

## REUNION COORDINATOR GUIDE or LESSONS LEARNED: Steps To A Successful Reunion

- I. **GENERAL** Communicate, communicate, communicate - with the hotel, with the caterer, with the honor guard, with everyone. Use this document as a guide. It is not a -1 tech order!!!! But it does contain a LOT of useful information. If you have any "what about this" questions, please put them out in an email to the prior Reunion Coordinators to help relate our individual experiences (Gus, Ron, Mac, Jerry, & Wayne).
1. Important communication must occur between the coordinator & Prez; eMails are ok to summarize actions you're going to take but if you want to discuss options or considerations, CALL your Prez.
  - a. Wayne & Gus talked weekly; Rogers & Ron weekly; Craig & Wayne weekly. When it gets within a few weeks you might be calling each other every other day!!
  - b. The more often you send eMail splats that include other folks, the more chaotic it can get - recommend sending eMails to additional folks ONLY when you're summarizing actions planned or decisions, OR "when it's a really biggie & you need lots of inputs & buy-in".
2. You will not please everyone. Do what you think is best for the most & press on.

## II. PLANNING ACTIONS

1. **FIRST, find a hotel:** the biggest factors are location, ability to hold all the events in the hotel, Hootch requirements, room pricing, free hot breakfast (not just continental), & airport accessibility.
  - a. Don't sign anything until the Prez agrees to it. We almost got bit for \$30,000 penalty costs for not meeting a large hotel's "corporate policy" on minimums.
  - b. Talk to both their Sales Manager & Catering Manager.
  - c. Get more than one hotel bid. Ultimately, price is a huge factor.
  - d. Share our Historical Spreadsheet with them so they know what our attendance & price ranges have been.
2. **Negotiate a contract with the hotel(s):** you'll need rates, dates, number of rooms needed by day, meal/event info, etc. Use the "Historical Numbers" spreadsheet to work room nights with the hotel, room costs, meal costs, etc.
  - a. The determination of "room nights" is a biggie since it is part of the hotel's overall profit basis & any contract will have a guaranteed minimum percentage of whatever we agree to.
  - b. Use the historical data to forecast your meal numbers but include an adjustment time frame in the contract where you can adjust the numbers they'll use for our final contractual liability.
  - c. **A show stopper is Hootch size & our ability to serve beer, wine, sodas, water, & munchies in it using our own stuff (or at a similar pricing from the hotel). WE (the Association) provide free beer, wine, soda, water, chips, dips, etc. If that's a problem we can't work out, it's a show-stopper. The Hootch is THE central point to gather & talk (i.e., the Hootch bar) is critical. Everyone gathers here whenever there's not a formal activity scheduled. Hootch stays open from 8:00 am until 10:00 pm daily Wednesday – Sunday.**
    - i. We can purchase everything locally & keep it stocked ourselves; preferably at a nearby Commissary & Class Six Store (no tax).
    - ii. An alternative is for the hotel to provide ALL of the above but, we need their price to match the costs we can get at a local Commissary/Grocery store or Class Six/Liquor store, or we don't use that hotel.
    - iii. **BIGGIE: some hotels will not let you bring in & provide our own beer, wine, munchies, etc. If they won't, we need their "price" to match the costs we can get at a local Commissary or grocery store or we don't use that hotel. If they won't, it's a show stopper.**
    - iv. Need enough room to move around, sit down, with plenty of tables to spread things out. Hotel should "comp" a large room if we are using a large # of sleeping rooms.

