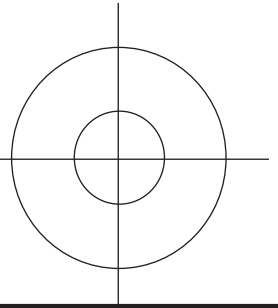


# Firing Circle



Summer 2006

A Newsletter of the AC-119 Gunship Association



## Special Reunion VII Edition

### Reaching New Heights

AC-119 Gunship Reunion VII  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Sep 29 - Oct 1

### Quick Facts

- **When:** Sept. 29- Oct 1, 2006;  
Special Kirtland AFB trip on Friday
- **Where:** Elegante Hotel,  
Albuquerque, NM
- **Reunion Registration:** Forms  
Available on our website at:  
[www.ac-119gunships.com](http://www.ac-119gunships.com) or  
from Doug Wohlgamuth at  
[Bush791@msn.com](mailto:Bush791@msn.com) or at 813-  
633-0685. **Hotel reservations  
must be made separately.**
- **Room rates:** The reunion rate is  
\$91.33 and includes tax (double  
or single). \$102.60 for triple/quad  
(suites). **To receive this rate, hotel  
reservations must be made  
by September 6.** Make your  
hotel reservation by calling the  
Elegante at 1-866-650-8900.
- **Complimentary breakfast:**  
Room rates include full hot  
breakfast and two complimentary  
cocktails per day.
- **Questions:** Call reunion  
coordinator Mac MacIsaac  
505-867-3367 or e-mail:  
[colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com)

## A Common Heritage

Hello from Albuquerque from 'Mac' Mac Isaac!  
I am happy/proud to host my 'brothers' -- 'we few, we chosen few'  
-- to Albuquerque!

Hope you all have signed-up already; this could be one of our  
biggest Reunions and we *do not* want any of our 'long-time' regulars  
to be 'shipped' out to an 'over-flow' Hotel and/or be aced-out of the

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## 2006 Officers

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**Wayne Laessig**

Vice-President  
**Vern Hansen**

Secretary & Circulation Manager  
**Jim Alvis**

Treasurer  
**Doug Wohlgamuth**

Officer at-large  
**Craig Corbett**

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**Rogers Stevens**

Webmaster  
**Bill Petrie**

Chaplain  
**Larry Hunter**

Next-of-Kin Locator  
**Jim Terry**

2006 Albuquerque Reunion VII  
Coordinator & Awards & Decorations  
Officer  
**Steve "Mac" Mac Isaac**

71st SOS Coordinator  
**Jim Alvis**

17th SOS Coordinator  
**Chuck James**

18th SOS Coordinator  
**Everett Sprous**

Saturday Banquet.....**SIGN UP NOW!!!!**

The 'Pres' gave you a super update in his last message.... but him being my 'co-Pilot' way back when, here's some added hard-sell on some really neat features of this Reunion:

1. **Our day at Kirtland AFB**...sign-up early/sign-up for EVERYTHING!! Things have changed since we all left our beloved Air Force; the new AF has consolidated almost all the training for Special Operations Forces at Kirtland AFB (5 miles from our hotel). As part of that consolidation, the AF reactivated the 58th SOW at Kirtland and every 'kid' - Officers and Enlisted - who is going to fly a Special Ops or Combat Rescue mission gets his initial equipment check-out at the 58th SOW. After that initial mission qualification, 90% of them are in *Combat* within *one year* of graduation from Kirtland!

**Colonel Tommy Trask (58th SOW Wing King** - Silver Star- Operation Global Terror) just finished 'putting-on-the-dog' for a group of *Very* special WW II Airmen. Had I been Wing King, I could have *not* done any better! He sees each and everyone of *You* as a 'National Treasure' - sees you as great 'Mentors' to his young Troops (yet to see *Combat*), and he is respectfully requesting *You/ Yours* spend the day with the 58th SOW.

He will 'put-on-the-dog' for you 0900-1200, then put on a great outdoor BBQ on the Flight Line (\$10 per person) -he will then turn you over to the New/ Best Squadron Commander

at Kirtland - **Lieutenant Colonel Jim Cardoso**-who will 'officially' open Reunion VII with the re-birth of the 71st SOS/ CV-22 (2 mini-guns...**YES - a GUNSHIP!!**). *Do not miss this DAY*. Meeting and being with these Great Kids will make you feel good for a long time!

