

Association President's Message - May 2019

Greeting fellow gunshippers, friends and family.

There is much doing these days as the Association heads towards its 20th anniversary reunion in Sept. in Salt Lake City. Of course, the best news is that on-line registrations are going well. What do you think of that announcement flyer? Everything you need to know is in there!! A list of "Who's Coming" is on the Association's Web page, and will be updated in all future *Firing Circles*. Andrea and I are looking forward to seeing many of you in SLC.

Here are some important newsworthy items that the Association's Board is managing:

Personal Interview (Oral History) Videos. The Association has tweaked the videos (into MP4 format files that are compatible with current computer software and on-line views) and would like to make them more available in order to add to our mission of supporting the AC-119s place in the history of the Vietnam War. We would like to "add" a link to them on the Association's Web-site (under the Quartermaster's page) for you to view your video. Most of you have signed our "media release forms". If you do not want your oral history to be viewed by our AC-119 family, please take a moment now and contact Roy Davis by phone at 253-549-2044, or by email at roy@island-escape.com.

T-Shirts for 20th Anniversary Reunion: Since this is a special reunion, we decided to make a special t-shirt. We are also celebrating 50 years of brotherhood. These t-shirts can be ordered on-line starting May 9th and ending August 7th. The design of the shirt can be seen on the ordering link below. The shirt comes in three colors: black, military green and white. The cost per shirt will be approximately \$18.50 plus tax. There will be a small upcharge for shirts larger than XL. The shirts will be available for pick up **at the reunion**. If you're not planning to pick up your t-shirt at the reunion, you will have to pay for shipping when you order. We need to have a minimum order of 50 to get this price. If we do not get 50 orders by August 7th, we may have to cancel the order. If you have any questions call Roy Davis at 253-549-2044 or email at roy@island-escape.com. **LAST DAY TO ORDER IS AUGUST 7th**. Link: <https://www.customink.com/g/vwq0-00bu-h3fe>

You can also find a link to this Order Form on the Association Web-site under the Quartermaster's page. As a personal note, I like this ordering process, it reduces the need for the Quartermaster to store inventory and haul them around. Don't forget that Association golf-style shirts are available on the Quartermaster's page if you want more than an Association Reunion T-Shirt.

We will not have extras available for purchase at the Reunion, nor will they be stocked by the association for future orders. Use the link at REUNION T-SHIRT ORDER FORM to place your order now if you want one!!

Shadow and Stinger Wooden models: The Association seized an opportunity to get new wooden models at a bargain price. We blasted news flashes out and received a good response. The initial order of Stinger models proceeded smoothly, and according to Facebook posts I have seen, those who purchased them are very happy. The final correction to a Shadow model is "Board approved," and in the hands of the model makers. Those who ordered the Shadow will also be very happy. We are continuing to offer these on the Association's Quartermaster page, take a look: <https://www.ac119gunships.com/shop/models/ac-119g-wooden-model-with-stand/>

Association's Mission: We endeavor to make opportunities to best secure our correct place in the history books. Nevertheless, so often the AC-119 Gunship is slighted in media presentations on Vietnam. We have done a lot to correct this, as examples: the KIA and Stinger Memorials at Hurlburt AFB, the Memorial Bench at the USAF Museum in Dayton OH, our History Book, the SEA Gunships Kiosk in the USAF Museum, the new Web site, and other things. The Association hopes to continue the effort to publish a Vol. 2 or Addendum to the history book. We discovered an easy and less costly means to publish. Therefore, if you are interested in getting "your AC-119 story and experience" published, keep scanning future *Firing Circles* for more info. And most important, if you are coming to Salt Lake City, please indicate your interest on the reunion registration form.

That is it for now. Please be well. Guns Hot!!

