

## 2020 Mike Drzyzga President's Messages

### President's Message – November 2020

Greetings fellow Gunshippers, family, and friends,

This very peculiar year is slipping away into history, for what I hope and pray will become a brighter future. All the uncertainty we had about cancelling this year's reunion, seems now to have led to a good decision. I know that those of us using Facebook, posted some sadness of not being able to reunite this year in Ft. Walton Beach. The good news is that the details for our 21<sup>st</sup> reunion in FWB next Oct. have been finalized, and will be (or is now) posted on the Association's Web Site, and in the November *Firing Circle*. With a safe and effective vaccine on its way from the super virologist in our pharmaceutical companies, the pandemic should wind down as the earth slowly makes another trip around the sun. A side thought, as I mentioned in the Aug. *Firing Circle*, Andrea and I did NOT venture to visit friends and family in FL in Oct., and sat in NJ avoiding the TV news as much as possible.



As I often report, the Association's Board of Directors is very active keeping the Association focused on the future. With many organizations using video conferencing (i.e. ZOOM) to have "virtual" meetings, your BOD tried a video conference for our Board Meeting on Nov.10. What a hoot!. We did have some technical glitches, even after some good testing, but the consensus is: it is enjoyable to see one another, not just listen to our voices on the phone.

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**NEWS** – With the passing of Shadow Pilot **Don Craig**, we lost our "legacy unit" Point-of-Contact (POC) for the 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, who were flying MC-130Js from Kadena AFB. I have been communicating with the 17<sup>th</sup> Past Cmdr., and learned that the 17<sup>th</sup> STOOD DOWN. The 130's stayed at Kadena with the 1<sup>st</sup> SOS. Now, what is intriguing RUMOR has it that USAF wants another AC-130J squadron, probably at Cannon AFB, and they may become the 17<sup>th</sup> SOS (with gunships this time). That would be so cool. I'll keep an ear-to-the-ground.

With the passing of Stinger Gunner **Bruce Byrd**, we lost our "tracker" of the last remaining AC-119 Gunship that is Stinger 850, at TSN. A Google Earth search shows that our 850 was fully reassembled by March 2020, and out of the hangar, now sitting in line with other VN era former USAF A/C. The Association's goal is to see that OUR HISTORY of 850 is well presented if/when the Stinger is put on public display at a TSN museum.

**Association Web Site** – Our Web Site has become a full-feature place for news, our history, and purchasing of AC-119 memorabilia. Quartermaster Gus Sininger has added new items to "our store". Also, Roy Davis, Wayne Laessig, and our Web Master Liz Buss, built a super "our stories" page where all of our Oral Video interviews, Biographies and Stories are readily available. Superb effort! The best thing our members can do is read the bios and stories and watch the videos of their fellow 119ers. You all must take a look, [www.ac119gunships.com](http://www.ac119gunships.com).

**Kimber Classic Pistol Raffle** – The Association is fortunate to have for raffle a highly customized Kimber Stainless Steel .45 ACP pistol provided by Cherokee Firearms master

gunsmith Ron Soderquist. This is a beautiful tribute to our AC-119s, and everyone involved with our success in Vietnam. See the *Firing Circle* for details on the beautiful customization and obtaining raffle tickets.

Secretary Andrea and I wish everyone a safe and peaceful Thanksgiving and Christmas time. Have faith that this pandemic will pass into history and we will again traveling freely.

Mike Drzyzga, President