

# AC-119 Gunship Association Newsletter



# Firing Circle



**Dedicated to all AC-119 & AC-47 Gunship Aircrew, Maintenance, & Support Personnel**

## 2009 Officers

**President: Gus Sininger - Vice-President: Jerry McDonald - Treasurer: Doug Wohlgamuth  
Secretary & Circulation Manager: Jim Alvis - Member-at-Large: Wayne Laessig**

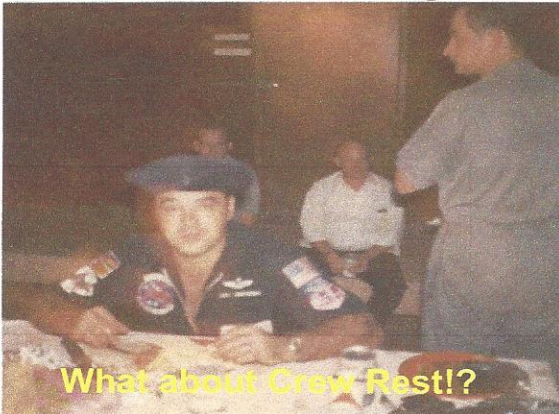
## Appointees

**Webmaster: Bill Petrie  
Next-of-Kin Locator: Wayne Laessig  
Awards & Decorations: Steve 'Mac' Mac Isaac  
Reunion X Coordinator: Bill Dudley  
Chaplin: Larry Hunter  
Newsletter Editor: Tony Pakufinski**

**71<sup>st</sup> SOS Coordinator: Jim Alvis  
17<sup>th</sup> SOS Coordinator: Phil Wheatley  
18<sup>th</sup> SOS Coordinator: Everett Sprous & Bill Reffner, Jr.  
AC-47 Coordinators: Al Sproul & Sam Tolleff  
"The Maintainers": Bob Farmer**

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## President's Message



The Holiday Inn in St. Augustine is now completely booked. You may want to put out an email notice to all our members that we have arranged for the Hampton Inn to accommodate our members who have not yet booked their hotel. The Hampton Inn is located just a few blocks from the Holiday Inn and is on the ocean at Vilano Beach. The room rate is \$99.00 per night and includes breakfast. The telephone number to call I - 904-827-9797 and ask for the AC-119 Gunship Reunion rate or ACC code. Our Sunday Board meeting will be held in the conference room at this hotel. Any problems, please contact Bill Dudley at 904-806-4712.

I recently spoke with Col Tom Teal, our guest speaker, about his keen memories of commanding both Shadows and Stingers. He is quite a man and I welcome him as our Banquet keynote speaker!

You all should know by now, but, the HISTORY BOOK IS BEING PRINTED!! It is a fantastic compilation of our Shadow and Stinger heritage, with Squadron chronologies, aircraft info, OVER 240 individual biographical sketches with stories and photographs, unique mission stories, a special section on our honored members Killed in Action, and lots of great aircraft and other photos!! PLUS, you can buy it in two versions – hard or soft cover, with the same content in pages in each. Get your order in since these will go fast. Next, plenty of you have heard there might be an 'AC-119K' in existence. There is. We will tell you all we can at the Reunion and in the next Newsletter. **Until further notice – Stand By!**

Congratulations once again, to Lt Col Kent Landreth, Squadron Commander 18<sup>th</sup> FLTS. We are very fortunate to have his support of our commitment to the preservation of the history of the 18<sup>th</sup> SOS.

Do you want another Shadow or Stinger Lithograph, or one of our other Reunion T-Shirts? We will discount them at this Reunion: you will be able to buy any 3 prior reunion T-shirts for \$10; buy either litho for \$25 or both for \$40 (and no, this doesn't apply to Website sales since shipping would eat our shorts) – **A Great Deal** for Reunion attendees. Also, this year we will have new Golf T-Shirts available.

