

The AC-119 Gunship Association

November 2021 President's Reunion Flash

Prez's Message Nov. 2021

Greetings Fellow AC-119ers, families and friends! I hope that you are all well and continuing to stay safe. I guess you figured out that I'm continuing as Association President. This message has two main points: a summary of the reunion, and what's next for the Association.

Reunion Summary: When Andrea and I arrived, the FWB-Destin Four Points Hotel was still training new staff and painting the Hootch. They worked very hard to make our event a success. With the outdoor seating area (Hootch deck) and very nice weather every day, we were able to spread out as needed. If you are on Facebook, there are many pictures posted. We are working on getting a Newsletter published with pictures and a summary of this reunion. The attendance was low, about 130 registered, but the love and energy level was great. Those in attendance made comments like "we really needed to do this!" We opened the Hootch on Wed. with a real team effort – those folks available brought in our snack supplies and Quartermaster inventory. Thursday's bus trip to Pensacola had about 43 attendees. We had guided tours of the NAS Museum, lunch at the Cubi restaurant in the museum, and stopped at the Veterans Memorial Park. Friday was interesting: instead of going on-base at Hurlburt for a picnic hosted by the 18th SOETS, they brought the picnic/memorial service off-base to Navarre Park. Col. Nate Dillon and his team from the 18th seriously cooked up a great meal, Gus Sininger lead the memorial and presented a wreath with KIA family members on each arm. Another highlight was that Matt and Annette Robeck arrived with Marshall Mullin's Memorial Trike. There were many Kodak moments around it. Fri. night's meet and greet was pool-side. The buffet was plentiful and all went well. Sat. morning's business meeting went at a fast pace. TWO TAKE-AWAYS: 1) Your Board of Directors is the same, with two changes for Board Members at Large. Terry Sarul returns, and Ron Dorazio is added. 2) With significant discussion, the members present decided that a proposal for a reunion in Hawaii is not desired, and we will work on Washington, DC for 2023 using a professional event coordinator to take the work load off us. After the meeting, Carol Hinton did an amazing Quilt's of Valor Presentation. This was a very meaningful and emotional event. Each vet who has never received a quilt from any organization was wrapped in a custom, hand-made quilt, along with a hug from the presenter. Sat night's Awards Banquet was also pool-side under a clear starry sky. The buffet was plentiful. All our first-timers and special guests were present. We showed a video presentation covering our first 20 reunions. Thank you Andrea and Roy Davis for that!! Sam and Debbie Gallo did our 50/50, as they do so well, Gus and Wayne did the Live Auction (lots of fun), and Peggie Craig read the winners of the silent auction. Andrea and Peggie did a great job with the auctions. These were very successful! Also, I presented our Above & Beyond Award to V.P. Roy Davis, and Certificates of Appreciation to outgoing Board members Jim Dunn and Jenna Laird, and Wayne Laessig for his tireless support of reunion planning. I had a tough time for a meaningful way to recognize the extreme effort of reunion coordinators Gus Sininger and Larry Hunter. Gus received a custom-made, colorful glass scorpion, and Larry received a "picture book" made from the images of the reunion history video. Whew – a long day it was for me! Sunday night was our Farewell BBQ, again under the setting sun of a clear night. I am very pleased I heard many positive comments on how well the reunion progressed. And Col. Dillon and his crew were amazed at our level of comradery over all these years.

Branson MO Reunion XXII

We are moving forward finalizing the details for reunion XXII, September 29 – October 2, 2022, Branson, MO at the Radisson Hotel, (where we held reunion IX in 2008). Jerry McDonald is working on the announcement flyer. The room rate is \$92.95 + 21.1% tax. We expect to have a final plan for the Branson Belle cruise boat trip in the flyer. I expect a large turn-out for this one. Hope to see you there.

Best regards,

Mike Drzyzga, Association President