

The Firing Circle

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

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Appointees:

Awards & Decorations:
 Next-of-Kin Locator:
 Reunion XII POC:
 Webmaster:
 Chaplain:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



You should have heard this from your POC, but in case you didn't, if you're not already registered in our hotel, you've missed the boat for our Reunion Rate at the Embassy Suites. We extended the rate as long as we could, with the guaranteed rate cutoff ending midnight September 8th. However, we have an overflow hotel that may still have enough rooms left to honor our rate, so call me (850-865-2634) or Doug Wohlgamuth (813-781-5728) if you need that. NO GUARANTEES but we can try. Full reunion info is on the website at <http://www.ac-119gunships.com/association/reunion/reunioninfo2011.htm>.

“Reunion XII” - September 28-OCTOBER 2, 2011, Charleston, South Carolina.

Once again, we will be raffling off another “Commemorative Gun” at the Charleston Reunion. It's a .45 cal. Pistol with special markings and case with accessory. See the Ticket Form in this newsletter. Tickets are One (1) for \$10, Six (6 for \$50 and Thirteen (13) for \$100. You don't have to present to win. Doug will hold tickets and bring them to the Reunion. Be sure to write your name and phone number on the form. FYI, please get your tickets for if we don't get enough tickets sold I will have to keep the gun. Ha Ha, Thanks! Also, the cost of our litho's has again been reduced; **this time to \$35.00.**

One NOTE about Reunion costs: when we sign the contract for a reunion hotel, we guarantee a certain occupancy rate to the hotel. When that rate is not met, we lose money. When you stay in the Reunion hotel and not off-site it helps. It's getting more and more difficult to get reasonable room rates with breakfast included; consequently our efforts to get reasonable room rates with full breakfast is made much easier if you stay at the Reunion hotel.

❖ **Bring your AC-119 Gunship Association Name Tag Lanyard – to Reunion XII.**

Here is a list of the guys, wives, and guests who are coming so far. If your friends are coming and you aren't (yet), think about it one more time and sign up! You're only going to be this old once!

Hank & Elizabeth Alau, Larry & Debbie Barbee, Ray & Sue Barradale, Frank & Shirley Bartlett, Jack & Carolyn Bastin, Jim Bennes, Bill Benzi, Claude Blum, Don & Alice Brogan, Bruce & JoAnna Byrd, John & Melinda Coates, Gene & Diane Coco, Ernie Cole, Bob Connolly & Cathy Henry, Don & Marilyn Cooling, Jim Cooper, Don & Peggy Craig, Dale Cullop, Chuck & Sharon Daenzer, Phil & Mary Lois Diehl, Mike & Andrea Drzyzga, Estel Dunn, Fred & Dee Eggert, Norm Evans & Shirley Hagan, Bill & Jeanette Feezor, Larry & Sue Fletcher, Sam & Debby Gallo, Joe & Janis Goryl, Karen Graves & Earl Hollon, Jerry & Lisa Greene, Vern & Becky Hansen, Bill Hanson, George Hardy, Jerry & Ellen Hester, Al & Caroline Heuss, Don & Mary Hiers, Johnny & Anita Higgins, Ron & Carol Hinton, Gary & Diane Hitzemann, Baby Huey & Soncy Hunter, Bill & Frances Jowers, Ron & Kathy Julian, Bill Korte, Mike Krauss, Bob Krueger, Lee Kyser, Wayne Laessig, Bob LaRosa, Ralph & Joyce Lefarth, Mac, Nancy, & JP Mac Isaac, Dick Mahany, Jim & Lynn Mattison, Cash & Mary McCall, John & Linda Michels, Jim & Cathy Moore, Harold & Jeanette Morgan, John & Lynn Morrow, Mike & Theresa Mullen, Marshall & Marilyn Mullins, Larry & Lorrie Nelson, John & Barbara Nicol, Dave O'Mara & Sharon Smith, Art Perry, Bill & Karen Petrie, Dick, Joan, & Alex Pollmann, Bill & Cindy Posey, Don Radke, Howie Reid, Al & Karen Reynolds, Mike & Cheryl Ryan, Ken Shedd, Jim Shoemaker & Mary Cockerill & Jim Shoemaker II, Gus & Lonnie Sininger & Robbie Dangler, Bernie & Judy Smith, Jerry & Diane Snyder, Ron & Venita Soderquist, Ev Sprous, Ken & Veronika Stearn, Rogers & Cathi Stevens, Neil & Muriel Taylor, Gary & Kathi Totten, Mike & Sandra Traynor, Bill & Wilma & Cora Lee & Paul & Norma Tyler, Jimmi & Judy Ward, Ken & Janet Wilson, Bob & Deborah Wells, Chuck Williams, Doug Wohlgamuth, Bill & Jean Woolard, Jim Yanacsek & Barbara Mills, Virgil & Donna Zins