If you want to become the proud owner of the one-of-a-kind Commemorative Rifle and Pistol set built by Stinger Ron Soderquist, get your raffle tickets ordered if you're not going to be at the Reunion – one raffle ticket for \$10 donation, 6 tickets for \$50, or 13 tickets for \$100. ONE person will take home both of these beautifully done commemorative pieces. Do you have a raffle item to bring to the Reunion? Please contact me, or Wayne Laessig, at [stinger7172@cox.net](mailto:stinger7172@cox.net) or [qadvocate@sbcglobal.net](mailto:qadvocate@sbcglobal.net).

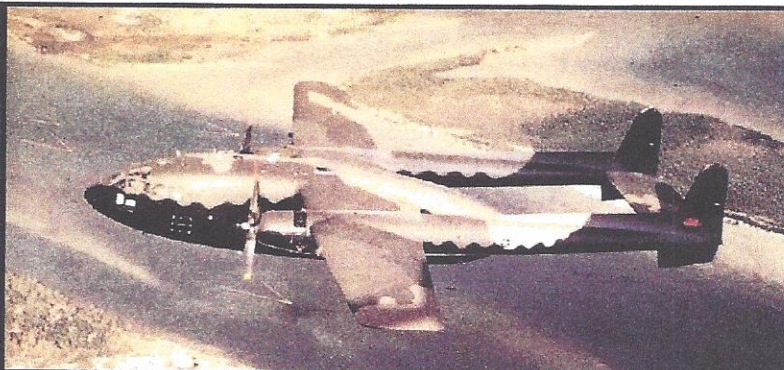
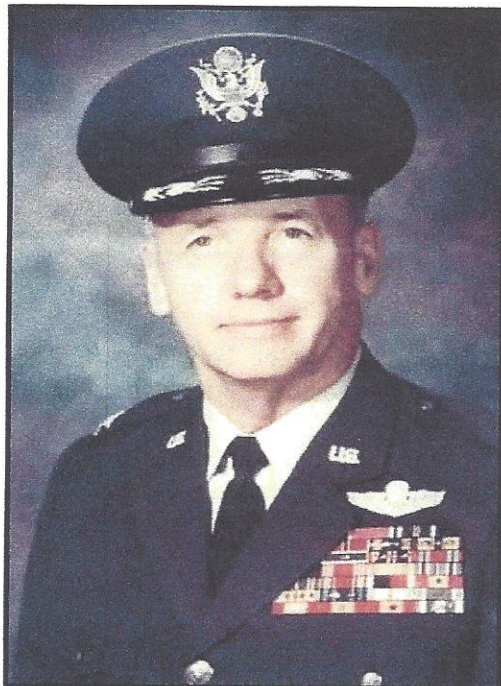
One more thing, Randy will have a display of his aircraft models. He is giving one for our raffle. Who ever wins that raffle has their choice of an AC-47D; C-119G; AC-119G; or AC-119K. He of course will be taking any orders from any one that would want one. Finally, I look forward to seeing you all in St. Augustine on September 24, 2009. **Take care all, and I'll see you soon!**

Gus Sininger, President

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Reunion X – St. Augustine, Florida - September 24-27, 2009

St. Augustine Reunion Keynote Speaker - Colonel Tom A. Teal



Colonel Teal is a one-of-a-kind Commander and leader of both our **17th SOS Shadows** and **18th SOS Stingers**. He was the 17<sup>th</sup> SOS *Fighting "C" Flight* Commander at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam in 1970-1971, as well as the 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Commander at DaNang Air Base, Vietnam in 1972-1973, flying over 150 *Shadow* and *Stinger* missions. In March 1973, he was the last USAF Commander at DaNang and turned the base over to the South Vietnamese Air Force Commander. After assignments in B-17s, C-47s, C-124s, B-36s, and B-52s followed by staff and Command positions in multiple Squadrons and Wings, Colonel Teal retired with 33 years of service spanning World War II through Vietnam. Since St. Augustine was where our aircraft began the transition from C-119 "Cargo and Troop Carrier" to AC-119 "Gunship", Colonel Teal will remind us of another transition each of us went through, aptly and simply described as:

