

2022 Mike Drzyzga President's Messages

MIKE DRZYZGA'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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 18th 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

September 2022 – President's Message

Greetings from NJ to AC-119 Gunshippers, friends, and family! I hope that you are having a good experience with Summer 2022. Only a few more weeks left – but I dare not want to rush it!

1. Branson, MO, Reunion XXII, Sept 28 – Oct 2, 2022, some quick notes and reminders:
 - A) We will have an auction as we have done in the past, as part of the Sat. night banquet. Please bring something unique and/or interesting to donate to the auction.
 - B) We are fortunate to have our videographer, JP Mac Isaac again to capture YOUR oral history videos. If you have NOT done one yet, please seriously consider what a video would mean to your family members. We have many personal bios on our [Website](#) – you can look at what others have done. Tell your stories! It is not for you it is for them. Roy Davis will help JP get you signed up.
 - C) The Who's Coming list grows almost daily. Take a look in the Firing Circle and see who's going to enjoy a great time in Branson!!
 - D) If you plan to attend this reunion, AND you have an AC-119 neck lanyard from a previous reunion to hold your name tag, PLEASE remember to BRING IT with you. If you want a valuable "Neck Wallet" from the Branson Chamber of Commerce, contact Jerry McDonald, reunion coordinator at email: jmshadow6869@yahoo.com.
 - E) Our Wed. and Thur. social events are sold-out or close to it. Thank you, Wayne Laessig, for getting the word out and addressing the issue.
2. Plaque Project for the SEA Pavilion at the USAF Academy: I'm pleased to report that very many of you responded to Steve "Col Mac" Mac Isaac's efforts to obtain donations. At this time, we are planning to move forward with due focus and take the necessary steps to mark our place in history, where it would have been otherwise missing. In terms of process, it seems the Association FLASH message gets folks' attention. We will keep you well informed as we make progress.
3. Do you know that the Association has an agreement with The Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University (TTU) in Lubbock, TX? This had been established many years ago. The Center is accepting Vietnam-era memorabilia for archiving. Steve "Col Mac" Mac Isaac and Roy Davis have been in contact with key individuals there. If you are inclined to offer your "stuff" from VN to archive for historical keeping, you may want to investigate TTU's facility. We have the info on our Website here: [Association Recommended Historical Repository – AC-119 Gunship Association \(ac119gunships.com\)](#).
4. Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins (PACT) Act. The Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances, such as Agent Orange. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans, and their survivors, with the care and benefits. There are 20 new presumptive conditions added to the list. If you are not on the Agent Orange registry, YOU SHOULD BE! Hopefully, you are aware of this, but here a link to more info: [The PACT Act And Your VA Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#)
5. Do you realize that next year will be the 50th anniversary of the "cease-fire" ending the hostilities between North Vietnam and the US and its allies? The USAF is planning a documentary as a memorial to the war effort. It is too early to know much, but the Association expects to be involved in whatever the USAF is planning. More info to come as this project evolves. Thank you to Terry Sarul for taking the lead on this task.

Now, back to planning for Branson, Reunion XXII. My to-do list grows. I am so looking forward to seeing many of you there. Stay well and be safe!

Mike Drzyzga, President (2015-2022)

August 15, 2022, AC-119 Reunion FLASH – Dixie Stampede and Branson Belle Close-Outs

If you're already signed up for our Branson Reunion's Dixie Stampede and Branson Belle options, you're good to go!

But, if you snooze(d) you lose (maybe):

1. The Branson Belle option is closed as of this Flash – the early registrants (i.e., the non-fence sitters :>) booked every available seat and there ain't no more :<(

We'll pull the Branson Belle option off the Reunion Registration but as of this Flash, please do not sign up for it.

2. The good news is that we still have 15 slots for the Dixie Stampede, so first come, first served for those remaining slots (i.e., it's time to stop sitting on that fence :>).

We are negotiating to take other groups' leftover dinner/show seats – but those will be in a different location than our main AC-119 group.

As soon as we reach **our** AC-119 group's booking max, we'll send another Flash that will tell you the remaining seats will be in a different location than our AC-119 group. If you sign up after that Flash, you'll be seated with another group.

July 2022 President's Message — Greetings from NJ to AC-119 Gunshippers, friends, and family! I hope summertime 2022 is treating everyone well.

