

Association President's Message – January 2021

Greetings fellow AC-119ers, Family, and Friends.

Happy New Year everyone. Last year ended with everyone looking back at a truly CRAZY year. This is a first for me: I wrote and posted on the Association Web site a November President's Message, which told of a Nov. *Firing Circle* newsletter coming, which never happened. Let's say that this is part of 2020!

I sincerely hope and pray that in this New Year, 2021, we will experience a much better world to live in than was 2020. With a safe and effective corona virus vaccine on its way across the USA from the super virologist in our pharmaceutical companies, the pandemic should wind down as 2021 progresses – we hope and pray.

Nevertheless, many of you, I suspect, are expecting to receive a *Firing Circle* newsletter with all the details for our reunion in Ft. Walton Beach in Oct. A January *Firing Circle* is coming, but the reunion registration process is being delayed for two reasons. First, the details and registration process are tied to our web site, which required a significant update to the ancillary modules that allows it work so well. Thank You to web master Liz Buss for her hard work. Second, and more troubling, are the new uncertainties associated with distribution of the corona virus vaccine, and our population attaining "herd immunity" against it. The CDC is saying now that if 75-80% of the USA population is vaccinated by Sept., we will have the protection and can travel freely. But now, the Association is managing our commitments to the vendors that support the reunion (Hotel, Convention Hall, caterers, tours) so they can provide us necessary flexibility, should the USA NOT "open up" as expected.

As I write this, I foresee having our Oct. reunion as planned. If all registered guests are vaccinated, then the week should be as awesome as we ever had. If there are attendees who were unable to get vaccinated, then the associated risk rests with them. This is my plan: to follow closely the CDC's information on the USA vaccination process, and liaise with other organizations that are planning annual meetings this year. There are organizations that I am associated with, that have larger annual events than we have, and are facing these same issues.

News: (repeated from Nov. 2020 Prez Message)

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

With the passing of Stinger Gunner **Bruce Byrd**, we lost our "tracker" of the last remaining AC-119 Gunship, Stinger 850 at TSN. A Google Earth search shows that our 850 was fully reassembled by March 2020, and out of the hangar, and now sits 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. If you're interested in becoming the tracker for this, contact me.

Please stay safe and stay well

Mike Drzyzga

President



2021 AC-119 GUNSHIP REUNION XXI

OCTOBER 6 – OCTOBER 10, 2021 AT FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA

“BACK HOME AGAIN AT FOUR POINTS”

Our AC-119 Association's Founding Fathers got us together in 2000 to celebrate who we are, the friendships and bonds we'd formed, and to affirm our place in military and SEA History. 400 of us met at the Fort Walton Four Points Hotel. Since then, we've held Reunions every year at locations all over our great country, doing exactly what our Founding Fathers set out to do. We've added reasons to get together, like NEW friends, and including family members of our honored KIAs who Gave All. Help us show family, friends, and history our pride in being part of this AC-119 Gunship family. Unfortunately, the 2020 Reunion had to be cancelled but 2021 Reunion Coordinator Gus Sininger went into action and made the arrangements for the 2021 Reunion, STILL in Ft. Walton Beach, STILL at the same hotel, the Four Points **BUT** on different dates, October 6 – 10, 2021. Join us, while you can, where we started, at the Four Points Hotel in Fort Walton Beach!! We look forward to reuniting in Fort Walton Beach in 2021.

Reunion and hotel registration information will be in place soon. Watch for a Flash message and Facebook announcement

Final Flight

We remember our human frailty, and the strength of our brotherhood, in the loss of these who joined our Final Flight. Please remember their families in your prayers. R.I.P., Brothers all:

