interested in interviewing any Ripcord vets who live within a few hours' drive of Grand Rapids, Michigan, my home base. I make house calls, so I can do those interviews any time during the year on days when I am not in the classroom. Anyone interested in being interviewed, either at the reunion or elsewhere, can contact me by email at [smitherj@gvsu.edu](mailto:smitherj@gvsu.edu), or by phone at 616-331-3422.

You can access most of the earlier interviews that we have done by using the links on the Ripcord Association website. There are two names on that list, Steve Avgerinos and George Murphy, that do not have live links as of this date, but both interviews are posted in our Veterans History Archive at GVSU, which you can access by going to our website, [www.gvsu.edu/vethistory](http://www.gvsu.edu/vethistory), and clicking on the archive link. Two more interviews done locally over the past year, with Tim Newman and Terry Handley, will be up soon, and we are now starting to process the interviews conducted this year.

## Ripcord on Facebook

by Anthony Chritchlow



As always I'll start with our FB membership. On 11/16/2013 we reached 338 members. Welcome to all our newest members.

Thanks to all of you who posted pictures on the FB page. It sure looks like there was fun for all at this year's reunion.

Our page depends on the pictures you post. I know FB is having problems with letting some of you to post to the page. Please keep trying don't give up.

By the letter I posted about the documentary it looks like they are about done. I know like the rest of you I'm biting at the bits to see this on TV.

Everyone be safe and have a good time during the holidays.

### 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.

Bill Williams  
Phil Michaud  
Carol & Fred Gilbert  
Wilburn Wall  
Kathy Smith  
John Fowler  
Frank Delfino  
Anne Todd in the memory of Edith Habib  
Claire Linton in the memory of Edith Habib  
Joseph Minias in memory of Steve Steward & Gerald Risinger C 2/506

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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

# The Ghosts of Ripcord

from the filmmakers of *The Ghosts of Ripcord*

We hope this email finds you well and that you are enjoying your fall. As always, everyone involved in this production cannot thank all of you enough for your continued interest and support of this documentary. It was almost exactly two years ago that we began the journey of telling the story of Firebase Ripcord through this film and it has been an incredible experience for everyone involved. Many of those involved in the production started this project while students at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA and have since graduated and watched this project change and evolve dramatically just as our own personal lives have.

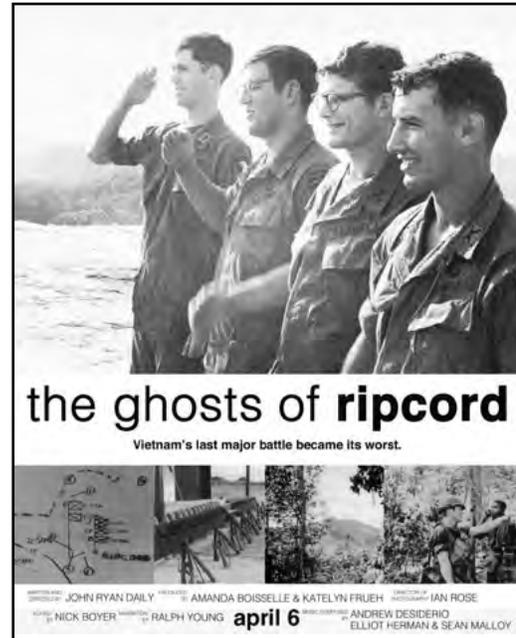
The process of bringing this 80 minute documentary to life has been a great learning experience for all of us as young filmmakers and we are very proud of the product that we currently have. As stated before, the creation of this film would not have been possible without the continued help and assistance of Frank Marshall and everyone at the Ripcord Association. All members of the crew have worked tirelessly for the past two years and spent thousands of hours to tell this story correctly and respectfully, and we were thrilled to have been able to screen the film at the National Constitution Center last April. It was a wonderful event and we received a lot of helpful feedback from many of the veterans that were in attendance and have since made several changes and improvements to the documentary.

Our latest screening of the film took place last month at the Ripcord Reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC. We were even more excited to show a better version of the film to an even larger audience of Ripcord veterans and their families. And as expected we received a great collection of reactions and feedback and have since begun making the final changes and improvements before we officially complete the film and seek professional distribution.

We have received some concerns though about the status of the production as a whole from those who have not gotten a chance yet to view the documentary. A lot has taken place over the past two years and everyone's lives are very busy so I wanted to take a moment to explain some of the responsibilities and duties that have been fulfilled by our incredible team of artists and storytellers to bring this film together.

Here is a short list of those responsibilities...