2. Our 'Pres' & Board have built **more Family/Free time into this Reunion** - There is so much to do within 10 miles of the hotel. There is the **Atomic Museum** (good), **Old Town** (must), **Indian Cultural Center** (most interesting), **Sandia Resort Casino** (free pick-up/return - FUN)...and best of all, **Sandia Peak Tramway** - 'space-ship' ride - great views/ food on top (10,700' ft)...**SIGN UP EARLY** and I can go to Kirtland and get you a \$13-per-person ticket for around \$8!!!!

**Much more** - you will get a Welcome to Albuquerque bag at Check-In with maps and lots of Info from the Visitors Board. We'll have a sign-up for El Pinto Restaurant on Thursday night - there may be a small transport charge depending on how many want to go, but it will be worth it!

By the way, **REGISTER AT THE HOTEL EARLY**; do not get shipped out to the over-flow hotel. Our hotel has a super hot breakfast and great 'Bar' (2-free-drinks-per-person-per-Day!!)...do not be part of the commute-to-fun-bunch!

One more time, **SIGN UP NOW**.....send me requests/questions at colmacmac@mac.com

*Love & Luck - Cheers  
Mac*

# President's Message



The Reunion is almost here and we've been getting calls, Reunion sign-ups, and Association applications from lots of new folks. Mac has a super agenda and it will be fun! For me, it's all about old friendships, new friendships, and putting the AC-119 Shadow and Stinger Gunships back into the history books and peoples' awareness.

Friday morning and afternoon we have static displays of all the 58th SOW's aircraft, meet some of the crews and maintainers, then join the reactivated 71st to share some "then and now" time together. Friday evening we'll have our welcome get together – we encourage folks to wear flight suits and or party suits if you can still get them on. It's informal and a great chance to just visit with everyone!

On Saturday, while we are in the annual

membership meeting, the hotel will set an area up so the women can have a breakfast/brunch while we are conducting Association business.

Following our meeting, it's *Hootch Time* – bring your pictures and it's another great opportunity to visit with friends. Saturday evening's banquet will be special with our own Al Heuss and Lt Col Jim Cardosa swapping what it was/is like bringing the 71st up to full fighting capability.

Sunday will be an open day for you to spend as you desire with golfing, Sandia Peak, Old Town, Santa Fe or whatever else you wish to do while in beautiful Albuquerque. Sunday afternoon is our Farewell BBQ,

While your here, we hope to scan as many pictures as possible into our computer, so please try and bring some of the pictures from your days in SEA that you wouldn't mind sharing with others.

This year's membership meeting (Saturday) will be full of issues that need your input. For a start, we will be voting on where we plan on going in 2008. We voted last year to do a "Joint" Gunship Reunion next year in Florida with Spookys, Shadows, Stingers, and Spectres. We'll give you an update on that but we also need to know if anyone wants to nominate their area for the 2008 Reunion. Over the years we've learned that we need to

plan our reunions two years in advance; we need your inputs to make it happen. There are other large issues that we need to discuss and get your input on during the meeting aside from electing the officers for 2006 season. We will do our best providing read ahead materials in your membership packet so that we can try and cover all the issues in the one meeting.

This will be the last newsletter going out before the reunion. Bill will continue to add new reunion relevant information as it becomes available.

Take care and I'll see you at the Hootch.

Wayne

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## Don't Forget!

Reunion Registration  
Deadline  
is September 19th.

Hotel Reservation  
cut off  
is September 6.

After Sept. 6 room  
rates will be based  
on availability!



