

**Association President's Message – February 2020**

**Greetings fellow AC-119 Gunship Brothers and families!!** I hope your New Year is progressing well. It has been an interesting few months as your President, but with the help of your Board of Directors, we're trying to keep things on track. Last Fall, the Association voted two Associate Members to serve on the Board, and they have brought new energy and a new perspective to our meetings.

We're glad to be able to share information about this year's AC-119 Gunship Reunion in our first **Firing Circle** of 2020. You'll find information about registering for the Fort Walton Beach Reunion **and** making your hotel reservations (**two totally separate actions**) later in this newsletter. (**NOTE:** *It's a good idea to print out your completed registrations and bring them with you to the Reunion.*)

If you haven't been to one of our Reunions before, I'd encourage you to do so to renew and promote camaraderie among our AC-119 Brothers and our families. I also encourage you to bring your families (including children and grandchildren), so we can share our heritage with them. The Reunion flyer provides information about the group activities taking place during the reunion, as well as things you can see and do in Fort Walton Beach on your own.

The Reunion information is also posted on our AC-119 Association Website at the following web link <https://www.ac119gunships.com/reunion/upcoming-reunion/> (and our AC-119 Gunship Facebook page). (*If you haven't joined our Facebook Group yet, I'd encourage you to do so to keep informed on what's going on throughout the year.*)

***Other items of interest you'll find in this Newsletter:***

- **Special Raffle Item.** Look for preliminary information on our next commemorative pistol raffle. We plan to have the pistol on display this year, with the actual drawing to occur at our 2021 Reunion in Branson.
- **Veterans Helping Veterans.** This article shows the success we had working with the VFW to help a Brother navigate the VA system to get care and to get him full military send-off when he passed.

Finally, I had the distinct privilege to present Bill Petrie a special copy of "**The Brothers**" picture that he drew. We had been transporting this picture from reunion to reunion for years to give everyone a chance to sign the space around the picture (see photo below).

If you have any suggestions for improving the Association or promoting our heritage, please forward them to any member of your Board.

Wishing all y'all (Texas' plural version of y'all, or you guys) a great 2020! Hoping to see you in Fort Walton Beach in October.

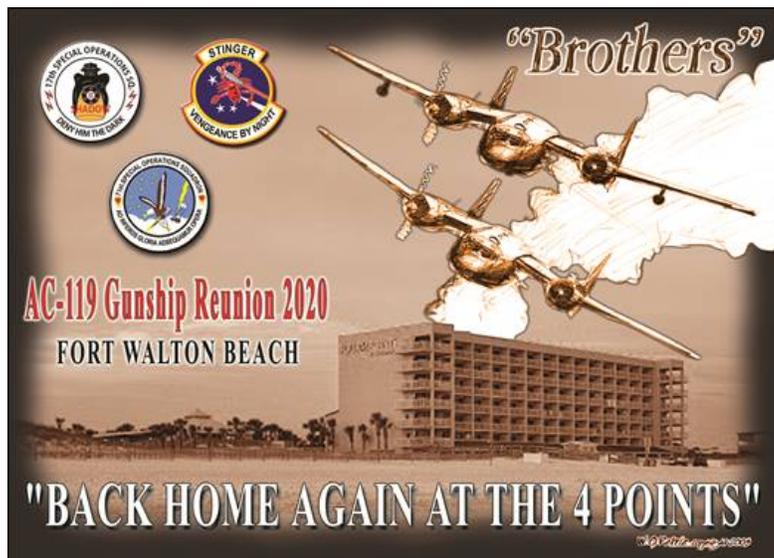
Respectfully,

Jerry Hester  
President 2019-2020



**2020 AC-119 GUNSHIP REUNION XXI REGISTRATION**  
**OCTOBER 28 – NOVEMBER 1, 2020 AT FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA**

***“BACK HOME AGAIN AT FOUR POINTS”***



Our AC-119 Association's Founding Fathers got us together in 2000 to celebrate who we are, the friendships & bonds we'd formed, & to affirm our place in military & SEA History. 400 of us met at the Fort Walton Four Points Hotel. Since then, we've held Reunions every year at locations all over our great country, doing exactly what our Founding Fathers set out to do. We added reasons to get together, like NEW friends, & including family members of our honored KIAs who Gave All. Help us show family, friends, & history our pride in being part of this AC-119 Gunship family. Join us, while you can, where we started, at the Four Points Hotel in Fort Walton Beach!!