Yours in Service,

Mike Drzyzga, President 2016-2019

AC119 Association Membership Updates

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Members:

- Joseph Alvarez 18th SOS Gunner, Life #497
- Dennis R Backus, 18th SOS Maint. / Vehicle Mechanic, Life #484
- Larry Blood 18th SOS Pilot, Life #489
- Rafael Bosch 18th SOFTS Commander, Honorary Life #495
- Charles Cornwell 18th SOS Gunner, Life #487
- Jerome Johnson 18th SOS Crew Chief, Life #494
- Hank Laakman 17th SOS Pilot, Life #488
- Adrein Leavitt Son of 18th SOS 1st SGT Von Leavitt, Associate Life #499
- Andrew Leavitt Son of 18th SOS 1st SGT Von Leavitt, Associate Life #498
- Jeff McMaster 73rd SOS Commander, Honorary Life #492
- Ed Pinkham 18th SOS FE, Life #490
- Sterling Roper 71st SOS Gunner, Life #493
- Michael P Schmoll, 18th SOS Maint/Avionics, Life #485
- Gregory Terral 71st/17th SOS Gunner, Life #491
- Alan Westin 18th SOS Gunshop, Life #486

We also give a warm welcome to our new Annual Members, and the Association appreciates very much those "annual" members who respond promptly to the regular request to renew your membership.

- Dean Barnard, 18th SOS Maint/Electrical
- Gilberto Chavez, 18th SOS Flir/Doppler Maint
- Barry Packard, 18th SOS NAV
- Stephen Paynter, 18th SOS NAV/NOS
- Robert Reese, 71st/17th/18th SOS Pilot
- Levi Rosecrans 3rd & 17th SOS Maint
- Richard Zenoz, 18th SOS Pilot

**"Next drawing for a Free Life Membership will be at the Reunion in Salt Lake City".
The drawing will be for all paid up annual members.**

Who's Coming To The 2019 AC-119 Reunion

47 Attendees and Many More to Come - Join them and Register NOW!

<u>Mario Alfaro</u>	<u>Larry Fletcher</u>	<u>Ralph Lefarth</u>	<u>Fred Rider</u>
<u>Thelma Alfaro</u>	<u>Sue Fletcher</u>	<u>Joyce Lefarth</u>	<u>Jean Rider</u>
<u>Alfaro Guest Anthony Perez</u>	<u>Lloyd Froelich</u>	<u>Don Luke</u>	<u>Gus Sininger</u>
<u>Alfaro Guest Jessica Perez</u>	<u>Mary Ellen Froelich</u>	<u>JP Mac Isaac</u>	<u>'Ski' Sledzinski</u>
<u>Mike Drzyzga</u>	<u>Karen Graves</u>	<u>Jim Montgomery</u>	<u>Yami Lust-Sledzinski</u>
<u>Andrea Drzyzga</u>	<u>Jake Jacobson</u>	<u>Elaine Montgomery</u>	<u>Larry Swanson</u>
<u>Dan Eramo</u>	<u>Charlotte Jacobson</u>	<u>Montgomery Guest Bruce Artis</u>	<u>Dave Voisey</u>
<u>Kay Eramo</u>	<u>Wayne Laessig</u>	<u>Montgomery Guest Marlene Artis</u>	<u>Mary Voisey</u>
<u>Allen Evans</u>	<u>Lynette Laessig</u>	<u>Dan O'Leary</u>	<u>Doug Wohlgamuth</u>
<u>Judy Evans</u>		<u>Gerri O'Leary</u>	

Chuck & Stefani Williams and children KateE, Hannah, Jack, James, Charlie, Alex, & Matthew

Final Flight

Our Membership Coordinator, Ev Sprous, recently began an Outreach Initiative to find lost AC-119 air & ground crew. Through Ev's efforts and our AC-119 Facebook site we learned of several of our AC-119 Gunship family who have passed on, some years ago, some recently. Rest in Peace, brothers.

Ev told us, "*We do find many of the guys we'd lost contact with, and we also sadly learn of many who passed before we were able to reconnect with them.*" PLEASE, visit our ALPHA website at <https://www.ac119gunships.com/membership-contact-information/alpha-roster> and add any missing names or contacts you have – we can still reach many IF we know who they are!

