

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Stinger IO Bill Petrie's AC-119 Gunships Website & Stinger FE Fred Graves' relentless search for contact information of former members of the 17th & 18th Special Operation Squadrons led to our first reunion. More & more Shadow & Stinger brothers united via the internet website in late 1998. The number of contacts online steadily increased to a point where a reunion became realistic. Too late for organizing a reunion for the year 1999, it was decided to hold a reunion in 2000. Reunion steering committee members Norm Evans, Jim Bennes & Walt Riebau in addition to Petrie & Graves went to work organizing & coordinating **REUNION I. The First-Ever AC-119 Gunship Reunion** was held September 29 – October 1, 2000 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. It was a reunion to remember as 212 17th SOS "Shadows" & 18th SOS "Stingers" reunited for the first time since returning home from the Vietnam War. A total of 404 people attended the long-overdue reunion.

The Saturday morning business meeting was directed by the Steering Committee Chairman & Acting Secretary Walt Riebau. Those in attendance unanimously approved formation of a permanent & recognized AC-119 gunship organization exclusive of any other gunship organizations. Annual membership dues of \$20 were approved. Election of officers followed with Bill Petrie & Fred Graves unanimously elected as President & Vice-President, respectively & by unanimous vote, the two officers were given approval to appoint individuals to the positions of Secretary & Treasurer.

After the business meeting, everyone traveled to Hurlburt Air Park for a Memorial Service honoring our fallen brothers. Following the service, everyone was bussed to the flightline for tours of the AC-130H & AC-130U on static display.

Saturday night Reunion Banquet was held at the Eglin Air Force Base NCO Club. Master of Ceremonies was Bill Petrie. Introduction of the keynote speaker was made by Colonel Dick Iversen, USAF, Ret. General Charles T. (Tony) Robertson, Jr. was the keynote speaker. First Lieutenant Robertson was an 18th SOS pilot at DaNang during 1970-71. General Robertson was honored by being appointed as Permanent Honorary Chairman of the Board of the new AC-119 Gunship Organization.

The first Over & Above Award was presented by Bill Petrie to Jim Bennes, Norm Evans, & Fred Graves for their efforts as Founding Fathers of the Reunion & beginning of the AC-119 Gunship Association.

On Sunday morning, our golfers were driving, chipping, & putting.

An emergency membership meeting was held Sunday evening at which Bill Petrie & Fred Graves respectfully declined taking the positions of President & Vice-President, so they could continue to devote full time to their previous duties leading up to the formation of the new AC-119 Gunship Association. The following slate of officers for 2000-2001 (Reunion II) were nominated & unanimously elected by the quorum of members in attendance at the Farewell Bar-B-Q: President: Charles "Chuck" James Vice-Pres: Norm Evans

Secretary: Walt Riebau Treasurer: Doug Wohlgamuth

Members also approved Association Life Memberships for a one-time fee of \$119.

Editor's NOTE: while there wasn't a formal **Theme** for this first ever AC-119 Reunion, the Reunion T-Shirt said it all, **"I survived the first AC-119 Gunship Reunion."** Also, if you want to read the actual Association meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>

This was the Beginning of the AC-119 Gunship Association & its Reunions. To keep this reunion chronology from turning into a book, I have noted highlights for each reunion with some details. For more information about each reunion, log on the AC-119 Gunship Association website <https://www.ac119gunships.com> to read the annual association meeting minutes of past reunions & the past "Firing Circle" newsletters.

Respectfully,

Dr. Larry Elton Fletcher

AKA "Doc", Fletch, Prez, & Author of AC-119 Books

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REUNION II

Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

September 28-30, 2001

Again, there wasn't a formal **Theme**, but this Reunion's T-Shirts reflected the theme that "We Were AC-119ers". Those T-Shirts were: *Stinger, Shadow, & Laotian Highway Patrol*.

Reunion Coordinators: Norm Evans / Gus Sininger

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President: Charles "Chuck" James Vice-Pres: Norm Evans Secretary: Walt Riebau Treasurer: Doug Wohlgamuth	President: Larry Fletcher Vice-Pres: (Larry Fletcher) Secretary: Jimmy Grant Treasurer: Art Perry

Webmaster: Bill Petrie / Fred Graves

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 190

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved & Adopted Association By-Laws written/submitted by President Chuck James. Of special note: as a result of last year's Reunion attendees approval for a AC-119 Gunship Association, the formal establishment was completed as a 501(c)19 Non-Profit with By-Laws.
- Approved the AC-119 Gunship Association Patch designed by President Chuck James.

Memorial Service: Hurlburt Field Memorial Air Park Ceremony directed by President James. Laying of Wreath near the AC-119 Shadow Gunship in memory & honor of our Fallen Brothers.

Reunion Banquet - Eglin Air Force Base NCO Club. Guest Speaker – Major General Richard C. "Buck" Marr, USAF, Ret. As a First Lieutenant, Buck flew 171 combat missions as a 17th SOS "Shadow" pilot while stationed at Phan Rang AB & Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN in 1970-71.

Awards Presented:

- Over & Above Award - Charles "Chuck" James, First Association President
- Magellan Award – Kjell Hoelstad - Norway

Farewell BBQ: Four Points Poolside

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REUNION III

Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

September 27-29, 2002

Again, there wasn't a formal "**Theme**" for this Reunion, but the Reunion T-Shirt reflected the theme that "*We are AC-119ers Together*" with the "**AC-119 Gunship Association**" T-Shirt.

Reunion Coordinators: Norm Evans, Gus Sininger, Larry Fletcher

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President: Larry Fletcher Vice-Pres: (Larry Fletcher) Secretary: Jimmy Grant Treasurer: Art Perry	President Gus Sininger Vice-Pres Wayne Laessig Secretary Ray Barradale Treasurer Art Perry

Webmaster: Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor: Chuck James

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 225 Many cancelled due to a Hurricane forecast. It was downgraded to a tropical storm, & weather turned beautiful for the Reunion.

