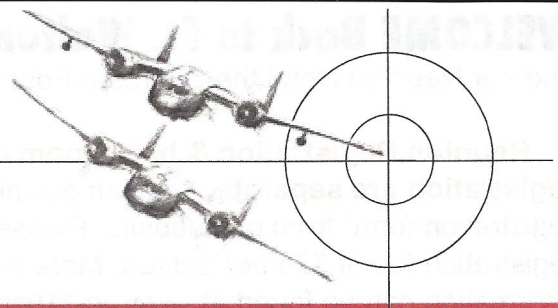


Firing Circle



Summer 2012

A Newsletter of the AC-119 Gunship Association

AC-119 Will Fly Again At Reunion 2012

by Lee Kyser

On July 18, 1972 at Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand, a hand-built, six foot wingspan AC-119K Stinger model was flown. The owner, Capt John Hupe (Navigator), built it from scratch using tech data for all the details. It was ready to fly 2 weeks before the end of his tour. A gathering of 60, or so, fellow crewmembers were on hand to watch the maiden flight. It flew, an engine failed, it rolled over and crashed, and became a forgotten story for 39 years.

Then, something happened! Someone found a phone number for John Hupe and a phone call was made. The result of that call is now an effort to fly it, again. After making contact with John Hupe by phone during the 2011 reunion, newsletter editor Bill Petrie published a story about that phone call in the Winter 2011/2012 edition of our newsletter. The final paragraph Bill wrote read, "And now you know the rest of the story! But do we? Will the AC-119K "Stinger" fly again?"

Bill had written that because John Hupe had said he had no plans to repair the aircraft, nor to fly it. With Bill posing that question, it gave me the idea to see if John would change his mind.

I had learned from John that he had doubts about his Radio Controlled (RC) model-flying abilities. I felt that if that is the only reason, perhaps he might change his mind if a more qualified person could be found. But where will I find one within the association? The association won't be meeting again until the 2012 reunion in September.



Captain John Hupe, former 18th SOS navigator, holds up his model after crashing it at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand.

Then I remembered a local friend, Ray Lischka, who once was a radio-controlled modeller. I called Ray to see how he felt a fellow modeller would react at the proposal of rebuilding John's Stinger and then flying it for him. His immediate thought was that most RC hobbyists would be all for it. Then he wanted to know where it is and how much damage. So I told him it was in Kansas and that it might be best that I check with an RC modeller club near John Hupe.

After talking with Ray, I gave it more thought. Since John lives in a relatively small town in Kansas, and John had plans to attend the reunion in September, maybe John would be receptive to shipping it to Fort Walton Beach (FWB) if I found someone there who would be willing to tackle the project. That way it could be ready to fly before the reunion.

A search for "RC Modellers in FWB" on the internet revealed the e-mail address of the Eglin Aero Modellers Club president, Rob Campbell. I e-mailed Rob asking him for the phone number of anyone he knew who might be interested in taking on the project. He answered with his own phone number. I called him and he was ecstatic about the project and said he would get the approval to do it, themselves, at his upcoming club meeting. Rob went on to tell me that they would only charge for the necessary parts—nothing for the labor—and they would get their best "Ace" to fly it. "Hot Damn!", I thought. If this doesn't change

John's mind about rebuilding and flying it again, nothing will.

Armed with the aforementioned plan, I called John. I could almost hear the bells and whistles going off in his mind. He said he wanted to give me a go, but would have to wait until his family was told of the plan and agreed to let it find a new home in a suitable museum.

John contacted all of his heirs and approved the plan. Rather than endanger his Stinger to damage through shipping (keep in mind it is quite large), he elected to deliver it himself. On 14 July, 2012, just 4 days prior to the 40th anniversary of the maiden flight, John drove to FWB

(an 1100 mile trip) and delivered it to Rob Campbell.

Rob expects to have the Stinger repaired by mid-August. In the meantime, he is making contact with various media to cover the project through the repair and the various flights that will follow.

Be sure you're at **Reunion 2012**....because the "rest of the story" is yet to come.



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AT Reunion
2012!