



# RIPCORD REPORT



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

Issue # 135

January 2024

## 2024 Ripcord Reunion

### Myrtle Beach, SC

### The Hilton Doubletree Resort

### Oct 27 thru Oct 30

### Do not miss this one!



The 2024 Reunion will be at The Hilton Doubletree Oceanfront Resort located at the south end of Myrtle Beach. It is three miles (10 minutes) from the Myrtle Beach Airport. Also located just two miles from the Market Common Shopping and Restaurant District, formally the old Air Force base. And you are just 10 miles from fine-dining restaurants with white table cloths to burger joints where you can discard peanut shells on the floor in Murrells Inlet. Known as the “Seafood Capital of South Carolina.”

# Ripcord Association Update

by Pete Meloro

Hello again from New Jersey. I hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year. Another year has passed and another reunion in Springfield, Missouri. As usual, we enjoyed the time spent with each other and from that perspective, it was a reunion enjoyed by all who attended. However, I must address the general failure of the University Plaza Hotel to deliver a satisfactory experience for anyone who stayed at the hotel. Our stay was replete with long delays and lines upon checking in to the hotel. This was compounded by the fact that rooms were not cleaned and available upon checking in. Several members waited hours for the rooms to be made available. We also endured less than quality customer service on the part of some hotel staff, and last but certainly not least, the hotel experienced significant issues with the supply of hot water. This resulted in far too many of us having to take cold showers. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being outstanding, I would rate our experience at 1, and that is only because the kitchen staff was responsive to all our needs and did an admirable job during the reunion. Board members were forced to spend far too much time meeting with the Managers of the hotel in an attempt to address the many complaints. Fortunately, our contractual obligation to this hotel is finished.



On to 2024 where our reunion is scheduled to be held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Let me start by saying that there WILL BE A LADIES AUCTION. Given our negative recent hotel experience and feedback we received from many members, we have contracted with a Hilton Hotel in Myrtle Beach. This should be a *significant upgrade* in our hotel experience. Obviously, when we upgraded the level of the hotel, that comes with higher cost. The basic daily rate for the hotel will be \$107. Unfortunately, this hotel and most hotels add a Resort Fee and taxes, which will bring the daily rate to approximately \$137. Unlike past reunions, breakfast will not be included but, thankfully, parking will be at no cost. The daily rate and free parking were secured after many hours of negotiation. We were offered a 20% discount on breakfast but the cost of breakfast was prohibitive. We will work on putting together a list of available locations that offer breakfast.

I hope this Newsletter finds everyone doing well.

# FSB Ripcord Association 2024 Reunion

by John Fowler

When: October 27 – 31, 2024  
Where: Double Tree Resort by Hilton  
Myrtle Beach Oceanfront  
3200 S. Ocean Boulevard  
Myrtle Beach, SC 29577  
843-315-7100



We are returning to Myrtle Beach for the 2024 and 2025 Reunions. Due to the deteriorated condition of the Sands Ocean Club Resort, the Board of Directors searched for a better hotel that would provide high quality accommodations and amenities at a fair price. The Double Tree Oceanfront Resort was the result of the search. The Double Tree Resort is located in the heart of the Myrtle Beach commercial district with many dining and entertainment options nearby.

**The negotiated room rate is \$107/night plus resort fees and tax. The total daily expense for room, tax and fees is \$137.64. The following is included:**

## In Room Amenities:

- Basic guest internet access (up to 2 devices).
- Unlimited local & 800 phone access.
- In room bottled water.

## Resort Amenities:

- Walking access to Pier.
- 10% off onsite Gift Shop purchases.
- Use of Beach towels during stay.
- AM Coffee in hotel lobby.

## Recreation Amenities:

- Mini golf.
- Lifesized games & board games.

## Onsite parking

- Free.

While Breakfast will not be included, as it has in the past, we are evaluating alternatives and will have further information in future Newsletters.

Reservations can be made by calling 843-315-7100. Make sure to mention that you are with the Firebase Ripcord Group. A link will soon be posted on the Ripcord Association website to allow on line registration with the Double Tree Resort.

**Dear Ripcord Association,**

First of all, thank you so much for inviting me to attend and meet so many of you at the reunion in Missouri last year. It truly was an honor to meet you and tell you about the *Robert Kalsu Legacy Project* here at Del City High School (DCHS) in Del City, Oklahoma.

We have now fundraised enough to proceed with the building of an heroic size statue of Del City 63' Alum *Robert Kalsu*, who after an All American Football Career at the University of Oklahoma and "Rookie of the Year" performance in his only year with the Buffalo Bills, became the only professional athlete killed in the Vietnam War .