**Reunion Registration Form  
AC-119 Gunship Reunion VII  
September 29 & 30, October 1, 2006  
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

***Mail your Reunion Registration to Doug Wohlgamuth today!***  
**THIS IS NOT YOUR HOTEL REGISTRATION**

Are you an AC-119 Gunship Association member? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

To join, please visit: [http://www.ac-119gunships.com/association/assoc\\_application.htm](http://www.ac-119gunships.com/association/assoc_application.htm)

**Reunion Registration**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron (if applic): \_\_\_\_ Years in SEA/working AC-119s: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE/GUEST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: (# \_\_\_\_ ) Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*We'll attend:*

Friday, Sept 29th Wing Heritage Day visit & static displays, 1000-1200, Kirtland - # attending \_\_\_\_

BBQ lunch, 1200-1300. Cost: \$10 per person - - - - - # attending \_\_\_\_ X \$10 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Friday (Sept 29th) 71st SOS visit, 1300-1500, Kirtland - - - - - # attending \_\_\_\_

Friday (Sept 29th) Social & Southwest Buffet, 1800-2200, MCM Elegante # attending \_\_\_\_ X \$20 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Salad bar, Beef Taco & Chicken Fajitas bar, Chips/salsa, Spanish rice/beans, Taquitos, & Biscoghitos (Spanish cookies). Cost: \$20 per person (Cash Bar)

Saturday (Sept 30th) Banquet, 1700-2200, MCM Elegante

Buffet Dinner includes Salad Bar & all normal Buffet items, plus your selected main entrée

- Marinated London Broil # of meals \_\_\_\_
- Blackened Salmon Filet # of meals \_\_\_\_
- Chicken Marsala # of meals \_\_\_\_ \$26 per person (Cash Bar) # attending \_\_\_\_ X \$26 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Sunday (Oct 1st) Golf Tournament, 0900-1400 Cost: \$40 - - - - - # playing \_\_\_\_ X \$40 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Sunday (Oct 1st) Tour Santa Fe, 0900-1500 Cost: \$25 per person - - - - # on tour \_\_\_\_ X \$25 = \$ \_\_\_\_

We need a minimum of 40 people for this; if we don't get enough, we'll cancel/refund.

Sunday (Oct 1st) Farewell Western BBQ, 1700-2000, MCM Elegante - - - - # attending \_\_\_\_ X \$20 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Salad bar, BBQ brisket/pork/chicken, corn-on-the-cob, baked beans, corn muffins, dinner rolls, dessert. Cost: \$20 per person (Cash Bar)

Free Time Activities Sign Up - for "Fun-in-the-Sun" with lots to do (cheap!) & lots of time to do them!

Sandia Mountain Tramway Ticket cost \$8 per person; 4 or/more in a Cab \$5 each-way; approx cost \$18 per person (discount sale ticket good for day-of-sale-only) Thurs Sept 28th - # of tickets \_\_\_\_ X \$8 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Fri Sept 29th - - # of tickets \_\_\_\_ X \$8 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Sat Sept 30th - - # of tickets \_\_\_\_ X \$8 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Sun Oct 1st - - # of tickets \_\_\_\_ X \$8 = \$ \_\_\_\_

Mon Oct 2nd - - # of tickets \_\_\_\_ X \$8 = \$ \_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to "The AC-119 Gunship Association".

Mail this page along with your payment to: Doug Wohlgamuth (AC-119)

504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726

If you haven't received a confirmation card within two weeks, contact Doug at 813-633-0685 or e-mail him at [Busch791@msn.com](mailto:Busch791@msn.com). *Questions?* Contact Doug or 'Mac' Mac Isaac at 505-867-3367 or [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com)

**Please note Cancellation Policies**

- Reunion Registration cancellations on or before September 19th = refund or donation as requested
- Reunion Registration cancellations after September 19th = we have to pay hotel "guarantees", so no re funds (but talk to us if there are special circumstances like family emergencies or losses)
- Hotel Registration cancellations: if you cancel after their minimum 24 hour notification, you may get charged.

# AC-119 Family Notes

I continue to stay in contact with many of our special families who lost loved ones in Vietnam, including Kirstin Giroux (Tom Hamman's daughter), Bob Knapic (Bernie Knapic's son), Dewight Fage (Robert Fage's son), Mr. and Mrs. John Rucker (John Rucker's parents), and Barbara Barker (Rod Slagle's wife).

The men we lost in Southeast Asia live on in their families, and in us – it's humbling, it hurts, yet fills you with wonder all at the same time when you meet these families.