**Gus Sininger, President
AC-119 Gunship Association**

This isn't your Hotel Registration it's - your Reunion Registration Only!

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: __71st; __17th; __18th; __3rd or 4th ACS; __other (____); Crew Position/Role: _____

Address: (include Zip 4) _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Spouse/Guest Name: (First, Middle Initial, Last) _____

Additional Guests: (#) _____ Name(s) _____

Are you staying at the Reunion Hotel: Yes__No__ Staying somewhere else__ Where _____

REUNION FEE.....# attending ___ X \$25 = \$ ___

YES! I / We will attend:

• Thursday Charleston Tour# attending ___ X \$37 = \$ ___

• Friday Night Meet & Greet# attending ___ X \$29 = \$ ___

• Saturday Night Banquet

▶ Salmon with Citrus Beurre Blanc.....# of meals ___ X \$36 = \$ ___

▶ Apple-Cider Spiked Chicken.....# of meals ___ X \$35 = \$ ___

▶ Sliced Flank Steak with Roasted Peppers, Onions & Mushrooms.....# of meals ___ X \$36 = \$ ___

▶ Chef's Choice Vegetarian Entrée.....# of meals ___ X \$35 = \$ ___

• Sunday Morning Golf Tournament (Green Fees separate).....# playing ___ X \$10 = \$ ___

• Sunday Afternoon BBQ (See web or Newsletter for menu).....# attending ___ X \$30 = \$ ___

Check # _____ Total Payment \$ _____

NOTE: For special meal needs, contact Gus Sininger at 850-865-2634 or stinger7172@cox.net

After filling-in this page mail it (if you use the web version, print it first since it will not save your info) with your payment - make check payable to AC-119 Gunship Association – and send to:

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

Contact the Embassy Suites, direct, for your Hotel registration: **call 1-843-747-1882, (mention the AC-119 Association). Or on the Web: http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/C/CHSEMES-AC1-20110928/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG**. If you have Questions: Check our Web Site at <http://www.ac-119gunships.com>; call Doug at 813-938-1886 or 813-781-5728 e-mail Busch791@tampabay.rr.com; or Gus at 850-865-2634 e-mail stinger7172@cox.net.

Cancellation Policies:

- Reunion Registration cancellations on or before September 1st = refund or donation as requested
- Reunion Registration cancellations after September 1st = we have to pay hotel “guarantees”, so no refunds (but talk to us if there are special circumstances like family emergencies or losses)
- Hotel Registration: if you cancel after their minimum 24 hour notification, you may still be charged

Reunion XII - September 28th – October 2nd 2011 - Agenda

Wednesday, September 28th

1800 – Hootch opens & stays open, until 1800 Sunday night, Meeting Rooms 6 & 7, in the Convention Center. Soda, Beer, & Snacks Free to Reunion Attendees. *Hootch closed during Scheduled Events.*

Thursday, September 29th

0845 - 1340: Historic Charleston Tour with free time, Lunch & Shopping. In The Old City Market.

1340 – Transportation on Concord Street behind the US Customs House for RTB – **\$37**

Friday, September 30th

1900 - 2200 – Meet & Greet at the Convention Center Meeting Rooms 10 & 11.

Buffet Style -- Dress casual or Party suites. * **\$29**

Saturday, October 1st

0830 - 1000 – Membership Meeting at the Convention Center Meeting Rooms 10 & 11.