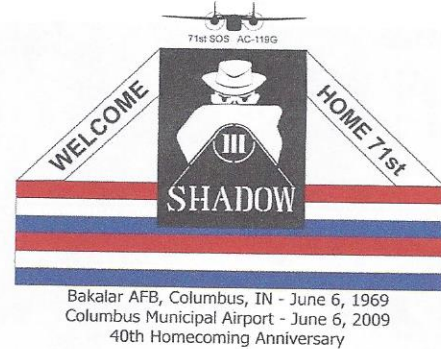
*"We became Shadows; We became Stingers."*



# AC-119 Gunship Association Newsletter September 2009

The Vietnam era 71st SOS celebrated the 40th anniversary of the unit's return home on Saturday June 6, 2009. Three C-141s delivered 205 reservists to their home base on Friday June 6, 1969. The location was Bakalar Air Force Base, now the Columbus (IN) Municipal Airport. The reservists were greeted by loved ones and friends, and brief speeches by Indiana Governor Edgar D. Whitcomb and other local dignitaries.

The 40th anniversary homecoming reunion was held on Friday June 5 and Saturday June 6, 2009 at the Hampton Inn, Columbus/Taylorsville/Edinburgh, IN. Reunion activities on Saturday June 6 included a memorial service, attendance at the Columbus Municipal Airport Open House sponsored by the Atterbury/Bakalar Air Museum and a banquet Saturday evening. The banquet was highlighted by a 15-minute video of footage photographed during the unit's arrival at Bakalar AFB, and a presentation by Lt. Col. Todd Lovell, USAF (Ret.). Todd is a former commander of the current 71st Special Operations Squadron at Kirtland AFB, NM.



The Vietnam era 71st SOS was awarded The Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Presidential Unit Citation, and The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross With Palm for service during the period 19 Dec 68 - 30 Apr 69.

*"The 71st Special Operations Squadron performed its mission in an outstanding, professional manner. All members of the 71st SOS can and should be proud of their performance. I am proud to have been the Commander of such a great group of men. I wish to say THANKS to all members of the 71st SOS for their outstanding performance."* **Lt. Col. James E. Pyle, USAF (Ret).**



(L to R) Mauri Ray, Todd Lovell, and Al Heuss swap stories in the Hootch following the banquet.



(L to R) Jack Bastin & Glenn O. Smith. Jack was Flightline Support at Nha Trang and Glenn was the Flightline Supervisor at Phan Rang. Glenn was one of the seven 71st members who served in WW II.

# AC-119 Gunship Association Newsletter September 2009

## Hotel Registration

Join us & reunite with old friends & meet new ones in historic Saint Augustine – where all of our AC-119s were converted from cargo C-119s to the AC-119G & AC-119K Gunship aircraft we flew & worked on. Our Reunion theme is "**We Became Shadows; We became Stingers**". Reunion Coordinator is Bill Dudley.

**Hotel Registration: Historic Holiday Inn** at 1302 Ponce de Leon Blvd in St. Augustine, Florida.

**Reunion Room Rates:** \$109.00 per night, which includes all taxes plus two full breakfasts per day. There are also Mini-Suites & Jacuzzi Suites for \$119.00 per night. The Group rate is in effect from September 21 through September 28, 2009.

**Call Hotel Registration at 800-569-8008 direct.**



**Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009: 6:00 p.m. - Hootch opens & stays open through Sunday with snacks, wine, beer, sodas & water - Free to reunion attendees.** There is plenty of space for your memorabilia & pictures, or to visit with friends. You can also pick up your pre-ordered **History Book** (there will be a limited number of extras for sale there). Reunion registration includes a **Free Trolley Pass** during the Reunion to take you downtown & RTB.

**Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2009:**

**11:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m. – Casino Cruise off the Florida coast.** \$13 per person for this mid-day sail includes transport to & from the boat, free meal, & complementary beverages when gambling. Buses will leave the hotel approximately 10:15 a.m. & arrive back at the hotel approximately 4:45 p.m.

**Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009:**

**1:00 – 3:30 p.m. – Northrup-Grumman tour - 6:00 p.m. Meet & Greet - \$25 per person at the hotel:** Menu: Roast Beef Carving Station, cold Poached Salmon, Meatballs, Chicken-Pineapple Brochettes, Spring Rolls, Spicy Wings, BBQ Wings, Finger Sandwiches, Fresh Fruit, Cheese Tray, Garden Vegetable Trays, Pretzels, Chips, & Dips. Dress: Party Suit or Casual. Cash Bar at all functions.



**Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2009:**

**9:00 – 10:30 a.m. – Membership meeting - St. Francis Barracks Officer Club**

**9:00 – 10:30 a.m. - Spouse's Meeting - Holiday Inn**

**6:00 p.m. – Banquet Happy Hour at the Riverview Club**

**7 p.m. – Banquet Dinner \$30 per person: See registration form for menu.**

**8:15 p.m. – Guest Speaker – Colonel Tom A. Teal (Ret), COMMANDER OF THE 17<sup>TH</sup> SOS & 18<sup>TH</sup> SOS UNITS.**

**8:45 p.m. – Association Awards & Raffles**

**Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> 2009: 9 a.m. – Golf Tournament at World Golf Village (\$10 per person) with Golf Hall of Fame. 5 p.m. – Farewell BBQ, \$20 per person at the St. Augustine Lighthouse Museum.** Menu: BBQ Chicken & BBQ Sliced Roast Beef with Roasted Potatoes, Baked Beans, Cole Slaw, House Garden Salad, Pickle Tray, Fresh Bread, Seat Ice Tea, & Old Fashioned Lemon Bars.



See you in Saint Augustine! Questions? Check the web at <http://www.ac-119gunships.com>, or contact your POC or Bill Dudley at [ANUDAY00@AOL.COM](mailto:ANUDAY00@AOL.COM) or 904-806-4712.

# AC-119 Gunship Association Newsletter    September 2009

## Reunion Registration

Name: (First, Middle Initial, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an AC-119 Gunship Association member? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Years Served with Gunships: 19\_\_ to 19\_\_ ; 19\_\_ to 19\_\_

Squadron: 3<sup>rd</sup> ACS \_\_\_ 4<sup>th</sup> ACS \_\_\_ 71st \_\_\_ 17th \_\_\_ 18th \_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ Crew Position / Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest: (First, Middle Initial, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Guests: (#) \_\_\_\_\_ Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Reunion Fee ..... # attending \_\_\_ X \$15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Yes! I / We will attend:*

Thursday Casino Boat Trip with Sun Cruz # attending \_\_\_ X \$13 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Northup-Grumman Tour # attending \_\_\_ X NC = \$ no cost

If taking tour, Employer or Retired from: \_\_\_\_\_ US Citizen (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_

- Friday Night Meet & Greet # attending \_\_\_ X \$25 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Saturday Night Banquet
  - Prime Rib au Jus # of meals \_\_\_ X \$30 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - Chicken Marsala # of meals \_\_\_ X \$30 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  - Grilled Salmon # of meals \_\_\_ X \$30 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Sunday Morning Golf Tournament (To Be Announced) # playing \_\_\_ X \$10 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Sunday Afternoon BBQ # attending \_\_\_ X \$20 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: For special meal needs, contact Bill Dudley at [ANUDAY00@AOL.COM](mailto:ANUDAY00@AOL.COM) or 904-806-4712

Check #: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Payment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**After filling-in this page, PRINT IT OUT & mail it. If you're filling it out on the website, it will not save your information (you need to print your completed page then mail it to):**

**Make check payable to "AC-119 Gunship Association"**

**Doug Wohlgamuth, Treasurer  
AC-119 Gunship Association  
504 Shea Place  
Sun City Center, FL 33573**

Questions? Check the web at <http://www.ac-119gunships.com> or call Doug at 813-938-7176 or 813-781-5728 or e-mail him at [Busch791@msn.com](mailto:Busch791@msn.com) mailing this page with your payment completes your Reunion registration, you still need to contact the hotel direct for your Hotel registration! See the Reunion X Info sheet for details.

### Cancellation Policy

Hotel Registration cancellations: if you cancel after their minimum 48-hour notification, you may still be charged.

