

2017 Mail Call Archives

December 20, 2017: POC Ev Sprous passes along a message from 18th SOS Stinger Instructor Pilot Don Main's family. Please keep Don & family in your prayers. *"Not a good year for Don. At the end of Sept, he was diagnosed with cancer lesions on the brain. He went to his AC-119 Gunship reunion in Dayton, Oh (probably his last). It went well. On his return Oct 1, he was scheduled for a 2nd cat scan and found the cancer was coming from lung cancer. He started treatment and after the 1st chemo treatment, there were complications and he was back in the hospital for 10 days. He was then sent to rehab in Kalispell to build back his strength. It was then decided to move to Helena to be closer to Robyn and family. Patty and Robyn took care of the whole move to a nice single floor apartment in Helena. The 2 story home and in the woods in Lakeside was too much to handle. Robyn takes care of everything for us including appointments. We moved Don to Helena and he spent another week at a rehab facility in Helena. Last Wednesday, he was released home and will start treatment at the end of this week. Please keep him in your prayers. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and God Bless you all!"*

December 20, 2017: Ev Sprous posts that 18th SOS Stinger Pilot Don Johnson, of Festus, Missouri, passed away Friday, August 4, 2017 at his home. His interment with full military honors was in National Cemetery in Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

December 12, 2017: Jim Alvis posts: It is with sadness we recently learned of the passing of yet another 71st SOS member. The date or location of SSgt Ronald D. Penrose passing is unknown. Ron was Flight Engineer on Lt Col Mickelson's crew #11 at Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. Sincere condolences are extended to the Penrose family and friends. NOTE: The November Firing Circle was returned with the notation 'Deceased' but we have not been able to find Ron's obituary on line. If anyone has more information please email it to Wayne Laessig at Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net

December 6, 2017: We received an e-mail from Mark Flebotte via the our website's Contact Form; Subject: Danang operation. I was attached to the A/C 119K gunship squadron in Danang during the first 3 months of 1972. I was TDY from NKP Thailand. I was a fire control technician on the AC119K gunship. My records were lost when they were mistakenly sent to Tan Son Nhut Vietnam instead. I cannot prove I was there even though I have both Vietnam service metals. I am looking for anyone who might remember I was there so I can prove it to the VA. Any help would be appreciated. **MAIL CALL NOTE:** if you can help Mark, please send Wayne Laessig an email at Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net & Wayne will put the two of you in direct contact.

December 1, 2017: Connie Grimes notified us that her husband, Ernie R. Grimes died Wednesday, November 29, 2017, due to complications from a heart procedure in Cleveland Clinic. Ernie enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in November 1966. He volunteered for Vietnam and served in Southeast Asia in Life Support from February 1969 to February 1970, with the 71st and 17th Special Operation Squadrons & AC-119G Shadow Gunships C-Flight, at Tan Son Nhut and Nha Trang. Ernie was AC-119 Gunship Association Life Member 259. Friends will be received 2 to 4 pm and 6 to 8 pm Sunday, Dec 3rd in Behm Funeral Homes Inc., 182 W. High St., Waynesburg where services will be held at 11:00 a.m. Monday, December 4, 2017 with Rev. Nick Bardo officiating followed by interment in Bethlehem Cemetery at Ruff Creek. Graveside military honors will be accorded by American Legion Post 330 and Veterans of Foreign Wars 4793 and the U. S. Air Force. Condolences may be offered at www.behmfh.com. Connie asks that we all pray for her & her family.

November 9, 2017: Stinger Gunner Tom Honzik needs our help. He was wounded by shrapnel during a Rocket Attack at Bien Hoa on 31 September 1972 & the VA & AF denied his Purple Heart. Tom is working with Col Mac to get this one resolved & they need some help. If anyone can remember that attack or know anything about his injury please send Wayne Laessig an email at Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net & Wayne will put the two of you in direct contact.

September 26, 2017: John Schumann forwarded a message from **Jan Iversen to Dick's** close friends asking them to pass this along: *Dear friends, Dick's celebration of life will be Sunday, Oct. 22nd from 1-3 pm at the Heritage Flight Museum, Bayview Airport, Burlington, WA. We are blocking rooms at the Swinomish Casino Hotel for those needing reservations and will forward contact information at the museum for those bringing*

their own planes. The Blackjack Squadron is doing a missing man formation; the Lear will be on static display representing Veterans Airlift Command; & the AF color guard will provide honors, with refreshments, lots of mingling and laughs. This is just what he asked for and we'll have a wonderful sendoff. My love to each of you, Jan **MAIL CALL NOTE:** If you plan to attend, please coordinate with John. If needed, you can contact him via Wayne Laessig at Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net

September 21, 2017: Sadly, Stinger Pilot & Life Member Dick Iversen passed away Tuesday, September 20. His crew, still as tightly knit as they were in SEA under Dick's leadership, know he will be missed but remembered forever. Jan Iversen is working on a celebration of his life but nothing definite yet. We will provide details as we get them. Please include Jan & all the family in your prayers. R.I.P. Brother.