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- 1) Need maximum tables around the room edges for guys to put the pictures & other things they bring; merchandise & food/drink areas, & an area for the Association's laptop, printer, etc. At least 15-20 rectangular tables around room perimeter plus another 10-12 large round tables within the room (including 8-10 chairs for each round; no chairs for perimeter tables). Bigger/more is better!
  - a) We'll need 4-5 of the perimeter tables for merchandise (T-shirts, hats, pins, lithos, books, etc). We'll have member's photographs & memorabilia on the remaining perimeter tables. We'll have our computer, scanner, printer – need one perimeter table for that with 2-3 chairs.
  - b) Need one table for JP to set up his AC-119 "Simulator"
- 2) Need containers that will hold ice & water - about 4 of them. Need trash cans & ice for the drinks.
- 3) Need the hotel to check the ice, empty the trash cans, & vacuum the Hootch every day.
- v. Details: start up time is early Wednesday for a noon or earlier opening, through Sunday night, with us clearing out Monday morning.
- d. **Room costs are the next show stopper.** Getting some rooms comped per 25-50 room nights (or whatever # they use) helps us, but individual room costs are still one of the decision makers for someone coming or not.
  - i. Anything that keeps the room costs low increases the numbers who stay in the hotel – period.
  - ii. Complimentary Rooms: they're usually "per night." Our agreement is usually 1 comp room per 35 or so room nights (per night – NOT cumulative).
  - iii. One year, although we had well over 440 "total" room nights, the "per night" blocks of 40 only resulted in 8 comp nights versus the "total" room nights that would have been 11 comped rooms. If the Coordinator can get a "total" room nights comping formula, we end up with more comped rooms. Most hotels do it "by night" but it's worth asking for since our "below 40" nights added up to 2-3 more rooms if the were "total rooms" for the comp formula, AND we're providing a large block of overall room nights.
  - iv. Our policy has been to "comp" the Coordinator plus Banquet Speaker's rooms, then any special needs like 1<sup>st</sup> timer relatives of those we lost in SEA. JP MacIsaac gets a comped room as our videographer. Coordinator decides how to distribute the comped rooms with input from Prez.
  - v. We have almost always been able to get free hot breakfasts included 'within' the room costs. It's a biggie because the attendees have gotten used to it. An alternative is ½ price.
- e. **PRICING:** they make plenty on our overall room blocks, the catering (like 20% on top of costs that they automatically 'add'), cash bars, so don't be bashful about saying "horse-manure" if they start playing the "We can't make any money if we give you free hot breakfasts, etc, etc." If they won't give reasonable acknowledgement of their overall profit and try to nickel-dime you to death, go to another hotel. We 'are' military combat veterans – if they don't see it as that, go to another hotel.
- f. Determine when payments will need to be paid for. We prefer at the end of the event except for minimum deposits. Some require 50% at a certain "pre-event" date, 90% at another closer "pre-event" date, & even 100% before the events. We've always been able to negotiate a final payment on the day after the last event.
- g. **Meal selections & costs are the last real show stopper. See EVENTS info; need reasonable price & selection.**
- h. Open bars: you'll need pay as you go bars at the 3 major events. Be sure you have an understanding of just what the bar has to make or what you have to do as a minimum of cash. You'll need two Open Bars at the Meet & Greet and Banquet; the Farewell Event usually needs less – 1 open bar usually suffices.

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### III. EVENTS

1. **Decide ahead of time who will be emcee for what event**
2. **Friday night is the Meet & Greet & it should be a buffet.**
  - a. Includes informal table set up (rounds good) but requires a microphone for the evening host.
  - b. Plan for a basic menu of no more than half a dozen items, like veggie trays, fruit trays, chicken wings, Swedish meatballs, & carving station.
  - c. **Do NOT add anything that can't be re-serviced enough to assure EVERYONE gets some of it.**
  - d. **Keep buffet COVERED until everyone is in & seated; have the Association Chaplain do an Invocation, THEN open the buffet, explain what is where & that there is enough of everything to assure all can get some of each.**
  - e. Recognize special guest & newbies: at Meet & Greet and Banquet, ask all 1<sup>st</sup> timers to stand & tell everyone who they are, where from, what unit & role (need a wireless hand mike & couple of guys to pass it around).
    - i. Alternative: make a "different" (color?) Name Tag for 1<sup>st</sup> Timers & let everyone know what those kind of name tags mean, & hopefully, returnees will do some introducing, etc. We'd need to include a line on the Reunion Registration, like: First Reunion? X
    - ii. In 2012 we added a couple lines to the Registration Form: re you a First-Timer? Would you be willing to hot a First-Timer for the first day?
      - a) Match the First-Timers & Hosts up BEFORE they arrive (based on arrival compatibility).
3. **Saturday morning Membership meeting:** need a room to hold over 200 people.
  - a. Need a podium, microphone & speakers, pull-down screen or a large stand-alone screen, & chairs. Check out the audio system & the acoustics.
  - b. Need laptop & projection capability. Pre-load laptop with PowerPoint Meeting Agenda & slides. **Test the laptop-projection system ahead of time.**
  - c. Need flag stands for US Flag, Association flag, & 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 71<sup>st</sup>, & 4<sup>th</sup> (if we have one) Squadron flags.
  - d. Usually have bloody Mary's, juice, & coffee
4. Plan a **Lady's meeting** Saturday morning. They want info on raffles sent in Newsletter/POC Messages (what, how, why) to include the fact that something "transportable" works best.
5. **Saturday night banquet:** need a room to hold the amount of people that will be coming. Can be either served or buffet style **BUT if buffet-style, you need a "general" coordinating tables.** The meal is part of an evening agenda that includes speakers, raffles & auctions, awards, etc
  - a. **Menus usually include three selections like beef, & chicken or fish).**
    - i. "Can" be served versus buffet IF the service can accommodate the numbers rapidly. Meal is usually a 60-75 minute "space" in the agenda
    - ii. Large round tables work best & need microphone with podium & perhaps a video capability (might include video clips, PowerPoint slides, &/or pictures projected from laptop)
      - a) If meals are served, be sure to have enough people to handle the serving of the dinner in a timely manner & not have people waiting for their dinner.
      - b) **If you use the buffet method, strongly recommend that the caterer provide staff to serve the meat. In 2004, we planned for one piece of chicken & three pieces of beef medallions. Many folks took two pieces of chicken & four or five pieces of beef. Hence, we ran out of meat. Related to that experience, in 2006 we planned for several kinds of meat at our Sawadee BBQ & an 1800 start time. The chef was not ready at the agreed upon time & there was not enough**