On 21 July 1970, America and Del City lost a TRUE All American . Robert Kalsu was a man of great honor, courage, commitment and character. Now 54 years later, DCHS is remembering and honoring Kalsu on Friday, 29 March 2024, (Vietnam War Veterans Day), at 1300 (1 pm) at DCHS where we will unveil and dedicate this statue. This statue will serve to inspire generations of future Del City Eagle students in the many years ahead.

All of the Ripcord Association members are invited to attend this ceremony, which will include a documentary film and a reception. The entire Kalsu Family is expected to be there. Classmates, teammates and Battle Buddies are invited to attend. Legendary Oklahoma Football Coach Barry Switzer and Ripcord Association and fellow soldier from the 101st Airborne, Mike Renner, will make comments. It is going to be a time to remember.

*Very Respectfully,*  
*John Keilty*  
*Captain U S Navy (Ret)*  
*405-820-9542*



**2022 Ripcord Reunion Yearbook**

I have had a few requests for our previous reunion Yearbook from 2022.

If you gave me your request, I am sorry but I lost the information. Please let me know again and I will send you a 2022 yearbook, once I have everyone's request, I will have to get them reprinted.

Thank you for your patience.

**Frank Marshall**  
**fbripcord@gmail.com**

**Ripcord on Facebook**

*by Anthony Critchlow*



Happy New Year everyone. I hope you had a great Christmas. As in all years, we have had our ups and downs in our life. Overall, a great year. Dennise and I are looking forward to next years reunion. It looks like we will get there on Monday. It's a long flight to Myrtle Beach from Idaho. Our membership is holding steady at 1305. Keep posting your Vietnam pictures. Don't worry if they are not Ripcord. Your time there is your history. Have a good year. Currahee!

**Editor's note:**

Anthony received the Appreciation Award this year for all his work with the Facebook group page. He has been monitoring the facebook page for over 10 years now.



**Join our Facebook group:**  
**Ripcord Association**  
**Hosted by Anthony Critchlow**  
**1,305 current members**



**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, and all our Ripcord members up to date.

- Richard Blythe
- Anthony Critchlow
- Bob Jones
- Ken Gainer
- Don Holthausen
- George Strasburg
- David Lockwood
- Joe Smith

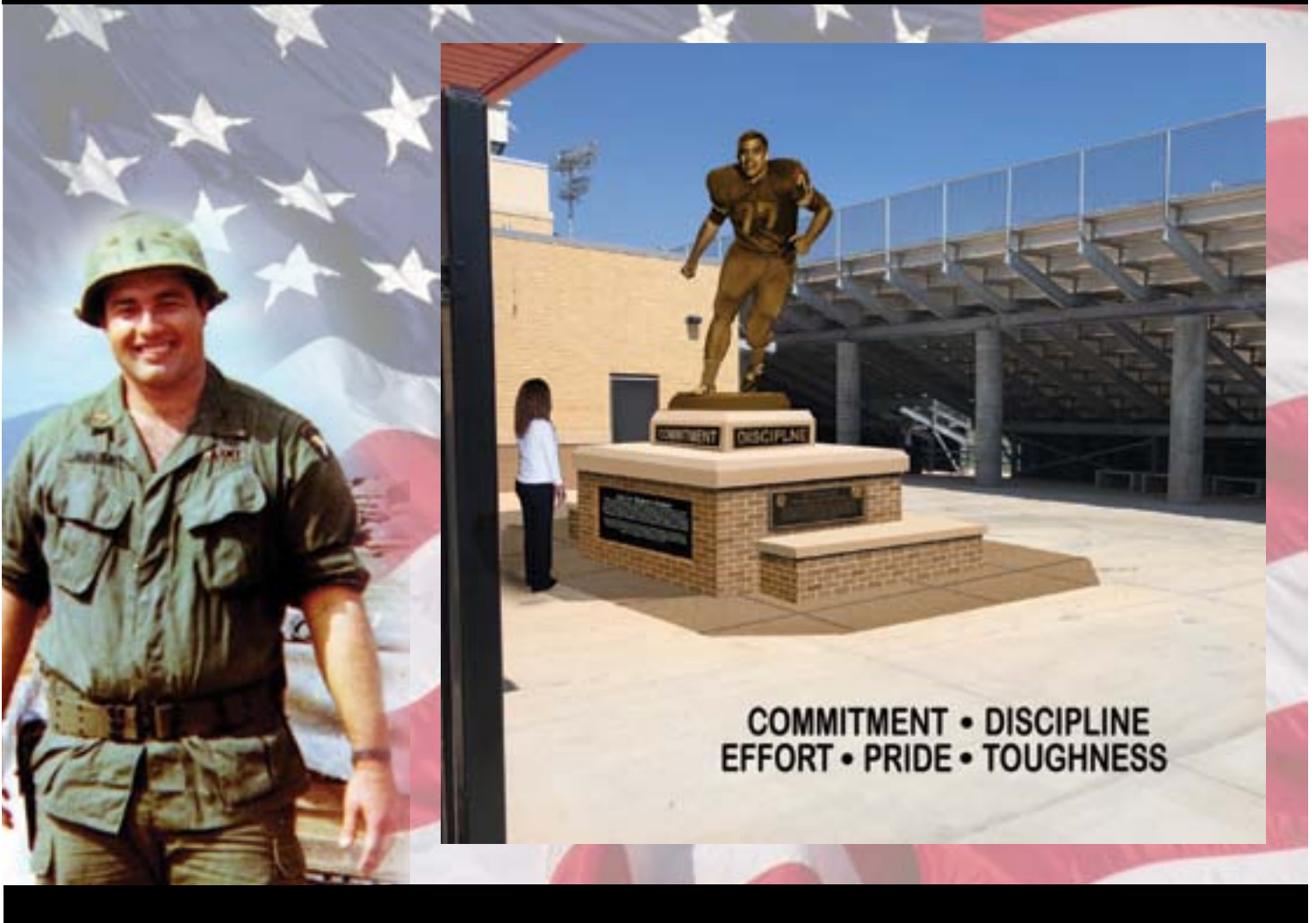
Checks payable to: "Ripcord Association".

