

Association President's Message – August 2021

Greetings fellow AC-119ers, Family, & Friends,

I hope that this message finds you all well and continuing to stay safe. As the summer of 2021 rushes past, the calendar is flipping daily pages at a steady rate heading towards our Ft. Walton Beach reunion. I have spoken to and emailed many of our Associates about the Board's decision to require vaccinations for all those who want to attend. We must be as safe as we can for situations under our control. Right now, we have far more of our folks who are attending because of the policy, compared to a small number that will not be attending. It hurts badly to have to deal with this pandemic, and make some tough decisions, based on so much uncertainty. But the support we are getting from those that are coming is helping my heart. Nevertheless, we continue to monitor our hotel and Florida for anything they might implement about masks or anything else based on CDC and Delta variant emergence.

Some News:

I am very happy to say that we have a new Point-of-Contact (POC) for our Maintainers Group. **Bruce Muller**, Phan Rang Shadow Crew Chief, will pick-up this responsibility from **Andy Bright**. Andy did a great job for the Association, and we will be sure to recognize him.

Also, the rumor I spoke of previously about the 17th SOS is TRUE. Lt Col Andrew Saylor, from Cannon AFB, reached out with info about standing-up the new 17th SOS in Oct. Since the 73rd SOS at Hurlburt already commandeered a lot of "Shadow" stuff, their call sign, and squadron patch will be based on the former 17th SOS MC-130Ps JAKAL, formerly at Kadena AFB. Longtime Associate and former Shadow gunner **George Renfroe** accepted my "job offer" to be our POC with the 17th. More info to come as we gather it. I already saw a Facebook post on a "Gunships Project page" that Cannon already received its first AC-130J.

Speaking of the Ghost Rider, did you see the video circulating on the internet of a "heritage flight" of an AC-47 Spooky and an AC-130J, made in late July at the week-long giant air-show in Oshkosh, WI? I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking it would be miraculous to have a flying C-119, made to look like a Shadow/Stinger, to be part of that heritage flight. The two "Js" at Oshkosh were from the 4th SOS (Spooky again) from Hurlburt.

Looking ahead:

I spoke to two Associates already, one is a Board member, about the new concerns with COVID-19 Delta Variant, and possible more restrictive safety mandates. The Board will be discussing these concerns at our next video conference.

Reunion XXI is less than two months away. I am so looking forward to seeing as many of you as can be in Ft. Walton Beach. We will have our Saturday morning "business meeting" as usual, and deal with planning future reunions and continued functioning of the well-staffed Board of Directors, in order to keep this great Association moving forward. Without dedicated people to give time and talent, we can lose our current momentum.

In closing, same three thoughts: 1. please tell us what you think about our newsletter, *Firing Circle*. Much time and energy go into making and distributing it. 2. We have 700 people who joined our Facebook page, and a lot of valuable information, stories, and hot news, are shared on it. If you do "social media" please join in! 3. Our web site has been a valuable source of current info, but recently is becoming a great depository of our AC-119 history. Please visit www.ac-119gunships.com and browse around.

Gear-up!!

Mike Drzyzga, Association President

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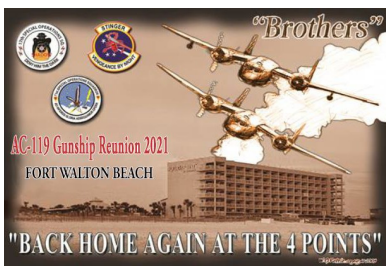


A Chaplain's Prayer

Chaplain Larry "Baby Huey" Hunter sent this. "I'm reading all the traffic on who is coming. I would like to say I pray for our group every night, for the ones that are sick and the ones that we have lost. Now I am praying for a good reunion for all. I ask the ones that have not signed up to please do so. I ask the ones that are coming to please get your shots, if not for yourself, for the rest of us. If not please stay home and take care. It is my prayer that we come together, have a great reunion, and all return home safe. This is my prayer."