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**ribs to go around. Make sure you do a final coordination of all the details. Delegating that coordination is good but it really helps for the coordinator to be part of it.**

- c) Meals for the guest speaker & his guest, Honor Guard, & anyone else that may warrant a meal on us are at association expense. Need to know how many, what they want have, & that cost factor needs to be “incorporated” into the individual meal costs or paid out of the Reunion Registration Fee Funds.
- b. Check out the audio system & the acoustics BEFORE that night begins.
- c. Head Table. For some Reunions we did not have one & it was fine. If you do have one: Who sits at the head table? We stopped doing flowers for the head table, the head table females, & honored guests a few years ago – COST. If you do them, use a local florist to order these early the week of the reunion to be ready for Saturday morning for pick-up or delivered to you at the hotel or banquet hall.
- d. **We have some folks who need special meals (glucose intolerance, vegetarian, etc). Most places handle these issues well with enough advance notice. Ask the caterer to identify who will serve those meals, & pre-coordinate with them before each meal. Goof-ups can be unpleasant for all.**
  - i. Not required, but you “can” add a simple activity where everyone (including spouses) stands who’s been to 3 or more reunions, then have them sit down year by year until you only have those few standing who have made every reunion.
  - ii. Not required, but again, can have all 71<sup>st</sup> stand, then all 17<sup>th</sup>, then all 18<sup>th</sup>, then all Maint/Support, then all AC-47 – it’s a little fun competitiveness but also shows where we are getting support & gets the others to try to get more representation. Some guys will stand up 2-3 times!
- e. Raffles: put them on a table in the Hootch & move it all to the Banquet that night.
  - i. Need raffle tickets – sell them at \$1, or 6 for \$5, or 13 for \$10, or 28 for \$20.
    - 1) For TV, use different color ticket & raise ticket price to \$5, 3 for \$10, or 8 for \$20. Other big items may need the different color/pricing.
    - 2) Special tickets for rifles/pistols with separate color tickets & pricing.
  - ii. Put a large plastic cup/jar/bowl with each raffle item. Folks put their raffle tickets in the one they want to win. Use post-its or a Sharpie pen to mark each jar/bowl/item with “what & who contributed it”
  - iii. Tell them to put names on tickets to speed the process up.
  - iv. Call name twice, & then move on to next name. Any left at end call names again, then get it to them the next day or mail if unable to get it to them.
- 6. Memorial & flyer: we’ve stopped doing a separate Memorial unless there’s a specific reason to do one. If we do a Memorial Service, need to identify what goes into the flyer i.e. Posting of the colors, invocation (Chaplain), welcome & opening remarks, a list of honored guests, the list of the “we shall not forget” list of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> names, & on the back of the flyer we have the Vietnam poem.
  - a. Prez should decide who will do what - role call of those lost in SEA & laying of the wreath. Memorial closing remarks-Prez, Benediction-Chaplain, retirement of colors. Wayne has prior pamphlets.
  - b. If we do a Memorial Service, you’ll need a wreath. If out of town reunion you’ll need to get one locally.
- 7. **Sunday morning golf:** Delegate the golf outing & other side events whenever possible. The side events are very important but a good helper or two to handle the details is priceless. Details: who will run the golf tournament? Where will the golf be played at? Do you need maps to the course? This is also announced at the banquet the time & the course. The price of the golf has been \$10.00 collected by the registration sent in by each member coming. That money then is given to the person that will run the tournament Saturday night at the banquet by the treasurer in cash. The person that runs the golf will give out the awards at the Sunday night good bye part.

