

August 2025

Five Reasons why Members of the AC-119 Gunship Association Should Attend this Year's 25th Reunion

As July ends, I'm reminded that in two weeks I'll turn 80. Recently, I was reflecting on my life through the questioning of some civilian friends who had not been in the military. One of the questions they hit me with was "why do you guys reunite so much?" I've been asked that question many times and my reply is usually the same, *We Reunite to Remember!*

As the years pass, our reunions serve as a vital link to the past, offering members of our Association an opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and share experiences that might otherwise fade with time. For members of the AC-119 Gunship Association, this year's upcoming *25th reunion* is more than just a gathering—it's an essential milestone in preserving the legacy of our service and camaraderie. Let me take a moment to give you five reasons I'll attend this year's reunion:

1. **Our Reunions Enable us to Honor the Past:** The *Vietnam War* was a defining chapter in American military history. Gunship crews, who flew perilous missions to support ground troops, played a pivotal role in the conflict. The 25th reunion provides a moment to honor the sacrifices, bravery, and dedication of these individuals. It's an opportunity for our members to reflect on their shared history, remember fallen comrades, and ensure that the story of their service is not forgotten.
2. **Our Reunions Preserve a Brotherhood:** Military service creates bonds that last a lifetime. For many, the relationships forged during combat are deeper than those formed in any other aspect of life. A reunion offers a chance to reconnect with old friends, relive stories, and reignite the sense of brotherhood that transcends time. These gatherings offer veterans a rare chance to meet others who truly understand the experiences they shared during the war in Southeast Asia.
3. **Our Reunions help with Healing and Reflection:** The emotional toll of war can linger for years, and it's not always easy to talk about those experiences with family or friends who weren't there. Reunions offer a supportive environment where veterans can speak freely, share their feelings, and find healing in the company of others who understand their journey. Our *AC-119 Gunship 25th reunion* serves as a time for reflection, allowing members to process their past while finding strength in shared memories.
4. **Our Reunions, Hopefully, help us Pass the Torch:** We're not getting any younger and as time moves forward, the importance of passing on the legacy of service becomes more significant. For younger generations—whether they are children, grandchildren, or newer veterans—the reunion offers a chance to learn about the history of AC-119 gunship air and ground crews and the pivotal role they played in the *Vietnam War*. By attending, our members contribute to preserving the memory of their service for future generations, ensuring that their story continues to be told.
5. **Our Reunions Create New Memories and New Friends:** As Wayne Laessig is fond to say, "Though it's a time to reflect on the past, reunions are also about making new memories." After 25 years, this reunion promises to be a celebration of survival, resilience, and the enduring spirit of those who served. It's an opportunity to meet new faces, strengthen existing friendships, and create memories that will carry forward for another quarter-century.

So, to conclude why I attend, it's simple, the *25th reunion of the AC-119 Gunship Association* is more than just a social gathering. It's an opportunity to reflect, heal, honor fallen comrades, and preserve a shared legacy for generations to come. For those who served in the skies over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and those who maintained the gunships, this reunion is a rare and invaluable chance to reconnect with the past and celebrate the enduring bonds of service and once again remind us "*We Reunite to Remember!*"

I Look forward to seeing many of you and your families in Ft. Walton Beach in November.

YITB (Yours in the Brotherhood)
Bill Petrie
AC-119 Gunship Association President

AC-119 Gunship Reunion: November 12 - 16, 2025
The Island Resort at Fort Walton Beach – Hotel Reservations

1500 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

To reserve a room, call 850-337-9194 or 800-874-8962 (reference the AC-119 Gunship Association), or to **reserve your room online**, use this link **[The Island Resort Booking](#)**. Our all-inclusive **Reunion Rate** is \$164.20 for double Queen rooms (you can request a King, based on availability), and includes free Breakfast buffet for up to 2 guests per room, free parking, free high-speed internet, all available Monday, November 10th thru Monday, November 17th, 2025. The resort fee of \$29 is waived for rooms booked in our group block. **But you MUST Reserve by October 20th for our guaranteed rate.** Since you can cancel without charge up to 48 hours prior to your reservation check-in date, reserve your room now to guarantee you get our Reunion rate. You can also upgrade to Pool View at \$186 or Gulf View at \$230 based on availability. For reservation changes, or after the 20th cut-off, you need to call Vanessa Blackmon at 850-337-9194 Monday-Friday 0800-1700 CST. Cancellations must be received 48 hours prior to arrival date to avoid a charge of one night's room plus tax. **Important:** If you need a handicapped accessible room, **you must call Venessa Blackmon** for assistance, Monday-Friday 0800 to 1700 CST at **850-337-9194**. **Scoot Around** rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for details or to reserve one.