0930 - Photographs to be taken by Jill Norman. **No Obligation, immediate on site printing.**

0900 - 1000 – Women’s Meeting at the Convention Center Meeting Room 9.

0930 - Photographs to be taken by Jill Norman. **No Obligation, immediate on site printing.**

1800 – Happy Hour at the Convention Center Ball Room “A”, Coat & tie or party suit.

1900 – Banquet Dinner Ball Room “A” **

2100 – Association Awards & Raffles

Sunday, October 2nd

0900 - Golf Tournament on Charleston AFB Golf Course – Green Fees **\$20**

Tournament Coordinators: Doug Wohlgamuth & Col Mac. Cart **\$12**

1700 - 2100 - Farewell BBQ at the Convention Center Ball Room “A”,

Buffet Style – Dress - Casual * **\$30**

* Pay as You go Bar

* See Registration Form

Reunion XII - Guest Speaker

Lieutenant Colonel George Hardy, USAF, (Ret)



Typical of the many individual, unique stories regarding the lives of the Tuskegee Airmen is that of one of our own Stinger aircrew, Lt Col George Hardy. This 81-year-young man, awarded an honorary doctor of public service from Tuskegee University earlier this year, represents the rich diversity and experience our members bring to our Association and our Nation. We plan to ask others to tell us about their WWII and Korea experiences at future reunions.

George Hardy began life in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 8, 1925, and in March of 1943, 17-year-old George took the Oath of Service in the Army, and shortly thereafter entered aviation cadet training at Tuskegee Army Air Field in December 1943. After he graduated and received his wings in 1944, George got a whole 10 hours training in his first fighter, the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk (at that point, he still hadn't driven a car). George did receive additional combat flight training in the P-47 at Waterboro AAF in South Carolina, where the black pilots had their own officers' club and stayed on base since there was no place in town where they could socialize. George says, "My goal was to fly and I could put up with anything to get that done." Then, in March 1945, he received an assignment to the 99th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group in Italy. At age 21, George Hardy flew 21 combat missions over Germany as a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen's WWII combat pilots. This coming year, a George Lucas movie titled "Red Tails" will be released that chronicles the Tuskegee Airmen who fought and protected our bombers during the critical years of WWII.

Following his return from overseas duty, George was discharged in November 1946. However, in June 1948 he was recalled to active duty and assigned to the 301st Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group at Lockbourne Air Force Base in Ohio. After going to the Airborne Electronics Maintenance Officers' School, George was transferred to the 28th Bomb Squadron, 19th Bomb Group on the Island of Guam, as a Maintenance Officer on B-29s. He was the first person of color in the 19th Bomb Group. George remembers, "My squadron commander would talk to me in the line of duty, but when we were in a social setting, it was as if I wasn't in the room". He also piloted many support missions in the venerable C-119, at that time the only aircraft that could hold a B-29 engine. George was not only the Maintenance Officer and C-119 pilot, he also became qualified as a B-29 pilot. In 1950, despite his commander arbitrarily limiting his flight status, he was able to fly 45 combat missions over Korea in the B-29.

Between 1951 and 1962, George served in various armament and electronics maintenance squadrons in Strategic Air Command, earned a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering, and received his command pilot rating. In 1960, as a squadron commander in a KC-97 tanker unit based at Plattsburg, NY, his commanding officer was ironically the one he had when flying B-29 missions over Korea. This time, however, the commander had a positive attitude toward him. Some time later, after leaving the unit, Hardy got to see an evaluation the commander had given him. He was surprised to read, "George is the best of my six squadron commanders." Over time, the barriers had come down and attitudes had changed. Somewhere in all this George earned a Master's Degree in Systems Engineering Reliability at the Air Force Institute of Technology, and became Chief of Engineering as a Program Manager at Hanscom AFB, MA. Finally, in 1970, he became the 18th Special Operations Squadron Detachment Commander at Udorn and DaNang. As a Stinger pilot on our AC-119K gunship he flew 70 combat missions in Vietnam. He returned from Vietnam in 1971 and retired from the Air Force in November of the same year. After the Air Force, George worked for 16 years as a Program Manager with GTE Communications Systems, retiring in 1988. Part of our Country's history and heritage – Lt Col George Hardy flew 136 combat missions in three Wars. He served proudly, surviving not only enemy combat, but our Country's segregation and integration.