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 all:

- Bruce Abbott, 18th SOS Stinger Gunner; passed on Jan. 31, 2019.
- Vincent Donadio, AC-119 Recip Engine Specialist; passed on Feb. 19, 2019.
- Paul Kaminski, 18th SOS Stinger Nav; passed on May 13, 1986.
- Larry G. Meadors, 71st SOS, Engine Specialist, passed on Apr 14, 2017.
- Walter Meyer, 71st SOS, Gunner, passed on Jul. 15, 2014
- John Parish, 71st SOS, Pilot; passed during 2002
- Tommy C. Peterson, 71st SOS, Pilot, passed on Oct.7, 2017
- Jack Ragsdale, 71st SOS, Gunner; passed during 2016
- Maurice E. Ray, 71st SOS, Co-Pilot, passed Nov. 29, 2017.
- Tom Sullivan, 18th SOS, Nav, passed April 6, 2019
- Burton Zeiler, 18th SOS, Pilot, passed May 2, 2012

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/> & our Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>

Administrative Updates & Reminders

1. PLEASE remember to contact your group POC, the Membership Coordinator (Ev Sprous), or the Association Secretary (Ralph Lefarth) when you **change contact information, especially your email address**. We do very much want to keep in contact with you.
2. If you receive the *Firing Circle* by walking to the mail box after its postal delivery, AND you do have and use an EMAIL ADDRESS, TELL Mike Drzyzga, your unit POC, or our Secretary NOW if you want future Newsletters & FLASHES sent via email. You can \$AVE us a lot by avoiding postage, printer paper, envelopes, ink cartridges, etc. Contact Association Secretary Ralph Lefarth, via email at ralph-l@sbcglobal.net or call (314) 846-1009.
3. Are you interested in some AC-119 Gunship historical facts, current events, interesting dialogue, photos & stories about AC-119s? If you have Internet access on your computer, then you have to join the Association's **Facebook page**. It now has **over 583 members** – not just directly related AC119ers, but also history buffs, AC-130 folk (including some new 73rd SOS Shadows), model makers, etc. Just browse to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726/>
4. Also, there are Facebook Pages dedicated to "Air Force Gunners", "Air Force 462 Weapons", "Happy Valley – Phan Rang" (almost 1400 members), & "U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use" – very interesting pictures & history, current news, & other valuable information.
5. **Awards & Decorations** coordinator Steve "Col" Mac Isaac continues to aid us in fixing incorrect DD214s. He has helped many get on the trail to receiving decorations they earned through research of documentation and orders shared by association members. Questions and comments: Contact Col Mac at email: colmacmac@mac.com, or (MST) Cell phone: (302) 249-1499.

Reminder From Col Mac Isaac – Agent Orange Registry Enrollment

From Col Steve Mac Isaac, USAF Ret.

Call to All Gunshippers!

If you are not 'guilty', please bear with me . . . too many of our Brothers have not done what they Must Do!

1). If you have not gone to a VA Hospital/Regional Clinic and asked to get on the Agent Orange Registry - that is an Order get it done, . . . not hard. They will ask for any Official document that shows you were in VIETNAM for at least for 24 hours. You will be scheduled for an AO 'physical', they will ask you if you are having problems? If any one of your answers is on the list of Agent Orange Presumptive Diseases, you are 100% registered for the Agent Orange Registry.,

No further proof required- You are now in the Agent Orange Registry. You will receive, every 6 mo. a 2-3 page color mailing from the AO Registry tell you the status of All studies and what your rights are!

You must do this First! **YOU MUST DO THIS!**

2). Go to a web site www.eBenefits.va.gov

Get registered, it's easy!

This will open up many communication channels within the eBenefits website;

- 1) Submit claims for benefits and/or upload documents directly to the VA.
- 2) Request to add or change your dependants.
- 3) Request a Veterans Service Officer to represent You. (I like the DAV for this Service).
- 4) Track the Status of Your Claim/Appeal.

And Much, Much more!

Now I have to put on my 'tough love' face.....you may not care about yourself, but I am Ordering You to do this; for your Wife,...for your children,...for your grandchildren....

Luck & Cheers Always - COL Mac.

