



January 2026

Dear AC-119 Family and Friends,

As we step into 2026, we're reminded that every new year, really every new day, gives our Association a fresh opportunity to grow stronger in friendship, in purpose, and in preserving our proud AC-119 Gunship legacy.

We move into this year with gratitude and determination. Together, we will continue to remember and tell the story of our gunship mission in Southeast Asia, support one another through the resources our Association provides, and make sure the public never forgets what the AC-119 air and ground crews accomplished. Whether you are renewing your membership, volunteering your time, attending reunions, or simply reconnecting with old friends and making new ones, there is a place for you here. I especially encourage you to reach out to your old aircrew and ground crew mates and let them know this is *their* home too, a place to share their stories through our newsletter, our website, and with each other. Every new or returning member makes our Association stronger and helps ensure our history is preserved for future generations.

As a non-profit organization, we depend entirely on the generosity of our members and supporters. Your donations, whether large or small, directly support our mission: preserving our history, maintaining our programs, and keeping this Association strong and active. If you're able, please consider making a donation and encouraging others to do the same.

Together, we honor the volunteers who give their time, the donors who believe in our mission, and the dedicated Association staff who are there for you every day with heart and commitment. I truly believe 2026 will be a great year of gratitude, storytelling, growth, and mission accomplishment as we build on what we've created together and look ahead to the important work still to come.

I wish you and your families a healthy, prosperous, and Happy New Year — and I hope you'll help us grow our AC-119 family by inviting others to join us.

Warm regards,

Bill Petrie, CMSgt, USAF (Ret.)
President, AC-119 Gunship Association



Stinger 41 Survivors

As President of the AC-119 Gunship Association, I respectfully request your support. As many of you may know, *Stinger Four-One (41)* was shot down during a daylight mission over the city of An Loc on May 2, 1972. The decorations for the crew's heroism were lost in the fog of war and in the subsequent deactivation of the 18th Special Operations Squadron. Recently, their valor award package was reconstructed and resubmitted; however, the decorations were denied or downgraded. We are now asking for a thorough, fair review of all available facts surrounding the shoot-down, with the goal of ensuring these brave airmen receive the recognition they truly deserve.

Please visit the *Stinger 41* website links below to read the full story and learn how you can *send a letter to the Secretary of the Air Force* to help your brothers get the awards they deserve. Join us in this fight to honor their legacy.

It is never too late to make things right!

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Bill Petrie, CMSgt, USAF, Ret.

[Stinger 41 Request for Support Article](#)

[Stinger 41 Air and Space Forces Article](#)

2025 REUNION RECAP

Greetings, AC-119ers, from cold and snow-covered South Bend! As I stare out my window at a driveway buried under a fresh foot of snow, I'd much rather be back in the sun and warmth of the Emerald Coast where just a few short weeks ago we were celebrating our *25th AC-119 Gunship Reunion* in Fort Walton Beach.

Before diving into the recap, I want to thank every one of you for your patience and flexibility. No matter how much planning we do, Murphy's Law always sneaks in. And yet, every year you roll with the punches, smile through the glitches, and keep the reunion spirit alive. Because of that resilience, we were able to adapt and still enjoy a fantastic "WE'RE BACK" 25th anniversary gathering, government shutdown and all.

MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY

Board members began trickling into the Island Resort early. After Theresa and I wrapped up our two-day drive, we linked up with the reunion crew and got to work setting up the hootch. Tables, displays, flags, A/V gear, and Quartermaster stock. You name it, we touched it. Gus led the usual Sam's Club run (yes, we bought too many snacks again).

With no scheduled activities those first days, folks explored the beach, lounged by the pool, hit the local restaurants, and reconnected in the hootch. Registration kicked off Wednesday, which is always a treat—greeting old friends and welcoming first-timers. That night, about 20 of us hit Benjarong Thai restaurant. Great food all around, and I'm still thinking about those egg rolls.

