



# RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 110

May 2017

## Chris Brady (Author of Remembering Firebase Ripcord) has written a novel “We Answered the Call”



Scottie Berrand was not unlike many young American men in the late 1960s and early '70s. He enjoyed cars and respected his elders, especially the men in his family who had answered the call of duty in wars dating back to the Civil and Revolutionary Wars. So when Berrand enlisted and went to Vietnam, he felt as if

he were doing exactly what those who came before him did answering the call of his country.

Vietnam was a different war though. Combat was horrific, confusing, and near nonstop for the young men on the ground in Southeast Asia.

Upon returning home from a traumatic tour, Scottie struggled with the reception he and other Vietnam veterans received as well as adjustment back into civilian life.

Through the love of a woman and the reconnection with a brother, a fellow combat veteran, he was able to put the war behind him and move on.

*We Answered the Call* is a must read for those wanting to better understand the life of a combat veteran in Vietnam and the struggles these men endured during the war and in the decades since the war.

This book is an excellent read for those who have family members who experienced combat, providing insight into the challenges troops face in the field and upon their return home.

Orders can be placed online at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or contact Chris directly via email at [rememberingripcord@windstream.net](mailto:rememberingripcord@windstream.net) or mail: 3535 Susquehanna Trail, Watsontown, PA 17777. Copies ordered through Chris can be personalized (please indicate in correspondence) and are \$16.50 (taxes and shipping/handling included) each.

## New Website design coming to our Ripcord website

by Frank Marshall

It was the year 2000 when I first built the Ripcord website at [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com). I am not a professional website designer and I did the best I could. I have been using the same software for 16 years.

The hosting company “**IHostnetworks**” has informed me that they will no longer be using that software on their servers because it is so outdated. I will be using “**wordpress**” to rebuild the website but it is not transferrable from one the old to the new. I will have to build the site from scratch with all the files I have saved.

**Ihostnetworks** has been a great help to me for 16 years and said they will continue to give me help and support for the transfer. They are waiting for me to transfer the site and then they will be able to shut down that server.

So if anyone is familiar with “**wordpress Twenty Seventeen**” and would like to offer me some suggestions or pointers, I will be very happy to hear from you.

I am trying to have the new website be ready and go live on July 23rd, 2017. The website address will be the same, [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com).

Please make note of the e-mail address for me **[frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com)**

The email address [frank@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frank@ripcordassociation.com) has too much spam and junk mail and I am **no longer using** [frank@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frank@ripcordassociation.com).

**Please go to our website and update your membership to keep getting important information about our Ripcord Association**



## **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.

Ken Lilley	A 2/506
Howard Strickler	B/158 AVN
Mike Womack	C 2/506
Leigh Freeman	C 2/506
Bill Williams	B 2/506
Dave Bridges	426 S&S BN
Patrick Silbaugh	Assoc. Member
Doug McNeill	
George Bannon	
C Matt Rich	

Checks payable to "Ripcord Association".

Mail to:

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

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.



Join us on Facebook group  
Ripcord Association

**Visit our website at  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)**

Please continue to send your letters and send your comments or articles to:  
[frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:frankmarshall@ripcordassociation.com)

or postal mail to:  
**Frank Marshall  
567 Circle Drive  
Surfside Beach, SC 29575**

Everyone would love to hear from you.