**WRITING | DIRECTING | PRODUCING |  
EDITING | RESEARCHING | CALLING |**



**EMAILING | SCHEDULING | TRAVELING |  
INTERVIEWS IN-PERSON | INTERVIEWS  
OVER THE PHONE | VISITING ARCHIVES |  
RENTING EQUIPMENT | ASSEMBLING CREWS  
| RECORDING NARRATION | COMPOSING  
MUSIC | SCANNING PHOTOGRAPHS |  
TRANSFERRING & REPAIRING 8MM FILM |  
FACT-CHECKING | RAISING FUNDS | MAILING  
PRODUCTION MATERIALS | CREATING MAPS  
| BOOKING SCREENINGS | PAPERWORK  
| COLOR-CORRECTION | PROMOTION |  
COORDINATING SHOOTS | COLLECTING  
HOURS OF ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE | CREATING  
SOUND EFFECTS | FIXING AUDIO |  
CONFERENCE CALLS | FINDING ACTORS |  
PRODUCTION MEETINGS | SENDING UPDATES  
| RELEASE-FORMS | SECURING LOCATIONS |  
WEB DESIGN**

To be honest, this is just a small glimpse into the unbelievable amount of the work that has been done over the past two years and it has all been done by a just a handful of young filmmakers, most of whom have been working on a “volunteer” basis.

Your incredible generosity at the start of the production with donating on *Kickstarter* was amazing, and we were able to raise a little over \$7,000, which we again cannot thank you enough for. To be direct

(con't on page 5)

*(Ghosts of Ripcord con't)*

as possible though, for a production of this size and professionalism, that figure is actually a very humble one. Typically a documentary like this would have a budget that exceeds \$100,000 and it would take about 3-5 years to make. To uncover all of this hidden history and create a documentary and narrative that is both compelling and concise is an extraordinarily complicated task that would overwhelm even filmmakers with several decades of experience. Most producers would not have proceeded into a project such as this with a budget like the one we had, but since we were students and still learning we sort've dove right in without asking questions and have learned throughout this process over the past two years the most wise and efficient ways to make a feature-length documentary.

We have now reached a point where essentially the documentary is "complete" and we are just making some final small editing changes to make the dramatic story more interesting and all the historical facts correct. However, after consulting with several Ripcord veterans and members of the filmmaking team we have all acknowledged that there are still some technical aspects of the documentary that we would like to improve before seeking professional distribution (DVD's, TV, etc.), those include the soundtrack of the film and several graphic design elements.

The audio design of this film is a complex one, which includes: audio from many interviews, several different tracks of music, sound effects, and several different kinds of voice-overs and narration. There are also several maps and animations that we have and are currently developing to include in the documentary to help explain the specific actions of the battle and the overall geography of the Ripcord AO. Both the audio tracks and graphics that are currently in the film are good but both veterans and members of our team have agreed that we would like to find professional assistance to "improve" these things before we release the film to the public.

However, by this stage of the production we have essentially exhausted all of our resources and are in a situation where the documentary is forced to go on a short hiatus. After overcoming hundreds of obstacles over the past two years we are in need of reorganizing the over-all production and our own personal lives so that when we start again fresh, with new resources, we are able to complete the final tasks. If we do this then the final product will be far superior than what we

now currently have, and have a much stronger chance in obtaining distribution through PBS, The History Channel, or other outlets.

Again, after speaking with Frank Marshall and the Ripcord Association it seems like everyone is on the same page and agree this is the wisest choice for the documentary moving forward. We wanted to personally update all of you regarding this and thank you for your patience. We will be sending out more updates through email and also on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/firebasefilm>

On the Facebook page we will be posting more images and clips from the film throughout the coming months, and will inform everyone immediately when the film is officially completed and the DVDs are sent out for Kickstarter donators to receive.

Thank you again for your immeasurable support, generosity, and passion. We are all very proud and grateful to tell the story of the Battle of Firebase Ripcord and its veterans.

Thank you again and take care!

Sincerely, The Filmmakers

The Ghosts of Ripcord

[www.facebook.com/firebasefilm](http://www.facebook.com/firebasefilm)



**Anna Britt Nolan Trust**

*by George and Mary Murphy*



Dear Ripcord Friends,

We had a great time at the reunion in Myrtle Beach. The camaraderie made up for the cool weather. Many thanks to all of you who brought items and bought tickets for the Anna Britt Nolan raffle. Surely, Keith is smiling in heaven right now knowing how much our Association cares.

Send donations to:

**Anna Britt Nolan Trust**

**c/o First Bank**

**6211 Mid Rivers Mall Drive**

**Saint Charles, MO 63304-1102**

## JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



The October 2013 Fire Support Base Ripcord Survivors and Friends reunion was held in Myrtle Beach and it had the largest number of veterans we have ever had sign and show up!!! Our final numbers were over 230 attendees with 30 coins presented to new attendees.

The weather was not as warm as many desired but the camaraderie made up for what the weather lacked. But the beach was right there and if that wasn't good enough, many made it to the local shops and entertainment venues to have an overall good time!

