

Local Names, Local Faces, Local Voices ... Every Day

The

# Post & Mail

YOUR WHITLEY COUNTY CONNECTION

Saturday, November 6, 1999

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## Inside

- 'Busco Christmas walk
- Christmas Bureau events, schedule
- Girl's basketball preview coming Monday

### Veteran's Day

# A soldier's story

**Editor's note:** Jeff Wilcox, the author of this story, grew up and graduated from high school in Gary. He is a 1968 graduate of West Point and a former IBM marketing representative with experience in small business. He spent about six years working full-time on Vietnam veterans issues in California and Washington. In addition he served on the national board of directors of Vietnam Veterans of America.

Wilcox has been self-employed in the real estate business for the past 13 years. He and his wife, Katherine, have been married for 31 years. He credits her love and assistance for where he is at today. They live in Saugatuck, Mich.

### Veterans Day 1999

By JEFF WILCOX

Every Veterans Day I take the opportunity to consider the meaning of service and to remember those with whom I personally served.

I've always been adamant that Memorial Day should be a healthy occasion for assessing the sadness and grief brought about by death in service to country, while Veterans Day should be the occasion to focus on celebrating those who served and survived.

It is nonetheless true that reflection on those who died provides a window on the soldier's experience and is in its own way, an acknowledgment of all who served.

During the period of March through July 1970 the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division confronted a full division of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars in a campaign surrounding Firebase Ripcord.

Ripcord was dug into a mountain peak on the edge of the A Shau Valley in extreme northwestern South Vietnam near the boarder with Laos and directly in the way of the NVA.

The principal unit involved in the Ripcord campaign was the 2nd Battalion of the 506th Infantry.



Rick Scott, in his senior year of high school

Casualties were numerous and the four rifle companies were ground down well below normal troop strength. Ultimately, we were driven from Ripcord and the surrounding area by the overwhelming NVA force.

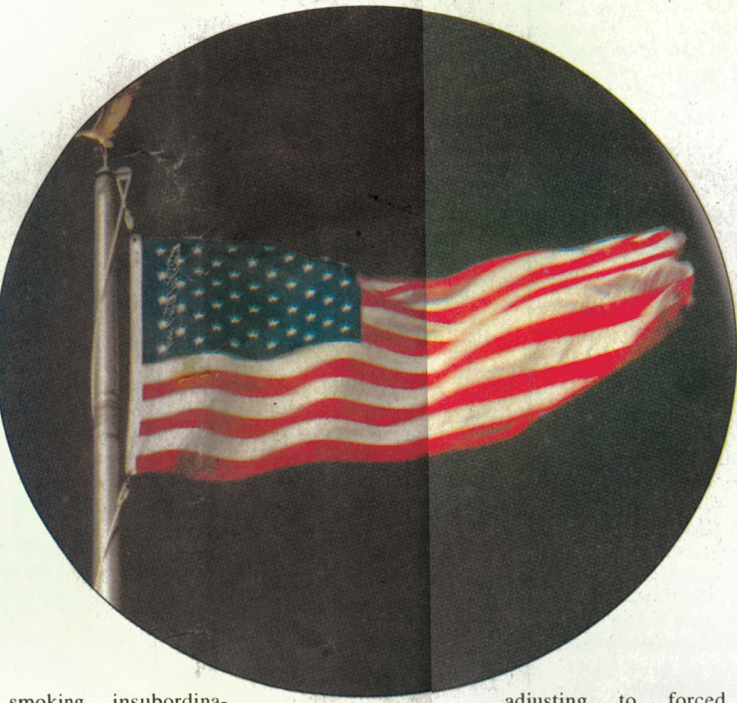
We were all young. I was a captain and, at 23, among the very oldest in C Co. 2/506. We were nonetheless highly trained soldiers and all experienced in the ways of our war; combat veterans.

During the week before Rick Scott of Columbia City arrived there was a series of encounters with the enemy, including a vicious night attack in which the company was overrun, suffering numerous casualties.

In 1970 the U. S. adopted the policy of "Vietnamization," which was supposed to turn over more of the conduct and fighting of the war to the South Vietnamese Army.

This policy pervasively trickled down to a decision to not reinforce our understrength brigade with additional American troops, thus leaving us exposed to the vastly superior enemy force. Just another of the ironies of Vietnam.