### **REUNION DATES:**

**2017 LAUGHLIN , NEVADA**

**MONDAY 2 OCT  
TO  
THURSDAY 5 OCT**

**LEAVE FRIDAY 6 OCT.**

~~~~~  
**2018 MYRTLE BEACH, SC**

**WEDNESDAY OCT. 31  
TO  
SATURDAY NOV. 3**

**LEAVE SUNDAY NOV. 4**

## **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**  
[www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)

Editor: Frank Marshall  
E-mail: [mail@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:mail@ripcordassociation.com)

Writer: Lee Widjeskog  
Phone: 856-451-1108  
E-mail: [ltwidjeskog@aol.com](mailto:ltwidjeskog@aol.com)

## Jim McCoy



Looking forward to the Reunion at Laughlin Nevada this Year! If you budget for gambling Laughlin is the cheapest place to do just that. Not sure if it's still the same but the Riverside was a place to play Dollar Craps and Bingo will be cheap and enjoyed by all!

One fun thing to do is go casino hopping along the boardwalk that runs along the Colorado River. If you want a water taxi just pick one up at the water in several locations. Food is cheap. If you're celebrating anything special there are some great places to eat for a more fancy meal which costs a little more.

We've always loved Laughlin because once you've parked your car there's no real need to drive anywhere. God Bless,  
Jim&Michelle McCoy



Dear Mr. Widjeskog,

My oldest brother, David Rich was a member of your organization. All the members helped him deal with residual post-traumatic stress. It affected his entire life!

He definitely improved after attending the reunions after 1999. The association helped him in ways I cannot understand. The impact of Vietnam was so terrible that he suppressed much of that time of his life. Beginning in the mid 1990's he was treated by the VA in Maine. During the last decade of his life he mastered Russian, studied geology and traveled. He sponsored exchange students and scholars.

Looking back, I am very grateful for the understanding and compassion the association extended to him.

Jim Campbell's remembrance on the web site, captured the complexity of the impact Vietnam had on David's life!

He passed on November 9, 2011. Please keep your great work going.

*Very respectfully,*

*C. Matt Rich, Harpswell, Maine*

## Ripcord on Facebook

*by Anthony Critchlow*



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ripcordassociation/>

Hi everyone. Well we are still struggling with winter here. WE get snow every other day and Rain the next. The river that runs through town is at flood stage. We are loads of fun here. I hope everyone else's spring is better.

Now for our Face book page. We continue to grow every month. We currently have 649 members. We get 5 to 6 new ones every month.

My wife and I are looking forward to this year's reunion in Laughlin Nevada. I have my hotel reservations. We will drive from Boise and back with a little stay in Vegas after.

Please keep posting to the Face book page. I was asked about death notices of Ripcord Vets. I say yes please by all means post them to our page. Frank would like to know these too I would think.

I hope many of your west coasters are thinking about coming to this year's reunion.

So from Idaho Have a great and safe summer see you in October.

## Ripcord 2017 Reunion Attendees

*24 April 2017*

David & Carol Bohan Pathfinder  
Bill Boles D 2/506  
Bruce Brady & Karolyn Kruger A 2/506  
Anthony & Dennise Critchlow HHC 2/506  
Bob & Red Judd B 2/506  
Dave & Sophia Kenyon 326 ENG  
Greg & Kristi Kiekintveld 326 ENG  
Jim & Michelle McCoy D 1/506  
Tom & Annette Militello A 2/11 FA  
Bob Tarbuck & Paige Corkhill C 2/506  
Dale & Janet Tauer D 1/506  
Lee & Kathy Widjeskog A 2/506  
Mike & Liz Womack C 2/506  
David & Linda Yonts A 2/506  
David & Wendy Yonts Guests

# JERSEY RAMBLINGS

by Lee Widjeskog A/2-506