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Treasurer Perry reported the Association is officially recognized by the IRS as a 503-C3 non-profit tax-free organization if we don't exceed gross income over \$25,000.
- Approved the purchase a 17th SOS Flag & a USA Flag & 3 flag poles & stands.
- Approved the purchase of a new 18th SOS Flag to replace the lost 18th SOS Flag.
- Approved Associate Member change to Association By-Laws Article IV, Membership, Section 2.
- Approved 415th Special Operations Training Squadron as eligible for Regular or Associate Membership. They trained our GUNNERS!
- Approved Association newsletter "The Firing Circle" to be published two times a year. Ev Sprous as Editor.
- Approved new Board positions of Newsletter Editor & Association Chaplain.
- Approved a donation of \$450 to the AC-119 Gunships Website.
- Approved Association flowers or donation in the maximum amount of \$100 for member's final flight.
- Tabled request from 4th SOS "Spooky" to form a joint Association until next reunion.
- Tabled motion until next reunion to purchase a Brass Memorial Plaque for the Hurlburt Air Park to honor AC-119 brothers who gave all in Vietnam.
- Ray Barradale donated \$2,500 to the Association in Memory of Lost Brothers.

Memorial Service: Held at the ½ size replica Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Veterans Memorial Park at Pensacola due to Increased Base Security at Hurlburt Field because of Attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Reunion Banquet: Eglin Air Force Base NCO Club.

- Guest Speaker: Colonel Billy B. "Rusty" Napier, USAF, Ret., former Commander, 16th SOS. As a First Lieutenant, Rusty was Navigator/NOS on 17th SOS Shadows in 1970-71 at Tuy Hoa, Phu Cat, & Tan Son Nhut Air Bases; flying 155 combat missions of which 6 missions were on Stinger gunships.
- Awards Presented:
 - Terrence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award: Ev Sprous. NOTE: this Award was renamed at this Reunion to honor Captain Terrence F. Courtney, Aircraft Commander of Stinger 41.
 - Fred Graves Golden Ammo Can Award – Gus Sininger (Award established in honor one of the Association's Founding Fathers, Fred Graves who passed away in December 2001.)
 - The Mike Friel Award – Howard Reid

Farewell Bar-B-Q: Poolside & Dancing– Music by Stormin' Norman Evans

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

REUNION IV

Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

October 3-5, 2003

“All Gave Some, Some Gave All”

Reunion Coordinators Gus Sininger & Norm Evans

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President Gus Sininger Vice-Pres Wayne Laessig Secretary Ray Barradale Treasurer Art Perry	President – Rogers Stevens Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Ray Barradale Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Webmaster Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor Ev Sprous.

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 170

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved purchase & installation of a brass AC-119K “Stinger” model on the AC-119 Gunship Memorial Pedestal already installed at the Air Park.
- Approved purchase of AC-119 Gunship Paintings & Lithographs; coordinator Bill Petrie.
- Approved \$400 for the purchase of website software to assist Project Volunteers for various duties that were identified for various tasks involving Association records, history, & website updates.
- Approved the following additions & change to the Association By-Laws:
 - Add Webmaster & Newsletter Editor as Voting Members of the Board.
 - Add Past Board Member (*Past Presidents*) as new Voting Board Member.
 - Add “Honorary Life Membership” for specified groups or individuals.
 - Add Family members are eligible to join the Association as Associate Members.
- Change in Membership Renewal Cycle.
- Approved the issuance of paper membership cards for Life Members.
- Tabled a proposal for forming an USAF Gunship Association to become an “Umbrella Group” for “Fixed-Wing” Gunships that would include the AC-119 Association & the AC-130 Association.
- Members in attendance unanimously voiced a “Vote of Confidence” for the Board of Directors to continue conducting Association business between annual reunions.

Memorial Service: Hurlburt Field Air Memorial Park. A Brass Memorial Plaque, honoring & memorializing AC-119 Gunship Personnel lost in Vietnam was unveiled & dedicated. Family members of KIAs Moses Alves, Bernard Knapic, & Robert Fage attended the ceremony as honored guests of the Association for the Reunion. Speakers: Gus Sininger, SMSgt, Ret & Lt Col James Marsh, 16th SOS Director of Operations. “God Bless America” soloist Donna Crews. After the Memorial Service, AC-130 Gunship flightline static display & tour by AC-130 crewmembers.

Presentation: Tom Milligan, Sundog FAC & Director of FLIR Systems, Inc gave a presentation on today’s FLIR technology & use. Tom was Sundog 29, FAC wingman for Stinger 41 in 1972, & was first to help locate & assist in the recovery of Stinger 41 survivors.

Reunion Banquet: VFW Post 7674; Mary Esther, FL

- Guest Speaker: Major General Douglas S. Metcalf, USAFR. Doug was an 18th SOS aircraft maintenance officer at Phan Rang & DaNang Air Bases, RVN.
- Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Ray Barradale

Farewell Buffet: Held poolside at Four Points. Music by “Stormin” Norm Evans.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

REUNION V

Hope Hotel, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio

October 1-3, 2004

“Where It All Began”

Reunion Coordinator – Ron Julian

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Rogers Stevens Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Ray Barradale Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig	President – Craig Corbett Vice Pres – Buck Buchanan Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Rogers Stevens

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Ev Sprous

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 368

Meet & Greet: Hope Hotel Ballroom

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved full funding for a permanent Stinger monument to be placed to the right of the Shadow aircraft at Hurlburt Field Memorial Air Park. Installation to be completed for dedication at the 2005 Reunion VI. Project coordinators – Bill Petrie & Gus Sininger
- Approved By-Law changes concerning all Association memberships.
- Approved continued authorization & responsibility for the Board of Directors to act for & manage the affairs of the Association; therefore, making funding decisions for the Association as deemed necessary for effective & efficient operations between annual membership meetings.
- Lithographs of the two AC-119 paintings were presented to the following: Founding Fathers Fred Graves (accepted by Karen Graves), Bill Petrie, Jim Bennes & Norm Evans; Past Presidents Chuck James, Larry Fletcher, Gus Sininger, & Rogers Stevens; Reunion Coordinators Gus Sininger & Ron Julian.
- Larry Hunter & Leigh Norstrum were designated as Association Chaplains.
- History Project Coordinator Wayne Laessig initiated videotaping reunion events & individuals / groups telling about their experiences with AC-119 Gunships.
- Immediately following the business meeting, Bill Dudley, former Fairchild Hiller Aircraft employee, gave a presentation about the conversion process of converting C-119s into Shadows & Stingers.

Memorial Service: NMUSAF Memorial Gardens at the 71st & 17th SOS Memorial Stone Plaque. A panoramic photo of those in attendance was taken after the service.

Reunion Banquet: “Under the Wings” at United States Air Force National Museum.