Recently, while on a vacation in Hawaii, my wife and I had the fortune and opportunity to spend some time with Kirstin and her children, Jacob (age 6) and Joy (age 4), on the Island of Maui. What great kids, full of



vim and vinegar (or something like that), as you can see from the picture! Tom would be proud of his kids and grandkids - I know I am! Kirstin and her

Mom said they would love to join us in Albuquerque if they can.

After Hawaii, I went to Texas and while there I met the parents and a sister of John Rucker. Mr.

and Mrs. Rucker reside in Jefferson, Texas and John's sister Marsha resides in Kilgore, Texas. As you see from their picture these are good Texas "folks" who



Some of our wonderful extended family members.

Lower left is Tommy Hamman's daughter and lovely grandchildren and pictured below are John Rucker's parents and sister.

appreciated hearing from us about their son and people he knew. While it might be difficult for them to come to Albuquerque, John's parents said that anyone who knew John is welcome to contact them. If you would like information on how to contact the Ruckers, please send me an e-mail at [Shadow70@](mailto:Shadow70@sbcglobal.net)

[sbcglobal.net](mailto:sbcglobal.net) or call me at 707-422-6774.

In meeting these fine people and the other families,

I've gained another couple of "grandkids" and some friends that add meaning to my life just from knowing them. What an honor to know and visit with these families. There are more family members we'd like to have contact with. If any of you have contact information for the families of **John Hathaway**, **Jerome Rice**, **Abraham Moore**, or **Terence (Terry) Courtney**; any help is greatly appreciated.

Send any info you have to me and I'll make initial contact, and hopefully we'll include them as our guests at a future Reunion.

*Jim Terry*  
Member Research

## Telling your Story—Maintaining our History

# Project History Book for AC-119 Gunships

Our Association plans to publish a history book if there is enough interest and participation shown by the Shadows, Stingers, and support folks on AC-119s.

We want your stories in the History Book along with your Vietnam Era photograph and a recent photograph if you so desire. Help capture what being in the AC-119s was all about—the training, the missions, living in the barracks, hootches, downtown, fun things we did, goofy things we did, things we did or that happened to us that we'll never forget, friends we still get together with, friends we'll always have even though they're not with us any more - *Anything* that helps create a picture and understanding of who we were, what we did, and how it was.

Maintainers, we want to know the things you did or had to deal with to keep those old but tough birds flying! What was it like pounding the ramp on 12 hour shifts at half-manning and no spare parts?

The coordinator for *Project History Book* is **Larry “Fletch” Fletcher**.

**Ralph Lefarth** is handling

graphics and photographs for the project.

Fletch will edit stories and bios for those who worry about grammar and spelling. Just send your stories and bio to Fletch at [umbra27@earthlink.net](mailto:umbra27@earthlink.net) or via snail-mail at 606

Racquet Club Drive;  
Lake Ozark, MO 65049.

Submit pictures to Ralph Lefarth at [ralph-l@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ralph-l@sbcglobal.net) (that's a lower case L, not number 1 in Ralph's address) or via snail-mail at 5754 Birch Hollow Drive; St. Louis, MO 63129-4236.

If you snail-mail photographs and want them returned, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Write your name on the back of each photograph (Do not use ink). If you have other photographs from Vietnam that you think are history book-worthy, follow the same procedures.

Keep in mind the project is about AC-119s, not the AC-119 Gunship Association. Shadow, Stinger, and support troops who are not members of the Association are welcome to submit stories, their bio, and pictures for the AC-119 Gunship History Book.

Biographies can be short and sweet: how/when you entered the AF; main career fields; any unique assignments;

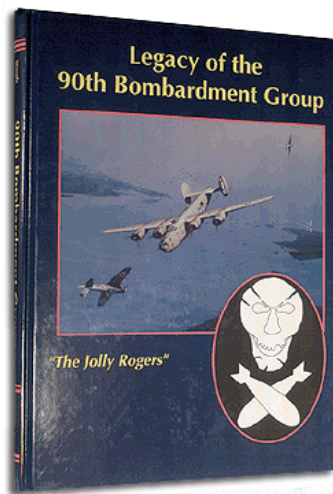
length of time in the service; separation or retired rank; etc. The main bio info should be about your entry into AC-119s (how/when/why); what you did in AC-119s; and most importantly, stories about your experiences. They can be anything from what a day was like to those once in a lifetime experiences you might have had. Once we're gone, our stories are too, unless we pass them along.