Nevertheless, the attitude of the men was fine. The 2/506 had been in the combat zone for about 30 straight days — about a month since the last bath, since the last period of rest and comfort in shelter and relative safety. We were all bone weary, but ready to tackle the next obstacle. There was no dope



smoking, insubordination or other shirking in our unit. As in all such small units in history, there was a palpable sense of duty and loyalty, not to some geopolitical aim, but to one another. It was a tiny world and we were all we had.

Late in the first week of July 1970 as company commander of C Co. 2/506 I found our depleted unit down to one other officer, a handful of NCO's and alarmingly, no medics. At the end of a day in which we had taken additional

adjusting to forced marching through mountainous jungle terrain in searing heat with a 60-pound pack on his back and sleeping on the ground in a foreign country with people stalking and shooting at him, the "newbie" doesn't have survival instincts yet.

He doesn't know to keep his head down. He doesn't know how to interpret sounds in the night. He doesn't have a sense of place and role in the group. He isn't attuned to "the way it is". He hasn't learned how to work within the team or to know the guys around him.

Although I was a highly trained West Point officer I remember the first time I was shot at I asked, "What was that?" I looked at Rick in his fresh new uniform with his wide-eyed look and thought, "This is a fish out of water". He wasn't particularly fearful. In fact, he was clearly willing and eager to serve and please; he just seemed particularly out of place.

I looked a little closer and found myself saying, "Where is your weapon?"

While medics' prime responsibility was not to shoot, most were fully armed and available as riflemen. They at least carried weapons for self-defense. Occasionally every hand is needed to defend the group. A normal rifle

company usually has about 100 troops. We had about 30 when Rick arrived. We needed men who would shoot.

"I'm a conscientious objector," said Rick.

Reality dawned. There was serious business at hand. I told Rick to stay

“It is nonetheless true that reflection on those who died provides a window on the soldier's experience and is in its own way, an acknowledgment of all who served.”

Jeff Wilcox  
Vietnam veteran

close by me and my radio operators so that I could keep an eye on him and train him. He busied himself dispensing malaria pills, checking feet for blisters and administering to the general well-being of the troops.

Within 48 hours of Rick's arrival C Co. was given a mission to assault a heavily fortified hilltop near Ripcord. We were to go up one side of the hill and D Co. the opposite. Starting in the pre-dawn hours the enemy

See Soldier, page 3

## Pauline Scott's memories, thoughts about Rick Scott

By PAMELA THOMPSON

Pauline Scott, step-mother of Rick Scott, remembers him as a doting step-brother to his baby sisters.

In high school Rick was involved in debate and drama, his two great loves.

Rick enlisted to serve in the Vietnam War even though he did not want to kill anyone.

"He told his dad, (the late Adrian Scott) he wouldn't kill anybody with a gun," said Pauline.

Even so, Rick enlisted to serve his country. "We couldn't understand why they assigned him to the medics after boot camp," she said. "He had no prior medical training, but was trained and assigned to the 'Screaming Eagles' Unit.

According to Pauline and his commander Rick was a religious person.

"He would read the Bible and he knew it," said Pauline. "He thought highly of the Rev. Wolf who was at the First Presbyterian Church.

"I do wonder what Rick would have been like after he came home from the war," she said. "I know he wanted to go back to Ripon College in Wisconsin and major in drama and elementary education.

"Would Rick have a home, marriage and a family?" asked Pauline. "How would he have turned out?"

Five months and three weeks after Rick enlisted, U. S. Army personnel came to Columbia City looking for his father.

They missed him at the Post Office. Adrian had the day off. In his comings and goings, he met a couple of his friends and they told him about the army officers.

"Army officers only come to Columbia City for one thing," said Pauline. "Adrian came home to tell me and that's the first time I ever saw him cry."

Scott was awarded the Purple Heart, a medic's medal and five other medals.



Clockwise from top, the Korean War Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial, located at the Veteran's Memorial Park, Hadley Road in Allen County; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Morsches Park; a closeup of the Korean War Memorial at Veterans Memorial Park.

Post & Mail photos by Charles Trump and Pamela Thompson

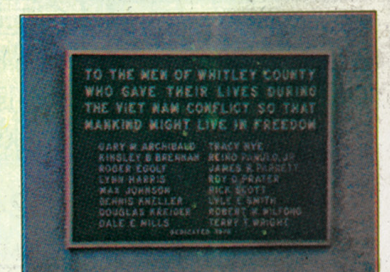
casualties, both dead and wounded, Rick Scott was delivered to us by helicopter to take up the duty as our new medic.

Any soldier new to a combat unit would typically require a period of time to become acclimated. In addition to

company usually has about 100 troops. We had about 30 when Rick arrived. We needed men who would shoot.

"I'm a conscientious objector," said Rick.

Reality dawned. There was serious business at hand. I told Rick to stay



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# This weekend

Things to do this weekend in Whitley County.

## Today

### Events

- CCHS production of *Guys and Dolls*, Newell Rice Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
- Diabetes Fair, Whitley Memorial Hospital auditorium, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Holly Jolly Christmas Bazaar of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., food carry outs available.
- Churubusco United Methodist Womens' Cookie Walk, 9 a.m. to noon, Fellowship Hall, Forty cookie varieties, \$4 per pound.

### Food

- Candlelight Cabaret dinner presented by CCHS choirs beginning at 4 p.m.
- Oak Grove United Methodist Church hog and turkey roast, 4 to 7 p.m., 200 South, three miles east of state Route 5, donations taken.
- Tri Lakes Lions Club cholesterol free tenderloin fry, 4 to 7 p.m. at Lion's Hall, adults \$6, children ages five to 12, \$3 and preschoolers eat free.

## Sunday

### Events

- CCHS production of *Guys and Dolls*, Newell Rice Auditorium, 2:30 p.m.

# Of interest

## EMT meeting planned

An informational meeting for anyone interested in serving as an EMT in South Whitley is planned for Nov. 10, 7 p.m., at South Whitley's Star Financial Bank.

## Fall taxes due Nov. 10

The final day to pay fall tax installments without a penalty is Nov. 10.

Payment can be made at the Treasurer's Office in the courthouse. Taxpayers should take their tax and drainage assessment statements with them when payment is made.

When mailing payments, enclose a self addressed, stamped envelope if you want a paid receipt returned. Payments postmarked after Nov. 10 will be delinquent and subject to a 10 percent penalty on real estate and personal property taxes.

The Treasurer's Office will close on Nov. 11 to

# Soldier

From page 1



Left to right: Frank Bort (SGT), Jim Campbell (LT), Jerry Cafferty (medic who was wounded and evacuated a week before Rick arrived), Jeff Wilcox (CPT), Howie Colbert (radio operator who completed his tour prior to Rick's arrival) and Paul Burkey (SSGT) join together at a reunion of a C Co. group and Ripcord campaign. Rick Scott was remembered and present in spirit.

Post & Mail photo contributed

emplacements were bombarded by artillery, mortars, jet airstrikes, helicopter gunships and gas.

We left our heavy packs at the bottom of the hill and set out for our jumping off point. As we skirted the base of the hill, one of our young sergeants, a fellow who had been studying to become a priest in civilian life, began loudly reciting *The Lord's Prayer*.

Rick's step-mother, Pauline Scott, told me that Rick was a religious person. I can only imagine his thoughts at the time. Everyone knew the jeopardy we were in and sensed the drama of the moment.

The hill had been so heavily bombarded over a period of days that the top half, about 500 feet, was basically denuded. We made our way up the open area by fire and maneuver - one element moving, while the other provided covering fire - and were under fire ourselves as we moved. By the time we reached the summit, we were under withering enemy machine gun and small arms fire and found ourselves hunkered down behind deadfall and in a bomb crater.

It soon became clear that D Co. had been unable to reach their objective and we were alone atop the hill. We made every effort to determine the enemy location among the debris on the far side of the hilltop. Our efforts were comical times, actually using a helmet on a stick to draw fire in hopes of identifying the enemy

positions. We then received the order to assault across the wide, open space that separated us from the enemy.

Immediately upon beginning our advance we received such heavy fire we were beaten back to cover. A number of men were wounded and one lay motionless in the open area.

Chaos reigned and before we knew it Rick was moving forward. In a heartbeat, without thought for his own safety, Rick Scott did his duty as he knew it and went to aid a comrade. He did not hesitate. Rick advanced into a hail of enemy fire to aid an already dead trooper and was himself killed.

Out of the hundreds of people I encountered during my time in Vietnam, Rick has always stood out. I only knew him for a few days, but I remembered his name, his principled stand, as a conscientious objector, where he came from, and how he reacted to being in the field of combat. His memory is still vivid.

Over the years I've reflected on the unresolved conflicts of my Vietnam experience and attempted to sort out what happened and why.

I've often replayed by brief association with Rick in my mind. With almost constant protests at home, I have always believed that Rick Scott was sent into combat because of politics - "How dare you say you won't kill for the cause?"

I was aggravated at the "system" that would on one hand put a guy who I could tell was a deep down, real life pacifist in harm's way; and on the other hand send an undermanned combat unit, an unarmed man. Somehow this has always exemplified the strangeness of the Vietnam War for me.

I have rerun the events leading to Rick's death over and over again. I found myself drifting off in business meetings to rethink the day Rick died and other scenes from Vietnam.

"What could I have done differently?" "What if?"

In July 1970 my goal was not some grand military objective. It was to keep the men in my command alive. Years later, no matter how I replayed the scenario, Rick would still be dead and I felt I had let him down.

Over the years I sought help dealing with my unresolved conflicts from Vietnam through therapy and sharing with other vets. A couple years ago I was reunited with a group from C Co. and the Ripcord campaign. By then I had healed much of my psychic injury due to our war. It was a very comforting experience to be with my mates again. Rick was remembered and present in spirit.

Last month at another Ripcord reunion one of the vets talked about visiting with the family of another fallen vet. While I had often thought of contacting Rick's family, I feared that I might needlessly bring up pain again and my presence might be an intrusion and an unhappy reminder of a family's loss.

But I was reassured that it might be good for the family. I see my showing up now as an extension of the soldier's promise to go back for the dead and wounded; to leave no one on the battlefield.

Pauline had been close to Rick and she was gracious and glad to hear from me. His family, friends and community deserve to know how honorable Rick served.

"I want you all to know that Rick's final act was a selfless, valorous act."

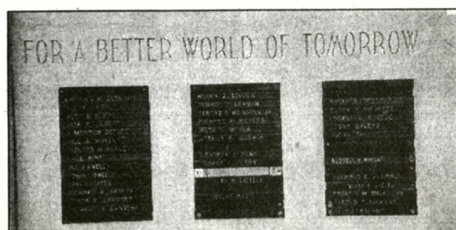
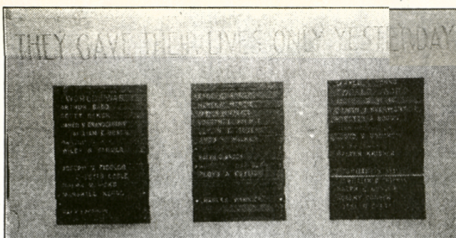
In dealing with the memories of Vietnam, my personal healing process made a dramatic and positive turn when I determined that I could make a living memorial to Rick Scott and all the other men I fought with with, by living the life I would have wished for them - a life of happiness, love, friendship, prosperity, sufficiency and peace of mind.

"I salute Rick Scott's bravery and pureness of heart. I will be inspired by him and keep him in my heart forever."



Sometimes... For a soldier they're the last face seen, the last voice heard, the last touch felt...the Military Nurse.

Post & Mail photo by Charles Trump



Memorials dedicated to those who served from Whitley County in WWI and WWII, located on the north side of the Whitley County Courthouse.

Post & Mail photo by Pamela Thompson

## DeMoney-Grimes

Countryside Park Funeral Home

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# Public Auction

## South Whitley, IN

10:30 A.M. Saturday, Nov. 6, 1999 1

Located: North of South Whitley, IN on SR 5 to CR 200 S then west 1 mile North 1/2 mile to Auction Sit. (Watch for King Auction Signs).

### Tractors, Combine's & Lawn Mower

1944 JD D, "hand start", nice original; 1941 JD H "hand start", nice straight o JD MT new tires, repainted; 1955 Ford 900 5 spd, nice original; 1947 IH W6 r 1949 MH 44-G Stan. original; Oliver 550 Utility W/blade, repainted; AC W1 Cub W/60" belly mower; 1978 White 8900 combine hydro. W/15ft grain h diesel combine, hydro, 3,400 hrs; Ford 13ft grain head; Ford 4x30 corn head; Cadet;

### Trucks, Car, Trailer, Sleigh & Horse Trail

1988 Ford Ranger Pickup, 4spd., new paint; 1989 Dodge Ramcharger 4x4, Custom 100 Pickup, 6 cyl., 3 spd.; 1990 Ford Ranger Pickup 2.3 eng., 5 spd.(d 1971 Chev. 1/2 ton V-8, 3 spd., body rusty; 1950 Chevy 1/2 ton, 6 cyl., 3 spd. (Dodge 400, 318 V8, 4 spd., runs good W/5 ton bulk bed; 1991 Dodge Spirit ES full power, 4 door; 1979 King 32 ft. gooseneck 4 horse trailer, side load, w/liv'in (redone in 1988); 1997 Corn Pro 25+5 ft. imp. trailer 9,000 # tandem-axle, du w/tramps; 12 ft. 2 whl. trailer horse draw farm Sleigh;