Guest Speaker: Colonel Ronald “Ron” W. Terry, USAF, Ret. “Father of USAF Fixed Wing Gunships”

Awards: Terrence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Jim Terry

Presentation: Two original AC-119 paintings by USAF veteran & aviation artist Darby Perrin were presented as gifts to the National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF). The AC-119 Gunship Association commissioned Darby to paint “Rolling In” that depicts the AC-119G “Shadow” firing on targets during daylight, & “Guns Hot” that depicts the AC-119K “Stinger” in nighttime action. **Noteworthy Fact**: Darby uses the title “Guns Hot” for the Shadow version (using the Fighting Shadows of C Flight’s informal motto of the same), & “Rolling In” for the Stinger version. However, when the Association took ownership, we reversed the titles on the plaques put on the original paintings donated to the National Museum of the Air Force (now on semi-permanent loan to AFSOC HQ), & on litho plaques donated to the Atterbury/Bakalar Air Museum, the Air Force Enlisted Village, & others. We’ve corrected the titles on our website’s Store.

Farewell Buffet: BBQ held in the Hope Hotel Ballroom.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion VI

Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

September 30 – October 2, 2005

“Brothers”

Reunion Coordinators –Gus Sininger & Norm Evans

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Craig Corbett Vice Pres – Buck Buchanan Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Rogers Stevens	President – Wayne Laessig Vice Pres – Vern Hansen Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Craig Corbett

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Ev Sprous

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 221

Meet & Greet: Sheraton Four Points Hotel Poolside

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved Association By-Laws change to recognize the newsletter editor & the webmaster as non-voting Board of Director Positions.
- Approved the establishment of coordinators (POCs) for our three squadrons plus a coordinator for all maintenance/support personnel. Coordinators selected were Jim Alvis (71st), Chuck James (17th), Ev Sprous (18th), Andy Bright (M&S) & approved.
- Approved By-Laws change to require proposed reunion locations two years ahead.
- Approved VP Larry Fletcher as the official President of the Association during the 2001-02 term of office due to the absence of the elected president.
- Approved Larry Hunter as the official AC-119 Association Chaplain.
- Approved the establishment of an appointed Association Quartermaster – Gus Sininger.
- Tabled the proposed AC-119 Gunship History Book Project until next year’s reunion.
- Association “Challenge Coins” introduced by President Corbett.
- Presentation: The VA gave a Benefits briefing at this reunion.

Memorial Service: The original Memorial Plaque at the AC-119 in the Hurlburt Field Air Memorial Park did not include all our KIA. That was corrected & the Plaque rededicated for this Reunion. We also dedicated a Monument to the 18th SOS AC-119K Stinger aircraft (the AC-119 in the Air Park is a 71st/17th SOS AC-119G Shadow aircraft representation). Bill Petrie, CMSgt, Ret; one of our four Association Founding Fathers & 18th SOS IO, gave the Dedication speech, with Family members of KIAs Tom Hamman & Ken Brown participating.

Reunion Banquet: Elks BPOE Lodge 1795, Fort Walton Beach

Guest Speaker: Brigadier General Harry C “Heinie” Aderholt, USAF, Ret. aka “Air Commando #1”

Awards:

- Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Bill Petrie & Gus Sininger
- Fred Graves Magellan Award – Kirstin Hamman – Hawaii

Following the Banquet, Auction of Association Coins Bill Petrie, Auctioneer

Farewell Buffet: poolside in the Four Points with dancing to the Music of Gunner DJ Stormin’ Norman Evans

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion VII

MCM Elegante Hotel & Event Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico

September 28 – October 1, 2006

“Our Common Heritage”

Reunion Coordinator – Steve Mac Isaac

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Wayne Laessig	President – Vern Hansen
Vice Pres – Vern Hansen	Vice Pres – Bill Petrie
Secretary – Jim Alvis	Secretary – Jim Alvis
Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth	Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth
Prior Board Member – Craig Corbett	Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Rogers Stevens

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 263

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved ‘again’ for the Board of Directors to make common sense decisions about projects & expenditures for the good of the Association between annual membership business meetings.
- Approved the AC-119 Gunship History Book Project. Project coordinator Larry Fletcher volunteered at last year’s reunion to start taking biographies & pictures for a book. Ralph Lefarth also volunteered to assist Larry with photographs & graphics.
- 58th Special Operations Wing & 71st Special Operations Squadron reactivated at Kirtland AFB, NM. The 71st SOS is now flying the CV-22 Osprey.
- Albuquerque Places to visit: Old Town, Atomic Museum, Indian Cultural Center, Sandia Peak Tramway, Sandia Resort Casino, El Pinto.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service.

Tours: Santa Fe plus the 71st SOS hosted us for aircraft tours, their Heritage room, & a BBQ.

Reunion Banquet: MCM Elegante Hotel & Event Center

Guest Speakers: 71st SOS AC-119G “Shadow” Gunship Chief Pilot, Colonel Al Heuss, USAFR, Ret. & 71st SOS CV-22 “Osprey” Squadron Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Cardoso

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Ron Julian

Farewell Buffet: MCM Elegante Hotel

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion VIII

Sandestin Hilton 'Beach' Hotel, Sandestin, Florida

October 5-7, 2007

"1st Fixed Wing Gunship Reunion"

Reunion Coordinators – Gus Sininger & Norm Evans

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Vern Hansen	President – Vern Hansen
Vice Pres – Bill Petrie	Vice Pres – Bill Petrie
Secretary – Jim Alvis	Secretary – Jim Alvis
Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth	Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth
Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig	Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Web Master – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 222

Meet & Greet: Hotel Paradise Cove & North Pool Deck

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Association members voted unanimously to accept AC-47 "Spooky" Gunship Brothers of the 3rd & 4th Air Commando Squadrons as official members of the AC-119 Gunship Association.
- Approved Association By-Laws update to include family members as eligible for annual or life membership in the Association, Requirements for Reunion Coordinators, & Elected Board Member terms of office.
- Guest Dr. Steve Maxner presented info about the Vietnam Center & Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. The Center & Archives have the 2nd largest collection of Vietnam War era history (The National Archives has the largest collection).
- Approved Vietnam Center as official AC-119 Gunship Association's history repository of choice. This does not constrain anyone from donating historical documents, memorabilia, etc to other Museums or Archives.
- AC-119 History Book project proposal to self-publish a Volume I now; followed by a Volume II at a later date was rejected by the Board. A single volume history book is desired.
- The deteriorating physical condition of the AC-119K Stinger Monument at Hurlburt Air Park was brought to the attention of members. The memorial was dedicated in 2005.
- Members agreed to consider another "fixed-wing" reunion in five years.
- New Squadron Coins for the 71st & 17th & 18th are now available online.