Catherine Reffner, granddaughter of “Uncle Bill” Reffner for those that knew him, told a group of AC-119 folks recently that she wants to know about us—to help her understand more about the boxes of stuff she has of Bill's. By knowing us and our stories, she learns about her Grandfather, his life, and herself. It doesn't get any better than that.

Send your bio, stories, and pictures to us today. We only have inputs so far. We need 150, 200 or 500 of you to just sit down, write some words, and send them!

Shame on the AF for sometimes forgetting about us AC-119ers as Gunshippers—shame on us if we don't take the time to help everyone remember who we were, what we did, what we experienced.

We want our story to be there when we're gone. So, grab a pen or start pecking on the computer! We look forward to reading about your history.





# Special Guest at Reunion VII

A very special guest will epitomize the “Common Heritage” theme of this year’s reunion. **Marvin Litke** is a C-47 pilot who was assigned to the 71st Troop Carrier Squadron (434th Troop Carrier Group) from its formation in 1943 to the conclusion of WW II. Not only did he fly C-47s, he also flew our own C-119s in the 1950s.

The 434th and its four troop carrier squadrons received little glory and honor for their efforts, but Patton’s sweep across France to Germany would never have been successful had it not been for the troop carrier guys. If they were not towing CG-4 gliders or dropping paratroopers, they were flying re-supply missions and evacuating wounded allied troops.

Take a little time and check out some of the autobiographies by the 434th troop carrier guys on this webpage:

<http://www.71stsos.com/intheirownwords.html>

Our 71st TCS pilot, Marvin Litke, wrote his autobiography titled “Flying With The 71st Troop Carrier Squadron”. Ask him about it when you meet him in Albuquerque, and enjoy the special opportunity to recognize Marvin as one of our WW II veterans and a part of our Air Force and AC-119 heritage. Meet one of our true forefathers – one who flew without the Hamilton Standard 3-bladed props and before we got the 3350 engines or those neat little jets that bailed us out when we had to break left or lost a recip in-flight.

Marvin, thank you for joining us, and welcome back to the family!

*Jim Alvis, Association Secretary, and sponsor for Marvin.*

## Gunship Merchandise

**Don’t show up at a reunion without one...** It may cost you. Order your coin by contacting Gus Sininger by email at [g.sininger@seii.net](mailto:g.sininger@seii.net) or by mail at 206 Tooke Street, Ft Walton Beach, FL 32547. **Coins, and keychains, will also be available at the reunion.**



**Signed Lithographs are also available through the Association.** If you haven’t purchased your gunship lithographs they are on available for a suggested donation on the merchandise page on the Association web site. These extraordinary lithographs look beautiful matted and framed. All are signed and numbered by the artist. Order lithographs by contacting Ron Julian at [takitus@email.com](mailto:takitus@email.com) **Lithographs will be available at the reunion**

**AC-119G  
“Shadow”**



**AC-119K  
“Stinger”**



**Visit “the Hootch” and see the merchandise Association Quartermaster Gus Singer and others have available**

*Firing Circle 7*

## AC-119 Breakfast Club

A California group of about twenty or so AC-119 folks who live in a 75 mile radius have been getting together for breakfast 3-4 times a year to visit, enjoy friendships and spend an hour or two together.

Coordinator Jim Terry says this is pretty easy to do and lots of fun.

Terry says, "We have a loyal group of flyers, maintainers, and extended family including Bill Reffner's Granddaughter who make these breakfasts fun".

Let me know when you'll be in his area and he'll try to do one while you're there! If you have any questions, contact Jim by email at [shadow70@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shadow70@sbcglobal.net) or



phone 707-422-6774, Cell 707-631-8421. Why not hold your own local Breakfast Club.

Above, the California Breakfast Club gathers at one of the homes in their area.

### Help Save Association Resources

If you receive multiple copies, or wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, contact Association secretary **Jim Alvis** at [Shadow1969@indy.rr.com](mailto:Shadow1969@indy.rr.com) so we can update our mailing list.

AC-119 Gunship Association  
3110 Maqua Court  
Carmel, IN 46033-4136



Place  
Stamp  
here