- Glenn B. Ashworth, 18th SOS, passed on January 3, 2006
- Harold W. "Hal" Ayers, 18th SOS, passed on January 23, 2007
- Allen "Yogi" Bare, 18th SOS Stinger FE, passed on January 2, 2000
- Jimmy Barkalow, 18th SOS Stinger 41 Pilot, passed on December 21, 2020
- Antoine "Tony" Chaloux, 17th SOS Shadow FE, passed away November 11, 2020
- J.L. Chase, 18th SOS Maintenance, passed on June 12, 2012
- Dewell M. Clemons, 18th SOS, passed on May 15, 2000
- Donald A. Craig, 17th SOS Pilot, passed on September 27, 2020
- Larry E, "Doc" Fletcher, 17th Fighting C Flight Shadow Pilot, passed on December 13, 2020
- James "Jim" H. Green, 18th SOS Nav, passed away on September 4, 2020
- Doug Gorsuch, 17th SOS Shadow and 18th SOS Stinger FE, passed on January 4, 2021
- Richard Havens, 18th SOS Illuminator Operator, passed on 26 April 2019
- Warren E. Hinton, 71st SOS Crew Chief, passed on November 9, 2020
- Jack "Mac" McCarthy, 17th SOS Shadow Gunner, passed away on September 24, 2020
- Howard "Gene" E. Mangin, 71st SOS Pilot, passed away on September 16, 2020
- Bobby D. McLeod, 18th SOS Avionics, passed February 4, 2014
- William J. McDowell, 18th SOS FE, passed June 10, 2010
- Bobby R. New, 14th SOW Prop Mechanic, and his wife Jan both passed on November 5, 2020
- Eugene "Gene" Schaltenbrand, 71st and 17th SOS Shadow Pilot, passed on January 12, 2021
- Gordon "Gordie" Williams, 18th SOS Gunner, passed on May 30, 2020

We also note with sadness, the passing of Soncy Hunter, wife of 18th SOS Gunner Larry Hunter, on November 9, 2020 and 18th SOS Stinger KIA Tom Hamman's widow Susan and Mom Sue both passed on December 23, 2020 within 24 hours of each other; and Bob Safreno's wife Bev who passed Christmas-time. Our prayers to their families for strength and peace.

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> and our Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>.

You might also notice that some who took their Final Flight did so long ago. Ev Sprous and his Outreach Team do a super job locating, contacting, and reconnecting with our remaining living crewmates. They also find many who are already deceased. They can only reconnect us with our remaining living Brothers if they know who to look for! **PLEASE** visit <https://www.ac119gunships.com/membership-contact-information/alpha-roster> and add any missing names or contacts you have.

AC119 Association Membership Updates

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Member:

- Robert Kennedy, Life #551, NCOIC AWG13 Fire Control, 18th SOS and 14th FMS

We also give a warm welcome to our new Honorary Life Member:

- Christopher Lang, Honorary Life #552, Former Commander of the 17th SOS Jackals, Kadena, Japan

We give a warm welcome to our new and renewing Annual Members:

- Dennis Lavender, 71st SOS, Engine Mechanic
- Renewing Annual member, Jim Bond, 71st SOS IO

After 50 years, a C-119G returns to the former Bakalar Air Force Base

Courtesy of Jim Alvis

AC-119 gunshippers, there is a Fairchild C-119G restoration underway right now. Here is the story. For more than twenty years, the founders and volunteers of the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum (Columbus, IN) wanted a C-119G on *static display* since it represented the most common aircraft type stationed at Bakalar AFB during its twenty-eight-year existence. Thanks to donations by Columbus businesses, private individuals, and support from the City of Columbus, the museum was able to locate and purchase a Canadian origin C-119G in May of 2019. Once the purchase was completed, the aircraft was disassembled and transported from Greybull, Wyoming to Columbus, Indiana. All parts and pieces were finally delivered in mid-September 2020. The leader of the restoration team developed a phased plan and the local volunteers went to work, and have made considerable progress in a short period of time.

Since I cannot adequately explain the whole process, the best way to do that is through a series of videos and still images captured by museum volunteers. The images appear on the museum's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/atterburybakalarairmuseum>. *Be sure to click on 'photos' or 'videos' on the left-hand column* and scroll through the selection. The most recent videos and still images pertain to the acquisition and restoration of Charlie 119. Charlie 119 is the project name given to the Canadian C-119G. No, it will not be outfitted to represent a gunship. Instead, it will be restored to the configuration of Air Force Reserve C-119s as they existed at Bakalar AFB in the 1960s.

Some AC-119 gunshippers have probably never seen a non-gunship C-119G. Others have probably never seen a C-119 disassembled into its major components—fuselage, center wing section, right and left outboard wing sections, tail booms, and horizontal and vertical stabilizers. All of these major components are clearly visible in the videos and still images, so check 'em out.