Who's Coming to Our Fort Walton Beach Reunion

- Larry and Deb Barbee
- Paul Beagley with sons Mark and Michael
- Greg and Debbie Blackmon
- Jim & JoAnn Boyd
- Tom Brander
- Paul & Beverly Brown
- Windell & Bernadette Bunton
- Eugene & Kay Caruso
- Pete & Dean Chamberlain
- George Chapman
- John Cootz
- Craig Corbett
- Cliff and Carole Cornelius
- Peggy Craig
- Alton Criswell & Guest
- Charles & Sharon Daenzer (Gus Siningers daughter & son-in-law)
- Roy Davis & Paula Pascoe-Davis
- Ron Dorazio
- Mike & Andrea Drzyzga
- Bob & Janet Dydo
- Jim and Tina Farrell
- Mike Friel
- Lloyd & Mary Ellen Froelich
- Sam & Debby Gallo
- Joe and Janis Goryl
- Garry Gourley
- Jimmy Grant
- Irving and Gail Greenberg
- Richard and Patricia Grimsley
- Rich Hall
- Bill Hanson and Son
- George Hardy
- Jerry & Ellen Hester
- Ron & Carol Hinton, son Brian & wife Imari, and daughter Diane and husband, Wed Lord
- Larry "Baby Huey" Hunter
- Lee Jordan & Guest
- Mike & Mary Alice Kimmel
- Mike Krauss
- Bob and Diana Krueger
- Wayne & Lynette Laessig
- Mike Lee & spouse
- Joe Lentini & Sandy Piech
- Don Luke
- Robert & Cheryl Lyall
- Mac & Nancy MacIsaac & son John Paul 'JP' Mac Isaac
- Dale & Jeanette Martin
- Cash McCall
- Buck & Linda McCants
- Steve & Vivien Meleen
- Jerry & Claudette Michaud
- Bruce Miller & Guest
- Jimmy & Elaine Montgomery
- John Morgan & Guest
- John & Lynn Morrow, son Craig & wife Debbie
- Mike & Theresa Mullen
- Bruce & Mary Muller
- Larry & Loretta Nelson
- Tom and Rose Newbold
- Tom Novak
- Bill & Karen Petrie
- Bill and Cindy Posey with son (CMSgt Ret) Bill Jr and wife Robin; Grandson (Msgt) Brandon
- Jim Ray
- Matt & Annette Robeck
- Terry & Theresa Sarul
- Chris Schnell (Hamman) & niece Liz Kolepp-Mayer
- Gus Siningers with daughters Lonnie, Sherlie, Joyce & husband Vaughn Pelloni, Lee Ann & husband Glen Whitaker, Donna & husband Charles Glickman; grandsons Tyler Vaughn & Robbie Dangler; daughter-in-law Barbara Riveron; and friend Ed Brenner.
- Frank "Ski" & Yami Sledzinski
- Jerry & Diane Snyder
- Ronnie & Venita Soderquist
- Ev Sprous & sister Ruth Sprous-Chapman
- Donna (Crews) Stapleton
- Kenneth & Veronika Stearn
- Bill and Wilma Tyler with daughters Cheree and husband Steve Bachmann, and Tammy Kelly; and grand-daughter Shannon Hargraves
- Gene Van Over
- Dave & Mary Voisey
- Tom & Marisa Weisenfluh
- Doug & Karen Wohlgamuth
- John & Laura Wolff
- Teddy Wood & John White



2021 AC-119 GUNSHIP REUNION XXI

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

"BACK HOME AGAIN AT THE FOUR POINTS"

In 2000 our Association Founding Fathers got us together to celebrate who we are, the friendships & bonds we'd formed, & to affirm our place in military & SEA History. 400 of us met at Fort Walton. Since then, we held Reunions every year except 2020 at locations all over our country, doing exactly what our Founding Fathers set out to do.

We added more reasons to get together, like NEW friends & including family members of our honored KIAs. Show family, friends, & history your pride in being part of this AC-119 Gunship family. Join us, while you can, at the Four Points Hotel in Fort Walton Beach!