**Hotel Room Reservations – Four Points by Sheraton**

1325 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

- Rooms are \$110.39 for one King Bed no View, \$132.69 for two Queen Beds Garden View, or \$171.71 for 2 Queen Beds Beach View, all prices tax inclusive. Remember, **Hotel Reservations** are NOT part of the **Reunion Registration** & you must contact the hotel separately. Use their website [Book Your Group Rate for Back Home Again](#) or call 1-850-243-8116 for the hotel direct or 1-800-325-3535 for central reservations to **reserve** your room. Tell them you are with the AC-119 Gunship Association. **BOOK NOW!** You can reserve rooms at our Reunion rates from Friday, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> to Tuesday, Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, but our **Reunion rates are only guaranteed through Oct 5<sup>th</sup>**. After that, the rates are only good for as long as rooms are available. Bottom line: **reserve** your room by Oct 5<sup>th</sup> to get our guaranteed Reunion rate. You can cancel without charge, as long as you cancel no later than 24 hours prior to your reservation check-in date.

**Reunion Registration**

**After** making your **Hotel Reservation**, **Register for the Reunion!**

- Register online at [Online Reunion Registration](#). Note: It's a good idea to print your completed registration & bring it to the Reunion. **Note** When you Checkout, you'll see a place where it asks "Are you a returning customer?" and "Do you want to create an account?" Those are PayPal fields & you can ignore them. Just go to the end of the Checkout page & you'll be able to complete your registration using either PayPal payment or a credit card.
- If you cannot pay online, CALL Doug Wohlgamuth at 813-781-5728 NOTE: he's East Coast time.
- That **registers** you for the **Reunion**. If you plan to participate in the **Tour**, include it on your **Reunion Registration**, also with payment. **Note: Reunion Registration cut-off is October 21<sup>st</sup>; cancellations on or before October 21, 2020** can receive a refund or make a donation. **If you cancel after October 21, 2020**, we may be required to pay our contracted costs, so no refunds (but, talk to us if there are special circumstances like family emergencies or losses).
- **When you arrive**, head to our Reunion Table to pick up your **Reunion Registration** packet with name tags, Event tickets, etc. If we're not there when you arrive, check-in at the Hotel Desk & go to the Hootch to pick up your **Reunion Registration** packet.

## Transportation

- **Airlines:** Fort Walton Beach is served by the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) with Flights by American, Delta, & United Airlines.
- **Car:** Parking at the hotel is **free**.
- **RVs/Campers:** Hurlburt (850-797-0103) & Eglin (850-883-1243) FamCamps: no reservations; call a couple weeks ahead; Geronimo \$56+ (850-424-6801) & Destin West \$130+ but lower weekly (850-203-4533).

## Reunion Agenda

**Wednesday, Oct 28** (Reunion Registration; Hootch; anything you want to do on your own!)

Hootch opens & stays open **daily** from about 0800 until about 2200 **except** during our Meet & Greet, Banquet, & Farewell BBQ. Hootch snacks & beverages are free (donations welcomed :>).

**Thursday, Oct 29** (Reunion Registration; Hootch; Pensacola Area Tour!)

**Time TBD:** A Pensacola area tour for \$25 will include the Vietnam Wall South, Pensacola Historic District, the Naval Air Museum, & lunch (not included in tour price) at the Cubi Bar Café.

**Friday, Oct 30** (Reunion Registration; Hootch; 18<sup>th</sup> & 73<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Squadrons' Picnic, Meet & Greet!)

