

Association President's Message

March 24, 2018

I hope this message finds you all well, as we turn the corner from winter into springtime. This message is focused on two special items: First, the NEW and simpler on-line **reunion registration** process; Second, the new 73rd SOS Shadow gunship **"stand-up" ceremony** at Hurlburt Field.

REUNION REGISTRATION: My last message indicated that our IT Committee, headed by Wayne Laessig, was hard at work implementing a major revision to our web-site, in order to improve the reunion registration process. As most new technology has its "bumps" to iron out, the update we installed on the web site did not do what we needed, even though the vendor's product description said so. Ugh! They recalled their product, revised it as they had to, and it is working perfectly now on our web-site. It just took more time than we could have expected. Our hard-working POCs blasted out a two-part FLASH message that contains ALL the info you need regarding the reunion in Tucson, AZ, the social events (tours), and how to register. A successful super-effort by Wayne Laessig! **If you have not done so yet, you should go to the Association's web-site and make plans to attend.** Reunion coordinator Ev Sprous set forth a great effort putting our Reunion XIX together! I am so looking forward to seeing as many of you all that can attend.

AC-130J, Shadow's Stand-Up Ceremony: It is difficult for me to briefly tell this story, but here goes. I was forwarded an email that originated from Capt. Chris Zenc, Flight Commander (and Pilot) with a NEW AC-130J gunship Squadron at Hurlburt, and he wanted to know all about our AC-119G Shadow Patch. We began exchanging emails. I gave him details, pictures, and indicated our sincere interest to stay in close contact. All of a sudden, we were invited to attend the 73rd SOS Stand-Up ceremony on 2/23/2018. My wife Andrea and I extended our already-planned FL vacation to include attending the ceremony. It was an awesome event. About 24 former Shadows/ Stingers and spouses attended. We were seated up front in the hangar, and recognized by the Commander, Lt. Col Tracey Iverson, as their honored guests. There was many a teared eye in our group, including my own. A "J" was on static display, the first aircraft with the new nose art displayed. After the 20-min ceremony, we toured the new Shadow from the flight deck to the Griffin missile launchers in the rear. The 105mm Howitzers, removed from the AC-130H that were retired to the bone-yard, are refurbished and installed in the aft. After the tour, we reconvened in the Squadron Ops hootch, and had refreshments, snacks, and cut-a-Shadow-cake. I presented LC Iverson with her Life Membership Certificate, a hard copy of the AC-119 Gunship Association History Book, a 17th SOS Association Coin, our Shadow patch, and an autographed copy of Larry Fletcher's book "Charlie Chasers". Now, I saw a few teared eyes in those young special operations warriors! Our local Associate, former Shadow Gunner, Norman Evans, is our Point-Of-Contact with the 73rd. We have a well-established relationship that will continue for a long time. I could certainly interject at least four personally memorable moments that day, but space disallows that. Ask me in Tucson.

Below are eight pictures from this special day.

Respectfully submitted

Mike Drzyzga, President 2016-2018