



### Association President's Message:

July, 2017

Dear AC-119 Associates:

It has been more than a month since we launched the AC-119 Gunships Association's new web site. Other than a few "back-end" tweaks, it is up and running as expected. If you have not yet spent time exploring all the content, by all means, on a rainy day, let your fingers do the Browsing. Register for the reunion, find info' on the two tour events, order new items from our on-line store (What? We have a store?) – Yup, the Quartermaster's page.

This *Firing Circle* returns to what you may call our routine format. Since I'm still the Newsletter Editor, (hopefully this too will change), I'll stay on the familiar path and assemble what I have, and in the most effective way. If YOU have any new hot news, please let me know (always looking for cool info). I certainly need help NOW, therefore, the Association is still looking for a Newsletter Editor – if you have basic computer skills, are good using MS Word or a basic publishing software, we welcome a volunteer to take over the Editor's position and assemble the *Firing Circle*. Most of the content comes from other Board Members – the "editor" just patches it together. Contact me if you (or a close family member) are/is interested .....  
[drzyzga513@hotmail.com](mailto:drzyzga513@hotmail.com) or (201-310-2943).

I have been working with the 2017 Reunion Team detailing a very interesting event for us in Sept., Dayton, OH. My first AC-119 reunion was the Association's 5<sup>th</sup>, in 2004, also in Dayton. Those of you that know me understand what attending that one has done for me over the past 13 years. It is, and continues to be, a heart-warming experience: re-making friendships that for sure will be life-long experiences, making new friends, learning more about what/why we did-what-we-did in SEA, and visiting Special Operation units to meet today's gunship warriors. Looking forward to seeing you all in Dayton.

Until the next *Firing Circle*, I wish you and yours a happy and safe summer-time.

Mike Drzyzga, President

### News & Reminders

1. We do very much want to keep in contact with you. Therefore, PLEASE remember to contact your group POC, the Membership Chairman, or the Association Secretary when you change contact information, especially your email address.
2. IF YOU RECEIVE THIS Newsletter by U. S.POSTAL MAIL DELIVERY AND YOU DO HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS, let me or your unit POC know if you want future Newsletters and FLASHES sent via email. You can \$AVE us a lot in "office expenses!"  
Contact Association Secretary: Ralph Lefarth at: [ralph-l@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ralph-l@sbcglobal.net), or (314) 846-1009.
3. **Awards & Decoration's** coordinator Steve "Col" Mac Issac continues to aid us in fixing incorrect DD214s. He has helped many get on the trail to receiving decorations they earned. **If** you are coming to the reunion, **AND** you have a collection of ORDERS (stashed in a memorabilia box), **AND** those orders have names of fellow Shadows and Stingers, **then** PLEASE make copies and BRING THOSE with you to Dayton in Sept.. Questions and comments: Contact Col Mac at email [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com), or (MST) Cell phone: (302) 249-1499.

4. Are you interested in some AC-119 historical facts, current events, and interesting dialogue, photos and stories about AC-119s? If you have Internet (web-www) access on your computer, then you have to browse to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>  
Join the Association's **Facebook group**, which now has **over 440** interesting FB members!!
  5. Also, there are FB Pages dedicated to "Air Force Gunners", "Air Force 462 Weapons", "Happy Valley – Phan Rang", and "U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use" – very interesting pictures and history, and valuable information.
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### **FINAL FLIGHT addendum – May they rest in peace**

We remember our human frailty, and the strength of our brotherhood, in the loss of these who joined our Final Flight. Please remember their families in your prayers. R.I.P., brothers:

1. Ulas Benton, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger IO, passed away March 15, 2016.
2. McClendon Blue, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, passed away August 21, 2016
3. David F Hinken, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger NAV, 1970 to 1971, passed away June 8, 2017.
4. Charles M "Chuck" James, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Aircraft Commander & A Flight Operations Officer, 1969-1970, passed away April 9, 2017. Chuck is one of the honored few who served in three wars. He was also our first AC-119 Gunship Association President, & authored the By-Laws that serve us so well.
5. Richard E "Dick" Mahany, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Nav, 1971-1972, passed away March 1st, 2017.
6. John M. McGary, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Nav, 1968-1969, passed away February 10, 2013.
7. Alan D. Milacek, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Pilot, 1970, passed away February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. Alan was aircraft Commander on Stinger AC-119K tail number 883 whose crew received the coveted Mackay Trophy in 1971 for the most Meritorious Flight of the Year (1970).
8. Rogers Craig Stevens, Jr., 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Pilot, 1971-1972, passed away June 21, 2017 2004. Rogers was our 4<sup>th</sup> AC-119 Gunship Association President.