Reunion Registration

Register online at <https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/2025AC119>. **NOTE: online** registrations close October 13th! After that day, latecomers can contact Doug Wohlgamuth to register. He'll provide instructions and a form to mail with your check to AFR.

Wednesday, November 12

Time	Event	Room Name
1200 - 2200	Hootch Open	Fiji Room
1400 – 1900	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer
	Free Time to Explore Fort Walton Beach	

Thursday, November 13

0700 - 0900	Reunion Registration Open	Fiji Room
0800 - 1500	National Naval Aviation Museum Tour	Pensacola: Ticketed Event
0800 – 2200	Hootch Open	Fiji Room
1500 – 1700	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer
	Free Time to Explore Fort Walton Beach	

Friday, November 14

0800 – 2200	Hootch Open	Fiji Room
1400 – 1700	Navarre Memorial Park - Hosted Meet and Greet	See important info on next page
1800	Light Desserts in Hootch	Fiji Room
	Free Time to Explore Fort Walton Beach	

Saturday, November 15

0800 – 2200	Hootch Open	Fiji Room
0900 – 1100	Association Annual Meeting	Aruba Room
1700 – 2200	Cash Bar	Maui Ballroom Foyer
1800 – 2200	Dinner Banquet	Maui Ballroom

Sunday, November 16

0800 – 1000	Board Meeting	Bali Boardroom
0900 – 2400	Hootch Open	Fiji Room
1700 – 2000	Cash Bar	Aruba Ballroom Foyer
1800 - 2000	Farewell Dinner	Aruba Ballroom

Monday, November 17

	Farewells and Departures	
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CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date of October 13, Armed Forces Reunions Inc shall process a full refund less the non-refundable Group registration fee (\$35 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded, less vendor commitments, guarantees and the non-refundable Group registration fee. For math mistakes by the user that incur charges above the intended amount that require a refund, the user will be responsible for additional credit card fees. Cancellations will only be taken Monday - Friday from 9am - 5pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities. Refunds will be processed 4-6 weeks after the reunion. NOTE: canceling your hotel reservations does not cancel your reunion activities.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13 NATIONAL NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM TOUR

CHECK OUT THE MUSEUM MAP ON THE LAST PAGE OF THIS FIRING CIRCLE - AWESOME DISPLAYS!!!

Pensacola, Florida is home to the National Naval Aviation Museum, which captures naval aviation's entire heritage with over 150 planes representing the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Soar with the Blue Angels in the dazzling seven-story glass and steel atrium. The West Wing is devoted almost entirely to WWII carrier aviation and showcases a full-size replica of the USS Cabot Carrier Island and flight deck along with aircraft such as the Corsair, Avenger, and Hellcat, among others. While there, you can enjoy flight simulators and IMAX type films for extra fees. **Enjoy lunch on your own at Cubi Café. Please note: seating is limited and for faster service we highly suggest that not everyone goes to lunch at the same time.** NOTE: The Museum is kept very cool, so a jacket is recommended. There is also a limit of one hydraulically lifted scooter or wheelchair per handicap accessible bus, and the combined weight of the passenger and motorized wheelchair or scooter may not exceed 500 lb due to lift limitations. If you use a scooter or motorized wheelchair but can climb the steps to board the bus, either you and/or a person travelling with you must be able to put the scooter or wheelchair in the bus's luggage compartment. Due to liability issues, drivers and tour guides cannot assist with scooters or motorized wheelchairs.

8:00am board bus, 3:00pm back at hotel

\$72/Person includes bus and guide. Lunch is on your own.

Tour Buses will load and unload at the front of the hotel lobby, and guests should meet in the lobby.

Please be at the bus loading location at least 10 minutes prior to departure.