At the time the 71st Tactical Airlift Squadron of the 930th Tactical Airlift Group was mobilized in May 1968, there were thirty-six C-119Gs on the Bakalar AFB parking ramp. When the 71st SOS reservists returned home on June 6, 1969, there were none. The USAF C-119s were in the process of being phased out of service.

More information about the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Base and Museum is available at:

<https://www.atterburybakalarairmuseum.org/>

Enjoy these few still photos and be sure to check out many more on the Facebook page. Charlie 119 progress updates will follow.



71st plaque donated to Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum

If you attended Gunship Reunion XX in Salt Lake City in 2019, you may recall the three 22" individual wooden squadron plaques available for auction. JP Maclsaac is well known for his video and audio contributions at every reunion, but he is also a talented woodworker. To create each plaque, he had to digitally trace each squadron patch or insignia to produce a detailed scalable vector graphic. The scalable vector graphic was then used with a CNC router to rout the unwanted areas. JP used high quality 3/4" plywood and it took several 1/10" passes to achieve the needed depth. He spent a considerable amount of time to produce each plaque. Well done JP!

Aerial Gunner Jim Boyd was the successful bidder for the 71st plaque and promptly gave it to Col. Al Heuss. Al, with the assistance of his son, delivered and presented the plaque to Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum President Nick Firestone on October 10, 2020. A museum volunteer will paint the plaque to replicate the 71st insignia, and it will be prominently displayed in the museum. Al also had the opportunity to view the recently acquired C-119G that is being restored for static display.



Bios and Videos

- We have completed the AC-119 GUNSHIP BIOGRAPHIES-VOL ONE book. It was proofed and published, and is available on Amazon through our Quartermaster Store soon. See link below.
- We are starting to collect new bios, and as soon as we get enough, we will publish Volume Two. In the meantime, your bio will be placed on our Association's website. Information on the format of the bio can be found on our website at the link below. If you have any questions, or want to submit a bio, contact Roy Davis at (253)549-2044 or roy@island-escape.com. Try to encourage other Association members to submit bios. The more we get, the quicker Volume Two will be published.
 - [Bio and Video Info and Samples](#)
 - [Quartermaster Store- Books](#)

From the Association Quartermaster Store - ASSOCIATION SPONSORED BOOKS

These are the books we have recently published on Amazon. You can access and purchase them from Amazon through the Quartermaster Store (<https://www.ac119gunships.com/product-category/books/>).

- **AC-119 GUNSHIP HISTORY BOOK**
- **THE GUNSHIP CHRONICLES-STINGER 41**
 - Written by Larry Barbee. About the only gunship to be shot down (1972)
- **THE HISTORY OF THE FAIRCHILD C-119 FLYING BOXCAR**
 - Probably the best source of info about the 119; took Cosner (member) 15 years to put together
- **SPOOKY, SPECTRE AND THE MAN**
 - Written by Mike Friel. About Ron Terry.
- **STINGER GUNSHIP CARTOONS**
- **AC-119 GUNSHIP BIOS**
- **AC-119 GUNSHIP STORIES**

Give Yourself A Birthday Present!

Have you been holding off on getting one or both of the AC-119 Lithographs?

Now's your chance! The Quartermaster Store is having a clearance sale on our Lithos. Regular price is \$45. We are listing them for \$20 now. These are beautiful paintings and will look great in your man cave. Go to our store to order: <https://www.ac119gunships.com/product-category/prints/>



AC-119 Commemorative Pistol Raffle



NOTE: Photos show the actual Kimber pistol as crafter by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. The actual pistol will be on display at the 2021 Ft. Walton Beach reunion.

- Kimber Classic Stainless Steel 1911 Style Pistol
- 45 ACP Caliber with 5-inch barrel
- Combat Trigger and Beavertail Grip Safety
- Ambidextrous Extended Thumb Safety
- Tactical Hammer and Sear
- Flat Checkered Main Spring Housing
- Open Mag Well
- Fitted Barrel Bushing with Guide Rod
- Fiber Optics Sights Installed
- Original Rosewood Grip Panels Will Be Included when sent.
- Custom Engraved Grips Have Been Fitted: AC-119 Association Patch on one grip panel, the Brothers image on the other grip panel
- Custom Box for Storage.
- Slide has "Vietnam 68 – 73" and the 71st, 17th and 18th SOS engraved
- **Tickets Are:**
- 1 For \$10.00
- 6 For \$55.00
- 13 For \$120.00
- **LIMIT 100 Tickets per person.**

Pay by PayPal to dawohlgamuth@gmail.com. Put "Pistol Bids" in the PayPal subject line.