THURSDAY

This was our big pivot day. The shutdown canceled our bus trip to the Naval Air Museum and Blue Angels practice. Disappointing, yes—but we regrouped fast.

We rerouted to the Special Operations Air Memorial Park at Hurlburt Field to visit the AC-119G Shadow clone and other Special Ops aircraft. For first timers and families, seeing "their" aircraft up close was a real highlight.

Next, although the Air Force Armament Museum was officially closed, the curator graciously opened the doors for us. We enjoyed full access to the incredible displays and the AC-130A "First Lady" outside.

FRIDAY

Instead of our usual Friday evening Meet & Greet buffet, we caravanned to Navarre Park for a picnic hosted by our legacy squadron, the *18th Special Operations Test and Evaluation Squadron* (18th SOTES). They grilled brats and burgers, provided drinks, and made everyone feel right at home. Great food, even better camaraderie.

Afterwards, we headed back to the hootch for dessert and storytelling—most of which probably grew a little taller as the night went on.

SATURDAY

Saturday morning kicked off with the Business Meeting led by President Bill Petrie and me. We recognized our first-time attendees, reviewed Association reports, confirmed next year's reunion in Phoenix, and voted back in the current Board's slate of officers (all unanimously approved).

That evening was the Awards Banquet, always the crown jewel of the reunion. The Fort Walton Beach High School JROTC Color Guard opened the event with a sharp presentation of colors.

AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

This year's "**Terry Courtney Above & Beyond**" Award went to:

- **Jim Mattison**, for building and maintaining our Face Book page, his IT assistance and the Association's *Final Flight* postings memorializing our fallen.
- An *Award of Appreciation* went to **Bill Petrie**, for developing our first website in 1998, spearheading the FIRST reunion back in 2000, and helping lay the groundwork for the Association itself and then stepping up last year to serve as President.

Both recognitions are well-earned and deeply appreciated.

A huge shout-out as well to my daughter Lisa, attending her first reunion. She designed and created all 20 banquet centerpieces, featuring our 25th Reunion "*WE'RE BACK*" theme. The centerpieces were a big hit and created great keepsakes. If you didn't grab one and want a framed "25," let me know—she'll take care of you.

SUNDAY

We wrapped up the reunion Florida-style with a seafood boil in place of the usual barbecue. A perfect ending to a great week.

Well, 119ers, that's a wrap for 2025. Now I guess I must go tackle that snow. Thank you all for making our *25th Reunion* so special. The Association Board and I hope to see you next year in Phoenix. Stay safe, stay healthy—and stay engaged.

Guns Hot!

**Terry Sarul, Vice President
AC-119 Gunship Association**

AC-119 Gunship Association Membership Meeting Summary Held Nov 15, 2025 at Fort Walton Beach

1. Membership Report - Dave Voisey: Annual & Life were eliminated ~ There is now "Regular" & "Associates". Total Members: Regular & Associates 2024: 549 (504+45) ~ 2025 632 (460+169)
2. Treasurer Report - Doug Wohlgamuth: See detailed report below. Hootch costs this year were covered by Eddie & Del Mims. Thank you!
3. Association Database - Ron Julian maintains an SQL database that is tied to the website & creates the Master Contact List, which each POCs gets as a breakout Spreadsheet for their distribution.
4. Website Home Page www.ac119gunships.com; Historical info <https://www.ac119gunships.com/history-references/ac-119-air-&-ground-crew-our-bios-videos-&-stories/>
5. Quartermaster - Gus Sninger needs to step back & he's looking for help managing QM Store.
6. Newsletter "Firing Circle" Editor John Forbes: 11 Firing Circle & Flashes distributed to 1,200+ people!! Future: same format, with only 2 Firing Circles snail-mailed. Flash messages will only go to those with email address.

7. AC-119 Gunship Facebook Page has 835 members at "AC-119Gunships" Our official Association Facebook Page. We also endorse "AIR FORCE GUNNERS" & "Fixed Wing Gunships" initiated by Ev Sprous; "U.S. Military Veterans news you can use" created by our Facebook Admins.