NOTE: you must have a COVID vaccination to attend. If you won't or cannot, contact Roy Davis or Mike Drzyzga Contact Roy or Mike

Hotel Room Reservations – Four Points by Sheraton

1325 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

- **All-inclusive rooms prices are \$110.88 for a King Bed (no view), \$133.28 for two Queen Beds with Courtyard Garden view, or \$172.48 for 2 Queen Beds in the tower with a beach view. **Hotel Reservations** are not part of the **Reunion Registration** & you must contact the hotel separately. Use their website **Book your group rate for AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion** or call 1-850-243- 8116 for the hotel direct or 1-800-325-3535 for central reservations to **reserve** your room. Tell them you are with the AC-119 Gunship Association. **BOOK NOW!** You can reserve rooms at our Reunion rates from Monday, Oct 4 to Tuesday, Oct 12, 2021, but our **Reunion rates are only guaranteed through Sept 20th**. After that, the rates are only good for as long as rooms are available. Bottom line: since you can cancel without charge as long as you cancel no later than 24 hours prior to your reservation check-in date, **reserve** your room by Sept 20 to guarantee you get our Reunion rate.**

After making your Hotel Reservation, Register for the Reunion!

- Register online at **Online Reunion Registration**. **Note:** When you Checkout, you'll see a place where it asks "Are you a returning customer?" & "Do you want to create an account?" Those are PayPal fields & you can ignore them. Just go to the end of the Checkout page to complete your registration using either PayPal payment or a credit card. It's a good idea to print your completed registration & bring it to the Reunion. If you cannot pay online, CALL Doug Wohlgamuth at 813-781-5728 (he's East Coast time).
Note: Reunion Registration cut-off is October 5th. If you cancel on or before then you can receive a refund, or make a donation. If you cancel after Oct 5, we may have to pay contracted costs, so no refunds (but, talk to us if there are special circumstances like family emergencies or losses).
- **When you arrive**, head to our Reunion Table to pick up your **Reunion Registration** packet with name tags, Event tickets, etc. If we're not there when you arrive, check-in at the Hotel Desk & go to the Hootch to pick up your **Reunion Registration** packet.

Transportation

- **Airlines:** Allegiant, American, Southwest, United, & Delta fly to Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS).
- **Car:** Parking at the hotel is **free**.
- **RVs/Campers:** Hurlburt (850-797-0103) & Eglin (850-883-1243) FamCamps: no reservations; call a couple weeks ahead; Geronimo RV Resort (850-424-6801); & Destin West RV Resort (850-203-4533).

Reunion Agenda

Wednesday, Oct 6 **Reunion Registration**; Hootch; anything you want to do on your own!

NOTE: Our Hootch opens & stays open **daily** from about 0800 until about 2200 **except** during our Meet & Greet, Banquet, & Farewell BBQ. Hootch snacks & beverages are free (donations always welcomed :->)

Thursday, Oct 7 **Reunion Registration**; Hootch; & Pensacola Area Tour!

Tour Time TBD: this Pensacola area tour, COVID permitting, is \$25 & will include the Vietnam Wall South, Pensacola Historic District, Naval Air Museum, & lunch (not included in tour price) at the Cubi Bar Café.

Friday, Oct 8 **Reunion Registration**; Hootch; 18th & 73rd Legacy Squadrons' Picnic, & Meet & Greet!

18th & 73rd Legacy Squadrons' Picnic across from Hurlburt Main Gate in Picnic Area (not "on" the base); **free** to Reunion attendees but depend on deployments & COVID. For now, sign up & we'll provide details as we get closer. Plan to attend, & meet today's Air Force warriors who carry on our Gunship heritage & legacy!

1700 - Meet & Greet Cash Bar

1800 - Meet & Greet on the North Pool Deck & Patio is \$41; kids ages 4-12 are \$20.

- Introductions of Reunion newcomers, special guests, & KIA Family members.
- **Buffet includes:** Beef Wellington hors d'oeuvre, Swedish Meatballs; Bacon wrapped Scallops w/horseradish sauce; vegetable Spring Rolls; fried Chicken Fingers w/honey mustard; vegetables Crudit  w/onion & Ranch Dip.

Saturday, Oct 9 Association Meeting; Hootch; anything on your own; Banquet!

0900-1100 - Business Meeting for all Regular & Associate Members.

1700 - Banquet Cash Bar

1800 - Banquet on the North Pool Deck & Patio is \$49; kids ages 4-12 are \$24.