Since we were showing the documentary "The Ghosts of Ripcord" at noon, we held the business meeting at 1100 hours. Our finances continue to be in good shape as it is once more greater than it was a year ago. Due to Frank Marshall's efforts, the year book is now being printed privately by Frank for the cost of the ink and paper. As a result we are able to sell it for only \$5 a booklet, a savings of over \$12 per book! Frank has also taken over printing the newsletter once in a while to produce yet another savings.

George Murphy has reported that the Anna Britt Trust Fund has just a little less than \$40,000 in it at this time. She will be heading to college in the next 4 years so we really need to beef it up further if at all possible. George has suggested that if each member were to send \$10 per year to the trust fund that would help tremendously! It isn't hard or expensive so we should all consider doing it.

Other items discussed were the location of our next three reunions and the proposal to incorporate. We reopened the idea of incorporation since it seems if we are going to act as a body we have to have an identity. We have been offered the movie rights to the Ripcord story by the Nolan family. We can only accept that if we are incorporated. Jim Campbell volunteered to look into it and get back to me, Fred Spaulding, Chuck Hawkins, Ben Harrison, Frank Marshall and others in the New Year so we can proceed. This will require a board of directors, bi-laws, election and officers. You will be hearing more as we progress.

The reunion for next year will be in Myrtle Beach once more. In 2015 and 2016 we are scheduled to meet in Springfield, MO at the University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center. Beyond that, future locations are still to be determined.

Finally, Kathy and I would like to thank all who contributed to the gift we received at the reunion! It was not necessary but always appreciated! Working with the Ripcord members makes all the work well worth the time and effort!

Thank you one and all!!!



### *(Reunion 2013 con't from page 1)*

all was said and done, the ladies had raised \$3,537 for the Ripcord Association. This was the most ever raised by us on a Friday!

Saturday came upon us almost before we realized the reunion was almost over! At noon the documentary "The Ghosts of Ripcord" was shown. This was put together by John Daily and Nick Boyer who got interested in our story while doing a short film for Temple University. They expanded their interviews and put together this 80 minute film. They want to do some more editing and then see if they can market it. If they are unsuccessful, they will give it to our organization for distribution. The viewers found the presentation great and are looking forward to the finished product.

Once again Mike Chiarelli resumed the role of the Ripcord barber and trimmed hair for those who felt the need. The donations collected by him were donated to the association and amounted to \$410, also a new high.

Saturday night came quickly upon us. Red and Bob Judd with the help of Jackie and Bob Wallace decorated the ball room with flags and guidons. Paul Buhr once more shot the photos for the yearbook and recorded the images of the new guys receiving their coins. The food and service was excellent and all enjoyed the event. The Anna Britt Nolan raffle contributed another \$1350 to her education trust fund. Keith Nolan, who we owe much to for writing about our story, would be pleased to see that his daughter is being cared for by our group. She is now 13 years old and in high school.

In all it was a great reunion and we hope for even a better one in 2014 at the same location!!

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

# INCOMING MAIL

Dear Ripcord Association,

Nobody is more ashamed of her behavior than me. I am getting more embarrassed every day, but please forgive me. We received a wonderful check for Anna Britt's college fund and I am finally saying "Thank You!"

We are getting older and first I fell on the tennis court and ended up in the hospital. Then Bill fell and had his hip replacement fail again and ended up in the hospice for 2 months again in our family room. My life has changed 100%. Not an excuse and I am terribly sorry. There is no better people than "Ripcord people"!!!!

*Sincerely,  
Ulla Nolan*

.....

Hi Frank,

Just wanted to let you know that Sandra and I had a great time at the reunion! I was really hesitant about going but am truly glad that I did. Everyone there made us feel welcome. It was great reuniting with the guys from Delta company and it was a true pleasure to meet the survivors from Alpha company who I've thought about countless times over the years.

I also was honored to meet Jerry Rogers, the dustoff pilot, who got me out the day I was wounded.

I want to thank you and Lee and all the others who put so much time and effort into making these reunions, the website and facebook page possible.

I'm looking forward attending next years reunion too. The only complaint that I have is that the time went way too fast and I wasn't able to meet and talk with more of the Ripcord heroes.

*Thanks  
Keith Bowman  
D/2-506  
namgrunt51@yahoo.com*

.....

Attending the Ripcord reunion was awesome! We reconnected with old friends and met new ones! We hope to never miss another reunion.

From the female perspective-we were always on the sideline but suffered through many moments of our soldier's anger, frustration and panic upon their return to us. For the first time I was able to observe the

expressions on other wife's faces as husbands opened up to their vet brothers and spoke of shared experiences of long ago. I overheard the ladies in gift shops, restaurants, and lobbies saying what the reunion meant to them. We were finally able to share also! We are a band of "sisters" with a lot more in common than others would know.