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8. **Sunday morning: Board Transition Meeting:** need a room for the old & new board members to have a get-together for about 2 to 3 hours. Have water available & a table. The hotel should have a small conference room. If not then use one of the board members hotel rooms.
9. **Sunday night is the Farewell BBQ** & it should also be a buffet type set up that can handle about 100 to 150 or more people. Will need to know how many, what to have. BBQ has been the tradition & works well.
  - a. Use servers & limit refills until EVERYONE has had an opportunity to get some of each menu choice.
  - b. **Menu usually includes 2 – 3 meats**; usually buffet & less formal; & outdoor is great

### IV. **LESSONS WE'VE LEARNED**

1. Find out who the decision maker is at the hotel for your activities.
  - a. It helps if you only have to deal with one organization. We used the banquet facilities in our hotels for most reunions. It increases the leverage with the hotel & decreases the number of organizations that you have to deal with. You can let them know that you are looking at other places for the meals but the reality is that having it all in one site is humongously good.
  - b. Find out who will be the "onsite floor general" for your events. The decision maker & the floor general could easily be two different people. As you get closer to the reunion weekend, the overall decision maker & the floor general should both be involved in your final planning meetings.
  - c. If the caterer is different from the facility manager where the events will be held, we recommend at least four group meetings with ALL the players in the same room at the same time.
  - d. Contact the facility manager, hotel manager, & caterer at least once a month during the last six months.
    - i. R-180 days – reconfirm the dates, schedules, events, banquet room layout, hootch layout, etc.
    - ii. R-90 days – reconfirm details: number of people, detailed schedule (including times), specific room layout, traffic flow, audio visual, etc. Get a Banquet Room layout started; one you can use to number the tables & blow it up big enough to have folks sign up for a specific table.
    - iii. R-30 days – Finalize room details for banquets (traffic pattern, head table, reserved tables, etc), finalize the schedule (setup time, gathering time, when people will be allowed into the banquet hall, start time, meal time, etc), microphone setup & placement, identify special needs people (food, wheel chairs, kiddie chairs, etc) to the extent known. Get the Banquet Room layout with numbered tables, & blow it up to 3x4 feet or so.
    - iv. Somewhere between 2 weeks & 2 days before the event you can expect to be asked to guarantee the # of guests that will be attending each activity.
    - v. R-4 to 7 days – Review all details above. Walk through the entire area with the facility manager & the floor general & identify location of tables, serving lines, head table, & other items like flags & POW Table.
  - e. If the caterer's principal point-of-contact (POC) for an event changes, then the senior catering manager should notify the event coordinator immediately & schedule a new meeting with event coordinator & the new POC. It is very important for the event coordinator to be notified of any changes the catering managers make.
  - f. When a meeting is held where changes occur to the contract, each attendee should get a copy of the changes. Be sure to get an "official" version of the contract within three (3) days after any changes are made. Be sure it is what you want! For example, at one reunion we verbally negotiated free hot breakfasts but never got that documented on the contract as a change. Later, when I was discussing the Free Breakfast tickets for our Welcome Packets, I got the blank stare & the "That's not in the contract" statement. If I had not been able to provide an e-mail to them stating our agreement, & if the Sales Manager would not have said "That's good enough & we'll abide by that" we'd have been SOOL.