Spring is really here and on some days summer is here. Things have been busy in our household. We had a 30' X 10' porch put on the front of our house. I had wanted to do the project myself, but Kathy said she would rather have it done before I die. I objected and said I was in good health. She agreed but based on my track record it could be 10 years before I got the project done! Her logic won out and we hired a contractor to do the porch for us. It is now done and I can say the results are worth the money!

In my continuing search for photos of those who died in the Ripcord battle, I am now down to only needing one more picture. I received a very good picture of Leroy Nelson (B 2/501) from his sister. That only leaves Raymond Peter Susi who served with A 2/506 in late 1969 (on the bunker line up near the DMZ)



Leroy Nelson

and then with E 2/506 (mortars) till his death. Reportedly he was in a helicopter crash on 28 April 1970, but we have not been able to verify that there was such an incident. So far only Frank Marshall remembers this Italian boy from Brooklyn and even he has no pictures of him. Any info you may remember about Ray may be useful so let me know what you recall of this trooper or the circumstances surrounding his death. As I write this Tiny Aanonsen is diligently searching old newspapers in New York City for further info on Ray or his family and maybe a picture from his high school as well. There are many high schools in Brooklyn!! Robin Graham has searched the Army archives and Ancestry.com but is still coming up empty. Guys in Alpha and Echo 2/506, check your old photos and see if Ray is in them! If anyone has a suggestion for a possible lead, let me know!

As I have mentioned, the intent is to put out a year book that includes all 139 KIAs for the 50th anniversary of the battle in 2020. If possible, I would like to add a short note about each fellow as we remember them, under each picture. Any of you reading this, who knew the guys, send me a note and I will add it to the photo. The list of those who died due to the operation can be found on our website. Click "History" and then "Ripcord Memorial Page". The list is in order of dates of death.

With that, make sure you get your rooms reserved for the reunion and get your registration into me as soon

as possible. It may be a while before we travel this far west for a reunion so you west coast boys should try to take off a little bit of time and join us! I guarantee you will have a great time!

See you in October !

Lee Widjeskog

Sir

I am attempting to acquire any documentation that would assist my efforts too correct my fathers DD214. He flew on the mission with B Co. 159th Aviation Battalion (ASH), 101st Airborne Division in the evacuation of Fire Base Ripcord. I have a picture recovered from the Varsity webpage that shows him being awarded the medal but the paperwork never got in his records. Any assistance or documentation would be greatly appreciated.

Jermaine L. Irby

jermaine.irby1@yahoo.com

Air Medal with "V", My Father



## INCOMING MAIL

Our members enjoy reading letters to the Editor, so why not take a few minutes and send us a letter to let other members know about you, your thoughts about the Ripcord Association, our reunions or anything you like to share.

Send your letters to:

mail@ripcordassociation.com

Send your letters to:

mail@ripcordassociation.com

## Ripcord Association Newest Members

|           |          |                   |
|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Bohan     | Daniel   | Associate Member  |
| Day       | Craig    | Div HHC G-3 ops   |
| Lonnerman | Donald   | 2/319 Arty        |
| Fieser    | Lawrence | A & C 1/506       |
| Zoller Sr | Willis   | HHC 2-506         |
| Turner    | Michael  | B/1-506           |
| Tucker    | Kirby    | Associate B/2-319 |
| Krom      | Ron      | A & B 2/319 Arty  |

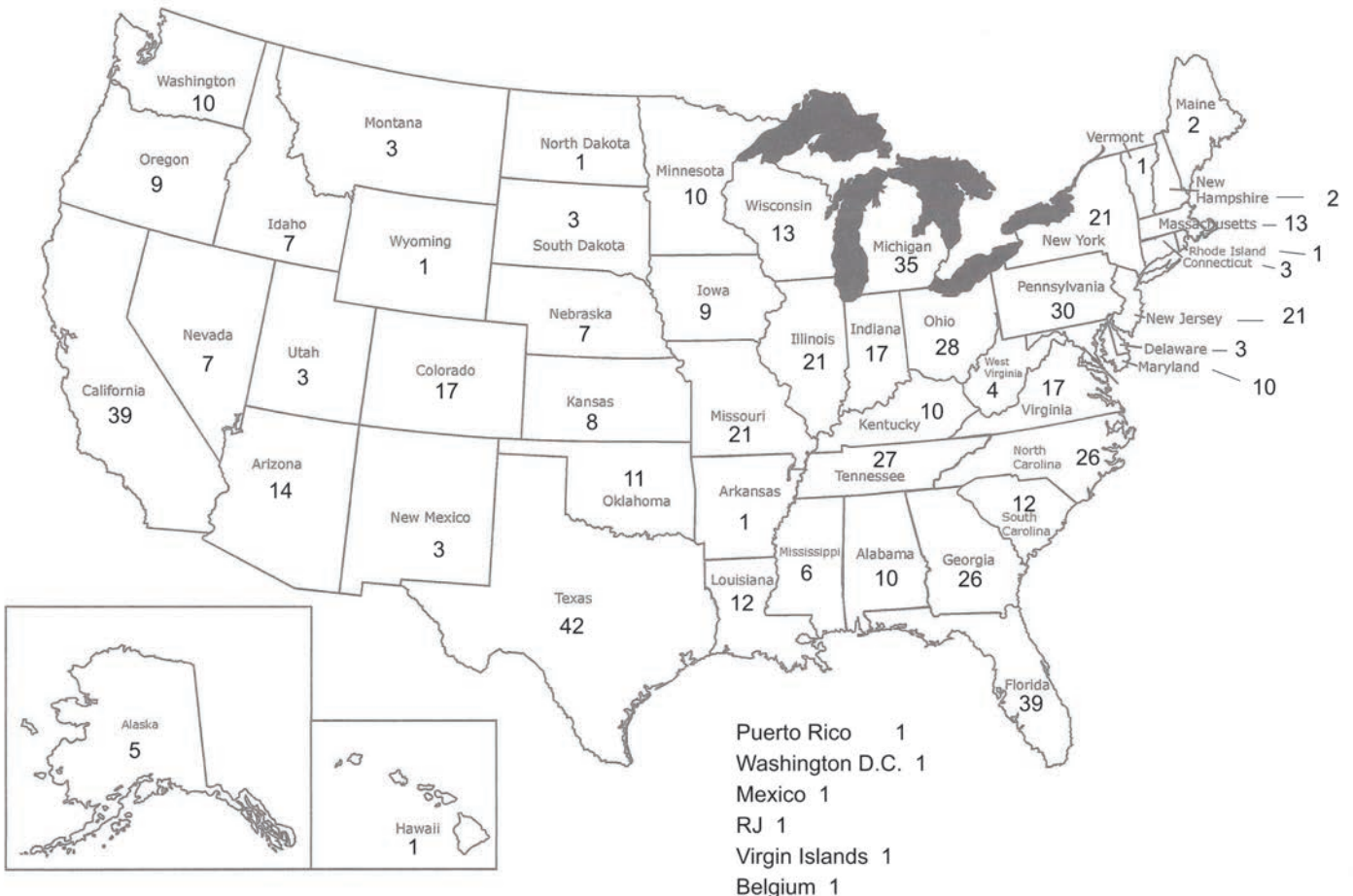