REUNION XII COMMEMORATIVE PISTOL



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A
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F
L
E



Tickets are (1) for \$10 - (6) for \$50 - (13) for \$100. You don't have to present to win.

Features: Stainless steel w/ black trim – Ambidextrous thumb safety – Combat Grips (2 sets, 1 presentation) – Beveled Mag well for ease of loading – High Beavertail grip safety – Felta hammer – Target trigger – Match barrel – Full length recoil guide rod – Front cocking serrations – Fully adjustable rear Trijicon night sight – Dovetail Trijicon front night sight – Checkered flat mainspring housing – Supplied with mag pouch, belt holster, cleaning brush, gun locks and two mags with lockable hard case - Presentation box is a plain case with Association information on Black background with silver wings – The poem “Our Lady of the Night”, by Bill Petrie. Let us not forget those “Still Flying”.

Cherokee Firearms Repair, LLC – 3019 227th Street E – Spanaway WA 98387 – Ron Soderquist, FE, 18th SOS.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

E-Mail: _____ **Phone:**() _____

Total Tickets: _____ **Total Donation:** _____

Make Checks payable to:

"AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION COMMEMORATIVE RAFFLE"

**Doug Wohlgamuth, Treasurer
AC-119 Gunship Association
504 Shea Place
Sun City Center, FL 33573
(813)-938-1886
bush791@tampabay.rr.com**



71st SOS



17th SOS

"AC-119 Gunship Heritage Circle"



18th SOS

Did You Know?

Terry "Bus" Blaine Schuler, Maintenance

18th SOS, Bien Hoa, Nakhon Phanom, 1971-72

Fort Mitchell, Kentucky is where I was born in 1952. Plantation, Florida is where I grew up and graduated from Plantation High School in 1970. To avoid getting drafted into the Army or the Marines, I joined the Air Force. Later in life, I completed two years of college at Broward Community College. I served with the 18th Special Operations Squadron at NKP and Bien Hoa from November 1971 to November 1972 in aircraft maintenance. I'll never forget the one morning that we were pushing the gunships back into their respective revetments when suddenly we came under attack by 122mm rockets. I remember feeling a warm sensation in my back and before I realized what was happening, I woke up under the Coleman tug that was being used to push the aircraft into the revetment. The tug operator, I don't remember his name, asked me, "How did you get here so fast?" Without even knowing what to say, I automatically responded, "I Flew!!" As the rocket fire subsided, everyone started coming to their senses. After seeing me under the tug, Sergeant Dunbar happily said to me, "Good to see you Schuler, I thought you were dead!" As I glanced over my shoulder and looked where I had been wing walking the Stinger, I began to understand why the Sarge said what he did. There where I once stood was a crater formed from a rocket hit! I will always remember the friendships made during my tour of duty with the AC-119 Stinger gunships. The camaraderie between us all was simply super. Age, color of skin, or ethnic background could not separate us during the tough times; times that I will always cherish. We were like brothers! I separated from the United States Air Force on 17 December 1977. I currently live in Plantation, Florida; still proud to be a Stinger!





71st SOS



17th SOS

“AC-119 Gunship Heritage Circle”

Did You Know?



