

Reunion VI Epilogue

WOW! What a fantastic reunion Gus & Norm put together between hurricanes! Very quickly, here are some highlights. During the business meeting, the wives and significant others got together for their own meeting during a patio breakfast. You'll be hearing more on that but I'm assured all that attended were glad they were there. Our association meeting made some much needed changes to ensure our organization will continue to grow. While both of those meetings were taking place, two volunteers, Tim Gautreau and Joseph Fortune were busy scanning some of our SEA pictures into our history data base. Lots more to do but it is a step in the right direction.

Then it was a trip to Hurlburt Air Park for a brief memorial service where we honored our KIA as well as some of the attending family members of our KIAs. They included; Barbara Barker, widow of Capt Rod Slagle, Kirstin Giroux, daughter of Capt. Tommie Hamman, and Lee Jordan, daughter of Maj. Meredith Anderson. Afterwards, we dedicated the absolutely beautiful AC-119K monument in what has to be the best site in the park. As dedication speaker, Bill Petrie shared his own poem, "Lady of the Night" – and it captured our intent on the monument (you can see the complete poem in the dedication speech).

That evening, at the banquet, we were honored to have as our guest speaker, Brigadier General (ret) Harry "Heine" Aderholt, perhaps better known as Air Commando One. As the president, I had the pleasure of sitting next to him and hearing first hand some of his stories and his very frank opinions. He shared with me that he has not enjoyed himself at an event) like ours in a very long time but he was really enjoying being among us. He said it was obvious that we knew how to enjoy ourselves and that we were a tight knit group. As I reviewed his bio, I wondered why he spent so many years in SEA (almost from beginning to end). Well, he answered that question in his speech - turns out he has always been outspoken, and got fired and rehired regularly, both in SEA and later while stateside. He is definitely a man who believes in honesty and honor. He talked about what happened to our AC-119s that made it to Thailand and how they ended up being cut up and melted down for scrap. With all our aircraft gone, our only 'Lady of the Night' is on a big beautiful piece of granite. From the feedback, I think all of us enjoyed his down to earth, no holds barred, frank view and stories.

Sunday, we had Mary Chestnut come and talk to our members who chose to be there about Veterans Administration Vietnam Era Veteran updates. I was there and can tell you her advice and insight will positively affect more than a few of our members. Lastly, in this year's welcome packets, each attending member received a Round Metal Object (ROM), or challenge coin along with the rules on utilizing said ROM. If you don't have one, I suggest you get one.