8. Association - Point of Contacts (POCs) your "go-to(s)" to UPDATE your contact information!!

- 71st SOS – Interim John Forbes; Chuck Callahan volunteered as POC after the meeting
- 17th SOS - George Renfroe
- 18th SOS - Interim Wayne Laessig; Bob Dydo volunteered as POC after the meeting.
- Maintenance Personnel - Tom Brander
- KIA Families; Family/Friends; & Honorary - Wayne Laessig

9. Legacy Squadrons - Point of Contacts (POCs) if a Squadron was/ is activated as the 71st, 17th, or 18th no matter the aircraft, we are part of their history, lineage, & heritage.

- 18th SOTES Hurlburt AFB - Gus Sininger
- 71st SOS Kirland AFB - CV-22 Osprey (Note: Chuck Callahan volunteered after the meeting)
- 16th SOS Cannon, AC-130J Spectre - They absorbed the 17th SOS "Jackals"
- 4th SOS Spooky - Hurlburt, AC-130J - They absorbed the 73rd "Shadows" 2023
- 17th SOS returned, OK WRANG OA-1K "Jackals"

10. Stinger 850 Update (Only surviving AC-119) which was originally found at TSN with other U.S. aircraft. Boots on the ground verified, thanks to Bruce Byrd. Disassembled once & relocated three times. Hangerized once & started to be restored (picture). Lots of information & pictures on our Web Site. No hope of "repatriating" 850 back to the USA. MAYBE find it on Web - use "Google Earth". See 2024 Newsletter. May be moving to a museum near Khe San. Terry Sarul has a new contact in Australia - Frank Palmieri. As of October 2025, nowhere in sight! Reportedly still intact. Wayne discussed Kirstin Hamman's upcoming trip to Vietnam.

11. Awards & Decorations, PACT act, DD214s - Chair, Roy Davis: Stinger 41 Awards in Process 4 + Years! Use the Agent Orange Registry & PACT Act, Get with the VA, use a Veteran Service Officer to Correct/Obtain DD214s.

12. Future Reunions 2026 - Phoenix, AZ at Phoenix-Mesa Holiday Inn. October 20 - 25. 2027 - Somewhere EAST of Mississippi River. Armed Forces Reunions (AFR) is our Reunion event coordinator. We polled the attendees asking: current reunion format 5 days with 2 tour choices, OR Shorter (less formal) event Fri & Sat only. Large Majority of attendees: keep reunion format as is.

13. Election of 2025/26 Board of Directors/Slate of Officers: Mike Drzyzga moved to approve the Slate; Gus Sininger seconded; passed by all members present: President: Bill Petrie; Vice-President: Terry Sarul; Secretary: Robert "Bob" Safreno; Treasurer: Doug Wohlgamuth; Immediate Past President: Mike Drzyzga; Members-at-Large: Gus Sininger, Roy Davis & Dave Voisey

14. Moola, Denaro, Bread, Pienza, if you might leave the Association some money in your will, donate it now if you can!!!! A couple of years ago, one of our members donated \$10,000 that helped keep our heads above water!

Reunion Pictures

The following pictures and several more can be viewed at the link below:

[Reunion Photo Link](#)