## Membership Status

798 members in our Ripcord Association  
 645 are Ripcord Veterans  
 153 are Associate Members  
 209 receive newsletter via Postal Mail  
 588 receive the newsletter via e-mail  
 649 on Facebook "Ripcord Association Group"

**Please go to our website and update your membership to keep getting important information about our Ripcord Association**

## Ripcord Veterans by State (that are in The Ripcord Association)

Updated 5/5/17



# CINC Army Aviation North Atlantic

*By Major General Ben Harrison, Retired*

In July 1959 I replaced Captain Clay Pigeon (honestly, that was his real name) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Combat Team (2<sup>nd</sup> BCT) in Keflavik, Iceland which made me Commander-In-Chief of Army Aviation North Atlantic. The 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT consisted of about 1,300 U.S. Army military personnel serving as the Army component of the Icelandic Defense Force. An Army colonel commanded the Army component, but had little to do with the daily operations of the 2d BCT. A Navy captain (06) commanded their component which consisted of a relatively small detachment of support personnel. The Navy rotated half-squadrons of P-2V "Neptune" patrol bombers to duty in Iceland for six-month TDY tours. Today, the largest U.S. force in Iceland is the Navy and a Navy captain commands the base.



## Icelandic Landscape

An Air Force Colonel, commander of the Air Force Component, commanded the base wing. Its major fighting force was the 57<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (57<sup>th</sup> FS) with F-89 "Scorpion" twin-engine, all-weather fighter-interceptors. Keflavik gained fame as the "intercept capital" during the Cold War, thanks to the "Black Knights" of the 57th Fighter Squadron. It intercepted more than 3,000 aircraft of the former Soviet Union between 1962 and 1991, an all time Air Force record. The high point of this activity came in 1985 and 1986, when the 57th FS logged a whopping 170 intercepts in each of these years. Because of the changed world situation and the subsequent Air Force downsizing, the 57th FS met deactivation on March 2, 1995.

The Icelandic Defense Force (IDF), commanded by a U.S Air Force brigadier general during my tour, is subordinate to the NATO Commander in Europe. Today the IDF is commanded by a U.S Air Force colonel. It is the umbrella command for all other commands within Iceland. The staff includes NATO liaison officers. The 2d Ranger Battalion (of WW II D-Day fame at Pointe du Hoc) was redesignated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry

BCT of the "Arctic Rangers." It was a standard light infantry battalion supported by a 105 battery of artillery, a platoon of M-48 tanks, an engineer platoon and an aviation section of two H-19 "Chickasaw" helicopters and an L-20 "Beaver."

Why was the U.S. Army in Iceland and why was Ben Harrison in Iceland? The history reaches back to 1940 when British Intelligence learned that Nazi Germany planned to establish a submarine base in Iceland to control the North Atlantic sea-lanes. The Icelandic government (the world's oldest surviving parliament, the

Althingi, was established by early Norse colonists in 930 C.E.) denied the British request to come ashore and defend Iceland against the Nazis. The British came ashore shooting in 1940 and the Icelandic government retreated to Norway. The Brits invited the U.S. into Iceland and Marines, followed by Army troops, came ashore. All British

and U.S. forces withdrew in 1945. The Americans withdrew uneventfully while the British withdrew amid fanfare. Upon departure the British asked the Icelandic government to compensate them for the major buildings and a hospital which they constructed. The Icelandics refused and the Brits sent engineer sappers ashore and blew all the buildings down.