September 20, 2017: Update for Family and Friends planning to attend LtCol Bernie Smith's funeral on Friday, October 6th. The preferred hotel designated by the Family is: Courtyard Fort Worth Historic Stockyards 2537 N. Main Street Fort Worth, TX 76164 Phone: 817-624-1112. Report by Larry Fletcher 9/20/17 FB Post: Ev Sprouse Web Post: Wayne Laessig

September 16, 2017: update from John Schumann on Dick Iversen. I received a message last night from Iver's cousin Larry. Larry is a retired orthopedic surgeon and very close to Dick and the family. He indicated that Dick is stable, but intubated and on paralytics. He mentioned that they would not be able to assess brain function until today at the earliest. I know Larry, he is a really good guy and I am glad that he is at Iver's side. He mentioned that he had his "6." Keep the prayers coming. **MAIL CALL NOTE:** if anyone needs more info please contact Wayne Laessig at Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net.

September 15, 2017: John Schumann heard this morning from Dick Iversen's wife Jan that he had a terrible boating accident. The boat tipped, he almost drowned, was rescued by the ferry crew, and had two heart attacks as they were trying to save him. He is in an induced coma at Harborview Trauma Center in Seattle Washington. John spoke with his daughter Margi this morning and they hope to have more information later this evening. Please put Iver and his family in your thoughts and prayers. I know there are many others that knew and loved him, please forward this message and let them know. As John hears any further information he will share it with the group.

September 10, 2017: Bernie Smith Final Flight Update. Burial and Service Arrangements for 17th SOS Shadow Brother Bernie Smith will be Friday, October 6, 2017 with 10:00 am with Burial Ceremony at the Dallas-Fort Worth Veterans National Cemetery (2000 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas) followed by 11:30 am Celebration of Life service at Christ Chapel Bible Church (Intersection of I-30 and Montgomery, Fort Worth), with light lunch provided at church after the service. Note: Arrangements are pending for motel group rate and free transportation to and from DFW Airport. Report by Larry Fletcher

September 1, 2017: From your IT & Web Team. Having trouble viewing our web pages or using the online Reunion Registration? We did some troubleshooting & found some problems that affect many web sites internet-wide:

1. Simply put, if you use Firefox or AOL, you may have problems accessing our web pages, web page folders, or registering online. If you use any older, outdated browser versions, they may not automatically update on your computer, may be incompatible with the updated versions of our website and PayPal, and you may have problems accessing our web pages, web page folders, or registering online.
2. If you want a longer explanation:
 - a. SOME browsers don't automatically update to keep current with all the ongoing software changes that some other programs implement. As a result, those browsers may not be compatible with other programs or websites you try to access through those browsers. For example, we seem to have problems if you use Firefox or AOL to access our website.
 - b. Also, if you use an older/outdated version of ANY browser, they often stop trying to keep those older versions current with the ongoing software changes that other programs implement (they want you to use the most current version of their browser). As a result, older outdated versions of many browsers are not compatible with other programs you try to access through those older browser versions. For example, we seem to have regular problems with older versions of Internet Explorer.

3. So what can you do?

- a. Update your browser to a current version. It may work.
 - b. Download an up-to-date version of Google Chrome or Internet Explorer to use as your browser (those browsers seem to work). Microsoft Edge for Windows 10 users seems OK too. Those browsers are free & we haven't experienced problems, as long as you keep them current (i.e. allow automatic or prompted software updates they send).
 - c. Yes, you can keep on using your old browser for whatever else you want, but if you have problems accessing our web or anything related to that, try 3a & b above.
4. If you still have trouble accessing anything on our web, contact Wayne Laessig qadvocate@sbcglobal.net 707-592-4492. If you still have trouble completing your online registration transaction, contact Ron Julian 119.2017@gmail.com 937-546-3219

August 31, 2017: Greetings from your Final Flight POC. I had an accident & was out of the loop for a couple months. I'm fine now & thought it best to do a summary Mail Call to try to catch up. Thanks! Wayne Laessig

Larry Fletcher informed us that **Fighting C Flight Shadow Nav Bernie Smith passed away peacefully August 23rd, 2017** at his home in Fort Worth, Texas. His family was there. He was 82. Larry spoke with Judy Smith about funeral arrangements. Bernie will be cremated & his ashes interned in the Dallas VA National Cemetery (no date yet for the internment). A Celebration of Life will be scheduled by the family at a future date.

Jim Alvis informed us he received notification of another 71st member & reservist's passing: **SSgt Phil Bender passed on July 17, 2017**. Phil was the IO on John Lewis' crew at Nha Trang.

Jim Alvis informed us we lost **William Lawrence (Bill) Withuhn, "Old Sky Warrior" Shadow Nav of the 71st & 17th SOS, who passed away June 29, 2017**. He was assigned to John Lewis' crew at Nha Trang before transferring to the 17th. A memorial service for Bill took place July 2, 2017 & his ashes will be placed in the Columbarium at Arlington National

Cemetery. http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/obituaries/life_tributes/article_a3e749ba-61da-11e7-be51-7f94b4179dbc.html

From **David F. Hinken's** daughter Kathi Hinken: Just in case you haven't been informed, he **passed away June 8th 2017**. Memorial service was held June 18, 2017. I would love to hear how he touched your life also. Dave had been involved in meeting with me and some others for the 2018 reunion in Tucson. Dave was an 18th SOS NAV, 1970 to 1971. Ev Sprous was able attend the service and represent us.