You may find more details on the Association's new Mail Call site at <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/> or our Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>

### **Welcome to New Association Members:**

#### New Life Members:

1. Kenneth Schwandt, 18th SOS Gunner, Life # 442
2. Monroe Smith, Brother in Law of Hans Wurful, 18th SOS Gunner, Associate Life # 443
3. LtCol Walter M Winter, New Commander of the 18th TFS, Honorary Life # 444
4. Windell E Bunton, 18th SOS AC Record Sec AC Mech PE Dock, Life # 445

#### New Annual Members:

1. Gary D Ivy, 17th and 18th Gun Shop
2. Roger Couturier, 17th and 18th Airborne Interpreter
3. Elaine Seth, Father was 18th Ground Crew
4. Daniel L O'Leary, 18th NAV

### **A short Story of the last remaining AC-119**

A recent post on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>) has generated much new interest regarding Stinger 850. When a Personal Computer application named *Google Earth* arrived 10 yrs. ago, anyone could search the earth's surface for whatever you'd liked to find. One of us found an image of AC-119K 53-7850 sitting on the tarmac at TSN along with other US aircraft captured by the North Vietnamese with the fall of Saigon. Bruce Byrd, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Gunner, had the resources to look into the details, and he faithfully reported to us at every Association reunion since 2009. With a covert op' and "local" boots on the TSN tarmac, in 2009 Bruce received close up images and verified it is our 850. The Association for a number of years considered issues about possible retrieval back home to the USA. In summary, 850 is a

weather-beaten wreck, maintainers say it would be impossible to disassemble neatly, the cost is out-of-reach, there may be (or probably not) a place for it in a US air museum, and there is the question of two government's bureaucracy that our State Dept. would have to engage. The Association decided to not pursue retrieval, or spend any money. Bruce intends to maintain surveillance on 850. But, it certainly appears now, our early-on guess that 850 will be somewhat restored, and go into a Vietnamese Museum, is true. See pictures below. I'm sure this story will continue.



### **Updated News – Dayton, OH, Reunion XVIII – 2017**

The Reunion coordination team continues to work on the finer details that make for a great experience for attendees. Remember: Reunion Registration is very easily completed on-line at our new web site. Nevertheless, if you can NOT access the web, please contact our Association Treasurer, Doug Wohlgamuth to register manually - Cell: 813-781-5728. Here is the latest info provided by Team Leader Ron Julian.

1. **Hotel Reservations** - **Please make your Holiday Inn reservations ASAP (937-426-7800 Tell them you are with the AC-119 Gunship Reunion).** If we stay too far below projections, I must start looking at returning rooms to the Holiday Inn soon so we don't have to pay for empty rooms. Once I've turned them back, there is no guarantee that you will be able to book at the Reunion rate or to book at the Holiday Inn at all.  
**Hotel – Airport shuttle.** We have a discounted roundtrip price. Please contact Kimberly Peterson at the Holiday Inn. [kimberly.peterson@hidaytonfairborn.com](mailto:kimberly.peterson@hidaytonfairborn.com) 937-431-4613