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- g. **STRONGLY** recommend an “initial” meeting of the event coordinators, the caterer’s POC, & the facility manager to review the contract details; i.e. the placement of the bars, tables, serving lines if buffet style or enough servers to handle the people, the timing & movement of the people & any other logistics of the facilities issues. Some of the things to cover include:
  - i. General room layout including the head tables, number of tables overall, the stage, the POW table, locations of the bars, the serving lines, etc.
  - ii. Timing of the major activities. Need to be sure that everyone has the same understanding of the timing & the times. Set at 1800 hrs & dinner at whatever time you have set up. Be sure the caterers understand what the serving time is. **Everyone needs to know when:**
    - 1) Attendees will be allowed into the bar area.
    - 2) The caterer will have the tables set for the attendees to go to their seats.
    - 3) Attendees will be allowed to pick/mark their seats for dinner.
    - 4) Dinner is served.
    - 5) Make sure reserved seats are marked before attendees enter the dinning area.
  - iii. Schedule a “final review” meeting of all the following people at least one week before the event. If one or more of these people cannot attend this meeting you might try rescheduling it to adjust someone’s schedule, BUT don’t hold off too long.
    - 1) Reunion coordinators, caterer’s principal POC, caterer’s floor general ( the one responsible for executing the plan), & representatives from the office of the facility the event is being held in.
    - 2) The meeting should confirm or clarify the same things as the initial meeting:
      - a) The specific room layout including the head tables, number of tables overall, the stage, the POW table, locations of the bars, the severing lines, etc.
      - b) The timing of the major activities.

## V. PRE-PLANNING

- 1. **AFTER you have a hotel contracted, pick a Reunion theme:** have an idea of what this reunion is all about i.e. Some Gave All, All Gave Some; The Circle Is Complete; A Common Heritage, Where It All Began, etc. Each reunion takes on its own theme. Set the theme right away since you’ll need it for publicity, website, T-Shirts, etc.
- 2. **Decide if you’ll have a Banquet guest speaker:** we had reunions without a keynote speaker (just an AF Band Ensemble for one). The Board’s policy is that a speaker must be relevant to our AC-119 heritage or history, or active squadron connections. No big-namers just because they’re big names. If they don’t have a direct link to us, the question should be whether we include a speaker or not. Talk with the Prez before “deciding” on a speaker (or not) as well as the speaker’s topic.
  - a. **Need this as soon as possible & locked in.** Speaker will need to know what the theme is for the reunion & what you want him to talk about.
  - b. Make SURE they know how long their speaking “window” will be – too long is a killer!!
  - c. What kind of gift do you get the speaker – historically it’s been a wooden AC-119 model (\$250) that Doug or Wayne managed to find.
  - d. Is he bringing a guest? Find out their Banquet meal choices & reserve a hotel room for him & his guest.
- 3. **T-shirts:** you, or a volunteer, need to come up with a T-shirt design, coordinate with a T-Shirt place on design, printing costs, sizes & quantities, etc.
  - a. **Start this ASAP, at least January or February of the reunion year.** Try to have them done at least a week before the reunion date.