**Time TBD Picnic:** Our 18<sup>th</sup> & 73<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Squadrons are hosting a picnic for us across from the Hurlburt Main Gate in the Picnic Area (not "on" the base); we'll post & provide info in a follow-on message. Free to Reunion Attendees! Come on out & meet the warriors who are our heritage!!!

**1700 - Meet & Greet** Cash Bar

**1800 - Meet & Greet** on the North Pool Deck & Patio is \$37; kids ages 4-12 are \$18.50.

- Introductions of Reunion newcomers including guests & KIA Family members.
- **Menu:** Beef Wellington hors d'oeuvre, Swedish Meatballs; Bacon wrapped Scallops w/horseradish sauce; vegetable Spring Rolls; Chicken Tenders w/honey mustard; vegetables Crudité w/Onion & Ranch Dip; coffee & teas.

**Saturday, Oct 31** (Association Meeting; Hootch; anything on your own; Banquet!)

**0900-1100** - Business Meeting for all Regular & Associate Members.

**1700 - Banquet** Cash Bar **Note Optional dress up for Halloween – surprise us!!**

**1800 - Banquet** is at the Emerald Coast Convention Center, across the highway from the Four Points

- **Menu** – Choice of one of these plated entrees; all include House Salad w/balsamic vinaigrette or ranch; New York style Cheesecake with triple berry Coulis or Apple Pie Parfait with salted caramel:
  - Bourbon balsamic grilled Flat Iron Steak with Jack Daniels demi-glaze; roasted Yukon Gold potato wedges; & roasted Brussel sprouts for \$50
  - Jerk seared Mahi Mahi with mango Jicama slaw; Island rice w/dried pineapple; roasted red bell pepper, & grilled squash for \$45
  - Cajun crusted Chicken Breast with red pepper cream; Jambalaya pilaf; broccoli & carrots for \$41
  - Kids ages 4-12: Chicken Tenders with Mac 'n Cheese & Chef's Choice Vegetable at \$20

**Sunday, Nov 1** (Golf; Hootch; anything you want to do on your own; Farewell BBQ!)

**Early - Golf Tournament.** Doug Wohlgamuth will coordinate details with golfers.

**1700 - Farewell BBQ** Cash Bar

**1800 - Farewell BBQ** on North Pool Deck & Patio is \$35; Kids ages 4-12 are \$17.50. Includes:

- BBQ Baby Back Ribs & Half Chicken with Southern Potato Salad, Twice Baked Potato Casserole, Smoked Baked Beans, & Southern Green Beans. Plus, tossed Salad w/Ranch or Italian Dressing; Summer Fruit Salad w/Citrus, Honey, & Pecans; Banana Pudding, coffee & teas.

## Reunion Special Information

- **Look for more info in future Firing Circles or Flashes about Halloween dress up options!!**
- **Breakfasts & Lunches** - On your own. The Hotel has excellent, affordable breakfasts!

