

Our Association President, Rogers Stevens

Hello Gunshippers, how can you top REUNION IV?? Gus, Wayne, Ray, Art, and the other “helpers” did an OUTSTANDING JOB at Ft. Walton Beach for our Association. WE ALL THANK YOU!! Those of you in attendance can attest to that fact.

The Memorial Service and the Plaque Dedication brought many remembrances of our fallen aircrew members. Those family members we were able to locate and then those that chose to attend the reunion, all said they did not realize that we still carried their loved ones in our hearts, as well. The “Guest book” Thank You entry from Teddi Alves says it all.

The AC-130 Static Display at Hurlburt Field was a great opportunity again. I have missed that part of the Reunions since the events of 9/11. While there, I was able to visit at length with the Co-pilot, Flight Engineer, Loadmaster, and Electronic Warfare Officer about their respective duties and recent flight experiences. I now know, even with the unsavory press the military receives, WE ARE IN GOOD HANDS! The dedication, knowledge, work ethic, and desire of those young people was very apparent. It was hard for me to believe the Air Force would give a “bunch of 15 year olds” an airplane of that nature. I feel certain that after we left, they might have said, “Is that what we are going to look like in 30 years??” Thank You for the opportunity to go onboard the aircraft.

General Metcalf’s presentation at the Reunion Dinner gave each of us aircrew members an opportunity to see the “not so glamorous” side of the flying game. The problems related to being a “Tenant Unit” on base, and having to beg, borrow, salvage, and steal parts to keep the old bird in the air. If it had not been for the dedication, creativity, and willingness of the “wrench turners” to work long and hard on aircraft, that were probably older than they were, we would not have been able to make our missions. We are forever grateful for your efforts and those of the maintenance teams that let RTB (return to base), and ultimately back to the “world”.

Congratulations again to Ray Barradale on receiving the “Terrance F. Courtney Above and Beyond Award”.

REUNION IV what a Great Time!!

I want to say a Special “Thank You” to all of the Association Members who took the time to fill out and turn in the Reunion Survey Forms. They help us make the reunions better because you see and experience things that we may not be aware of.

The REUNION V coordinators have now turned their attention to REUNION V in Dayton, Ohio at the Air Force Museum. The weekend schedule has been established. Letters of commitment have been signed with the Hope Hotel for a block of guestrooms, the meeting room, hospitality rooms, reception room, and the menus are set for the two receptions and the dinner at the Air Force Museum. Both receptions and the Dinner will be BUFFET style [See, we really do read the survey forms]. We have also signed a MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) with the Air Force Museum for our Saturday Evening Banquet. Our Guest Speaker will be Colonel Ron Terry, USAF (ret), the “Father of the Gunship” (You will be able to read Colonel Terry’s biography on the Web Site in the near future). The site for the Memorial Service has been selected. While we will not have “Shadow” or our dedicated plaque behind us, the site is very appropriate.

During our meetings with the Air Force Museum Curator Staff, we were reminded the Air Force Archives (Formal Records) are catalogued, maintained, and stored at Maxwell Air Force Base. The Air Force Museum, however, is a collection of memorabilia that supports the formal records. They use archival practices to capture, preserve, and retain non-archival information. Air Force Museum, Senior Curator Terry Aitken gave us the following Air Force Museum “Wish We Had” list: Flight Suit Uniforms Crew Member Uniforms Off-duty Uniforms, Patches, Photos of A. Nose Art B. People doing their job C. Equipment Hats, End of Tour Awards, Stuff/Items from the Hootch bars (bells, etc.) . Any Item(s) that depicted the life of the Airman on active duty in South East Asia.

We ALL have a story about our experience with the 119. Between now and Reunion V, I would like to request, challenge, beg, threaten, etc. EACH Association Member to write down his most memorable, scary, rewarding mission experience (this included IO’s, gunners, F.E.’s also!!). This is the “historical” data that make the Association tick. It’s what we are all about, and why we get together each year to commiserate about what we did and how we did it. The ONLY person exempt from this request is Doc Fletcher, but he has a second book underway now. Your mission recollections can be as long as you want it to be. Let’s all make a commitment to write “Our Mission Story” during the next 10 months.

See You in Dayton!!

Rogers Stevens President, AC-119 Gunship Association