- **Buffet includes:** Blackened Mahi Mahi w/pineapple rum sauce, Jamaican Jerked Chicken, Baked Ham w/citrus glaze, roasted fresh vegetable, Caribbean Confetti Rice, Tossed Salad w/Ranch or Balsamic Dressings, & Banana Pudding.

Sunday, Oct 10 Golf; Hootch; anything you want to do on your own; Farewell BBQ!

Early - Golf Tournament is \$10 & Doug Wohlgamuth will coordinate details with golfers.

1700 - Farewell BBQ Cash Bar

1800 - Farewell BBQ on North Pool Deck & Patio is \$44; Kids ages 4-12 are \$22.

- **Buffet includes:** BBQ Baby Back Ribs, BBQ Half Chicken, Southern Potato Salad, Twice Baked Potato Casserole, Smoked Baked Beans, Southern Green Beans, Tossed Salad w/Ranch or Italian Dressing; Summer Fruit Salad w/Citrus-Honey-Pecans; & Banana Pudding

Breakfasts & Lunches are on your own. The Four Points has excellent, affordable breakfasts!

Reunion Special Information

- **We will notify you & update the website if anything changes. The important thing right now is to complete your **Hotel Reservation** & your **Reunion Registration**!**
- **Reunion Helpers:** Coordinator Gus Slinger can use help on a few things at the Reunion. If you can help, please contact him & let him know what you can help with, like:
 1. **Welcome Team** to greet folks & give them their Reception package Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday afternoon or evening (after that, Reception packages will be in the Hootch)
 2. **Hootch-Sitters** to be the "Go To" person in the Hootch for a specific morning, afternoon, or evening. You'll replenish snacks/beverages & make sure questions or requests get to Gus.
 - Wednesday afternoon or evening
 - Thursday morning, afternoon, or evening
 - Friday morning or afternoon (no Sitter needed during Meet & Greet)
 - Saturday afternoon (no Sitter needed during Association Meeting & Banquet)
 - Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon (no Sitter needed during Farewell BBQ)
- **Silent Auction: If you'd like to contribute**, something that fits in luggage works well. If you have an item you think needs to be bid upon as an Active auction item, please let Gus know & he'll coordinate with our Auction Team on whether it will be a Silent or Active auction item.
- **Special Raffle: *Commemorative Kimber 45 Pistol***, Classic 1911 model, Stainless Steel, Combat Trigger & ambidextrous safety, in special box, crafted & donated by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. Raffle tickets are 1 for \$10; 6 for \$55, & 13 for \$110 (LIMIT 100 Tickets per person). Includes special AC-119 commemoration pistol grips; comes with two magazines, carrying case, & gun lock.
 - Kimber Classic Stainless Steel 1911 Style Pistol
 - 45 ACP Caliber with 5-inch barrel
 - Combat Trigger & Beavertail Grip Safety
 - Ambidextrous Extended Thumb Safety
 - Tactical Hammer & Sear
 - Custom Engraved Grips: AC-119 Association Patch on one grip panel, Brothers image on the other panel
 - Slide has "Vietnam 68 - 73" & the 71st, 17th & 18th SOS engraved
 - Flat Checkered Main Spring Housing
 - Open Mag Well
 - Fitted Barrel Bushing with Guide Rod
 - Fiber Optics Sights Installed
 - Custom Box for Storage.
 - Original Rosewood Grip Panels Will Be Included when sent.



NOTE: Photos show the actual Kimber pistol as crafted by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. The actual pistol will be on display at the 2021 Ft. Walton Beach reunion. Buy your tickets from Doug Wohlgamuth, who will hold all tickets for the actual Raffle, which will occur at the 2022 Branson Reunion. 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 at Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726. Be sure to indicate that the payment is for the Pistol raffle.