Memorial Service: Hurlburt Field Memorial Air Park Following a flight line static display of an AC/MC-130 & a CV22, lunch was hosted by the 18th FLTS at their building. Following lunch, a Memorial Service was held at the Air Park. Self-guided tours of the Park included the AC-119 Gunship KIA Memorial & Stinger Monument.

Reunion Banquet: Sandestin Hilton Coral Ballroom. Gunship Brothers of the AC-119 "Shadow & Stinger" Gunship Association, the AC-130 "Spectre" Gunship Association, & AC-47 "Spooky" Gunship Brothers joined together for the first time ever fixed-wing gunship reunion.

Guest Speaker: Major General Robert B. Patterson, USAF, Ret. & Spectre AC-130 Pilot stepped in as Speaker when Colonel Bud Day, USAF, Ret. was unable to fulfill his speaking engagement.

Awards: Since we were jointly celebrating the AC-119 & AC-130 organizations at this reunion, the AC-119 Board decided not to present the Terrence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award this cycle, & instead re-initiate it at the next AC-119 Reunion.

Farewell Buffet: Poolside at the San Destin Hilton.

Noteworthy: Fourteen Sea-Faring AC-119ers & one AC-47 Spooky took a 5-day Pre-Reunion "Mexican Rivera Cruise" on Carnival cruise ship "Holiday" from the Port of Mobile, Alabama. Also, a Pre-Reunion Warm-up Party was held in Fort Walton Beach on Thursday, October 4th.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion IX

Radisson Hotel, Branson, Missouri

September 12-14, 2008

“Out of the Dark, We made History”

Reunion Coordinator – Jerry McDonald

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Vern Hansen Vice Pres – Bill Petrie Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig	President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Jerry McDonald Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 254

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved the creation & purchase of an AC-119 Gunship Association Flag.
- Approved obtaining Battel & Campaign Streamers for Association Squadron Flags.
- Approved the creation & purchase of AC-47 Squadron Flag(s).
- Disapproved changing name of “AC-119 Gunship Association” to “Radial Engine Gunship Association.”
- Ralph Lefarth returned to college to learn the latest computer software technology so the Association can self-publish the AC-119 Gunship History Book. Target date for book completion is 2009 Reunion.
- Report that an AC-119 aircraft has been sighted at Tan Son Nhut AB. Lee Kyser will spearhead a follow-up investigation as to possible recovery of the aircraft.
- Stinger monument at Hurlburt Air Memorial Park will be refurbished after the Air Park’s sprinkler system is modified.
- Shadow & Stinger lithographs were donated & presented to the Air Force Enlisted Village to be displayed in the Teresa Village Activity Hall.

Memorial Service: Held Thursday at Branson Belle Landing followed by Branson Belle Showboat Dinner Cruise.

Tour: Branson Belle Riverboat Dinner Cruise

Reunion Banquet: Radisson Hotel

Guest Speaker: Chuck Williams; Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations; Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Ret. As a 17th SOS “Shadow” Navigator/NOS from December 1969 to November 1970, Chuck flew 150 combat missions while stationed at Tuy Hoa & Phu Cat Air Bases in Vietnam.

Awards:

- Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Jim Alvis & Wayne Laessig
- Fred Graves Magellan Award – Ray Meckstroth (Soldotna, AK)

Special Presentation of “Brothers” Lithograph to the Radisson Hotel

After the Banquet, raffle held, auction of Reunion Quilt plus other great items & then Open Mic.

Farewell Buffet: Held in the Radisson.

Noteworthy:

- Steve Mac Isaac & Larry Fletcher were Guest Speakers at the 12th Troop Carrier Squadron Reunion’s Banquet simultaneously being held in Branson. The 12th TCS flew C-119s in Europe during the 1950s. They were fascinated to learn more about AC-119 gunships & its mission in Vietnam.
- Reunion Free Time: Lots to see & do in Branson besides Pierce Arrow, Jim Stafford, Baldknobbers, Silver Dollar City, & Veterans Museum. Veterans are truly welcome here.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion X

Holiday Inn & Suites, Saint Augustine, Florida

September 23-27, 2009

“We Became Shadows – We Became Stingers”

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of C-119 Conversions to Gunships

Reunion Coordinator – Bill Dudley

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Jerry McDonald Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig	President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Jim Ward Secretary – Jim Alvis Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Webmaster- Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Tony Pakutinski

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 251

Meet & Greet: Held at the Holiday Inn. Campaign & Battle Streamers were added to the 71st, 17th, & 18th Squadron Flags during a brief ceremony, President Sininger presiding.

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>): Meeting held at St. Francis Barracks Club

- AC-119 Stinger Monument at Hurlburt Air Park was repainted; stone replacement will be final solution.
- The Association’s Book, *AC-119 Gunships History Book 1968-1973* is now Published & available for reservation pick-ups & additional purchases in the Party Hootch.
- Bruce Bird presented info about locating AC-119K gunship #53-7850 at Ho Chi Minh Airport (Tan Son Nhut), Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). The aircraft is a skeleton after being stripped of everything removable.
- “Uncle Sam” Paul Campbell suggested 50/50 drawings be added to the auctions to help raise money for the Association.
- Approved a \$5 increase to make reunion fees \$20, starting next year.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service.

Tours:

- SunCruz Casino Cruise off the Florida Coast; Northup-Grumman Tour
- 1-Day Free Pass for Trolley Tours of St. Augustine

Reunion Banquet: Held at the Riverview Club

Guest Speaker: Colonel Tom Teal, USAF, Ret.; 17th SOS C Flight Commander at Tan Son Nhut 1970-71 & AC-119K “Stinger” Detachment 1 Commander at DaNang Air Base 1972-73.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award: Larry Fletcher & Ralph Lefarth

Farewell BBQ: St. Augustine Historic Lighthouse Museum

Noteworthy:

- After the Banquet, Raffle drawing for Ron Soderquist’s donated custom-made rifle & pistol set.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XI

Hilton Garden Inn, Fairfield, California

September 17-19, 2010

“Next Stop Vietnam – Gateway to SEA”

Reunion Coordinator – Wayne Laessig

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Gus Sininger	President – Gus Sininger
Vice Pres – Jerry McDonald	Vice Pres – Mike Krauss
Secretary – Jim Alvis	Secretary – Mike Drzyzga
Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth	Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth
Prior Board Member – Wayne Laessig	Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher

Webmaster- Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Tony Pakutinski

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 210

Meet & Greet: Held at Hilton Garden Inn

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Two hard-cover copies our AC-119 Gunships History Book 1968-1973 plus a \$30 Fee were submitted to the Library of Congress to meet application requirements for a US Certificate of Copyright. A Certificate of Registration #TX7-276-639 dated 5 August 2010 for Copyright of our Book was issued by the US Copyright Office.
- The Stinger Monument at Hurlburt Memorial Air Park is scheduled for repair of damage & discoloration due mostly to the ground sprinkler system.
- The AFSOC at Hurlburt will be working with the NMUSAF to relocate our Shadow & Stinger paintings from the museum to Hurlburt. The paintings are currently stored away & not displayed at the museum.
- Approved payment for advertisements in military magazines about upcoming Reunions. The Board of Directors will control the amount of spending.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service.