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2. **Silent and Live Auctions.** Due to time and venue constraints, we are creating some different options this year. The reunion team is asking for donations for our Silent Auction **and** our Saturday night Live Auction. These auctions are our only way of fundraising for the Association, it helps pay for our continued web-site maintenance, reunion costs and special projects such as our Memorial Bench, which will be a part of our memorial service in Ohio. If you have something to donate to the LIVE auction, please contact Jim Alvis ([shadow1969@indy.rr.com](mailto:shadow1969@indy.rr.com)) and include a photo if you can.
3. **Golf Outing.** Please contact Vern Hansen ([vchansen@woh.rr.com](mailto:vchansen@woh.rr.com)) after 25 August for outing details.
4. **Veterans Affairs.** Al Heuss ([53foxtrot@gmail.com](mailto:53foxtrot@gmail.com)) has arranged for a VA representative to speak at our business meeting and at the Ladies Business meeting. If you have any topics of special interest, please send a short note to Al soon.
5. **Special meals.** Please contact Ron Julian ([ac.119.2017@gmail.com](mailto:ac.119.2017@gmail.com)) with any special meal requests (gluten free, etc.).
6. **Tours.** The NMUSAF tour and the Dayton Historical tours are filling fast. Instructions are on the website. (<https://www.ac119gunships.com/reunion/upcoming-reunion/>)
7. **Bus for Memorial Service.** We will have one bus available to transport folks from the hotel to the memorial service and return on Friday afternoon. Since we have a number of folks who are NOT driving in, we respectfully ask those with cars to save the bus seats for those without vehicles. You do NOT need a military ID to get on the museum grounds.

## Future Reunions

**SAVE THE DATES: Oct 11 – Oct 14, 2018 Reunion XIX in Tucson, Arizona**

**Ev Sprous has done it again! When he was Reunion Coordinator for our St Louis Reunion it was awesome! Now Ev is our Reunion Coordinator for Tucson in 2018!!!**

(Please go to the NEW WEB site for addition details: <https://www.ac119gunships.com>)

## 2019 – Reunion XX

**We need a volunteer to be a coordinator – It is “up-in-the-air” now.**

### Who’s coming to the Dayton Reunion XVIII (as of July 17, 2017)

Christian Allevato	Samuel Gallo	Nancy Mac Isaac	Frederick Rider
Cheryl Artis-Huling	Patricia Gilbert	Pat Milacek	Jean Rider
Richard Baldwin	Ron Gilbert	Gale Martin	Wayne Rodgers
Debra Baldwin	Paul Goen	Jeanette Martin	James Russell
Jack Bastin	Todd Goen	Dale Martin	Ann Russell
Larry Belt	Karen Graves	Cash McCall	Mike Ryan
Tad Berkebile	Becky Hansen	Mary McCall	Terry Sarul
Tricia Berkebile	Vernon Hansen	Mel Mehlinger	Theresa Sarul
Claude Blum	Dennis Harris	Larry Mersek	Jim Shope
Karen Caruso	Mary Harris	James Montgomery	Gus Sininger
Eugene A. Caruso	Helen Heuss	Karen Montgomery	Lonnie Sininger
Jan Collars	Herman Heuss	Lynn Morrow	Robbie Sininger
Jay Collars	Randy Hickman	John Morrow	Alwyn Smith
Jim Cooper	Carol Hinton	Michael Mullen	Margaret Smith
Craig Corbett	Ron Hinton	Theresa Mullen	Everett Sprous
Don Craig	Adam Hitt	Bruce B Muller	Kenneth Stearn
Peggy Craig	Melvin L. Jackson	Mary Muller	Veronika Stearn
Robert W Dangler	Lee Jordan	Sharon Nash	Cathi Stevens
Theresah De-Graft	Kathy Julian	Wilhelmenia Nash	Stephanie Stevens
Mary Lois Diehl	Ron Julian	Marty Noonan	Jerry L Stout
Phil Diehl	Joanna Kafoed	Sandy Noonan	Dan Thompson
Dale R Doll	Mike Krauss	Daniel O'Leary	William Tyler
Mary Doll	Bob Krueger	Geri O'Leary	Dixie Wall
Ronald Dorazio	Lynette Laessig	Bill Petrie	Darrell Weaver
Andrea Drzyzga	Wayne Laessig	Karen Petrie	Gary Weaver
Michael Drzyzga	Bob LaRosa	Cindy Posey	Marisa Weisenfluh
Jim Dunn	Kaimipono J. Lau	William Posey	Thomas Weisenfluh
Janet Dunn	Joyce Lefarth	Betty Raveling	John C Williams
Larry Fletcher	Ralph Lefarth	Vernon Raveling	Doug Wohlgamuth
Sue Fletcher	Ashley Littell-Hitt	Jim Ray	Cynthia Wood
Bruce Foster	Cheryl Lyall	Howard Reid	Jesse Wright
Robyn Foster	Robert Lyall	George Renfroe	Margie Wright
Leroy Fraham	Col Steve Mac Isaac	Rebecca Renfroe	William Zito
Robert Frederick			

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**Most recent news/requests:**

A. From Wayne Laessig: updated info on the Web Site, and regarding POCs distribution of the *Firing Circle* newsletter.

Greetings from sunny & hot California! Now that our website is up & running, we're seeing a few things that might help everyone (including us volunteers who keep the site running).