You can also send Doug a check or money order. TO; Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726. Be sure to indicate that the payment is for the Pistol raffle.

Winning ticket will be drawn at the 2021 Ft Walton Beach reunion.

On behalf of the AC-119 Gunship Association, Col Mac and Ev Sprous, we would like to thank everyone that sent us copies of special orders, TDY/PCS Orders, DD-214, etc.

We have close to 3500 entries on the Special-Order Spreadsheet.

If you are missing any records, let us know.

If you need help with a claim, contact Col Mac colmacmac@mac.com 302-373-7269

From the Desk of Ev Sprous

How to Locate Missing and Lost Military Records

Need to find lost or missing records from your time in the military services, a good place to get started is at the National Archives website. To get started go to website <https://www.vetrechs.archives.gov/> or click on the following link: Vetrechs.archives.gov The following are some of the research items one can pursue.

- Research our organizational records
- Search for Veterans Service records
- Request Military Service Records

Military Service Records options:

- Request DD 214/ Separation Documents
- Request Official Military Personnel File (OMPF)
- Request Replacement Medals
- Request Medical and Health Records

When you finish your request, you will get a signature page you must print out and mail to the address on the instructions. If you need help of any type, call Ev at 520-528-9444

MODIFIED POLICIES

DECEASED MEMBERS: If you think one of our members has passed away, please notify Everett Sprous (529.528.9444). This will stop all correspondence until we verify the death.

MILITARY ORDERS: Everett is interested in collecting any orders you may have. From this point on the orders should be snail mailed to him with the social security numbers visible (they provide valuable information to the Association). If emailing them is your only option, black out the social security numbers.

Administrative Updates and Reminders

1. PLEASE remember to contact your group POC, the Membership Coordinator (Ev Sprous), or the Association Secretary (Andrea Drzyzga) when you **change contact information, especially your email address**. We do very much want to keep in contact with you.
2. If you receive the *Firing Circle* by walking to the mail box after its postal delivery, AND you do have and use an EMAIL ADDRESS, TELL Mike Drzyzga, Roy Davis, your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW if you want future Newsletters and FLASHES sent via email. You can **SAVE** us a lot by reducing the cost of postage, printer paper, envelopes, ink cartridges, etc. Contact Association Membership Coordinator Ev Sprous, via email at ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com or call (520) 528-9444.
3. Are you interested in some AC-119 Gunship historical facts, current events, interesting dialogue, photos and stories about AC-119s? If you have Internet access on your computer, tablet or cell phone, then you have to join the Association's **Facebook page**. It now has **over 679 members** – not just directly related AC119ers, but also history buffs, AC-130 folk (including some new 73rd SOS Shadows), model makers, etc. Just browse to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>
4. Also, there are Facebook Pages dedicated to “Air Force Gunners”, “Air Force 462 Weapons”, “Happy Valley – Phan Rang” (almost 1400 members), and “U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use” – very interesting pictures and history, current news, and other valuable information.
5. **Awards and Decorations** coordinator Steve “Col” Mac Isaac continues to aid us in fixing incorrect DD214s. He has helped many get on the trail to receiving decorations they earned through research of documentation and orders shared by association members. Questions and comments: Contact Col Mac at email: colmacmac@mac.com, or (MST) Cell phone: (302) 249-1499.
6. **WE NEED YOU TO SEND US YOUR SPECIAL ORDERS.** Please send Ev Sprous copies of your special orders. These are needed to help our comrades with claims and family members after their loved one passes. Send them to Everett Sprous at ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com or 639 E. Orchard Lane, Gilbert, AZ 85296 or call Ev at (520) 528-9444. Please do this as soon as possible.

Future Reunions

2021 *Back Home Again* AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXI

Look for detailed information on the 2021 Fort Walton Beach in future *Firing Circles, Flash Messages* and the AC-119 Association Website

2022 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXII

Reunion XXII was approved by vote for Branson, Missouri. Due to the COVID-19 disruptions, that reunion has been rescheduled to August 2022. Jerry MacDonald is the coordinator, and we will be at the Radisson Hotel again.