

Epilogue Message from outgoing Prez Wayne Laessig

Albuquerque was a fantastic reunion, with a huge thanks to Mac MacIsaac, our coordinator, for pulling it all together! Col Tom Trask, Kirtland's 58th SOW Commander, and Lt Col Jim Cardoso and his troops from the re-activated 71st SOS, were a highlight, with static displays of all their Special Ops aircraft, lunch with a chance to meet and talk with today's young warriors, a fun and interesting "then and now" Banquet presentation by Lt Col Cardoso and our own Col (Ret) Herman "Al" Heuss, casino visits (some gave, some took), Sandia Peak tramway rides, a Santa Fe tour, one of the best "Hootches" we've ever had (big with lots of room to sit and visit, Squadron coins, and the most important things of all – getting together with old friends and making some new ones.

This reunion definitely helped expand the awareness of "who we are and what we did" – Pete St Jean, Mac MacIsaac, and Al Heuss were guests at the 58th SOW's annual Special Operations Forces (SOF) gathering where hundreds of today's Special Ops heard from our generation of Special Operators along with a full day of briefings, presentations, and tours. Col Trask does these SOF sessions annually and asked us if we'd have a couple of our guys participate. Pete, Mac, and Al did a superb job representing us! Today's Special Operators now know a little more about some of their heritage – us and our AC-119 mission and experiences!

If you weren't there, you missed out on a helluva Reunion and we missed you! We were again honored to have several family members of brothers we lost in SEA as our special guests for the weekend. They met the men who flew with their father or husband; men who had never forgotten their loved one, men who never stopped honoring them. Jim Terry, thank you for all your efforts in continuing to reach out to our extended family!

A good year! Dedicated volunteers kept us going and deserve your "thank you" when you get a chance: Vern Hansen, Jim Alvis, Doug Wohlgamuth, Rogers Stevens, Craig Corbett, Mac MacIsaac, Gus Sininger, Bill Petrie, Larry "Fletch" Fletcher, Ralph Lefarth, Ev Sprou, Chuck James, Norm Evans, Jim Terry, Bud Buchanon, and Ron Julian – none of it happened without them. Thank you!

So what could be left for 2007? Well, there are a few things. It culminates with a Joint Fixed-Wing Gunship Reunion in Destin Florida from October 5th through the 7th. We'll still have our AC-119 get-togethers and all, but for the first time ever, all three fixed-wing gunships will have a Reunion at the same place, same time – AC-47s, AC-119s, and AC-130s. Spookys, Shadows, Stingers, and Spectres all at one time will be fun. And yes, we definitely will maintain our AC-119 focus, activities, and history at that reunion. It's a chance to find our common ground and how we might work together in the future. We will have one "joint" meeting but the rest will still be focused on us. Gus and Norm are working with the other Gunship groups to bring it all together and the sign-up will be available on the web shortly. Save the dates – October 5-7 2007.

In 2008 our Reunion will be in Branson, Missouri! The vote was close (the guys from the Travis AFB area's "Breakfast Gang" still want another revote) and Branson is the location for our 2008 Reunion with tons of fun things to do! Jerry McDonald is our Branson Reunion Coordinator. For those who might want to volunteer to coordinate a reunion in their area, we'll clarify the process for identifying and deciding reunion locations, post guidelines on the web, as well as send everyone some info through your Association Coordinators. The Travis area "Breakfast Gang" WILL bring a proposal to the next reunion for another shot at a California Reunion in 2009 so hang in there if you voted for that!

Our History Book project keeps moving forward; led by Larry Fletcher. Expect a contact from him or one of his troops, or from your Association Coordinator (there's one for each Squadron and our Maintenance/Support folks) to help us communicate with you, plus contact and find lost and prospective new members. We still have hundreds of brothers we haven't made contact with, including the huge number of maintainers and others who kept us flying. Our goal in both our History Book project and Coordinator contacts is to get as many as we can to join us to do the three things we exist for:

1. Renew old friendships
2. Make new friendships
3. Let the world know – we existed. We flew and maintained AC-119 gunships and we were damn good.

So, from your 2006 Prez, it was an honor to serve, and hope to see you in Florida come October!

Wayne Laessig