

Special Edition – Focused Content

July, 2016

Dear Associates and friends:

A lot of new and timely information has piled-up in your Secretary's inbox. Therefore, at the June 14, 2016 Board Teleconference, the Board deemed it necessary to blast-out a focused July *Firing Circle*. For information and details regarding the October reunion in Ft. Walton Beach and the Pensacola Tour on Fri., please see the May, 2016 *Firing Circle*, available on the Association's current Web Site.

Mike Drzyzga, Editor/Secretary

71st SOS reunion/gathering this summer - July 22nd and 23rd

Jack Bastin, with the help of a few others, offered to put together a **71st reunion/gathering this summer**. The **dates are July 22nd and 23rd**. The reunion will be held at the Comfort Inn & Suites, 2485 Jonathan Moore Pike (Indiana 46 & I-65), Columbus, IN 47201. Jack has reserved a block of rooms for 71st guests. The hotel phone number is 812-376-3051. Mention *Shadow Reunion* for the room rate of \$99 for King size, \$89 for Queen size beds – free breakfast is included. This will be a casual gathering without a formal agenda – just plenty of time to reminisce and share memorabilia. Snacks and beverages will be provided at reunion headquarters (the hotel). Lunch and dinner are on your own at several nearby restaurants. By all means, plan to visit our former Air Force Base and the Atterbury/Bakalar Air Museum sometime during your stay. Please RSVP Jack Bastin at 812-876-5459 or email him at jdbastin88@yahoo.com if you intend to participate, whether you stay overnight or not.

NEW HOME FOR NMUSAF 71st/17th SOS MEMORIAL PLAQUE

The 71st/17th Special Operations Squadron's Memorial Stone/Plaque has been relocated from the grounds of the National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF) to make way for the AC-119 Gunship Memorial Bench in 2017. In May 2016, Al Heuss made arrangements for the memorial to be relocated and he personally transported the stone/plaque to its new home, the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum at Columbus, Indiana, Municipal Airport, former site of Atterbury Army Air Field and Bakalar Air Force Base. The memorial stone/plaque will be displayed indoors at the museum in time for the 71st SOS Reunion on July 22-23, 2016.



Al Heuss and the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum Director during the Memorial Plaque transfer.

The first reunion held by the 71st SOS was in 1989. The 71st SOS paid for the 71st/17th Memorial Stone/Plaque which was installed and dedicated on NMUSAF grounds in 1995. The 2004 AC-119 Gunship Reunion was held at the NMUSAF and a memorial service was held at the 71st/17th Memorial Stone/Plaque.

Why is the memorial stone/plaque being placed in the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum in Columbus? Because Bakalar Air Force Base is where the 71st SOS reservist were activated in 1968 and were later deactivated after returning home from Vietnam in 1969. The 71st blazed the trail to Vietnam via Alaska, ferrying AC-119 gunships to set-up shop for combat. If you haven't read the history of the 71st SOS Shadows, you've missed the very beginnings of AC-119 gunships in Southeast Asia. To learn more, log on the 71st SOS website at www.71stsos.com

In 2017, our reunion will again be held at the NMUSAF in Dayton and a memorial service will be held at our new memorial bench that includes all the Squadrons & personnel who were in or supported AC-119s on the grounds of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

The AC-119 Gunship Association Board of Directors decided to hold-off, asking members for the new memorial bench donations until Reunion XVII in Fort Walton Beach is held on October 26-30, 2016. But if you are so inclined to contribute money to the memorial bench at this time, send your check or money order, "ear-marked" for the memorial bench to our Treasurer:

Doug Wohlgamuth (AC-119)
504 Shea Place
Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726

Your contribution is tax deductible. No contribution is too small. Your name will be listed in the Firing Circle newsletter as a contributor.

AC-119 History Book Addendum

To all members of the AC-119 Gunship Association: IF your bio and war stories were NOT included in the last History Book that was published, for whatever reason, this is your chance to be included on the next book or addendum. Publishing of a Vol.2 History Book or and addendum to Vol. 1 will depend on the response we get and the number of forms returned. It is an expensive endeavor and requires time and effort. No ones yet knows if we can proceed....but we are giving it a push now.

1. The blank bio form (next page and on the Association's current web site) needs to be filled out in its entirety and sent to the listed contacts.
2. The portion of your bio that describes your bio information and/or war stories should be limited to 1500 words or less.
3. As pointed out on the form....if more space is needed to describe your story, feel free to attach a separate sheet of paper.
4. If you choose to do so, and are going to attend the next reunion in Ft. Walton Beach, FL...you can bring the form with you and someone will also assist you in filling it out if needed. We will have a table set up in the hootch area at the reunion, so that you can sit down with someone who can assist you in filling it out.
5. A picture of yourself....then or now....or both will not only be accepted....but encouraged.
6. If you are unable to download or use the blank form, email Terry Sarul (see below), and he will send one out to you.

Terry Sarul

17841 Tollview Dr.

South Bend, IN 46635

Email: bluemax1965@comcast.net

Secretary's Note: PLEASE contact Terry if you want to help out with this effort!