18th SOS



Estel “W a d e” Dunn , Gunner

71st & 17th SOS, Nha Trang, Phan Rang, 1968 - 69

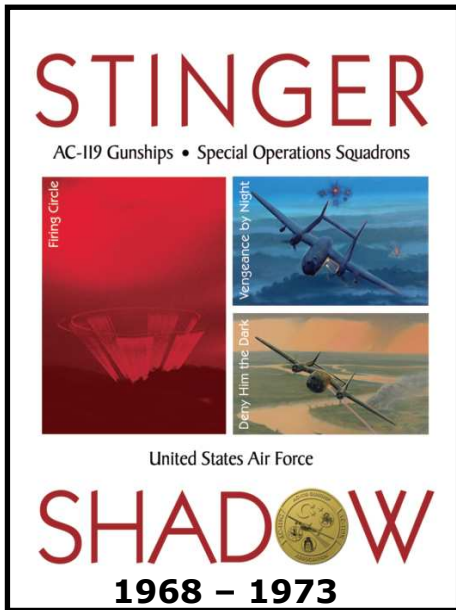


Back Row: Lt.Col. Frank Rostkowski, AC; Capt. Mel Hayes, Nav/Nos; Maj. Robert Milheim, CP, Lt. William Dawson, Nav/Nos. Front Row: Sgt. Keith Roberts, Gunner; Sgt. “X” Xanders, IO; Sgt. Wade Dunn, Gunner; Sgt. Ron Penrose, FE

Kentucky was my birthplace in 1945. My family moved from Middlesboro, KY to St. Louis, Missouri when I was eight years old. I graduated from John O’Fallon Technical High School in St. Louis in 1963. On 5 May 1966, I entered USAF Basic Training at Amarillo, Texas. I worked at McDonnell-Douglas Aircraft prior to enlisting in St. Louis. I wanted to travel and see the world; not in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I would see some of the world from the cargo bay of an AC-119 gunship. When I volunteered for gunship duty, I was assigned to the 29th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Malmstrom AFB, Great Falls, Montana. I was in the original mix with all of you; combat crew training at Lockbourne, jungle survival at Clark, in-country Vietnam at Nha Trang and Phan Rang. To be perfectly honest, after all these years, the Shadow missions I flew have pretty much blended together. One mission that remains clear occurred on 14 May and 15 May 1969 near Chu Lai. We had an Army patrol pinned

down and taking murderous incoming fire. When we got into the firing circle, Sgt. Roberts and I put down the entire ammo load in just under 20 minutes! To the best of my knowledge, we hold the record for most ammo fired in the shortest period of time. But more importantly, we saved the Army patrol. Some of the “special” memories that I have are: My first mission over the “Trail” and first time to see 23mm and 37mm fire coming up too close for comfort; flying at 2 o’clock in the morning with beautiful white fog in the valleys and millions of stars in the sky; touching down on the runway tarmac at sunrise, feeling dog-tired after flying a double sortie defending a Special Forces camp; watching a B-52 “arc light” strike in the distance while on a mission over Laos; looking down on the sampan fishing fleet off the coast of Phan Rang as my crew heads out on a 6-1 mission; and finally, feeling the wheels touch the runway at Phan Rang on my last combat mission with some of the finest and bravest men that I have ever known. I separated from the United States Air Force in December 1969. I graduated from St. Louis Community College in 1984 and attended Washington University in St. Louis. I live in St. Louis suburb, St. Ann, Missouri. Colonel “Ski’s” crew in front of tail #25925 “Charlie Chaser”





AC-119 Gunship History Book Order Form

“Our book seems to cover every aspect of the AC-119 Vietnam experience. Personal accounts of guys, who flew Gunship missions, and including those of maintenance and other support people, highlight the good, the bad and the ugly of operating has-been aircraft in less than desirable conditions while flying highly important missions. The little known history of AC-119 Gunship operations, missions that provided an important tactical piece to the Vietnam puzzle, is fully exposed in our History Book. Our book will be immediately valued by those who served and will become more valued by those who inherit the book down through the ages”. “Needless to say, I treasure my copy of our History Book”.