Reunion Banquet: Held at Hilton Garden Inn

Guest Speaker: No Speaker other than Shadow Bernie Smith speaking up.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Doug Wohlgamuth

Noteworthy: Travis Brass from the Air Force Band of the Golden West sang & played to our great delight!

Tours:

- San Francisco (China Town, Pier 39, Fisherman’s Wharf, Presidio, Fort Point, Golden Gate Bridge).
- Napa Valley Wine Country (Sebastiani Winery & Sonoma Town).
- Many interesting places to go & see, like Budweiser Brewery & Travis AFB Museum!

Farewell BBQ: Held at Hilton Garden Inn

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XII

Embassy Suites, North Charleston, South Carolina

September 30 – October 2, 2011

Welcome To South Carolina

Reunion Coordinators – Jim Ward & Gus Sininger

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Mike Krauss Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher	President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Norm Evans Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Past Board Member – Wayne Laessig

Website – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Tony Pakutinski

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 185

Meet & Greet: Held at Embassy Suites. Mayor R. Keith Summey presented an official certificate proclaiming AC-119 Gunship Day in North Charleston to President Sininger.

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Treasurer Wohlgamuth reported that the Association's investment costs for self-publishing the AC-119 History Book has now been recovered thru book sales since the project was completed in 2009. More books remain to be sold for a donation to the Association.
- AC-47 Spooky Gunship Brothers of the 3rd & 4th Air Commando Squadrons have officially organized to form their own Association, with their first AC-47 Gunship Reunion successfully held in 2011. AC-47 members of the AC-119 Association who can vote in AC-119 Business Meetings are those who were also in AC-119s.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service.

Tours: Pensacola Naval Air Museum

Reunion Banquet: Held at Embassy Suites

Guest Speaker: Lt. Col. George Hardy, USAF, Ret. Former AC-119K Stinger Pilot, & Tuskegee Airman P-51 Mustang "Red Tail Squadron" Pilot. Combat Veteran of WWII, Korea, & Vietnam

Awards: Terrence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Ron Soderquist

Farewell BBQ: Held at Embassy Suites

Noteworthy: Tony Pakutinski will start an AC-119 Gunship Facebook Page for Spouses.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XIII

Sheraton Four Points, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

September 26 – 30, 2012

“Fortifying the Brotherhood”

Reunion Coordinators – Gus Sininger & Norm Evans

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Gus Sininger Vice Pres – Norm Evans Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Past Board Member – Wayne Laessig	President – Wayne Laessig Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Immediate Past President – Gus Sininger Board Members At Large – Jim Dunn, Joe Goryl, Jim Mattison

Website – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Facebook Manager – Tony Pakutinski

Attendance: 216

Meet & Greet: Four Points Paradise Cove & North Pool Deck

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- The original paintings by Darby Perrin of Shadow & Stinger that were presented to the NMUSAF at Reunion V in 2004 have been relocated to AFSOC HQ at Hurlburt Field, FL. The NMUSAF now has Lithographs of the paintings in storage.
- An Information Technology (IT) Committee formed to investigate options for upgrading the current AC-119 Gunship website.

Memorial Service: Hurlburt Air Memorial Park

Reunion Banquet: Elks Lodge #1795 (Located across Hwy 98 from Four Points)

Guest Speaker: None

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Tony Pakutinski

Farewell BBQ: Four Points Paradise Cove & North Pool Deck

Noteworthy:

- The 18th FLTS hosted an “open house” for the Association at Hurlburt on Friday.
- John Hupe’s flying model of the AC-119K Gunship had a successful flight at Holly Field on Saturday.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XIV

El Tropicana Hotel, San Antonio, Texas

September 26 – 29, 2013

“Back to Basics”

Reunion Coordinators – Jerry & Ellen Hester

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Wayne Laessig	President – Larry Fletcher
Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa	Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa
Secretary – Mike Drzyzga	Secretary – Mike Drzyzga
Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth	Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth
Immediate Past President – Gus Sininger	Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger
Board Members At Large – Jim Dunn, Joe Goryl, Jim Mattison	Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 238

Meet & Greet: Coronado Room w/music by local artists.

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Lee Kaiser introduced South Vietnamese McBlair Lee, author of *The Fall of Saigon & The Loss of the Last VNAF AC-119K Gunship*. McBlair will meet later with our Instructors for the VNAF.
- AC-47 Spooky Al Sproul reported on the AC-47 Reunion held in Washington D.C.
- Wayne Laessig reported on progress of our new IT (Information Technology) Team’s progress investigating new website possibilities.
- Bruce Bird updated the latest on AC-119K #850 at Tan Son Nhut.
- Jim Mattison created a Facebook Page for AC-119 Friends in August, 2013. Everett Sprou, Fred Rider, Lee Wolf, & Andrea Drzyzga joined Jim as Administrators.
- The AC-119 Association Board of Directors recognized the AC-119 Gunships Facebook Page as the official Facebook page

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service; honored guests included family members of KIA John O’Neal Rucker Jr.

Tours: Hill Country/Fredericksburg Bus Tour, LBJ Museum, Pacific War Museum, & AC-130W at Kelly AFB.

Reunion Banquet: Coronado Room w/music of a saxophone quartet & vocalist from USAF Band of the West “Warhawks” at Lackland.

Guest Speaker: Colonel Ron Terry USAF Ret. had to cancel due to health.