Charles Milton James, 91, of Buhl, Idaho died Sunday, April 9, 2017, at a local Boise hospital of natural causes. Chuck is one of the honored few who served in three wars, including the 17th SOS Shadows as Aircraft Commander and A Flight Operations Officer. Chuck was our first AC-119 Gunship Association President, and authored the By-Laws that serve us so well. Please keep Marilyn & family in your prayers. Chuck's memorial service and interment was at the Idaho VA Cemetery in Boise, ID on May 8th, 2017

Richard Cosner informed us his Dad **Wendell Cosner, 17th SOS Shadow, passed away February 24, 2017**; & while going through his affects found some pictures he posted on our Facebook

Ulas Benton, 18th SOS Stinger IO, passed away March 15, 2016. We learned of his death from this Obituary: <http://www.pressreader.com/usa/chattanooga-times-free-press/20160316/281749858465975>

Jim Alvis learned **71st SOS member Captain John M. McGary passed away on Sunday, February 10, 2013**. John served in the U.S. Air Force until 1960, then was called back to active duty in 1968 for a tour in Vietnam as a 71st SOS Navigator on Tom Cougill's crew #2 at Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam.

June 21, 2017 – 18th SOS Stinger Pilot & 2004 AC-119 Gunship Association President Rogers Craig Stevens, Jr., 76, of Daytona Beach, FL went to be with his Lord. Rogers began his Air Force service as an ROTC graduate from the University of Maryland, received his pilot training in Enid, OK, served as an Instructor Pilot for the T37 and with AC 119 Gunships as a Stinger Pilot with the 18th SOS in Viet Nam. Rogers was one of our Association's Newsletter Editors, & co-coordinated our 2004 Reunion at the National Museum of the Air Force, with the best attendance since our first Reunion 17 years ago. Rogers graduated from the University of Maryland & received his Masters in Education & Guidance from Phillips University at Enid, OK, & taught "Air Warfare in Southeast Asia/Vietnam" at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Rogers was a Christian & served as Chairman of Trustees and as Chairman of the Stewardship Team at Lumberport Baptist Church. After being

diagnosed with cancer in December, 2016, Rogers continued to live his life to the fullest, and considered the past six months as a gift from God. Friends may call at the Perine Funeral Home, 1348 S. Pike St., Shinnston on Sunday, June 25, 2017 from 2-4 p.m. & 6-8 p.m. Funeral services will be held at the Lumberport Baptist Church on Monday at 11:00 a.m. with Interment following at the WV National Cemetery in Pruntytown where full military honors will be conducted. Condolences & additional info may be accessed at http://www.hutsonfuneralhomes.com/obituary/rogers-stevens-jr_. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Halifax Health Hospice, 3800 Woodbriar Trail, Port Orange, Florida 32129

March 1, 2017 – AC-119 Gunship group loses another Stinger. *From Steve Meleen:* Stinger and AC-119 gunship brother **Dick Mahany** passed peacefully last night in Charleston, SC with Angela, son Richard, and family by his side. Angela's daughter Angie called me and the services are this Saturday in Savannah at St. James Roman Catholic Church ...more info later. Let us toast a good man, better friend...one who loved his country and Stingers.

March 1, 2017 – Jim Moore, Stinger FE and long-time Association member stricken with Cancer. *We received this note from Jim's Daughter Lorraine McElrath...* "I am writing to let the association know that my Dad, Jim Moore, has been diagnosed with lung (mesothelioma) cancer. He is now at home recovering from surgery. The recovery process from the biopsy surgery is going a bit rough. Prayers and warm thoughts are appreciated He has two appointments next week so we will have more information after that." Messages for Jim can be sent to helenneely@gmail.com

February 28, 2017 – the 18th Special Operations Sq and AC-119 Gunship Association lost a great pilot. It is with profound sadness we note the passing of our Brother-in-Arms, **Al Milacek**. The Funeral services celebrating and honoring the life of Lt. Col. Ret. Alan D. Milacek, 77, of Waukomis were held February 27th in the First United Methodist Church with Graveside services in the Waukomis Cemetery. A Family visitation was held Sunday February 26, 2017 in the Brown-Cummings Funeral Home. Alan was aircraft Commander on Stinger AC-119K tail number 883 whose crew received the coveted Mackay Trophy in 1971 for the most Meritorious Flight of the Year (1970). Milacek's aircraft sustained a devastating anti-aircraft artillery hit that shot off more than 17 feet of one wing. Milacek and his crew literally brought their limping aircraft home on "a wing and a prayer"! The citation reads, in part: Working as a team and displaying the highest degree of airmanship and courage in the face of extreme danger, they managed to successfully return to their home base, thereby saving a valuable aircraft. The exceptional distinctive accomplishments of Captain Milacek and his crew reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force. For additional info, please visit <http://www.brown-cummings.com/home/obituary/4132123> *We will post any updates as we receive them.*
Your Association Crew