1. First, the Contact Lists of Board & committee members is designed to let you contact the right person directly– i.e. the one who owns or manages that subject/topic area. So, please use that list to determine the right person to send a message to – BEFORE you just pick a name that's not the Contact for that subject/topic (maybe because you know them, or like them). THEN send the right person a message.
  - a. Ditto on the Contacts listed on other pages. We included them on those pages BECAUSE they're the subject/topic owner for the paragraph or page where we listed them as the Contact.
  - b. The ALPHA Roster lets you send an email TO whoever you select from the Roster. We don't guarantee that we have the latest emails for everyone so don't be "torqued" if you don't hear back from someone.
2. Second, your Association Board received feedback from the Reunions' Spouse Meetings that they (the spouses) want to receive things like Firing Circle & News Flashes direct (seems like some of us guys aren't as good at sharing those as we thought).
  - a. As a result, your Board decided to focus the 71<sup>st</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, & Support ALPHA Roster & POC Lists on only air & ground crew members (our ALPHA/Last Flight lists/web pages are focused on ONLY AC-119 air & ground crew members). That meant that all Family Members (Associate Memberships or not) & all Honorary Members were moved to a single POC – Wayne Laessig.
  - b. That seemed simple.....but we learned that many of our guys DO share Firing Circles, News Flashes, etc. & their spouses DO NOT want separate emails or snail mails. Some of you told Wayne that when you received your separate email or snail mail (thank you :-).
  - c. We get it. We don't want to take on more work when less seems better.
  - d. So.....on this Firing Circle, we ask that Family Members simply respond to Wayne with a YES if they DO want a separate email or snail mail sent to them, or a NO if they don't want that.
  - e. If Yes, please include the email you want it sent to.

**BOTTOM LINES:**

- Family Members: if you receive an email or snail mail addressed to YOU, it was on purpose. Tell Wayne whether you DO (tell him YES), or DO NOT (tell him NO), need/want those separate emails/snail mails.
  - Family Members will continue to receive separate emails/snail mails until they tell Wayne otherwise.
- Respectfully, your web folks & POCs.

B. The AC-119 Gunship Association Quartermaster's inventory, now easily obtainable on the new Web Site, is very well stocked. Gus Sininger and Assistant Lee Wolff offer 70 items, all related to our squadrons and AC-119's. If you would like hats, shirts, coffee or beer mugs, patches and decals, pins, water bottles, mouse pads, OUR HISTORY BOOK, license plate brackets, lithographs and prints, and more, you should visit: <https://www.ac119gunships.com/shop/store>. If you do not have access available to the world wide web, the contact Gus: (850) 863-9649.

**C. Some reunion history in photos.**

		
<p><b>2008 Branson, Mo. Veteran's Museum</b></p>	<p><b>2009 FWB, FL, L.Fletcher, R. Lefarth (history book committee)</b></p>	<p><b>2010 Fairfield, CA (Gunners)</b></p>
		
<p><b>2011 Charleston, SC. G. Hardy, guest speaker, P-51 "red tail" model</b></p>	<p><b>2012 FWB, FL John Hupe, flying restored model Stinger</b></p>	<p><b>2013 San Antonio. AC-130W (30mm cannon) at Kelley AFB</b></p>

**D. Thank you Jim Alvis for providing this information:**

Cable TV's PBS channel: Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's ten-part, 18-hour documentary series, THE VIETNAM WAR, tells the epic story of one of the most consequential, divisive, and controversial events in American history as it has never before been told on film.

<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-vietnam-war/home/#module1>

End  
M. Drzyzga  
7/21/2017  
Rev 4