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- b. We've found that decal printed T's don't hold up as well; go for silk screened or another printing method.
- c. They want polo-type shirts with collars that they can wear anytime.
- 4. **Registration/Reservation Verbiage:** Use the term "registration" for the reunion. Use the term "reservation" for the hotel. That is to say that folks do NOT make a "reservation" for the reunion. They "register" for the reunion. It is two separate, distinct issues. Cross check the reunion registration list with the hotel reservation list once a week in the last two months.
  - a. Cross check the two lists daily in the last week. We had folks walk in without registrations; we had folks show up twenty minutes after the deadline only to find their room was given away because they did not 1) guarantee the room or, 2) call anyone to let them know they would be late. Rooms may be at a premium & most contracts allow the hotel to release any unfilled rooms from our block beginning two weeks before our event.
  - b. Plan for changes. Folks will wait until the last minute to register. There will be cancellations at the last minute also. Recommend some type of positive acknowledgment that a person is registered for the reunion (phone call, email, post card, something!!).
  - c. **Get the Reunion Registration into the Newsletter & on the web – the earlier the better!**
  - d. You can increase the chances of people wanting to come by posting the attendee list on the Website & in the Newsletter – alphabetical so folks can find their buddies. Include spouse & guest names – they've developed friendships over the years as well. Bottom line: many folks choose to come if their friends are.
- 5. **Reunion Registration:** develop a system & a process to get folks checked in at the Reunion (name tags, tickets for meals if needed, maps, agendas, schedules, etc.)
  - a. Need folks to "staff" the registration area.
  - b. Registration area: Thursday 12 pm till 9 pm & Friday 8 am to 6 pm to check folks in for Reunion activities, give them their Reunion welcome packets, name tags, agendas, tickets, coins, answer questions, etc
  - c. Welcome packets: will need volunteers to help stuff packets with maps, name tags, tourist information, association agenda, & whatever else you feel needs to get to the members should go in this packet.
    - i. Get all your stuff ready & plan to get the packets stuffed before the main group comes in – do it the weekend before the Reunion.
  - d. **Name tags.** Tony has been making these. **Recommend you coordinate early on** with him to make the drafts alphabetical; otherwise you'll go nuts trying to find changes & review for correct data every time Tony sends a draft set of Name Tags. Bob Dydo is willing to work with us to create the ability to make name tags from an electronic database of registrants, instead of manually like we do now
    - i. **Purchase name-tag holders to go around your neck with a clear insert for the name tag, a place to put meal tickets, schedule, etc.**
    - ii. Name tags should include name, "spouse of" if appropriate, squadron or role affiliation (17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Shadow Maintenance, etc), & home town at least.
- 6. **Publicity.** Cash McCall has done this for several years.
  - a. We get the best bang for our \$\$ using the 4 Military Times.
    - i. Wayne & Gus have more detailed info but you need to help prepare a short announcement Cash can use, like: AC-119 & AC-47 GUNSHIP REUNION Sep 17-19 in Fairfield, CA near Travis AFB. Everyone, aircrew & support crew, associated with AC-119 Shadows & Stingers (71st, 17th, & 18th Special Ops) & AC-47 Spookys (3rd & 4th Air Commandos) plus family members & friend are welcome. More info: Wayne Laessig 707-592-4492 or [Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net)
    - ii. **Start this at least 6 months before the reunion!**

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- b. Contact & use the local Visitor's & Convention Bureau. They can assist with pre-planning info on hotels, food services, tours or visits, local attractions, etc; all of which can go into a "Welcome Packet".
  - i. They might provide someone to run the Registration Desk & possibly even some tours, sometimes for a small fee like \$10 per hour.
  - ii. They might also provide a plastic or cloth bag to hold all the Registration stuff for each Registrant.
  - iii. The local chamber of commerce may be able to help you with flyers, trinkets, etc. They can help you deal with the hotel if needed, provide "tourist sacks" & other things.
- 7. **Hootch:** get volunteers who will keep beverages & munchies fresh & supplied & take care of merchandise placement, sales, pricing, \$\$\$.
  - a. To stock the Hootch you need:
    - i. Regular & light beer, & a few non-alcohol beers. Get decent beer – they like Newcastle & Sierra Nevada MUCH more than Bud, Coors, or Miller.
    - ii. Diet & regular coke, diet & regular 7-Up or Sprite, bottle water, & wine (red & white). Try to find a local winery for the Hootch & Banquet (probably 5-6 cases).
    - iii. Potato & corn chips, pretzels, peanuts, dips (ranch, onion, & cheese), plastic plates, & cups.
    - iv. **Plan on getting guys to run/manage the Hootch: beverage & munchie supplies, merchandise \$\$ takers, etc**
  - b. If Gus won't be at the Reunion, coordinate with him to make sure we have the merchandise we want there.
- 8. Videographer who can video guys telling their stories of life in AC-119s. This is part of our efforts to make sure we capture what it was all about. We sell tailored DVDs & CDs of pictures.
  - a. JP MacIsaac has done this for the last 6 years & we now have over 150 interviews videographed plus a data base of 4-5 thousand pictures, tech orders, documents JP has scanned in from each Reunion.
  - b. JP has never asked for money, but we learned he was flying out, getting a room, covering the video & DVD costs, etc - all on his own nickel.
    - i. In 2004 we paid a professional to do videos at Wright-Patt: \$2,400 for 28 individual interviews on 2 DVDs; 4 year-groups on 1 DVD; & \$2,600 for combined Social, Banquet, & Speaker video on 1 DVD.
    - ii. In 2006 Wayne proposed we help JP offset costs with a comped room & Reunion events, plus some cash (we just give it to him out of merchandise funds at the Reunion). For the last 6 years the Boards have agreed to continue this.
      - 1) 2006 Albuquerque: \$900 for 1 video interview on 1 DVD; hundreds of scanned pictures/documents on DVD archives.
      - 2) 2007 San Destin: \$1,000 for 8 video interviews on 1 DVD; a bunch more scanned stuff
      - 3) 2008 Branson: \$1,500 for 50 video interviews; more scanned stuff
      - 4) 2009 St Augustine: \$1,000 for another 20 video interviews including some spouse interviews; more scanned stuff
      - 5) 2010 Fairfield: \$1,000 for another dozen plus interviews; more scanned stuff; AC-119 Simulator
    - iii. Ev Sprouss helps JP, makes the DVD or CD copies for folks, etc.
    - iv. Wayne will coordinate with the Prez & JP.
  - c. Bring a laptop, scanner, & printer; maybe someone local. DON'T try to rent them; it costs too much.
  - d. Include a table in the Hootch, as well as a separate, quiet videography room (maybe a comped room or even JP's room).
  - e. If you decide (with the Board's concurrence) on any other videographer, they'll need our historical DVD sets, & a volunteer to publicize, plan, & run that activity as a project in itself.