Mail to: **Pete Meloro**  
**107 Maple Drive**  
**Spring Lake Hts, NJ 07762**



# Robert Kalsu Legacy Group Project

## Fall 2023



### **Mission Statement:**

To preserve and promote the story of Del City's Robert Kalsu,  
a true American Hero

Del City High School Class of 1963

#### **Donations:**

Force 50 Foundation, Inc. (501c3)  
Memo: Robert Kalsu Legacy Group Project  
P.O. Box 722838  
Norman, OK 73070  
405-388-3808

#### **For more information:**

Gina Standridge - grhs0201@gmail.com / 405-830-6294  
John Keilty - jkeilty@mid-del.net / 405 820-9542

[www.kalsulegacy.org](http://www.kalsulegacy.org)

## From the President

Bill Boles



I Hope everyone had a Great Christmas and New Year. I want to invite everyone to come to Myrtle Beach this year, it's going to be Great. The Board is really working hard to make it more enjoyable. Hope to see everyone there



### New member

I have only recently learned of the Ripcord Association and therefore I am requesting membership. My connection to the FSB is detailed below.

My initial assignment in the 101st was as a platoon leader in 1/327. I was brought out of the field in May or June, 1970 and put in the position of Aide de Camp to one of the Assistant Division Commanders - Supply (BG Olin E. Smith). I didn't request this reassignment and no one ever explained why I was chosen. I asked to return to my platoon in the field and was denied.

So...towards the end of Ripcord the division commander, MG Hennessy, went on leave to (I think) Japan to visit his wife. At that time division headquarters made the decision to put the acting division commanders on station via helicopter over Ripcord, not to command but observe. Since the CG was out of the country the acting division commander was the ASD for Operations, BG Sidney Berry. When he wasn't on station, my boss BG Smith and I were in the air over FSB Ripcord. If the CG had been in country he and BG Berry would have alternated the task and my boss would not have been involved, as his primary role was the supply side. As a side note, I have met the brigade commander, Col. Harrison, during meetings at division hq. He struck me as a very smart guy who quickly grasped the important details of a problem.

That's my connection to Ripcord. I am deeply sorry it happened but being part of it was a distant honor for me. Currahee!

Michael Carper

HHC, 101st Airborne Div (Airmobile)

*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.*

## Screaming Eagle Won't Go Navy

CAMP EVANS - A young 101st soldier recently received a letter from a Navy recruiter explaining the Navy's 120-day enlistment program.

The letter told him of his vulnerability to the draft, since he had completed his pre-induction physical examination, and that the Navy's delayed enlistment program might be the one for him.

Such letters are not uncommon to the draft-aged youths, but for Spec. 4 John R. Heber, Harleyville, Pa., it was a case of better never than late.

Heber is veteran of eight months in Vietnam with Co. A, 1st Bn. (Airmobile), 506th Infantry.

In his letter of reply, the Currahee soldier candidly informed his recruiter, "Yes, I have completed my pre-induction Selective Service examination, and my Selective Service induction examination. I have also received my cholera and plague shots, not to mention a one-year supply of malaria tablets."