Driver and Guide gratuities are not included in the tour price and are at the discretion of the individual.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14 VISIT THE USAF ARMAMENT MUSEUM DURING REUNION 2025

During a recent visit to Ft. Walton Beach, FL, Mike Drzyzga visited the USAF Armament Museum at Eglin AFB. The museum will set-up a formal visit of the museum for the AC-119ers attending our November reunion. The Museum has our Shadow and Stinger Lithographs on display. But most interesting, AC-130A "First Lady" has been restored inside and out, has electrical power to it, and is opened periodically for special events. The museum can have First Lady opened for our visit. Mike is also planning an informal car-pool for reunion attendees desiring to visit the Museum. The museum visit will be scheduled for Friday morning, Nov. 14, leaving the *Island Resort* hotel at 9:00 a.m., arrive at Museum around 9:30 a.m., We'll leave the museum around 11:30 am to arrive at the hotel around Noon. We will be back in plenty of time to enjoy the *FREE Meet & Greet later that day* at Navarre Park. If you are interested, contact Mike before Nov. 1 at email: drzyzga513@hotmail.com or cellphone 201-310-2943. Also, if you plan to attend and have a car with available seats to help with the car-pool, please let Mike know. For more Armament Museum information here is a link to Museum's website: [Air Force Armament Museum Foundation | Admission is FREE and all are welcome!](#)

NAVARRE MEMORIAL PARK - MEET AND GREET

 **BURGERS, BEER & BROTHERHOOD — YOU'RE INVITED!**

Navarre Memorial Park Meet & Greet | Friday, 2–5 PM | Free Event

We're kicking off Reunion 2025 with a *can't-miss* event! Join the 18th SOTES Legacy Squadron for an informal Meet & Greet at beautiful Navarre Memorial Park, just west of Hurlburt Field. This relaxed afternoon gathering is all about reconnecting, remembering, and raising a cold one with fellow squadron members and friends.

On the menu:

- ✓ **Grilled burgers & hot dogs**
- ✓ **Cold beer & sodas**
- ✓ **Great stories & even better company**
- ✓ **Absolutely FREE!**

This casual get-together was a *huge hit* last time—and we’re bringing it back! Plus, it’s a perfect chance to visit the newly public Hurlburt Air Memorial Park, right nearby. Even if the 18th SOTES deployment pace affects their turnout, we’re still gathering to kick off the reunion right!

🕒 Start Time: 2:00 PM

🕒 Wrap-Up: Around 5:00 PM

🚗 Carpools available (and we’ll roll into the Hootch afterward!

👉 **IMPORTANT:** This event is separate from the AFR Registration.

Please register here if you plan to attend:

[🔗 Reunion 2025 – Navarre Meet & Greet Registration - AC-119 Gunship Association](#)

Don’t miss this opportunity to reconnect with all your squadron family—we’ll see you at the park!

Silent Auction

Many folks bring auction items to help fund things like KIA Family participation, Color Guard meals, etc. Most items are **Silent Auctioned**, where everyone can bid on them until bidding is closed the afternoon of the Banquet and the “winner(s)” are announced. If you’d like to contribute, things that fit in luggage work well. If you have an item you think needs to be “live” auctioned, email Gus at stinger7172@live.com. The “live” auction items are part of the festivities after the Banquet. The auctions are fun and benefit our Association immensely.

Fort Walton Beach Reunion - Who is Coming?

We thought you might be interested in knowing which of your friends will be at our Fort Walton Reunion, and maybe help decide that YOU would like to also SEE them again, by Registering at

<https://www.ac119gunships.com/reunion/upcoming-reunion-2025/ Attendees:>

Rich & Sandy Atkinson	Ron & Carol Hinton with Son Brian	Jim Rash
Stan & Cindy Baker	& Daughter-In-Law Amari,	Jim Ray
Jack & Carolyn Bastin with	Daughter Diane & Son-In-Law	Howard Reid
Friends Linda McCain & Evelyn	Wes Lord	Matt & Annette Robeck
Algood	Gary Hitzemann	Bob Safreno & Sandy Paxton
Paul & Teri Beagley	Baby Huey Hunter with Daughters	Terry & Theresa Sarul with
Jim Boyd	Carolyn & Jo Emanuel & Son-In-	Daughter Lisa Redden
Roy Davis & Paula Pascoe	Law Ted Emanuel	Gus Sininger with Daughter
Mike & Andrea Drzyzga	Lee & Tim Jordan with Daughter	Lee Ann Whitaker, Grandson
Bob & Janet Dydo	Scarlett & Son Jacob, & Brother	Tyler Vaughn, Daughter Donna
Jim & Tina Farrell	Dale Anderson	& Son-In-Law Chuck Glickman,
Jim & Marilyn Fiala	Mike Krauss	& Friend Elvira Chiccarelli
Bob Frederick & Guest	Bob Krueger & Phyliss Demske	Al & Carmel Smith
Rod Frieze & Friend David King	Wayne & Lynette Laessig with	Jerry & Diane Snyder
Lloyd & M.E. Froelich	Guests Michelle & Kenny Mayfield	Ken & Ronnie Stearn
Ron & Patti Gilbert	Nancy Mac Isaac with Son John	Jerry Stout with Daughter Jodie
Janis Goryl	Paul	McGaha & Son-In-Law Patrick
Shelly Gravitte & Tom Freeman	John & Lynn Morrow with Son Kirk	McGaha
Rich Hall & Gloria Lister	& Grandson Nico	Wayne & Darcy Taylor
Jerry & Ellen Hester with	Rod Olson with Daughter Cyndi	Gene & Brother James Van
Daughters Jerri Hester &	Hathaway & Granddaughter Freya	Over
Delores Batten	Hathaway	Dave Voisey
Clement & Suzanne Hill	Bill & Karen Petrie	Doug & Karen Wohlgamuth