Awards:

Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Steve Mac Isaac

Fred Graves Magellan Award – Dick Iversen

Farewell BBQ: Coronado Room / TexMex BBQ

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XV

MCM Elegante Hotel, Albuquerque, New Mexico

September 18 – 21, 2014

“Operation Legacy”

Reunion Coordinators – Steve & Nancy Mac Isaac

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Larry Fletcher Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall	President – Larry Fletcher Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 229

Meet & Greet: Followed the Unforgettable Memorial Service*

Memorial Service: our Facebook Administrators conducted a very special memorial service Friday night for our KIA Brothers. Four different custom-brewed Ales by Call Sign Brewery of Kansas City, MO were presented with radio call sign labels of Shadow 76, Shadow 78, Stinger 41, & Lemon 10 (which covered that Stinger mission as well as our two ground casualties). Honored guests included family members of KIAs John O’Neal Rucker & Ken Brown. All known KIA family & surviving crewmembers received their appropriate Memorial Ale.

Tours:

- Kirtland’s 58th Special Operations Wing & our Legacy Squadrons, the 71st SOS & 73rd SOS, hosted aircraft static displays of the 71st CV-22 Osprey & 73rd AC-130W Stinger II, followed by lunch, then excellent briefings by active-duty personnel.
- Santa Fe Day Tour

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- Approved Board’s recommendation to contract with True World Enterprises (TWE) for the development of a new website for the Association.
- Approved purchase of AC-119 Memorial Bench to be installed at National Museum of the United States Air Force in time for Dayton Reunion in 2017. Tax Deductible Donations for the project are welcome.
- Approved a teleconference phone line for monthly & special meetings of Board of Directors & Board Committees. Previously, our Association paid the Spectre Association for use of their teleconference line.
- President’s Report on the private AC-119 Ceremony of Appreciation held at the NMUSAF for the new SEA Gunship Exhibit on July 25, 2014.

Reunion Banquet: Held at MCM Elegante Hotel

Guest Speaker: Colonel Arthur D. Davis, Commander, 58th Operations Group, 58th Special Operations Wing. Col. Davis stated, “AC-119 Shadow & Stingers established gunship guidelines & tactics that are still used today in USAF Gunship Special Operations.”

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award: Bruce Byrd & Mike Drzyzga
Fred Graves Magellan Award: Shadow Gunner William George (Hawaii)

Farewell Bar-B-Q Western Buffet: MCM Elegante Hotel - “Uncle Sam” hat signed by all attendees for “Uncle Sam” Stinger Paul Campbell. Jerry Hester will hand-deliver the hat to Paul who lives in Las Vegas.

Noteworthy: **“Operation Legacy”** - our AC-119 Gunship Legacy is assured with the 73rd SOS AC-130W “Stinger II” gunships, the 71st SOS CV-22 “Osprey”, the 18th FLTS, & the 505th SOS MJ-130 “Shadow II.”

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XVI

Crown Plaza St. Louis Airport Hotel & Conference Center, Saint Louis (Bridgeton), Missouri

September 16 – 20, 2015

“Meet Us in St. Louis”

Reunion Coordinators – Ev Sprous & Wade Dunn

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Larry Fletcher Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall	President – Larry Fletcher Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Mike Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 181

Meet & Greet: Crown Plaza / Gateway Ball Room

Tours:

- “Discovering St. Louis” Bus Tour on Friday. Lunch at Favazza’s on The Hill.
- Mississippi River Stern Paddle-Wheel Boat “Becky Thatcher” Sunday Brunch Cruise.
Coordinator of Tours – Andrea Drzyzga

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- IT Team reported on new website progress. Projecting six more months before operational. Team members are Wayne Laessig, Ron Julian, Jim Mattison, Bob Dydo, Mike Drzyzga.
- Facebook Page is doing great! Administrators are Ev Sprous, Jim Mattison, Lee Wolfe, Andrea Drzyzga & Terry Sarul.
- Update on Stinger 850 at TSN by Bruce Byrd. After eight years of following the demise of 850, all indicators show that the Vietnam government may have plans for restoration of the gunship for inclusion in the American War Museum at Ho Chi Minh City. Approved new dress code for Banquets. Men are no longer required to wear a coat & tie for the Banquet. David Voisey replaces Mike Drzyzga as Association POC for the 17th SOS.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service but honored guests included family members of KIAs Bernie Knapic, Tom Lubbers, & Meredith Anderson.

Reunion Banquet: Hotel Gateway Ball Room

Colors posted by Scott AFB Color Guard; POW/MIA Ceremony – Cash McCall

Guest Speaker: None

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Larry Hunter. Magellan Award is discontinued
Post-Banquet activities included silent auction & open auction with Auctioneer Gus Sininger.

Farewell Buffet: Hotel Cloud Restaurant (Breakfast Area)

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XVII

Ramada Plaza Beach Resort, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

October 26 – 30, 2016

“Welcome Home”

Reunion Coordinators – Gus Sininger & Larry Hunter

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Larry Fletcher	President – Mike Drzyzga
Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa	Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa
Secretary – Mike Drzyzga	Secretary – Ralph Lefarth
Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth	Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth
Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger	Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher
Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Phil Diehl, Cash McCall	Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, Terry Sarul

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Bill Petrie

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 222

Meet & Greet: Ramada Empire Room

Tours: Historic Pensacola with Lunch @ McGuire’s, Veterans Park Visit on Friday. Tour Coordinators Carol Hinton & Andrea Drzyzga

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- IT Team reported on new website progress. Website testing is underway. The Reunion Registration page on the website should be activated in January 2017.
- Don Craig will replace John Morrow as Legacy POC for the 17th SOS.
- Terry Sarul will replace Phil Diehl on the Board of Directors as a Member-at-Large.
- The AC-119 Shadow & Stinger Memorial Bench was installed at the NMUSAF on 23 September 2016.

Memorial Service: Hurlburt Field Air Park / Saturday 11:00 a.m.

Names of “Those Who Gave All” were read, with Memorial wreath placed at the AC-119 Gunship Monument by Gus Sininger.

Guest Speaker – Herb Mason, Historian for the Air Park.

Lunch at the 18th FLTS building.

Flight Line Tour of the AC-130J Ghost Rider

Reunion Banquet: Ramada Empire Room

POW/MIA Ceremony – Cash McCall

Guest Speaker: No Speaker. Special Guests for Dinner were Lt. Col. Daniel Kobs 18th FLTS Commander, Lt. Col. Robert Leeds, 18th FLTS & their wives plus Anne Aderholt, widow of Gen. Henie Aderholt.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Wayne Laessig

Silent Auction & Pistol Raffle, followed by the Open Auction & 50/50 Drawing.