I encouraged my husband to attend after finding the group on the Internet. One of his old buddies' wife was across states doing the same with him. During this reunion an old friendship was resumed and we've had weekly contact since!

We were welcomed with open arms while there by all and feel that Lee and the original group should feel tremendously proud of the job they have done, the lives they have touched and the rekindling of friendships of men who became brothers during the toughest of times.

*Thank you.  
Sincerely,  
Ray & Sheila Potts  
B/2-319 Arty  
spottsart@yadtel.net*

.....

Hi Frank.....

I have been busy since my wife and I returned from Myrtle Beach and all. Must say - it was a VERY GOOD time there.

It was nice to finally formally attend one in person after all these years starting communications with Chip Collins years ago.

Also - meeting many of the men such as yourself and so Many More - and talking with same over the course of the reunion filled in some of the missing details I had been seeking as well from "those days".

Talked on the phone the other day with my main pilot in Nam (John Fox) who currently resides in Atlanta, TX and that was nice after 40 Pus years. He and Jim Campbell know one another.

Hopefully my wife and I can drop in again at "LZ Myrtle Beach" in 2014 as well.

*Take Care.....  
Tom Chase  
163rd Avn Bn  
namvet101@roadrunner.com*

.....

# INCOMING MAIL

Frank

I can't begin to express what the reunion has brought to me. Conveniently I had found excuses not to attend for several years by saying "It is an event made for those who that had faced the enemy and not those on the hill". After some convincing from my wife I agreed to go but was prepared to turn it into a road trip and we could explore the area if things turned out as I believed they would.

Life brings you surprises, some good, some not so good but this trip gave me something I never would have if I hadn't attended. When first checking we were greeted by Lee who had a way of putting all my concerns aside, got a drink and we found a lone table and hoped we I would see at least one of the two names I had written down from B/2nd/319th. After about ten minutes a woman came up and asked if I was Russ Dixon and before I could answer I saw the man behind her who was the one person I wished was coming but thought had passed on the trip. The reunion between us has made a connection that I believe will never end.

I was also fortunate to meet one other from the 319th and another Ohio wild man who thought being a door gunner was a job he could carry into his civilian life. What I left with was a feeling that I had expanded my family with a great group of people that I am very proud to be a part of.

By the way Frank, it was great seeing you in person (wearing more than a rifle) and look forward to seeing you next year.

*Russ Dixon  
B/2-319 arty  
rd797@hotmail.com*



Frank;

I want to thank Lee, his wife, you and all who was involved with making this years reunion very enjoyable. I am sure that all who attended had a good time. As for us in Delta it was good seeing all the new faces and next year we hope to see a lot more new faces, and I am sure that the other Company's feel the same also. As you know when ever we find someone new we tell them about the Ripcord Association and the good work that you do for keeping the site in tack.

Most all they guys that we get hold of never heard of

the Association and many say that they wondered what had happened to their brothers from Vietnam. I have compiled a list of all the men with their addresses, e-mails, and phone numbers that we get and then add their names to the list and send them out to everyone, asking all to write or call welcoming them into the group. It is getting harder cause some have moved to different states from the addresses I have back in 1970.

The two Smith's Larry, and Donny, they were the toughest. Doug Puffer, Red Forsman, Rex Flansburg, and a few others have been trying to get hold of these guys for two and a half years. Finally I lucked out on Larry by calling the first number on my list that day. I talked to this one Larry for 20 minutes before he told me that he was in the Air Force in Korea. He told me good luck and so I went to the second number with no answer and left a message. Four hours later I get a call and when I picked up the phone and he talked I said "Larry we have been trying to find you for two and a half years". Donny "Doc" was just as hard. I wrote letters and called Donny's in Ga. only to get "no that's not me, but they would tell me good luck". I decided to call the High School in Guyton, and the women their kept passing me on to different people until I got this woman that works for the Board of Education. I told her who I was looking for and she said yes I know this guy, but unfortunately she thought he had passed away. I sent her a picture and she told me she would get hold of someone who graduated with him and let me know tomorrow. Tomorrow came and the subject line on her e-mail said "I was wrong" he is alive and lives here in Guyton. She forwarded my email to his daughter who is a principal in one of their schools and she in turn sent it to her dad. Just as I was reading her e-mail his name popped up and when I opened it he said "You found me". I called him, and we had another man on our list.

On the Ripcord website are a couple of pictures, one of four of us in Vietnam and the four of us at the reunion, both pictures were taken by the same man Rex Flansburg in Nam and at the reunion. Keep up the good work that you do and we will keep trying to get new faces at the reunions.....Jay

*Walt Juszczak  
D/2-506  
farmer64@hotmail.com*

