

## **MIKE DRZYZGA'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, November 2022**

Greetings AC-119ers, family and friends. Looking back at 6 yrs. as Association President, I am honored to have served you, and feel very well as we faced some real challenges and endured quite successfully. Looking forward, in my opinion, your new Board has the skills and energy to continue our Association successfully. The President is John Cootz, who will do a great job leading the Board – I wish him great success.

Reunion XXII Summary, Branson, MO: It was awesome. We were blessed with a week of bright blue skies and sunshine. Coordinators Jerry and Karen McDonald did a superb job setting it all up and interacting with the Radisson Hotel. We car-pooled to the Dolly Parton Dixie Stampede on Wednesday and the Branson Belle showboat on Thursday for two fun social events. With about 140 attending the reunion, we did have a significant group of “first timers”, always heart-warming to me – I enjoy welcoming them to our AC119 family. You will hear this elsewhere, but three significant outcomes of the Saturday morning business meeting were: 1) members ratified a change to the by-laws so that the Board will accept nominees for Officer Positions, and provide a vetted slate of candidates to the membership to vote on, 2) members present voted to go to Colorado Springs for Reunion XXIV in 2024 (we will continue to use a professional event coordinator, Armed Forces Reunions), and 3) a new FULL Board was voted in. After the meeting, Carol Hinton did a wonderful job of holding a Quilts of Valor (QOV) ceremony where 28 Quilts were wrapped around our veterans who had never received one. Thank you, Doug Wohlgamuth, for helping to get pictures of this meaningful event. We did gather at noon outside the hotel for a short series of group pictures by a local professional photographer. Very well done! The Awards Banquet had one annoying “bump-in-the-road”: As much as I practiced showing a video presentation of past reunions (Thank you Andrea and Roy), the audio part failed, really diminishing the presentation. But, once we reset Windows on the laptop, the show happily went on. I presented awards to Carol Hinton for two years of QOV ceremonies; Don Luke who continues as our Firing Circle editor; Ev Sprous for continually volunteering whenever we needed things done along with his efforts as media manager, Facebook, and handling membership; the McDonalds as reunion coordinators; and past presidents. The Above & Beyond Award went to Terry Sarul for his many successful efforts participating in presentations on the AC-119s, and his Operation Present Stinger at the 18<sup>th</sup> SOTES at Hurlburt AFB. One very memorable moment occurred at the Farewell BBQ on Sunday. Three Shadow Gunners did a photo op in front of the Association's flags. The flags tumbled taking down a back-drop curtain with it. It seemed like it happened in slow-motion. The event became a comical highlight at the end of the reunion. Nevertheless, another successful reunion for our history files.

New task: President John Cootz asked me to take on a project to be the lead on gathering our documents (USAF Orders, and such) and develop an organized document archive. I have been called many things, but now I'm an Archivist! We will add this change of process to a Facebook post, on our website, and, of course, in the Firing Circle newsletter. Therefore, if you do have copies of PCS or travel orders, awards and medals, and rank promotion orders, I'm the one to send them to. ***PLEASE DO.***

Mike Drzyzga, Outgoing President