AC-119 Gunship History Book
Biography Form (July 2016)

Name: _____
 (Last) (First) (Middle)

Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

E-Mail Address

Phone Number:

Date of Birth (M-D-Y):

Place of Birth:

Parent's Name:

Your Hometown:

High School / Grad. Date:

College / Location / Grad. Date;

AFROTC Graduate: Yes No

Date / Place You Joined the USAF:

Why you joined the USAF:

Date / Place Entered Active Duty:

OPTIONAL: In Chronological Order, give all your USAF assignments including training schools with approximate dates, starting with your completion of Basic Training, OTS, AFROTC, AFA:

REQUIRED:

Special Operations Squadron in Vietnam: 17th 18th 71st Other

Job: Pilot: Copilot: Nav: NOS: FLIR: FE IO Gunner Maintenance Other

Rank at time of Tour(s):

Dates of Tour(s):

Location(s) of Tour(s):

Location(s) of TDY(s) during Tour(s):

Most Exciting Event(s) in SEA:

Most Memorable Event(s) with AC-119s:

Most Memorable Person(s) in SEA:

Most Humorous Event(s) in SEA:

Decorations/Awards:

Date/Place of Separation/Retirement from USAF:

Rank at time of Separation/Retirement:

Married: Wife's Name: Children: Grandchildren:

Current Residence:

Current Occupation:

Special Auction Items at Reunion XVII



17th SOS Shadow Clock:

Donated to AC-119 Gunship Association by William (Bill) J. Zito for auctioning off at 2016 Gunship Reunion @ FWB. Bill's youngest son, Joshua R. Zito crafted it from an oak barrel bottom and made the image using a computer controlled laser machine Josh had the opportunity to use.

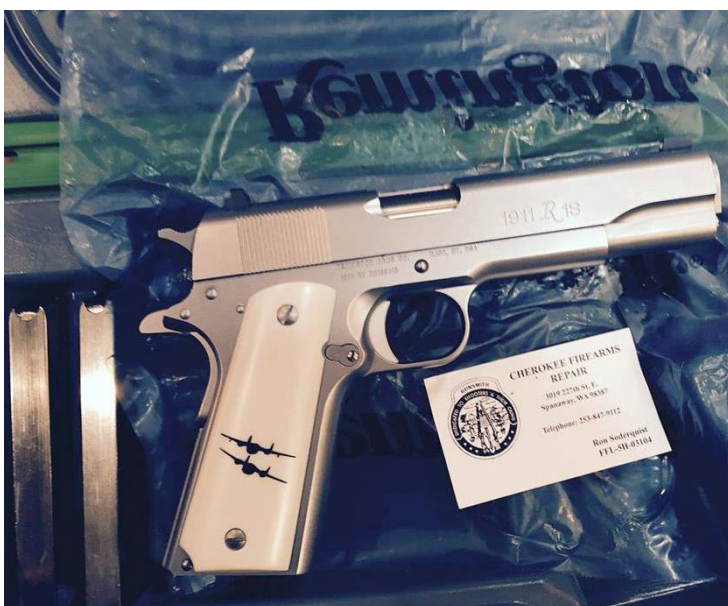
It is AWESOME! It's about 22 inches wide. This is a really unique and a special memento for someone's "I Love Me" wall in their Man Cave!!



Framed Brothers print with Names/Signatures.

Wayne Laessig won this at an earlier Reunion auction for \$250. His plan is to re-matt it to add room for more names around the edges, reframe it, have anyone sign it who hadn't already done so, & re-auction it off.

There are half a dozen folks who signed it that we've lost since. Hopefully, whoever wins it will bring it back in another 5 years to get more signatures & auction it again – that's up to them. Someday it belongs in a Museum (see last two pages of this Firing Circle).



REMINGTON .45 ACP, Model 1911 R1 Autoloading Pistol built for the AC-119 Gunship Association and donated by **CHEROKEE FIREARMS** Gunsmith & owner Ron Soderquist

TICKETS: 13 for \$100, 6 for \$50, or 1 for \$10

Send your donation to: Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Pl. Sun City Center, FL. 33573-5726

The pistol is stainless steel plated with the grip having the AC-119 Gunship Association's "Brothers" on both sides of the grip. It comes with two (2) 7 round clips in a plastic green carrying case and also has a gun lock. Get your tickets now for the raffle at the 2016 Reunion in Ft Walton. Tickets will be held by Doug Wohlgamuth. Be sure to keep your end of your tickets, AND, to make sure your tickets are included in the drawing, send a confirmation email to Doug at busch791@tampabay.rr.com

The AC-119 Gunship Association chose the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX to be the eventual holder of the Association's archives. President Larry Fletcher found a super article well-explaining this function in the July issue of VFW magazine. Below is the text from that article.