- **Oral History Videos & History Book Bios:** Over 250 of our air & ground crew, plus family members & spouses, have made oral history videos &/or written History Book bios. New videos & bios are posted on our Association web site. Videos may be done solo or with your spouse, crew or other crew members. If you have not made a video or written a bio, we encourage you to do so. You can sign up to do a video or History Book Bio when you complete your Reunion Registration. Click on this link for some tips for making a video or writing a bio. [Bio & Video Info & Samples.](#)
- **Special Reunion Event:** Thanks to Marilyn and Patriot Guard Riders Matt and Annette Robeck, our KIA and Marshall are a very real part of an ongoing story and legacy that fulfills Marshall's dream. If you come to our Fort Walton Beach Reunion, you'll see this beautiful Commemorative Trike and learn more about this wonderful story and the people involved!! The Trike is a work of art, love, and brotherhood. Matt and Annette add a passion for honoring our fallen brothers and comforting their families, reminding them that their loved ones are never forgotten; always remembered. Look for Matt and Annette at the Reunion, introduce yourself, and ask them about the Teddy Bears they donate to children of the deceased that they ride to honor as Patriot Guard Riders. The picture on the left is Marshall; on the right is Matt. As Marilyn says "He even looks a lot like Marshall!"



- **Books:** 7 books written about & by AC-119ers are in our Store. Their experiences & legacy are treasures to read, learn from, & enjoy! These include our original History Book; a history book with all the original plus new Bios; a book of Stories; Spooky, Spectre, & the Man by Mike Friel about Ron Terry's battles to create & utilize fixed-wing gunships; a book of the cartoons that were our way of inserting humor into SEA; The Gunship Chronicles by Larry Barbee including his Stinger 41 story; & History of Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar by Wendell Cosner. Your actual selections & purchase in the store are via Amazon.

AC119 Association Membership Updates

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

- Jacob Jordan Associate Life #558 Grandson of Meredith Anderson KIA Shadow 78
- Scarlett Jordan, Associate Life #559, Granddaughter of Meredith Anderson, KIA Shadow 78
- John Cootz, Annual Member, 18th SOS Gunner

Final Flight

We remember our human frailty & the strength of our brotherhood in the loss of these who joined our Final Flight. Please remember their families in your prayers. We raise a glass to all. R.I.P. Brothers.

- Byron D. Feather, 71st SOS Navigator on Gene Tippy's Crew #4 at Tan Son Nhut, passed April 26, 2021
- *Ronald C Goldberg*, 18th SOS Stinger IO, passed on July 7, 2020
- Joseph J Grushinski, 18th SOS Stinger Gunner, passed June 4, 2021
- Harold W. Peach Sr, 71st SOS First Sergeant at Nha Trang passed April 15, 2021.
- John McCartney, 18th SOS Stinger Pilot, passed March 8, 2021
- Richard "Dick" Ring, 18th SOS Pilot, passed on July 5, 2021
- Robert "Bob" Van Abel, 18th SOS Stinger IO, passed January 20, 2021

We also lost Marjorie Hansen, a member our AC-119 family, June 23, 2021. Marjorie was the widow of Charles Hansen, 18th SOS Navigator and authored *Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story* in his honor.

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> & 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 & his Outreach Team do a super job locating, contacting, & 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> & add any missing names or contacts you have.

Founding Father Fred "Farkle" Graves Is Now at Rest

One of our Association's four Founding Father's ashes was placed in his state's newest National Cemetery. 18th SOS Flight Engineer Fred Graves' ashes had rested on Karen Graves' mantle since shortly after he passed on December 11, 2001. Karen knew that being interred in one of our National Cemeteries was important to Fred, but that he also wanted to be forever near her and their home in Idaho.

When the Snake River Canyon National Cemetery opened near Twin Falls, Idaho last year, Karen started the preparations and with her family's help, Fred was interred there June 30, 2021 with full Military Honors. Wayne Laessig presented Karen with Fred's copy of our Reunion Pictures book at the ceremony.

Special thanks to Sheri, Mark, and Heidi Johnston for their love and work to pull this memorable event together.



R.I.P. Brother.

Administrative Updates & 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 & use an EMAIL ADDRESS, TELL Mike Drzyzga, Roy Davis, your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW if you want future Newsletters & 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 & 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), & “U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use” – very interesting pictures & history, current news, & other valuable information.
5. **Awards & 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 & orders shared by association members. Questions & 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 & 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.
7. **Order your AC-119G or AC-119K Wooden Model & stand; made in Philippines. \$130 includes shipping**



To order yours, visit <https://www.ac119gunships.com/shop/models/ac-119k-wooden-model-with-stand/>

Future Reunions

2022 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXII

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

2023 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXIII

Reunion XXIII will be at?