For those attending the reunion, a note to remember: **Name Tag Pouches/AC-119 Neck Lanyards:** IF you have one from a previous reunion, PLEASE pack it for re-use this year.

Transportation

- **Airlines:** Allegiant, American, Delta, Southwest, Sun Country Airlines, & United fly into Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS).
- **Car:** Parking at the hotel is **free** with hotel booking.
- **RVs/Campers:** Hurlburt (850-797-0103) and Eglin (850-883-1243) FamCamps: no reservations but call ahead; Geronimo RV Resort (850-424-6801); and Destin West RV Resort (850-200-4533).

Reunion 2026

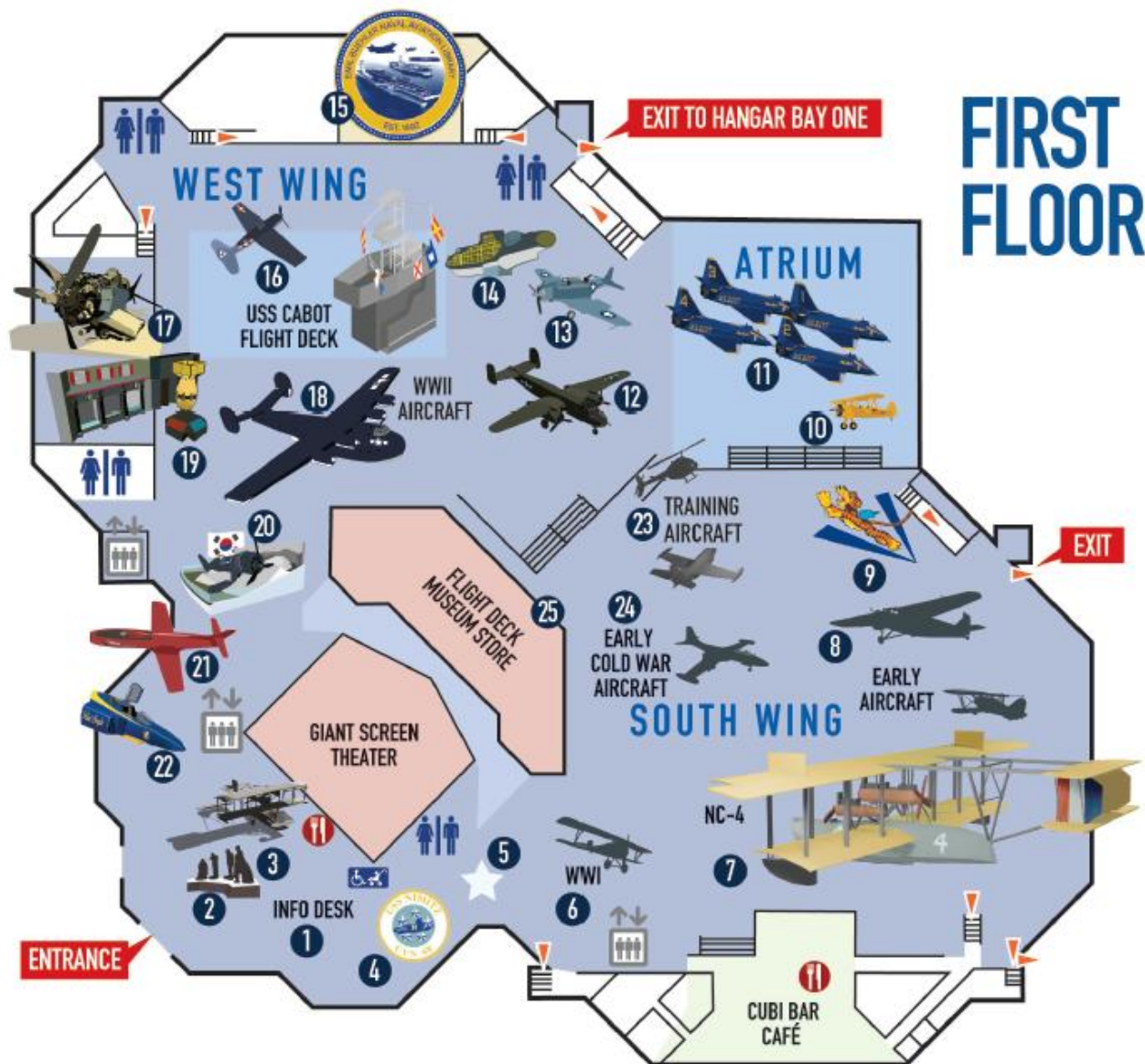
The 2026 reunion will be held in Phoenix , Arizona. As more information becomes available, we will share it in Newsletters, and on our Facebook Page and Website.