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9. Need projection capability & screen. We need a projection capability to hook a laptop into & to project that onto a screen for the Association meeting & possibly the Banquet. The hotel stuff costs big \$\$ so use a Board member's stuff, your own, get Ev to bring his, etc.
  - a. Hootch TV & DVD player: plan to buy a 32" flat screen TV with built-in DVD player for the Hootch.
    - i. JP & Ev will scroll DVDs & other stuff guys bring on Hootch TV.
    - ii. Then, raffle TV off at the Banquet. We pay any packaging shipping costs. Overall, this way costs less than renting a TV.
10. Need 5 flag holders/stands for US Flag, Association flag, plus 3 Squadron flags for Friday & all day Saturday (Association Meeting & Banquet).
  - a. Try to have Gus coordinate with someone driving to the Reunion early enough to have them there for Friday. You'll need to have Gus send you or bring the 3 squadron flags.
  - b. You can ask the hotel, a local base or VFW, or even ROTC unit to help you with the US flag & flag holders/poles BUT it's definitely not a "given" you'll be able to borrow them.
11. Banquet Pamphlet: prepare a one-pager with the evening's agenda/schedule, guest speaker bio/picture if applicable. Coordinator is responsible to make sure these are planned & distributed, but he can have someone else do them (Wayne & Bill have done them in the past). They need to be at each table setting for the banquet. The pamphlets need to include a specific time for planned "breaks."
  - a. Wayne has electronic versions of some past ones as samples.
  - b. You will need a volunteer to prepare them plus print them.
12. **Banquet Table Reservations:** make a simple sign-up for numbered tables so folks get to pick where they sit (& with who) since almost always it's a mass gaggle with some tables being held by one person, some getting in early & holding tables while those who wait till the right time got shafted.
  - a. Sequence needs to be planned: seating, Honor Guard (if you have one) & pledge of Allegiance, POW Ceremony, quick announcements & guest recognition, then Prayer, then "eat"
  - b. Ask the Caterer and the Banquet Floor Manager to have the servers hold serving salads until you seat everyone (Coordinator will need to pre-coordinate this with the catering head person). This allows us to do the Blessing FIRST. The serving folks can start serving salads during announcements/guest recognition
13. Daily Schedule: print a reunion schedule summary (day, event, time, location) to put into each Name Tag holder. You print them two per page then use a big paper cutter to cut them into the size that will fit the tag holder – it only takes 10 minutes to cut them up. Wayne does these once the agenda is "set"
14. Maps: need maps to any memorial, or to the banquet if it's not in the same hotel were you are staying.
15. **POW/MIA table** for the Banquet. Know what goes on the table (white table cloth, single red rose, vase, red ribbon, candle, slice of lemon on bread plate, put salt in plate, wine glass upside down, one chair empty) **There are specific guidelines on this. Wayne has the ceremony details & words to "Remember"**
  - a. You need to help arrange the POW/MIA table.
  - b. You'll need a good speaker to do the ceremony. Cash McCall was great. Need a deep-voiced, good speaker who can get through it without getting too caught up in the emotions it evokes.
  - c. We had been including a rep from each squadron + maintenance in the ceremony but it can be a mass gaggle.
    - i. Works best with just 1-3 guys up there. Just pick them.
    - ii. Whatever you decide, the focus needs to be on the POW Ceremony & Table – not the reps.
    - iii. IF you do include our guys in the ceremony, pick a Pilot, Nav, FE, Gunner, IO, Maint), with reps from all 3 Squadrons if you can.