- **Reunion T-Shirts are** ready to order! We'll have three order sessions. The first session ends April 14, 2020, & we'll send another email with the second order session dates. The shirts will be delivered to Gus Sininger & you can pick yours up at the reunion. If you do not want to wait until the reunion, you can have them delivered to your address for an extra fee [Reunion T-Shirt Group Order Form](#).
- **Sponsorships:** We keep Reunion costs as low as we can. One way to help us do that is to become a Sponsor! Learn about that at [Become an AC119 Gunship Association Sponsor](#) or in the Newsletter. Our strong crew relationships in AC-119s are one of the best things we have. On Crew or Group sponsorships, here's how you do it: one of you starts the ball with a donation, & "titles" the Sponsorship (e.g., Fred Firepower's Crew, Phan Rang Wrench Benders, Stinger Ammo Can Sitters, etc.). We'll include your names when we list the Sponsorships on the web & in our Banquet Brochure.
- **Reunion Helpers:** Coordinator Gus Sininger can use help on a few things at the Reunion. If you can help, please contact him & let him know what you can help with, like:
  1. **Welcome Team;** they welcome folks, give them their Reception package, & only need to cover one morning, afternoon, or evening:
    - a. Wednesday afternoon or evening
    - b. Thursday morning, afternoon, or evening
    - c. Friday morning or afternoon (After that, Reception packages will be in the Hootch)
  2. **Hootch-Sitters:** these are the "Go To" person in the Hootch for a morning, afternoon, or evening. They replenish snacks/beverages & make sure questions or requests get to Gus. Sitters only need to cover one morning, afternoon, or evening stint. We also don't need Sitters *during* the Meet & Greet, Association Meetings, Banquet, or BBQ.
    - a. Wednesday afternoon or evening
    - b. Thursday morning, afternoon, or evening
    - c. Friday morning or afternoon (no Sitter needed during Meet & Greet)
    - d. Saturday afternoon (no Sitter needed during Association Meeting & Banquet)
    - e. Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon (no Sitter needed during Farewell BBQ)
- **Silent Auction: If you'd like to contribute,** something that fits in luggage works well. If you have an item you think needs to be bid upon as an Active auction item, please let Gus know & he'll coordinate with our Auction Team on whether it will be a Silent or Active auction item.
- **Special Raffle Item:** Commemorative Kimber Classic Stainless Steel, Combat Trigger & Ambi (ambidextrous) Safety .45 Pistol in a special box, crafted & donated by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. Raffle tickets will be 1 for \$10; 6 for \$55, & 13 for \$110. This pistol will have special AC-119 commemoration pistol grips; & comes with two magazines, carrying case, & gun lock. You can buy tickets now through next year, for Raffling off at the 2021 Branson Reunion. Doug Wohlgamuth will take & hold all tickets until Branson. Look for more info on our web Reunion page & in the Firing Circle.
- **Oral History Videos and History Book Bios:** Over 200 of our air and ground crew, plus family members and spouses, have made oral history videos and/or written History Book bios. New videos and bios will be posted on our Association web site. Videos may be done solo or with your spouse, crew or other crew members. If you have not made a video or written a bio, we encourage you to do so. You can sign up to do a video or History Book Bio when you complete your Reunion Registration. Click on this link for some tips for making a video or writing a bio. [Videos and Bios – Samples and Tips](#).
- **We will notify you & update the website if anything changes. The important thing right now is to complete your **Hotel Reservation** & your **Reunion Registration!****

### **ON YOUR OWN: Things to see & do in Fort Walton Beach & Vicinity**

- Mini Golf, Gulfarium, Armament Museum, Flea Markets, Dinner Cruises, & walking distance to area dining, nightlife, & entertainment. Also available is scuba diving or ½ or full day Fishing Trips.

## 2020 Reunion T-Shirts

This year we have a very special T-shirt to celebrate all the places we have been for previous reunions and our homecoming back to Fort Walton Beach, Florida. All shirts will be shipped to Gus Sinyinger, unless you specify that you want them sent to you and pay shipping. There will be two 90-day sales windows & one 60-day window. The first window will end April 12, 2020. At the end of the final sales window, the shirts will be printed and shipped out about two weeks later. You do have to pay up front. Please remember to check if you want the shirts to go to the reunion or shipped to you.

On the front in gold lettering will be, "BACK HOME AGAIN, At The 4 Points", the image of the Brother's print centered on the front with "Ft Walton Beach-AC-119 Gunship Reunion, 2020" under the Brother's image.

Available colors are Black, Grey, Military Green (**Men's Only**) and Blue.

On the back are all the locations we have had our past reunions at since the beginning.