Farewell Bar-B-Q: Halloween Party – Empire Room

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XVIII

Holiday Inn, Dayton/Fairborn, Ohio

September 28 – October 1, 2017

“Telling our AC-119 Gunship Story”

Reunion Coordinators – Rogers Stevens, Ron Julian, Al Heuss, Jim Alvis, Vern Hansen

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Ralph Lefarth Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, Terry Sarul	President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Ralph Lefarth Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, Terry Sarul

Webmaster – Bill Petrie

Newsletter Editor – Mike Drzyzga

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 267

Meet & Greet: Held at the Holiday Inn

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- IT Team reported that the new website is up & running this year. The website will be ready for Registration for next year’s reunion in Tucson.

Memorial Service: Memorial Service & Commemoration of the AC-119 Gunship Memorial Bench held in the NMUSAF Auditorium. Mr. Jeffrey Duford, NMUSAF Curator spoke about the development of the Museum’s SEA Gallery. After the service, we walked to our Memorial Bench to visit & take pictures.

Tours: NMUSAF Aircraft Restoration Hangar; & Wright Bothers Memorial Hill/Carillon Historical Park.

Reunion Banquet: Dinner “Under the Wings” at the NMUSAF

Presentation of Colors, National Anthem & POW/MIA Ceremony

Music by Air Force Ensemble

Southeast Asia (SEA) Gallery in national museum officially recognized by AC-119 Gunship Association

Speaker: James A. Russell, USAF, Ret. Stinger FLIR Navigator told the Story of Stinger tail number 883

that was awarded the USAF Mackay Trophy in 1970. Captain Milacek was the “Stinger” Aircraft

Commander Pilot of AC-119K tail number 883 on 8 May 1970 when enemy antiaircraft guns shot off 14

feet of his gunship’s right wing & the right aileron. In spite of odds against returning to home base, he & his crew did just that. Consequently, Captain Milacek & his crew were awarded the Mackay Trophy for the Air Force’s Most Meritorious Flight of the Year.

Jim used the notes prepared by Aircraft Commander Lieutenant Colonel Alan Milacek. Alan had planned to be the speaker but passed away before the Reunion. Jim stepped in, to as he put it, “tell the story of 883, its mission, & its crew as Alan meant it told”. You could hear a pin drop in the Museum Hanger as he took the audience on the Flight of 883.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Herman “Al” Heuss

Farewell BBQ: At Holiday Inn

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

Reunion XIX

Double Tree Suites – Hilton Tucson Airport, Tucson, Arizona

October 11-14, 2018

“Welcome to the Old West”

Reunion Coordinator – Ev Sprous

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Bob La Rosa Secretary – Ralph Lefarth Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, Terry Sarul	President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Jerry Hester Secretary – Ralph Lefarth Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, John Wolff

Webmaster – Wayne Laessig / Association IT Team

Newsletter Editor – Mike Drzyzga

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Attendance: 224

Meet & Greet: Held at Double Tree

Tours: “Boneyard” Tour & PIMA Air & Space Museum; Mini-Time Machine Museum of Miniatures; Old Tucson; Pinnacle Peak Restaurant

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

- After nearly four years of blood, sweat, tears, & lots of money, our IT Team spearheaded by Wayne Laessig has accomplished the mission of creating & implementing our new comprehensive AC-119 Gunship Website. The new website was effectively used for 2018 Reunion Registration. Sincere gratefulness expressed for Bill Petrie who served as webmaster for over twenty years.
- Approved changes to the Association By-Laws as recommended by the Board of Directors.
- Approved the Board of Directors to make changes to the Association By-Laws without a vote of members attending the annual meeting.
- Approved the next Reunion in 2019 to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- Approved the 2020 Reunion to be held in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, with 2021 Reunion tentatively set for Omaha, NE with John Wolff as Reunion Coordinator.
- Approved additional change in the By-Laws to allow Associate Members of the Association to serve on the Board of Directors.
- Elected Board of Directors for 2019.

Memorial Service: No separate Memorial Service but honored guests included family members of KIA Meredith Anderson.

Reunion Banquet: Held at Double Tree

Guest Speaker: 18th SOS Stinger Navigator Howard Reid

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award – Cash McCall

Farewell Bar-B-Q: Held at Double Tree

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

REUNION XX

Little America Hotel - Salt Lake City, Utah

September 4-7, 2019

"20th Anniversary Reunion Celebrating 50 Years of Brotherhood"

Reunion Coordinator – Chuck Williams

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Jerry Hester Secretary – Ralph Lefarth Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Larry Fletcher Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, Cash McCall, John Wolff	President – Jerry Hester (4 mo,) -> Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Roy Davis Secretary – Andrea Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member– Gus Sininger -> Wayne Laessig Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, John Wolff, Jenna Laird

Membership Coordinator – Everett Sprous

Newsletter Editor – Don Luke

Quartermaster – Gus sininger

Webmaster – Liz Buss

Attendance: 160

Meet & Greet: At the Little America Hotel.

Association Annual Business Meeting Reports/Actions (if you want to read the full meeting minutes, click here <https://www.ac119gunships.com/presidents-page/association-documents/association-reunion-meetings/>):

Combined the Spouses Meeting with the Business meeting since Associates can vote and hold office.

Had a revised Job Description hand-out for Board and Appointed positions

A large number of 1st timers attended.

A sponsorship committee had been formed and contacted Aerospace vendors soliciting sponsorship, to no avail.

Memorial Service: No separate event

Reunion Banquet: At the Little American Hotel. Very successful 50/50 raffle and auction events. Larry Barbee presented a “toast” before dinner. Cadets from the local military school presented the colors.

Guest Speaker: None. R. Davis created a 20 min. video presentation, professionally narrated, that told the AC-119 story and honored our KIAs.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award: Posthumously to Bob LaRosa, (J. Hester hand carry to Bob’s son, Tony LaRosa)

Farewell BBQ: At the Little America Hotel

Tours: Informal groups went to the USAF Museum at Hill AFB. A C-119 was open for cleaning, and a few of us climbed aboard. The Mormon Tabernacle’s routine events were cancelled due to dignitary visit, which

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

cancelled our tour of the Choir practice. Some visited by bus the largest copper mine in the world, Bingham Canyon. Sun. was a bus trip to Park City, UT, home of winter Olympics.