Island Resorts, Welcome AC-119ers

Ron Hinton Terry Sarul Setting up our flags in the hootch



Hootch is open and friends are gathered

Navarre Park Meet/Greet – THANK you - 18th SOTES hosts



18th SOTES troops, led by "Bones" Perez

Matt Robeck with Teresa and Terry Sarul



Trailer for The Robeck's Memorial Trike

Larry Barbee Riding Trike with Annette Robeck



Treasurer Doug, Support POC Tom Brander

Tom Newbold, Jim Boyd, Jim Farrel

John Paul Mac Isaac, Chuck Glickman, Drzyzga



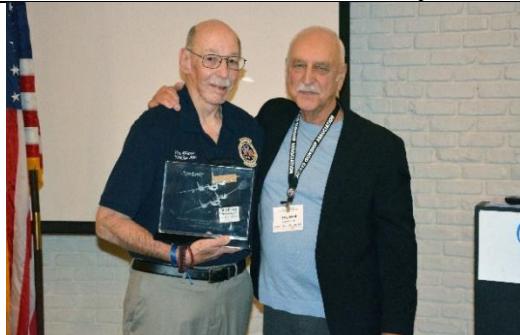
Eglin Armament Museum, AC-130A "First Lady"

Hurlburt Air Park, Memorial to Lost AC-130 Spectres



Carol Hinton's 3rd successful Quilts of Valor Ceremony

Junior ROTC Color Guard at Awards Banquet



VP Terry Sarul presenting Pres Bill Petrie – Award of Appreciation



Auctioneers Gus, Morgan Ginder, & sister Brooks Lyall, A. Drzyzga

Treasurer's Report

As of 10 Nov 2025

Operating account	\$7,494.43
Quartermaster account	\$2,634.62
Total	\$10,129.05

As of 11 Jan 2026

Operating Account	\$12,109.77
Quartermaster	\$2,214.90
Total	\$14,324.67

Monies received at the reunion

Memorabilia	\$2,605.00
Auctions	\$3,245.00
Auction - Donations	\$1,450.00
50/50	\$615.00
Total	\$7,915.00

Reunion Costs

Hootch costs	\$1,375.38
AFR Reconciliation	\$723.96
Color Guard Comps	\$100.00
Donation for Hootch Maint. Help	\$10.00
Total	\$2,209.34

NOTE: as they occur, we pay Quarterly Webmaster, DreamHost, & Zoom account Fees; and funds held within the Operating Account include:

KIA fund	\$1984.00
Hootch Fund	\$225.61

Thank you to those who Donated at the reunion:

Karen & Bill Petrie	\$500	John Forbes	\$250	Rod Olson	\$200	Wayne Taylor	\$200
Stan Baker	\$100	Rich Hall	\$100	Jim Rash	\$100		

Old Videos

If you have any old video Film on Reels or VHS tapes from the Vietnam war era, I have a source that will digitize them for free. Please contact Rich Benjamin, Producer Owner of Military Tales (865-242-1700) for additional information. He is the videographer who filmed Lt Gen Tom Waskow for the [Military Tales](#) website.

Roy Davis
(253)549-2044

Reunion 2026

The 2026 reunion will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, October 21 – 26, 2026. As more information becomes available, we will share it in Newsletters, and on our Facebook Page and Website.

The hotel will be the Holiday Inn Phoenix-Mesa/Chandler
1600 South Country Club Drive Mesa, Arizona 85210.

Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Contact Information

To obtain information regarding contacting your local VSO click the link below -

[**Search for a VA-accredited representative**](#)

Final Flight

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

Thomas E. Duda	18 th SOS – Maintenance	September 23, 2023
Robert "Bob" Krueger	18 th SOS – Pilot	November 6, 2025
Linzel "Lee" Kyser Jr.	18 th SOS – FE	September 26, 2025
Jessie R. Laing	17 th SOS – Maintenance	July 16, 2013
David C. Lindley	18 th SOS – Maintenance	May 15, 2017
Robert P. Lively	18 th SOS – Maintenance	August 20, 2013
Bernardo Lucero	17 th SOS – Maintenance	June 26, 2023
Robert Lyall	17 th SOS – Gunner	August 11, 2025
Leigh Norstrum	17 th SOS – Maintenance	November 22, 2013
Jerry Ray Swain	18 th SOS – Maintenance	November 18, 2025
Earl W. Wall	71 st SOS – Maintenance	December 12, 2025
Bruce Whelan	18 th SOS – Pilot	January 14, 2025