## Raffle Contributions

Raffle donations help defray Reunion & Association, and miscellaneous costs, so we don't charge you. They include:

- Helping the families of "Lost Brothers" to attend our reunions
- The famous 'Hootch' refreshments
- This Newsletter
- The AC-119 Gunship models that are given to our guest speakers
- Videoing your "stories" at reunions



30" Flat Panel TV  
Sample photo



American Table Runner, Place Mats, & Associated Pieces.  
Created & Donated by Judi Alvis



Commemorative Rifle & Pistol Set  
Created & Donated by Ron Soderquist  
(18<sup>th</sup> SOS Flight Engineer)

**Last reminder – almost 250 are signed up and coming – are you?**

Holiday Inn is now full but our backup hotel is the Hampton Inn at Vilano Beach which is less than 10 minutes from the Holiday Inn and has rooms set aside.

The reunion is going to be great with lots to do & see in St Augustine for everyone:

- You can take free Downtown Trolleys a block from the hotel to see Old St Augustine;
- Go on a Casino Cruise and
- Northrup-Grumman Tour;
- Pick up your History Book;
- Win a Commemorative Rifle & Pistol set or a 30" flat screen TV with DVD; and more
- Info is in this Newsletter or at <http://www.ac-119gunships.com/welcome.htm>
- Hope to see you there

*If you are bringing a raffle item, please e-mail Gus at [Stinger7172@cox.net](mailto:Stinger7172@cox.net) or Wayne at [Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net) with a description, so we can plan the raffle.*



## SHADOWS & STINGERS

### AC-119 GUNSHIP HISTORY BOOK



- As maintenance techs, we didn't fly on the gunships very often ... [I got to] help them crank ammo. It was an exciting flight that I will always remember. **(Engine Mechanic)**
- I'll always remember the teamwork that was so automatic. Everybody knew how important our aircraft were and it was up to us to keep each plane working to its fullest potential. **(Weapons)**
- The 71st SOS went on active duty as a unit, trained as a unit, deployed to Vietnam as a unit, and returned stateside as a unit, after as Reservist; we continued to work well together. **(Life Support)**
- When I woke up, I was on my knees somewhere near the forward bulkhead. Both of my gloved-hands were on fire. **(IO)**
- We flew straight into the bomb drop with MK 82s hitting the ground beneath us... Five minutes later [Moonbeam] put out a warning of the Arc Light ... **(Gunner)**
- I dove off the tractor ... After a few minutes, I ran to my aircraft, fired-up the engines, checked the magnetos and props, and taxied the gunship out of the revetment. The flight crew boarded and was airborne in minimum time ... **(Maintenance)**
- My closest encounter came when a mini-gun flew up in my face because of a short round. Thank goodness I had my face shield down ... **(Gunner)**
- We could feel the concussion of the blasts dangerously close as the cries of our on-board scanners/observers came across the intercom: BREAK RIGHT! or BREAK LEFT!" **(Navigator)**
- I was helping refuel an aircraft when a rocket attack occurred. I was blown off the wing ... (Logistics) Sometimes the AAA was so close, or the AAA warning call sufficiently delayed, that we had to roll to 90 to 100 degrees of bank and pull hard to avoid being hit. **(Pilot)**
- [The boss] said that if he caught either one of us with our eyes closed that night we would both get an Article 15 ... John got a roll of one inch Scotch tape and taped his eyelids open ... **(Mechanic)**
- I always remember the brand new Illuminator Operator who for some reason or other ejected the flare launcher instead of launching a flare as ordered. **(Wing FE/IO)**
- The commander greeted us, shook my hand and said, "Captain, welcome to Vietnam and get those damn [painted] ducks off my airplane." **(Pilot)**
- DaNang Tower. DaNang Tower. Stinger XX. Rockets, F---ing Rockets!! **(Pilot)**
- Stateside, three people were assigned to one A/C, but in Nam, you were alone **(Crew Chief)**
- A good bunch of men, flight crews and maintenance. All did great with those old crates! **(Navigator)**
- I will always remember our humanitarian effort for war orphans. We assisted them by providing clothing, food, schools and supplies. **(Maintenance)**
- It didn't matter if you were the aircraft crew chief, electrician, or an engine or weapons specialist ... you knew that with our planes in the air, lives were being saved on the ground. **(Weapons)**
- Watching our gunships in action at night from the roof of my barracks was quite a sight. **(Maintenance)**



