

October 2008

Our 9th Reunion just wrapped up & from **all** accounts, Jerry McDonald & last year's board & volunteers did a great job! The Branson Belle dinner cruise was a hit with a couple of our AC-119 folks even becoming a big part of the entertainment! The Radisson & their staff were great, the food was very good (& there was plenty of it), the Hootch worked great, & the ability to go to local shows & sights was welcomed by everyone! Thanks also to Chuck Williams, who (as our guest speaker) reminded us who we are & that we made (& make) a difference. Karen McDonald & everyone who sent a raffle or auction item helped make this reunion a great success – thank you all!

Last year was a tough one for me, but your support as part of my family helped me tremendously. I'm happy to be back as your "Re"peat Prez (only basketball teams do "three"peats so let's get some new volunteers stepping up). Reunion X is coming together & I want to give you some highlights. First, take a look at the Association Meeting minutes in this Newsletter for some of the highlights & things the board & volunteers did last year. Our newest volunteer is Tony Pakutinski taking on Newsletter Editor & coming through on this first edition. Nice work, Tony!

Now, many of you heard there are some changes in our Reunion Plans from two-years ago!

First, we learned that our 40th anniversary of the delivery of our converted AC-119s is next year. Many of us picked up an AC-119 at St Augustine Florida (where the C-119s were converted to gunships), ferried it to SEA, & all of us worked on or flew those converted dollar-nineteens during our AC-119 tours. Bill Dudley was involved with those conversions 40 years ago, & he volunteered to coordinate next year's reunion to St Augustine, with lots of local support & attractions. Second, we reviewed the Reunion attendance numbers, & it's obvious that moving reunions to other locations results in higher participation & some new folks being able to join us. The 40th anniversary of our aircraft pick-ups, ferry flights, & deliveries was a one-time opportunity, & the members present in Branson overwhelmingly voted Fort Walton Beach out (& me as that Reunion Coordinator) for next year & St Augustine in. I fixed them though; I volunteered to be on the Board again & here I am!

The 2009 St Augustine Reunion will be September 24-27, 2009 with the Hootch opening Sept 23rd. There will be free Trolley VIP Passes to go downtown, a Northrup-Grumman tour to see our sister Navy's aircraft being produced, plus a couple of dozen sights & things to do with your spouses & friends. We will have our traditional Hootch to gather, visit with old friends & meet new ones; our Friday night Meet & Greet; Saturday morning gals meeting concurrent with our Association meeting; Saturday night Banquet; & Sunday Farewell Barbeque Buffet. Breakfast buffet is included in your room reservations, & we'll send the details on Reunion & Hotel registration very soon. See Bill Dudley's note in this Newsletter for some added info & some of the things to see & do!

Our History Book is about to become a reality! After three years of hard work, Larry "Fletch" Fletcher & Ralph LeFarth have led an effort to finalize a Volume I for the St Augustine Reunion. There is still time to get your biography, story, & then / now picture in this groundbreaking History Book – finally, our own story as told by each of us! PLEASE see Fletch's note in this Newsletter on what, how & when. There are deadlines to assure you'll be in this first History Book.

Complementing & parallel to our History Book efforts, this last reunion we did 50 video sessions with guys (& gals) to help us capture what life was like in AC-119s & SEA. JP MacIsaac now has almost 60 sessions that we plan to put on DVDs for sale, along with the 64 video sessions on DVD from our Wright-Patt Reunion in 2004. For St Augustine, contact some of your AC-119 crew, sign your History Book stories, bring an old crew or mission picture, & we'll do a "then" picture plus a "now" picture as a great memento. You can also continue to be part of our video collection, fill in the ~~lies~~ stories about our time & friends in AC-119s. Bottom lines: send your History Book input in, reserve your book, bring your pictures & stuff - you never know who will show up!

Check out the Commemorative Rifle & Pistol set made by Ron Soderquist (article in this Newsletter). We'll raffle this unique, one-of-a-kind set at St Augustine (you don't have to be present to win) & we'll sell raffle tickets all year via our web, by contacting me, or at St Augustine. One winner will take this beautiful set home!

Some last thoughts: serving on the Association Board is an honor & a responsibility. Welcome aboard to new VP Jerry McDonald! Please think about filling one of our all-volunteer roles next year - Board member as well as one of the many who contribute their time to contacting people, coordinating plaques, pictures, patches, shirts, speakers, local breakfasts, etc. Bottom line is we can always use volunteers, & you can me for opportunities to support our Association.

Be sure to register for the Reunion & the St Augustine Holiday Inn as soon as we get the info out to you. We may fill up the hotel & with all rooms the same price (\$95 includes breakfast buffet) the king & queen beds will go first! God Bless you all, Prez Gus

p.s. The Association members also voted to go to Northern California (between San Francisco & Sacramento; near enough to visit both cities, or wine country, the redwoods, the Golden Gate Bridge, etc) for the 2010 Reunion, so look for info in this in upcoming Newsletters.