Noteworthy:

1. Pushing the personal video interviews was successful, and JP did 21 interviews.
2. John Wolff withdrew reunion coordinator for Omaha, NE, and Jerry McDonald offered to go to Branson, MO in 2021.
3. A framed “Brothers” print that had been sign along the border by attendees at the previous three reunions was taken by J. Hester for presentation to Bill Petrie.
4. The Association bank account offset out-of-control escalating cost, of \$12,235.
5. E. Hester/R. Davis completed a significant update to By-laws, clarity and simplicity.

Pandemic: In March 2020 the global pandemic of the Corona virus shut down much of the world. Most major events for 2020 were cancelled. The Board voted to “postpone” the FWB reunion until 2021. Gus worked the deal with the Four Points, while Jerry McDonald was able to also work with the Radisson in Branson, MO for reunion in 2022. Board voted to have the BoD continue for another year. Teleconferences continued but every-other month. MJD 09-07-2020

Updated Aug. 2021:

Special Projects: Andrea Drzyzga and team gathered pictures from every reunion, selected a small number for each year, and created a pictorial history of the Association. Roy Davis made a 30 min video presentation which should be shown at the reunion Banquet, available as a DVD.

Reunion Picture Book: Roy Davis created a picture book using Shutterfly internet service. The images from the above presentation were used. We presented them to the Founding Fathers, the KIA family members, and the remaining books may be used as auction items or awards.

Founding Father’s Proclamation. In order to memorialize our Founding Fathers, a Proclamation was made and sent to each.

Change of POCs: Andy Bright, Maintainers to Bruce Muller (Shadow Crew Chief). George Renfro (Shadow Gunner) to be POC for new 17th SOS JAKALS at Cannon.

The COVID19 Delta Variant really concerns the state of the reunion. Uncertainties about masking, Governors vs. the CDC continue.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

REUNION XXI

Four Points - Sheraton – Ft. Walton Beach, FL

October 6 -11, 2021

"Back Home Again"

Reunion Coordinator – Gus Sininger/Larry Hunter

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Roy Davis Secretary – Andrea Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – Jim Dunn, John Wolff, Jenna Laird Board Advisor: Wayne Laessig	President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Roy Davis Secretary – Andrea Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member– Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – John Wolff, Terry Sarul, Ron Dorazio Board Advisor: Wayne Laessig

Membership Coordinator – Everett Sprous

Newsletter Editor – Don Luke

Quartermaster – Gus Sininger Web Master – Liz Buss

Attendance: 130 (we expected 180 or more, but the pandemic caused many last minute cancellations.)

All events were out-doors (the weather luckily cooperated), poolside at the Four Points. The Hotel staff was new to the facility and short staffed. They did their best to keep us supported. Gus wanted the Banquet at the new Convention Center across US98, but it was too costly. L. Hunter had the Honor Guard from local H.S. Jr. ROTC at the Banquet. Peggy Craig/Andrea had successful silent auction.

Thurs tour by bus included a mask-on guided tour of the NAS Museum Pensacola, lunch at the Cubi Restaurant, and the Veterans Memorial. The bus driver liked us, and came to the hootch to see more of who we are.

Memorial Service - The on-base picnic for Fri. was denied by 1 SOW HQ, so the 18th SOTES made the picnic happen at Navarre Park – great food, and Kodak moments. Lt Col Nate Dillon was extremely engaged in helping us. NO AC-130J to tour. Gus did a memorial service there with KIA family members on each arm.

Guest Speaker: None. A. Drzyzga and R. Davis created a 30 min. video presentation showing pictures of all the reunions we had since 2000. It worked well outdoors, after dark.

Awards: Terence F. Courtney Above & Beyond Award: Roy Davis (Ev Sprous hand carry to Roy). Certificates went to Jenna and Jim Dunn (outgoing BoD). Gus received a hand-made blown glass scorpion from Drzyzgas, obtained in Destin). L. Hunter (Asst Reunion Coordinator) received a Shutterfly picture book of past reunions.

Sat. Business Meeting: Minutes are available. Two main items, 1) the membership voted no on a proposal for a reunion in HI, and, 2) voted yes for a Wash D.C. reunion in 2023 using a professional reunion coordinator known to us.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History

REUNION XXII

Radisson – Branson, MO

Sept. 28 – Oct. 2, 2022

"53 yrs. remembrance of AC-119 Gunships"

Reunion Coordinator – Jerry McDonald

<u>Outgoing AC-119 Association Officers</u>	<u>Newly Elected Officers</u>
President – Mike Drzyzga Vice Pres – Roy Davis Secretary – Andrea Drzyzga Treasurer – Doug Wohlgamuth Prior Board Member – Gus Sininger Board Members at Large – John Wolff, Terry Sarul, Ron Dorazio Board Advisor: Wayne Laessig	President – Vice Pres – Secretary – Treasurer – Prior Board Member– Board Members at Large – Board Advisor:

Membership Coordinator – Everett Sprous

Newsletter Editor – Don Luke

Quartermaster – Gus Sininger

Web Master – Liz Buss

Notes 06/12/2022 - MJD

On Feb 26, Operation Present Stinger was held at Hurlburt. Mike/Andrea, Gus, and Larry Hunter presented two 3-D printed Scorpion models to the 18th SOTES and the Maj. Rausch. The Models were donated by T. Sarul's Canadian friend, Vern Gwin, who received a Cert of Appreciation and Coin from the Association.

John Cootz accepted the position to pursue the use of professional event coordinator Armed Forces Reunions, and developed contracts with them and the Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC for reunion 2023.

Roy Davis and Yami Sledzinski helped organize a St-41 50th Anniversary reunion at DMAFB in May 2, 2022. Huge success – KIA family members and former airmen involved with the rescue attended. Custom Ink was used to make memorial t-Shirts for this event, which became a great fund raiser.

We formed an Awards/Decs Committee to revitalize resubmitting a fully-compliant ST-41 Package through Sen Scott Kelly's Office. Roy did a superb job connecting the Sen's staff, AFSOC, and all the key participants.

Dough Wohlgamuth, saved us \$\$ on bank fees by moving from Bank American to PNC.

The Association accepted financial donations from Fred/Karen Grave's family (\$10,000), and \$1,000 from KIA family member.

We formalized a Firing Circle distribution schedule, with built in deadlines for data input to Editor and review time.

AC-130W StingerIIs had a Farewell Ceremony on CannonAFB on June 1, 2020 and SIX AC-119ers attended.

AC-119 Gunship Association & Reunion History