"I would like very much to talk to you concerning your enlistment program, but my company commander feels he cannot grant me a 30-day leave to discuss my enlistment with you."

Story taken from "The Screaming Eagle" Army newspaper dated 02 Feb 1970 Vol. III, No.4.

**Side note:** "My daughter just gave me a new whiskey glass engraved with: ARMY Because No One Played Navy As A Kid." **BILL HEATH Editor.**

## 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: Bill Heath

email: [editor@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:editor@ripcordassociation.com)

### Design & Layout

Frank Marshall & Bill Heath

email: [newsletter@ripcordassociation.com](mailto:newsletter@ripcordassociation.com)

## TWO RIPCORD WARRIORS CROSS OVER

It is with great sadness that I must advise of the recent deaths of two Ripcord stalwarts, who were as good as it gets.

Ralph “Ralphie Boy” Motta passed away on November 8th, 2023, in his hometown of Hingham, Massachusetts. A graveyard service was celebrated on November 15, 2023 at the St. Paul’s Cemetery in Hingham. Ralphie Boy was a 19-year old pointman on one of the battalion recon teams for most of his tour, prior to being assigned as a clerk typist to the rear Tactical Operations Center (the “TOC”) at Camp Evans. Later in my tour, I was assigned to the rear TOC as a battalion liaison officer, where I first met Ralphie Boy. Ralphie Boy enjoyed a wonderful reputation as a magnificent soldier while performing his duties as a pointman on the recon team. His recon teammate and great friend, John Schnarr, would characterize Ralphie Boy as a man of great courage whose compassionate heart was devoted to those soldiers he served with on the recon team.

Ralphie Boy was greatly admired, respected and loved by his comrades on the recon team. He was somewhat of an introvert and was incapable of boasting about his many achievements while in the field. Ralphie Boy was one of the most unassuming men I have ever known. He loved the soldiers with whom he served, and his delightful personality coupled with his great courage in battle, made him the magnificent warrior he was. Ralphie Boy was probably the most naïve and idealistic soldier that I ever served with in Vietnam

While serving in the rear TOC, Ralphie Boy greatly enjoyed the banter among the other soldiers working in the rear TOC, prior to his return to the States. Ralphie Boy served about six (6) months at Fort Polk before separating from the Army and returning to Massachusetts. After graduating from college and marrying his wife Rosemary, Ralphie Boy spent the rest of his life working in the seafood business in Boston. One of the great passions in Ralphie Boy’s life was drinking Heineken beer in great quantities when he gathered with his Ripcord buddies from the rear TOC and the recon team. These were the happiest of times for Ralphie Boy. He was always a joy to be with. To know him was to love him.

Chuck “Big Dog” Damron passed away after a lengthy illness on November 25, 2023 at the Veteran’s

facility in Springville, California. He will be buried at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California on January 12, 2024. Chuck was originally assigned as a rifleman in the 1st Infantry Division which was then located in the southern part of South Vietnam. When the Big Red One returned to the States, Chuck was reassigned to second platoon of Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion of the 506th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. I was the second platoon leader when Chuck arrived in the platoon. I assigned him to the third squad under Sgt. Jerry Moyer. After serving as a rifleman for a month or so, I assigned Chuck to a machine gun team as the assistant gunner to Layne Hammons. No lieutenant in Vietnam could have been blessed more than myself to have had the great machine gun teams that served with me in Vietnam. Chuck and Layne were special and were admired and respected by all who served with them. Chuck was an extrovert with a warm and outgoing personality while Layne was more introverted with a non-confrontational personality. They both had a willingness and great desire to quickly bring absolute “scunion” on the enemy in a firefight. They both knew that being on a machine gun team was not a job for the timid or weak of heart. Together, they were best described as “bad ass”. They served with great distinction and never shirked a duty.

Chuck was a natural born leader who had the heart and courage of a lion in battle, yet was always cheerful in all weathers. He was devoted to the warriors he served with in combat. His leadership qualities made life much easier for his old lieutenant. A lieutenant could not ask for a more courageous and loyal warrior to command.

After separating from the Army, Chuck moved back to California, at which time he married, and he and his wife soon were blessed with the birth of two daughters, Onnie Bomgaars and Shawna Lange, who he loved with all of his heart. Chuck went to work as an iron worker.

To more fully understand how fierce a man like Chuck could be, the following story will give you a good idea of what kind of man Chuck was.