1. Branson, MO, Reunion XXII, Sept 28 – Oct 2, 2022: Take a look at the Who's Coming list and see all of the AC-119ers attending this year – I'm excited, we're expecting a great turn-out. I am hopeful the trend will continue to see more of our younger family members attend. The reunion flyer and registration forms are on the Association's website. Also, V.P. Roy Davis sent out an email FLASH message so you can easily order various reunion T-Shirts. GREAT SELECTION, get 'em now! Here's the link: *Custom Ink Group Orders – GUNSHIP REUNION*. This is a cost-effective way to reduce our inventory and eliminate hauling shirts across the USA. Thank you again, Roy! **NOTE:** For many of you planning to attend this reunion, IF you have an AC-119 neck lanyard from a previous reunion to hold your name tag, PLEASE remember to BRING IT with you to Branson. If you want a new "Neck Wallet" from the Branson Chamber of Commerce, contact Jerry McDonald, reunion coordinator at: jmshadow6869@yahoo.com.
2. Stinger-41, 50th-anniversary reunion: On May 2, 2022, 50 years after the tragic loss of Stinger-41, the survivors and those involved with the recovery of our heroic brothers,

along with special friends and family members, gathered at Davis-Monthan AFB to engage in a special reunion. A heart-felt thank you to Yami Sledzinski and Roy Davis to make this awesome event a reality. Roy did a great video capturing the event, which you can get to on the Associations Web Site, but here's a direct link: [Stinger 41 Reunion – YouTube](#).

3. Stinger Gunner JD Hughes: In the previous *Firing Circle*, I requested for any info' from those of you who knew JD Hughes. I received no reply. Yes, I was disappointed to tell the 1st SOW Wing historian at Hurlburt that we could not provide any personal info of JD. I suppose JD's flight suit will be on display somewhat missing personal info about JD.
4. AC-130W Stinger-II farewell at Cannon – see a summary in the *Firing Circle*. Board member Terry Sarul was invited to join AC-47 and AC-130 crew members to speak about Gunship history and operations in SEA. His presentation was June 16, 2022, at the EAA Museum in Oshkosh, WI, during the full-week air show called Air Venture. This is a very huge and prestigious annual event. They only gave each presenter 20 min, and I am sure Terry was challenged to fit the AC-119 story, our history and accomplishments, into such a short time. He put an impressive PowerPoint slide presentation together. They also did an audio podcast that you can listen to at [EAA's The Green Dot – U.S. Air Force Gunships Panel – Hangar Flying](#).
5. "Guns-Hot SCOOP #1" – From our Quartermaster Gus Sininger: **The Web store DOES NOT HAVE ANY MORE Wooden 119 Models in stock. THEY ARE ALL SOLD!** Due to a change of vendor owners, we cannot order any more at the old price of \$130. If you want to buy a wooden K Model, you can try EBAY, TAILWINGS, or AIRCRAFTSPACE. Unfortunately, they are much higher \$\$ than when we had them. Please do not try to order one from our Web Site; we do not carry them any longer. Thank You.
6. "Guns-Hot SCOOP #2" – Shadow IO, Allen Chandler, published a book covering his USAF career. It is available at Amazon as a Kindle file or as a paperback. Congratulations Allen, great work, and a shout-out to Roy Davis for helping Allen with the process. It is awesome to become an author! Here's a link: [Amazon.com: My Walk Home: 21 Years in the United States Air Force eBook: Chandler, Allen: Kindle Store](#).
7. Lastly, I must give another special recognition to Wayne and Liz for keeping the Association's web site fresh and current, and to our Facebook team for posting a lot of interesting current events! Your Association continues successfully due to many individuals donating time and energy.

OK now, onward to Branson! Hope to see many of you there. Continue to have a safe and healthy Summer 2022!! Be smart, be kind, be courageous, and be yourself.

Mike Drzyzga, President (2015-2022)

February 10, 2022, Flash — Registration for the Branson, MO reunion in Sept. is now available.

WOW! We are ready to celebrate another great reunion. Are you ready to party, and celebrate 53 years?

The following reunion flyer contains all the info' you need to successfully register for the reunion XXII. Please take the time to read it thoroughly before going to our Association web site or linking to

the registration page. Follow the instructions, and it is an easy process. Please note that the Association was spending more money than we can afford to use PayPal and Credit Cards for payments. We had to give-up that convenience. Therefore, we returned to the procedure of "mailing checks to the Treasurer."

A BIG thank-you goes to reunion coordinator Jerry McDonald for an excellent reunion plan, and the flyer which tells you all about it. Also, to Web Master Liz Buss and Wayne Laessig for getting the on-line process up and running.

We will be offering pre-ordered reunion T-Shirts again this year, as we have done in the recent past. V.P. Roy Davis developed an effective process. You will receive information on that separately.

We are behind the power curve on distribution of the Firing Circle newsletter, but keep scanning your in-box, it is in process!

We are expecting a great turnout in Branson – having another memorable event – as we continue to "never forget" what the AC-119s accomplished 50 years ago!

[Click here for the Upcoming Reunion webpage.](#)