Chuck James - 17th SOS  'A/C'

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 _____

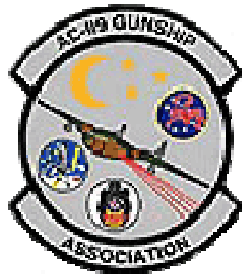
Hard Cover	\$50.00	= \$ _____
Soft Cover / Spiral Bound	REDUCED \$25.00	= \$ _____
Shipping & Handling per copy: _____	\$ 5.00	= \$ _____

(No Credit Cards Accepted) GRAND TOTAL = \$ _____

Check Number: _____ Amount: _____ Cash or Money Order Amount: _____

Make checks or money orders payable to “AC-119 Gunship Association History Book Fund”

Gus Sininger
1300 Arial Court
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547-1191
stinger7172@cox.net
Phone (850) 863-9649



Final Flight



Bob Krueger's Fiancée, Maria Gombas, of Lebanon, Pennsylvania passed away at home on Monday morning, August 15, 2011. Maria was born in Budapest, Hungary and is survived by Bob, her two sons, and 2 grandchildren, Maria brightened our Reunions for several years, and she is missed by all who were fortunate to meet her.

Bob's words: *It has been a long tough fight for quite some time. Maria was a fighter up until about two months ago when we finally realized the fighting was futile. She passed away in her sleep and is now with the Lord waiting for me. Thank you all for your prayers. Bob*

Marty Noonan writes: It is with a sad heart that I report the passing of **Col Bill Gregory** on Thursday, August 18, 2011. Bill was C Flight Operations Officer for 17th SOS "C" Flight at Tan Son Nhut 1970-71. He was playing golf on Monday or Tuesday with an AF buddy when he collapsed on the course. He was taken to the hospital within 30 or 40 minutes, but never recovered. His heart arrhythmia finally caught up with him. Pat Gregory got in touch with me and brought me the news and details. She is off to Scotland to be with her family and will return in October. A memorial service in Austin, TX will be planned sometime in October or November.

From Kevin Riley: On July 18th, **Jeffrey S. Sawtelle** lost his life to cancer. He was my father-in-law. After looking at his Air Force career it states he has stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and flew as a crewmember in AC-119 aircraft. I don't know which variant he flew, but he did mention electronics work of some kind and flying racetrack patterns. He left the Air Force in 1971 and joined the Navy and became a JAG officer. He retired in 1986 as a Lt. Cdr. That's all the info I have on his service with the AC-119. I will be building a shadow box for his military career and if you have any info that will help me fill this out it would be greatly appreciated.



Final Flight

From Steve Simmons: after a brave battle against respiratory fibrosis my father, **Herbert S. Simmons**, passed away on June 3rd and was laid to rest at the VA National Cemetery in Bourne, MA with full military honors on June 8th. He spoke often and proudly of his missions with 18th SOS and very often of the "Tank Buster Mission" that you flew together. He loved the article on the mission in "Vietnam Magazine" that Bill Petrie and Larry Fletcher put together (even though the magazine misspelled his name) which was framed in his office with his "Vengeance by Night" and "100 Mission" Patch. Although he was not a member of the AC119 Gunship Association he greatly respected its efforts not to let that part of the US Air Force's history slip away. I had noticed on the gunship web site that a memorial to the AC119K was put up at Hulbert Field and was able to show him a picture of that before he passed away....he thought that was awesome! In his last weeks he wasn't able to talk at length but via a clipboard and legal pad he wrote of many of his memories of his time over there and spoke very well of you and others he flew with during his 22 year career. After spending several days going through his military records etc I couldn't believe that we only had one picture of him during his wartime service. If anyone has any pictures of my dad over there or know of anyone who does, or a particular memory they would like to share with our family please send them to me at Steve Simmons 22 Weston Ave Apt 2 Braintree, MA 02302 781-848-1940.



From Lt Col Gareth Lee's Grandson: My Grandfather was an AC-119K pilot and Squadron Commander at Phan Rang. He never thought that he would go to Vietnam because he was up for retirement, but orders from above said that since he had experience with cargo planes and bombers he was going to fly the AC-119K. He had so many stories. *Joshua Lee.*



Bruce Abbott remembers: I wanted to express my condolences to his family. Col Lee was my aircraft commander during training at Lockbourne OH. He put up with several of us getting airsick during the initial flights (I thought I was going to die) and never said a word, just a wry smile as he surveyed several of his crew in less than ideal condition. I also flew with him several times in country and always thought of him as a total professional. I was surprised to learn from his obituary that he flew during WWII as a member of the 308th Bomb Group, the "Hells Angels". *Farewell to Col Lee.*