## AC-119 Gunship Association Newsletter September 2009

- It was amazing and reassuring to see our planes firing and dropping flares while working the base perimeter. They quickly silenced the night. **(Weapons)**
- On another mission, Col. McGuire rolled the AC-119K to inverted flight ... **(Gunner)**
- The aircraft bounced and banked 80 degrees left and right and twice the aircraft was stuck by lightening. **(Pilot)**
- At about 3 a.m. I awoke to find a large rat on my chest trying to extract a candy bar from my survival vest pocket. Needless to say, I got no more sleep. **(Pilot)**
- We learned to sleep on the way to the target area; three of us were taking turns laying under the 20mm guns. The big joke was not to wake the one sleeping [under the 20 mm gun], but to let the gun wake him when it fired ... **(Gunner)**
- I had at least 5 engine failures over hostile territory in the course of my 139 missions; **(Pilot)**
- Once, we took two rounds of 37mm through the right wing which left a Big Hole. **(Gunner)**
- I'll always remember straining to get off the ground with a full load on a hot, muggy tropical night and being ordered to fly in the middle of a typhoon with no chance of helping anyone, even though it placed the plane and crew in danger. **(Navigator)**
- Sadly, another memory is watching helplessly as our F-4 cover plane exploded and burned on the ground after failing to pull up from a firing run in our defense!! **(Navigator)**
- When not maintaining AC-119K Stinger gunships at DaNang AB, I ran a snack bar in a maintenance hangar in conjunction with the U.S. Army. **(Maintenance)**
- The children, aged 8 to 10 years, would surround us and start beating us with rolled up newspapers while searching our pockets. **(Maintenance)**
- We got our planes airborne as a rocket flew overhead and landed directly in the cockpit of an F-100 in an adjoining revetment. **(Weapons)**
- We were the first sortie of the night, supporting a TIC ... we scrambled three times ... Winchester each time ... even chased off two enemy tanks. **(Gunner)**

### NEWS FLASHS - 6 & 7

The Gunship Association established August 1<sup>st</sup> as the cut-off date for ordering the AC-119 Gunship History Book in order to meet the deadline for printing. The Association received request for nearly 340 books. Based on this excellent response, the Association is printing additional copies. Those copies are immediately available for reservation **while supplies last**. The book is being printed in two versions:

- **Hardback - \$50 + \$5 Shipping = \$55 each**
- **Spiral Bound Plasticized Cover - \$35 + \$5 Shipping = \$40 each**
- **The price difference is the cost of binding - content is identical**

### MAKE A GIFT OF THE AC-119 GUNSHIP HISTORY BOOK

If you would like to order a book as a gift to a family member, friend, or as a contribution for a library, school, military museum, or other organization, we can mail the book directly to you so you can personalize the gift, or we can mail it to the address you provide. In either case, the book will include a note from the Association identifying the book as a gift from you and describing its significance. Just tell us who to send it to and who it is from, and we will include a gift card.

**AC-119 GUNSHIP HISTORY BOOK**  
**SHADOW - STINGER**  
**MAIL ORDER FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: Land Line \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Ship To: Name & Address if Different from Above

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**AC-119 Gunship History Book - Number of Copies x Price per Copy = Total**

Hard Cover	_____	X	\$50.00	= \$ _____
Soft Cover / Spiral Bound	_____	X	\$35.00	= \$ _____
Shipping & Handling per copy:	_____	X	\$ 5.00	= \$ _____

**GRAND TOTAL      = \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Cash or Money Order Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

(No Credit Cards Accepted)

Make checks or money orders payable to "AC-119 Gunship Association History Book Fund" and mail this completed order form with your payment to:

**DOUG WOHLGAMUTH, TREASURER**  
**AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION**  
**504 SHEA PI**  
**SUN CITY CENTER, FL 33573**