Though a very old republic, Iceland habitually had a coalition government. They have been independent thinkers with many political parties. I don't recall the Icelandic names, but the four major parties were distinguished by whom they supported and whom they disliked the most. Number one was the Communist party, two was the Socialist party, three was the anti-British and four was the anti-American. The Icelandics much preferred consumer products from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Czech products led the way. One or more Soviet Union cargo ships were usually anchored in the Reykjavik harbor. Notwithstanding the fact that Iceland was a charter member of NATO, the people clearly were pro-Soviet Union.

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(CINC continued)*

When the Communist Chinese joined the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950, an element in the U.S. government intelligence services believed that this “limited” war might be a feint by the Soviet Union to mask their intent to invade Western Europe. Part of the U.S. response was the activation of four National Guard divisions. It surprised most people that only two of the divisions sailed to Korea; the other two deployed to the front lines of Western Europe. The concern about an aggressive Soviet Union led the U.S. to negotiate with the Icelandic government to build four Early Warning Radar Sites in Iceland and station security and supporting personnel on the island. These deployments and site construction began in 1951.

The negotiations permitted the U.S. to build a large airbase at Keflavik, about 50-miles west-south-west of the capital of Reykjavik. There were about 135,000 people in the country with about 60,000 in Reykjavik. Iceland is about the size of Kentucky, but with a round shape. The northern edge is just below the Arctic Circle. The jerks in the State Department who negotiated the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) obviously had no intentions of serving there. The airbase at Keflavik had to be called an “Agreed Area” with complete control maintained by the Icelandic government. Icelandic police possessed total authority and could enter any set of family or bachelor quarters and search when and where they desired. They could—and did--arrest personnel for traffic violations in the Agreed Area. A limited number of Americans were allowed off the Agreed Area by specific pass. The Icelandic police maintained the gates and usually detail searched every car. Only for specified hours at Thanksgiving and Christmas were we allowed to take food and other items off the Agreed Area from the commissary or base exchange. The most insulting, denigrating restriction in the SOFA was the restriction that no Black, Afro-American, Negroid personnel were permitted to be assigned to or visit Iceland to include the Agreed Area. The SOFA also precluded the assignment to Iceland of women in the U.S. military.

Very few passes were available to the troops and very few really wanted to go off the Agreed Area anyway. Most of the passes required re-entry by 2100 and most of the very few night spots in Reykjavik did not open until well past 2100. American military personnel on pass were required to be in Class A uniforms at all times—no civilian clothing permitted out of the Agreed Area.

The Officer’s Club, NCO Club and EM Club did a booming business. And, of course, in the summer, we could play softball, baseball and football everywhere all night with plenty of light. The Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights were truly spectacular. I never got used to leaving the Officers Club at 2300 hours in broad daylight. There were walkways from the club to the BOQ with an iron rail to help us fight the high winds.