“One day after work, Chuck and a friend of his stopped by a bar to have a drink. Chuck’s friend was wearing a “Vietnam” hat. A short time later, a guy comes up to Chuck’s friend at the bar and said to him: ‘You Vietnam veterans are nothing but a bunch of losers.’ Chuck said to himself, ‘this guy needs an ass whipping, and I’m the man to give him one’. Chuck then proceeded to give the poor soul a vicious beating

*(continued on page 7)*

**Two Warriors continued**

which resulted in serious injury to the guy. Chuck was charged with aggravated assault and battery and was convicted by the court and sentenced to two years in prison. When Layne and I located Chuck 28 years later, he was telling us the story and I said to him, "Chuck, you should have never done this. You going to prison ruined your life". He looked at me and he said, "Lt., it was worth it, the man needed a beating, and I can promise you one thing; that sorry loudmouth will never in his life make a derogatory statement to a Vietnam veteran again."

All in all, I loved Chuck and Ralphie Boy like brothers. These two courageous cavaliers served the nation with great pride and dignity. Men like them are our nation's greatest treasure. They defined the term "American Fighting Men". They both were the heart and soul of the units they fought with in battle. They were both not only magnificent warriors, but also magnificent human beings.

Lt. Jim Campbell



**New member**

I am looking for information, pictures, videos anything I can find on Sgt John Loy "Red" Keister, he was my Uncle KIA when I was a year and a half old.

He was with 1st platoon, company D, 2nd battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, KIA 7/14/1970 Thua Thien province. I have always heard he was on hill 805 near FSB Ripcord. Any information would be greatly appreciated.

*Thank you and thank you for your service.*

*Scott Keister*

*heath1366@twc.com*



**New Member**

My uncle was 1st Lt. John E. Darling, 101st Airborne, 2nd Battalion, 506 Infantry. Shot down May 18th, 1970. Purple Heart recipient.

*Todd Wantz*

*Associate Member*



**In Memory Of  
Robin Spear Graham  
June 17, 1943 - May 13, 2023**



Robin Spear Graham, a Vietnam veteran and retired lieutenant colonel, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, May 13, 2023. His family is deeply saddened by his sudden death.

He was born on June 17, 1943, to the late William and Helen Graham, in New Rochelle, NY. He attended Marietta College in Ohio and received a Masters of Science in geology from Emory University in Georgia. He served in Vietnam in the HHC 2/506th Infantry, US Army, and retired from the Army with 26 years of military service.

**Robin documented the day-to-day action of the Battle of Fire Support Base Ripcord, which has been archived with the Department of the Army. He received an award for his efforts from the Ripcord Association.**

He loved being outdoors in nature, camping, and driving backroads. He loved music, from classical to bagpipes, and celebrated his Scottish heritage at regional Highland games. He was an avid genealogist and documented several lines of ancestry. One of his passions was photography - he found comfort and peace in capturing raw nature and using it to express himself .

Robin had an enormous heart and a wonderful sense of humor. He will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his loving fiancée Ann Halligan of Cherokee Village, AR, daughter Anne Graham (Beth Wright) of Minneapolis, MN, and brother William Graham of Kent, England. Preceded in death by his son Scot Graham.



# RIPCORD REUNION 2024 Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

I have not received a Ripcord Coin.  I require a Reunion Name Tag and Lanyard

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT IN 'NAM \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

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.

**Your registration fee of \$75 per Adult covers the cost of the snacks, beverages, (includes beer and wine) hot Hors D'oeuvres on Tuesday night and dinner on Wednesday.**

**Registration fee is now due!**

Make your check payable to "RIPCORD ASSOCIATION" Mail your check with this form to:

**Peter Meloro, 107 Maple Drive, Spring Lake Hts, NJ 07762.**

**Questions? Call Pete at 732-947-1664 or Frank Marshall 609-472-0970**

## AGENDA

- Sunday, October 27:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Self guided tours and shopping)  
**Monday, October 28:** Hospitality suite opens at 1200 hours. (Golf in the AM) (Self guided tours)  
**Tuesday, October 29:** Hospitality 1200 Hours. Hot Hors D'oeuvres 1730 hours  
**Wednesday October 30:** Business meeting for association business in Hospitality room (1100 hrs)  
Dinner with cash bar starting at 1700 hours done by 2200 hours.  
**Thursday, October 31:** Homeward bound  
**Monday golf outing (a separate fee).** Check if you will play [  ].

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE SEPARATELY**

**BY September 11, 2024 CALL 843-315-7100 for DoubleTree Resort by Hilton**

**and ask for HOTEL RESERVATIONS and mention the**

**GROUP CODE: Firebase Ripcord**

(on line reservation link is on our website [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com))

Price is \$107 + Daily Resort Charge per night plus tax: (\$137.64 total)

While Breakfast will not be included as it has in the past, we are evaluating alternatives and will have further information in future Newsletters.