## REUNION COORDINATOR GUIDE or LESSONS LEARNED: Steps To A Successful Reunion

- iv. You'll need to "pre-explain" what the guys representing our crews at the table need to do (short "do this" should suffice during the Happy Hour or earlier)
- 16. Group photos. We've had a photographer do group photos (by squadron in Ft Walton & Fairfield & the whole shebang at Wright-Patt & Fairfield) & it went over really well.
  - a. No 'Association' cost, since the photographer only gets whatever they sell; i.e. whatever folks purchase.
  - b. If you do this, pre-coordinate it either right after the Saturday Association/Ladies Meetings or maybe right before the Banquet or even as part of the Friday social (everyone would likely be lubricated enough to smile there!). However, have the mechanics well-greased with the photographer so that the picture taking goes FAST. Otherwise, folks will straggle off & you'll be herding cats. You might need bleachers for large group/Squadron pictures.
- 17. Master Control List (MCL). Wayne coordinates with Ron Julian to make a LARGE hard copy version for the Hootch. Put a big note on it asking guys to check their info, make corrections, add info they have on other guys, etc. After the Reunion, send it to Ron to update the MCL
- 18. Association Awards. Coordinate with the Prez on getting the awards delivered to you for his presentations at the Banquet.
- 19. Letters of Appreciation. Start a "thank you" list early. Can include Hotel or other staff; Honor Guard, speaker, raffle contributors, etc. Use AC-119 Gunship Association Letterheads (Bill Petrie can send you an updated version. Wayne & Gus have samples that show the required margin formatting for the letterhead page.
- 20. **Overall funding. You'll need to cover LOTS of additional costs that are not direct charged to attendees:**
  - a. Hootch Funding. We began charging a Reunion Registration Fee several years ago because we were losing money on Hootch & other "extraneous" costs.
    - i. This fee is the Reunion Coordinator's funds resource for Hootch munchies, beer/soda/water, printing, speaker gift/meals/room, etc.
    - ii. The fee allows us to raise the quality of Hootch drinks/snacks & you have slush fund for unexpected Reunion bills. We've even used it to reduce room rates to a number that's more palatable.
  - b. Need to get a tax exemption certificate for the state the reunion is in.
    - i. Get with the Treasurer for the federal tax exempt form for your state.
    - ii. It ONLY applies to stuff the Association pays for like all Reunion meals (the attendees pay us & WE pay the caterer/hotel). This saves the association a lot of money. You need this for the year that the reunion is in.
    - iii. Start working on this as early as you can since we've learned that some states will not approve our exemption request (CA) & others have a bureaucratic process that takes time.
  - c. Family members of guys we lost in SEA: for **first-time** Reunion attendees who are Family members of guys we lost in SEA, we cover their meals, & if they need it, we try to comp them a room. We've even helped with airfare. It's only for their "first" reunion. After that, they pay like everyone else.
    - i. ALWAYS include a VIP Banquet table for all of the Family members.
    - ii. ALWAYS include special introductions of Family members at Friday Night & Banquet activities.
    - iii. ALWAYS include some type of Family member inclusion if there's a Memorial Service or short ceremony we do. We've moved away from formal Memorials (unless there's special circumstances) so it's usually either a short mini-ceremony during the Banquet, or just recognizing the attendees.
  - d. Other Special Guests. We've covered meals, hotel, even airfare for some guests, like Marvin Litke (AC-119s in WWII & Korea); sometimes a speaker's costs if we need to; Honor Guard; etc...
  - e. Name Tags, Name Tag Holders, Name Tag loops, printing & copies for Banquet Agendas, maps, daily schedules, any handouts, etc.