Long sleeve T's in Cardinal Red and Black in men's & women's sizes are also available. (Order after 4/12/20)

PLEASE NOTE, 50 SHIRTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SOLD ON THE FIRST ORDER. EVERY SHIRT SOLD FROM NOW TILL APRIL 14, EARNS THE ASSOCIATION \$\$\$\$\$

To place a T-Shirt order, use the link [REUNION T-SHIRT GROUP ORDER FORM](#)



## AC119 Association Membership Updates

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Members:

- Andrea Dryzyga, Associate Life #516, Association Secretary
- Tom Sobieski, Associate Life #517, Son of 71st SOS Pilot Tom Sobieski
- Larry Middleton, Life #518, 71st SOS Support-Munitions, Weapons
- Alton "Van" Criswell, Life #519, 18th SOS Pilot
- Larry Wayne Callicutt, Life #520, 18th SOS Maint./AGE

## Final Flight

We remember our human frailty, and the strength of our brotherhood, in the loss of these who joined our Final Flight. Please remember their families in your prayers. R.I.P., Brothers all:

- Mario Alfaro, 71<sup>st</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> Flight Line Supervisor, passed on December 24, 2019.
- Don Cooling, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS FE, passed on December 17, 2019.
- Michael Douglas, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Maint, passed March 2016.
- Richard Havens, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS IO passed on April 26, 2019.
- Richard D. Hehman, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Maint, passed on December 30, 2013.
- Robert (Bob) H. Lindley, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Nav, passed on April 4, 2017.
- Keith Underwood, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Nav, passed on October 10, 2019.
- Norman Wills, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS NCOIC of Admin, passed on November 9, 2006

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> and our Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>.

Lastly, please visit <https://www.ac119gunships.com/membership-contact-information/alpha-roster> and add any missing names or contacts you have – we can still reach many IF we know who they are!

## AC-119 Commemorative Pistol Raffle

- Kimber Classic Stainless Steel 1911 Style Pistol
- .45 ACP Caliber with 5 inch barrel
- Combat Trigger and Beavertail Grip Safety
- Ambidextrous Extended Thumb Safety
- Tactical Hammer & Sear
- Flat Checkered Main Spring Housing
- Open Mag Well
- Fitted Barrel Bushing with Guide Rod
- Night sights Installed (May be changed to fiber optics)
- Original Rosewood Grip Panels Will Be Sent Included
- Custom Engraved Grips Will Be Fitted: Association Patch on one grip panel, the Brothers image on other grip panel
- Custom Box for Storage.
- Slide will have Vietnam 68 – 73 and the 71st, 17th & 18th SOS engraved



**NOTE:** Photo shows a typical Kimber Stainless pistol, not the final customized pistol provided by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist . The actual pistol will be on display at the Ft. Walton Beach reunion.

Tickets Are:

- 1 For \$10.00
- 6 For \$55.00
- 13 For \$120.00
- **LIMIT 100 Tickets per person.**

Pay by Paypal to [dawohlgamuth@gmail.com](mailto:dawohlgamuth@gmail.com). Put "Pistol Bids" in the Paypal subject line.

You can also send Doug a check or money order. TO; Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726. Be sure to indicate that the payment is for the Pistol raffle.

Winning ticket will be drawn at the 2021 Branson, MO reunion.

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## Administrative Updates & Reminders

1. PLEASE remember to contact your group POC, the Membership Coordinator (Ev Sprous), or the Association Secretary (Andrea Drzyzga) when you **change contact information, especially your email address**. We do very much want to keep in contact with you.
2. If you receive the *Firing Circle* by walking to the mail box after its postal delivery, AND you do have and use an EMAIL ADDRESS, TELL Jerry Hester, Ray Davis, your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW if you want future Newsletters & FLASHES sent via email. You can **SAVE** us a lot by reducing the cost of postage, printer paper, envelopes, ink cartridges, etc. Contact Association Membership Coordinator Ev Sprous, via email at [ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com](mailto:ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com) or call(520) 528-9444.
3. Are you interested in some AC-119 Gunship historical facts, current events, interesting dialogue, photos & stories about AC-119s? If you have Internet access on your computer, then you have to join the Association's **Facebook page**. It now has **over 632 members** – not just directly related AC119ers, but also history buffs, AC-130 folk (including some new 73<sup>rd</sup> SOS Shadows), model makers, etc. Just browse to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>
4. Also, there are Facebook Pages dedicated to "Air Force Gunners", "Air Force 462 Weapons", "Happy Valley – Phan Rang" (almost 1400 members), & "U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use" – very interesting pictures & history, current news, & other valuable information.
5. **Awards & Decorations** coordinator Steve "Col" Mac Isaac continues to aid us in fixing incorrect DD214s. He has helped many get on the trail to receiving decorations they earned through research of documentation and orders shared by association members. Questions and comments: Contact Col Mac at email: [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com), or (MST) Cell phone: (302) 249-1499.
6. **WE NEED YOU TO SEND US YOUR SPECIAL ORDERS**. Please send Col Mac copies of your special orders. These are needed to help our comrades with claims and family members after their loved one passes. Col Mac's address is: 6449 Coventry Hills Dr NE, Rio Rancho, NM 87144-0832 email: [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com) Please do this as soon as possible.