Back to why Ben Harrison was in Iceland. Commissioned in the Infantry in 1951, I had tours in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, on the faculty of the Infantry School, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Germany (where I flew in L-19s as an aerial observer), and command of an infantry rifle company before my fifth request for flight school was finally approved. After the Advanced Course at Ft. Benning, I went to flight school and stayed on at Ft. Rucker. I graduated number one in my class and was told I would be an instructor in the Aviation School Tactics Department. When I returned from leave I found that they had read my eight-page critique of the poor quality of instruction and lack of supervision. My critique noted that in my four-months at Ft. Rucker, no one above the grade of captain had ever visited any of my classes. My assignment to the Tactics Department was canceled and I was assigned to the 121<sup>st</sup> Aviation Company, a part of the school troops under the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battle Group. After a brief period as company executive officer, I became the Battle Group S-1.

When the 1958 crisis erupted in Lebanon, the CG at Rucker received a Top Secret message asking how quickly the new air cavalry troop, the 7292<sup>nd</sup> Experimental Aviation Company, could be ready to deploy. The 7292<sup>nd</sup> had only about 12 people assigned and was only periodically augmented by staff and faculty instructors for the purpose of staging demonstrations.

The Battle Group Commander made me his special assistant to get the company ready for deployment. These were very exciting and challenging days with training at Ft. Rucker, Eglin AFB and Ft. Stewart with lots of high-level attention from above. The priority for pre-deployment training dropped significantly early in 1959. Not wanting to go back to a staff desk job, I asked the Infantry Branch what might be in store for me. They said my record was very good, but that I probably had no chance for the Command and General Staff College until I completed a short/undesirable tour overseas. I said “Fine, send me.”

*(To be continued in next issue of Ripcord Report)*

# RIPCORN REUNION 2017 LAUGHLIN, NEVADA

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) be attending? If yes what are their names? (For name tag purposes only).

---

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed for # \_\_\_\_\_ Adults and # \_\_\_\_\_ children under 18.  
\$35 for children under 18. For adults see discounts below !

## DISCOUNTS FOR EARLY REGISTRATION:

Before June 30, 2015, \$75 per adult

July 1 through 31, 2015 \$80 per adult,

August 1 through September 6, 2015 \$85 per adult.

After September 6, 2015 \$90 per adult.

Your registration fee covers the cost of the snacks, beverages, hot hors d'oeuvres on Wednesday night and dinner on Thursday.

## Registration due no later than SEPTEMBER 25, 2017.

Make your check payable to "RIPCORN ASSOCIATION"

Mail your check with this form to:

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

Questions? Call Lee at 856-451-1108 before 26 SEPT. 2015. (After call 609-774-6951)

- Monday, October 2:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)  
**Tuesday, October 3:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)  
**Wednesday, October 4:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Ladies raffle 1800 hours (6PM)  
**Thursday, October 5 :** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room.  
Dinner with cash bar in Pavillion starting at 1700 hours done by 2200 hours.  
**Friday, October 6:** Homeward bound

**Tuesday golf outing (a separate fee). Check if you will play [  ].**

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPERATELY**

**BY September 17, 2017**

CALL 1-800-343-4533

MENTION GROUP CODE: **RIPCORN**

(Price is \$33.99 per night plus tax (Sun-Thur.) breakfast is included.)