Final Flight

Brothers who made their Final Flight. Please remember their families in your prayers. R.I.P. Brothers.

J. Leslie Alford	17 th SOS	IO	June 6, 2025
Morris Campbell	71 st & 17 th SOS	Maintenance	October 19, 2023
Roy Cormier	18 th SOS	Navigator	May 29, 2025
Herman Allan Heuss	71 st SOS	Pilot	September 3, 2024
Paul Roberts	18 th SOS	Nav/FLIR Operator	June 21. 2025

WHAT YOU CAN SEE ON THE NATIONAL NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM TOUR!!!



- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 INFORMATION DESK | 9 FLYING TIGERS EXHIBIT | 17 SUNKEN TREASURES |
| 2 SPIRIT OF NAVAL AVIATION MONUMENT | 10 STEARMAN N2S | 18 PB2Y CORONADO |
| 3 A-1 TRIAD | 11 BLUE ANGEL ATRIUM | 19 END OF WWII EXHIBIT |
| 4 NIMITZ FLIGHT DECK EXPERIENCE | 12 DOOLITTLE RAIDERS B-25 MITCHELL | 20 KOREAN WAR EXHIBIT |
| 5 MUSEUM TOURS (9:30 • 11:00 • 1:00) | 13 BATTLE OF MIDWAY SBD DAUNTLESS | 21 D-558-1 SKYSTREAK |
| 6 WWI EXHIBIT | 14 PBV CUTAWAY | 22 BLUE ANGELS COCKPITS |
| 7 NC-4 | 15 LIBRARY | 23 TRAINING AIRCRAFT |
| 8 FORD TRI-MOTOR | 16 USS CABOT FLIGHT DECK | 24 EARLY COLD WAR AIRCRAFT |
| | | 25 FLIGHT DECK MUSEUM STORE |

Purchase Simulator and Movie Tickets at [NavalAviationMuseum.org/tickets](https://www.NavalAviationMuseum.org/tickets)

Want a Souvenir? Visit the Flight Deck Museum Store or shop online at [NavalAviation.com](https://www.NavalAviation.com)

Follow us on Social Media





SECOND FLOOR

- 1 USS ENTERPRISE EXHIBIT
- 2 THE RAFT
- 3 WWII SOUTH PACIFIC EXHIBIT
- 4 HOME FRONT USA
- 5 HALL OF HONOR
- 6 FOUNDATION OFFICE
- 7 HALL OF RECOGNITION
- 8 K-47 CONTROL CAR
- 9 L-8 "GHOST SHIP"
- 10 LIGHTER-THAN-AIR EXHIBIT
- 11 STRATOLAB
- 12 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS
- 13 ART GALLERY
- 14 PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH DISPLAY
- 15 FLIGHT ADVENTURE DECK
- 16 COCKPIT TRAINERS



- 17 MAXFLIGHT SIMULATORS
- 18 MOTION-BASED FLIGHT SIMULATOR
- 19 AEROSPACE MEDICINE EXHIBIT

HANGAR BAY ONE

- 1 HA(L)-3 SEAWOLVES EXHIBIT
- 2 VIETNAM WAR ERA
- 3 O-1 BIRD DOG
- 4 P2V-1 NEPTUNE "TRUCULENT TURTLE"
- 5 F-14D TOMCAT
- 6 F/A-18 HORNET
- 7 USCG AVIATION EXHIBIT
- 8 SP-5B MARLIN
- 9 APOLLO EXHIBIT
- 10 PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT
- 11 R4D-5L SKYTRAIN "QUE SERA SERA"

NavalAviationMuseum.org • Follow us on Social Media
 Main Museum Hours • 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
 Hangar Bay One Hours • 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM

