

Colonel Richard Mahlon Ripley Class 67-43

Patriotic from a young age, he joined the U.S. Army on 4 July 1942 as an enlisted man and was subsequently commissioned from Officer Candidate School as a 2nd Lieutenant on 3 June 1943. He was then called to duty as a 2nd Lieutenant, Regular Army in June of 1945. In May of 1966 he was promoted to Colonel. His military service included eighteen years of overseas duty assignments where he served with and commanded Cavalry, Artillery, Armor, Infantry, Parachute, and Special Forces Units. Colonel Ripley was a Master Parachutist himself and served in combat duty assignments for twenty-eight years during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

In Europe during World War II Colonel Ripley was assigned as a Platoon Leader and Company Commander in the 4th Armored Division. During the Occupation of Germany, he served with the U.S. Constabulary. While serving in the Korean War, he organized and commanded a Guerrilla Force, known as "Operation Wolf Pack," which conducted special operations behind enemy lines. In the Vietnam War, he served with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade (Separate) in combat operations both in 1968 and 1969.

Following Colonel Ripley's time of service in Vietnam, he was assigned as Head of the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. His responsibilities included all Special Forces training. He was awarded a total of thirty-eight awards and decorations, including the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, two Legion of Merits, three Bronze Stars, eight Air Medals, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal and several Foreign Decorations, including the French Legion of Honor and the Chungmu Korean Order of Military Merit. Colonel Ripley was also awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge with Second Award, the Master Parachutist Badge and Special Forces Tab. After more than thirty-one years of service he retired from active military duty in November of 1973.

Colonel Ripley was educated at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. His university education includes a BA in Economics from Park College in Parkville, MO; a MS in International Affairs from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.; and a Doctorate of Education from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C. In May of 2015, he was inducted as a Distinguished Member of the U.S. Army Special Forces Regiment. In September of 2016, he was inducted as a member of the Order of St. Maurice by the National Infantry Association.

Following his retirement from the military in 1973, Ripley began his second career at the NC Department of Corrections, where he served as Curriculum Manager and Director of the Office of Staff Development. He retired for the second time in 1989 after eleven years of dedicated service. During his "retirement", he served as Editor of the North Carolina Military Historical Society publication "Recall," between the years of 1995 through 2018. He also worked (and later volunteered) from 1996 to 2011 at the North Carolina State Archives and History in the Military Collection.