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Tucked away in West Texas is the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. If things go as planned, it ultimately will become the Museum of the Vietnam War at Texas Tech. The idea began when Texas Tech history professor Jim Reckner polled his students as to how much they knew about the Vietnam War, and the early 1960s in general. "Who was the general most likely to be associated with the war?" Reckner queried. The most common answer: "George Patton." And a typical response to "What was the U-2 incident?" was "a riot following a rock concert." Victoria Price, who, along with her husband, Phil, is a family friend of Reckner and his wife, Middy, says that Reckner was "going to do something" about the lack of awareness.

GETTING STARTED

Thus was sown the seed for what would become the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. For Professor Reckner, the motivation was more than academic. A Vietnam veteran, he served as senior advisor in 1968 to a South Vietnamese navy river assault group operating in the southwestern reaches of the Mekong Delta, along the Cambodian border. He arrived at Texas Tech in 1988 "wanting to teach classes" about the defining conflict of his generation, says Steve Maxner, the current Center director. Maxner served in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the 3rd Bde., 24th Inf. Div., at Fort Benning, Ga. He didn't go overseas. Maxner relates that Reckner "very quickly came to realize the university lacked the resources" to teach the class, and the library didn't have the budget to procure enough material. That's when Reckner approached a group of fellow veterans in Lubbock. Phil Price was one of them. He, too, served in 'Nam, with A Co., 2nd Bn. (Mech), 8th Inf., 4th Inf. Div. He was wounded while leading his platoon. Price had contacts in the Texas State Legislature. One of them was then-state Sen. John Montford. The result: start-up money amounting to \$125,000 for the first two years of operation. The Center opened its doors in 1989. "Jim ran it out of his briefcase and his history office for a while," says Maxner. That began to change after Reckner contacted Vietnam War movers and shakers, such as former Chief of Naval Operations Elmo Zumwalt and former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency William Colby. Both became loyal supporters of the mission.

THE MISSION

Our purpose, says Maxner, is to "collect and preserve the history of the Vietnam War, to provide access to that history and to promote a better understanding of U.S.-Vietnam relations and culture." Maxner says initial focus was on the war years. But as the collection grew it also has "broadened to include the entirety of U.S.-Vietnam relations, going back to this country's "interaction in Southeast Asia in the 19th Century." The Center's website notes that, "The Vietnam Center seeks to provide a forum for all points of view and for all topics relating to Indochina, particularly—but not limited to—the American military involvement there." Part of the big picture is a more balanced view of just who Vietnam vets are. Price's husband always felt the media propagated persona of the Vietnam veteran got it wrong, says Victoria. Instead of the stereotypes suffusing the six o'clock news, Phil points to vets who are "heads of hospitals, universities and bankers." Their history, and that of their fellow vets, is compiled in some 20 to 25 million pages of documents. "Hundreds of linear feet," says Maxner. Five million of those pages are digitized and available online. Since the virtual digital archive went live in 2001, Maxner says some 40 million searches have been conducted: "In 2015 alone, we had something like 10 million." Although the Center doesn't collect data as to what percentage of its users are vets, Maxner believes it's "somewhere north of 50%." They're looking for "documents from their units...after-action reports and things of that nature." Most compelling is its oral history collection, where veterans and their families "tell the story of their service in their own words." Vietnam was the last major war this country fought in the analog age—before smart phones, e-mail and Skype. This author wrote letters to loved ones back in "The World"—lots and lots of letters. Occasionally, my buddies would exchange cassettes, even reel-to-reel audiotapes, with their families. Such is the mud-smeared, scratchy, scuffed stuff on which this history is chronicled. Maxner says it can be "very, very emotive." The Center set out to preserve "the human face of war." That, too, is part of the mission, believes Maxner, to "remind the American people ... remind our leaders that war profoundly affects people. It's the most formative experience a young man or woman can have. Our collections [show] what happens when someone

goes off to fight for their country, to fight for their buddies.” Reminders like the clay-encrusted letters written by a Navy corpsman during the 1968 Battle of Khe Sanh. The Center “holds those as dearly as we do the refurbished Cobra and Huey helicopters donated to us,” says Maxner. “They’re just incredible artifacts.” Artifacts are important. But so too is sowing the seeds of a living legacy. A two-day conference in San Antonio cosponsored by the Center at Texas Tech University, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and the Army Medical Center of History and Heritage was held March 10-12. The focus: *A Medical History of the Vietnam War*. Department of Defense personnel awarded pins commemorating the 50th anniversary of the war at a special ceremony during the conference. The San Antonio conclave is just one of a number of events, including guest lectures, put on by the Center each year.

MUSEUM OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Currently housed in its own section of Texas Tech’s Special Collections Library, built back in 1997, the Center has plans to construct the Museum of the Vietnam War at Texas Tech. The target is to raise the \$15 million to \$20 million over the next three to four years, with a building up and running within six years—approximately 2022. Efforts are off to a good start. “We just received a generous grant from an anonymous donor,” says Maxner, “so that we can hire a development officer this year and start a major campaign.” Driving people such as the Reckners, Prices and Maxner is not just the need to chronicle the war but also the need to do so soon. With Vietnam vets in their midsixties and older, “time is running out,” says Maxner. “We have so many veterans and so many people in our country who served with honor and distinction, we need to do everything we can to preserve their story.”

END