



# RIPCORD REPORT



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

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## 2024 Ripcord Reunion was a huge success.



## Ripcord Association Update

by Peter Meloro



It is hard to believe that almost a month has passed since our reunion in Myrtle Beach. We had approximately 180 attendees in what was one of our most well attended reunions. The initial feedback we received was that a good time was had by all. We were gratified that the feedback, as it related to the hotel, was extremely positive. The Board and especially John Fowler worked diligently to find a hotel that had high standards and was focused on customer service and ensuring that the hotel experience was a positive one. This was an important goal of the Board since our recent reunions at the hotel in Springfield left a lot to be desired. As with most things in life, you get what you pay for, and the cost of having the Reunion at the Ellie Hotel in Myrtle Beach was more expensive. In spite of the increased cost, I am certain that it was money well spent. As you may know, we are contracted to return to Myrtle Beach for our 2025 Reunion. While there are two Hilton Hotels in this complex, we hope to return to the Ellie Hotel.

There were many highlights at this Reunion. First and foremost, the camaraderie we experience with our fellow veterans and their families is always a highpoint of our reunion. The event at Legends was attended by approximately 120 people and the general consensus is that we must once again schedule this event at our next reunion. We know that Legends does change the performers throughout the year and a completely new show may be scheduled next year.

However, from my perspective, the true highlight of our reunion was the return of Kathy Widjeskog along with her children, Denise Powers and Brett Widjeskog. I am fortunate to live within a two hour drive to Kathy's house and Chris and I have made that trip several times over the last three years. Her arrival at our reunion was much anticipated by everyone and to witness the greetings she received was heartwarming. While many tears were shed, the joy we all experienced in her return was priceless. We hope to see Kathy at our future reunions.

As I am writing this update, it is Thanksgiving week. There are many things I am grateful for and the Ripcord Association is near the top of that list. I value my relationship with the Association and all its members. I want to wish everyone a Happy, Healthy and Merry Christmas.

## Tribute and Plaque Presentation To Kathy Widjeskog - October 30, 2024

It is fair to say that, since the beginning of the Ripcord Association, one special person has been pivotal to its success.

We have an admired individual who is treasured among our group. A person of unparalleled commitment to the mission of solidarity that the Association aspires to.

A partner, a team member, and, most of all, a guardian of the "Welcome Home" message that all of our Country hopes to achieve for Vietnam Veterans.

Please join us in "Welcoming Home" our treasured sister, Kathy Widjeskog.

### Plaque Reads -

Presented to

**Kathy Widjeskog**

In Recognition of Your  
Selfless Devotion to the  
Ripcord Association,  
its Veterans and  
Family Members

*Presented to Kathy by Christine Nevin Meloro,  
Michelle McCoy and Mary Campbell*



# INCOMING MAIL



## To my Ripcord family.

Thank you so much for all your support. It was a very emotional week for me and my children, but we are so glad we attended the reunion. You will always be my Ripcord Family and it was so nice that Denise and Brett got a chance to meet everybody. Everyone was so sweet to them and shared such wonderful stories of their father. Also, thank you so much for the recognition you gave me...it made me cry, but it was a good cry.

*With all my love,  
Kathy Widjeskog*



## Good morning from North Dakota.

Dave and I enjoyed the reunion immensely. Neither of us had been to Myrtle Beach. The hotel staff we encountered were accommodating and very helpful. Denny deserves a big thanks! Our room was great and what a view. We don't see the ocean much from ND. Reconnecting with old friends and getting to know new friends was the highlight of our trip! The hotel outdid itself at the banquet. The food was great! The silent auction had so many wonderful gifts donated by members. The Legends concert was great, too. Appreciated the recognition you all received!

Thank you all as well for all you do and everything you did to put on a wonderful reunion. We look forward to next year!  
*Connie and Dave Cote*



Thank you for this personal tribute of Ripcord's first reunion. My wife and I were very touched by the reunion.

*Rick Blythe*

As always, it was a great reunion. Awesome job done by all. GOD BLESS YOU ALL & GOD BLESS AMERICA!

*Irene Hyde Aanonsen*



Thanks for a great time. So nice spending time with so many great veterans and their spouses and families. I have attached a few pictures, as well. If anyone might have any videos of the Elvis tribute to the veterans, that they would be willing to share, please do. I forgot my

phone Monday so couldn't get any. Awesome evening!  
*Ron and Patricia Sterenczak-Virgilio*

I want to thank every volunteer that made this reunion successful. Many hands make light work and this Ripcord family shines when it comes to volunteering. Thank you to everyone that attended. Until next year...

*Berniece Judd*



The volunteers were fabulous, the setting was perfect and I think all had a great time! It was nice to meet new vets and families and renew friendships with the old ones.

*Sheila and Ray Potts*



I would like to thank my daughter, Lisa Marie, for going to the Ripcord reunion with me to meet my Brothers that I served with in Vietnam, back in 1970. I had a great time and I hope she did too.

*John Beadle, Jr.*



## From the President

*by Bill Boles*



Again, I would like to thank all the many volunteers that helped. It was a great reunion.



**If your contact information has changed, please go to our website and update your membership to keep getting important information about our Ripcord Association**

*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 on Facebook

by Anthony Critchlow



I want to start with Thank you to everyone who made this years reunion possible. Dennise and I had a great time. We are thinking of going to the next reunion.

Our face book page has 1388 members. Thanks to every that posts on our page. You are the ones that help us with information about your time there.

By the time you see this thanksgiving will be over. I hope you all had a great time with family and friends. Now on to Christmas.



**Join our Facebook group:  
Ripcord Association  
Hosted by Anthony Critchlow  
1,370 current members**

## Photos from our 2024 Reunion



## Future Reunions

**2025 Ripcord Reunion**

**Myrtle Beach, SC**

DoubleTree Resort by Hilton

Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

**October 26, 2025 – October 30, 2025**

### BY THE NUMBERS

723 members in our Ripcord Association

597 are Ripcord Veterans

125 are Associate Members

148 receive newsletter via Postal Mail

573 receive the newsletter via e-mail

1,390 Facebook “Ripcord Association Group”



*Brett, Kathy and Denise Widjeskog*