## **“Veterans Helping Veterans, AC-119 Style – Success”**

This was the title of a section near the end of the lengthy May 2019 *Firing Circle*. This is a warm-hearted story that begins with Col. Steve Mac Isaac, the Association’s Awards & Decoration Chair. Col. Mac was searching for information on a routine case, and reached out to Keith Underwood (Lt.Col. Retired), 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger NAV/NOS. Col. Mac learned that Keith was getting seriously ill and having trouble engaging with the VA in Houston, TX. Col. Mac, at his best, put the “Call for Assistance” out and connected with a VFW Service Officer 20 miles away from Keith. The VSO., **Pat Germany**, a Vietnam Airborne Army Vet with multiple decorations, took the call and selflessly helped Keith every step of the way into the VA program, including driving Keith to his VA appointments. Keith successfully obtained some past disability payments and VA support for his family. Keith and Steve both told me of Pat’s extreme efforts and superb knowledge of the VA system, making the system work for Keith. And it did! Col. Mac, Keith and I agreed that Pat Germany must be recognized in a special way for his service to one of ours. Col. Mac put out a call to local Houston area Stingers, and we arranged to present Pat with an Association Special Coin and Certificate of Appreciation at his VFW post in Tomball, Texas during a regular VFW post meeting. What a heart-warming and meaningful event. I wish I could have traveled from N.J. and participated, but phooey, not so. A special “THANKS” to Larry Barbee for participating, for taking great images, and providing them for this article.

It is always sad to see a loved one lose the battle against any aggressive ailment. Keith Underwood kept his chin up high to the end. A number of us had the good fortune to talk with Keith while we were at our Salt Lake City reunion. While hangin’ in the hootch one afternoon, we passed my cell phone from one 119er to another. We received super feedback from Keith’s wife that the time he spent on the phone with us was his high point during the slide to his end. Association Pres. Jerry Hester has spoken with Mrs. Underwood. Keith passed on Oct. 10, 2019, and was buried with Military Honors. He is listed in the Association’s Final Flight roster.

### ***IMPORTANT - What underlying affect does this story have with US 119ers? A LOT!!***

**Agent Orange** exposure leads to some nasty diseases. As often as Col. Mac will push the issue in *Firing Circles* AND at Reunion Business meetings, that us now-old guys who banged around in and over SEA for a year or more, are at REAL RISK, working with the VA can sometimes seem overwhelming. The VA is getting better at helping with medical services and disability claims. If you have not yet done so, **YOU MUST** get on-board with the VA and get on the Agent Orange registry. If you hit what seems like a daunting process, there are Veteran Service Officers affiliated with the VFW, DAV and American Legion, that **WILL HELP** you. It is so sad to hear awful stories of us ‘Nam vets who have not acted for our own benefit! **DO IT!**

M. Drzyzga, via Steve Mac Isaac (ColMac), January. 2020



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### **Future Reunions**

#### **2020 *Back Home Again* AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXI**

Details for the 2020 reunion are covered on previous pages.

#### **2021 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXII**

Reunion XXII was approved by vote for Branson, Missouri in August 2021. Jerry MacDonald is the coordinator, and we will be at the Radisson Hotel again. All the hotels there are already booked solid for Sept & Oct.