Reunion Plans

2019 – Reunion XX, Salt Lake City, UT, September 6-8

“Celebrating 50 Years of Brotherhood”

Reunion coordinator Chuck Williams, with the assistance of Wayne Laessig, has been working diligently to organize the many pieces and parts that will result in a great 20th and 50th Anniversary AC-119 Gunship reunion in Salt Lake City. The Little America Hotel is providing great accommodations for all our reunion events as well as other off-site events.. Notifications have gone out via Facebook, email and snail mail indicating reunion registration is up and running on the AC-119 Association Website as well as information and links to complete hotel registration separately.. Registration for the reunion and reservations for the hotel are two separate processes. Secure reunion registration payment is available using PayPal or Debit / Credit card.

For those who plan on arriving early, the “Hootch” will be up and running starting Wednesday, September 4th. Plan on bringing pictures, memorabilia, or albums you'd like to share as well as something for the annual auction to help generate funds for future reunions. Hill AFB is close by for support. Again, reunion registration AND hotel reservation are ready for you!

2020 – Reunion XXI, Ft Walton Beach, FL

Gus Sininger and Larry Hunter volunteered to host and coordinate our 21st reunion at Ft Walton Beach, FL. Gus and Larry are actively moving forward with the organization and planning for the reunion. Our two legacy Special Operations units at Hurlburt (the 18th SOFTS and the 73rd SOS Shadows) will welcome us again!

2019 - 71st SOS Reservists 50th Anniversary Homecoming Reunion

There is a special one-day event to celebrate this anniversary. On Thurs., **June 6, 2019**, at 1:00 - 4:00 pm, there is a luncheon at the lower-level restaurant, in Hangar 5, at Columbus Municipal Airport, in Columbus, IN (formerly Bakalar AFB). There will be honored guests, and honor guard presentation, and a visit to the Atterbury Air Museum (near Hangar 5) after lunch. A block of rooms is set-aside at the Holiday Inn Express, EDINBURG, IN 46124, TELE 812-526-4919.

If attending PLEASE RSVP to coordinator Dixie Wall, 317-696-2775, or call her for additional information.

Veterans Helping Veterans, AC-119 Style

The following emails are an example of how AC-119 Gunshippers reach out to help fellow veterans, in this case, the efforts of Col. Steve Mac Isaac, USAF Ret in one of his many roles assisting others in need. First email is from Col Mac Isaac to Mike Drzyzga.

Col. Steve Mac Isaac, USAF Ret

This is the direct results of me sending out a 'Stinger Down' call to the closest Stingers to Keith, plus a call to a Service Officer at a VFW near Keith,...Pat a young Combat Paratrooper from the 81st AB Command, He has stepped up big time, the wheels of justice are turning, ... can't say what is next, but the morale of one of our Hero's (3 DFCs), is getting better by the day.

Do what you can as Boss, if you choose to invite Pat to our reunion, I will pay his costs, a comp room would help. If(?) Your Staff says no, then a personal "Thank You" to Pat is in order from you.

Luck & Cheers - Mac

Keith Underwood, LtCol, USAF Retired

Subject: Status on my VA benefits claim/application

Fellow gun shippers,

First of all, my thanks for your interest in my case and willingness to help.

1. A week ago, I received an appointments letter from VA verifying two scheduled exams for me in Houston on 29 April. Since I am handicapped, unable to drive and in poor health, Pat Germany has graciously agreed to take me to and from the Debakey VA Medical Center to meet those appointments. Pat was a terrific help also in guiding me through the completion of the disability claim application package which was submitted to VA on 8 Feb 2019.

2. Today, I received a related VA eBenefits notification confirming the work on my claim, and emphasizing the importance of the Agent Orange Registry exam.

3. I can only hope that our success in getting this far along in the schedule is a precursor to what lies ahead, but of course that remains to be seen. I am well aware of the long months many applicants have endured in their own experiences with VA. The VA has projected completion of my application review by 8 Oct 2019. Time will tell.

4. The most important driving force behind all of the effort which brought us this far (in just over 2 months) was fellow gun shipper Col. Steve Mac Isaac. Col. Mac introduced me (electronically of course) to the rest of you, gave me sage advice from the very beginning, and continues to be very much involved. Regardless of where it all ends, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone for all of the help offered and given by my fellow gunshippers.

The best to all of you,

Keith Underwood, LtCol, USAF Retired

18th SOS FLIR, Danang and NKP, 71-72

Special Operations 73rd Change Of Command Ceremony

Courtesy of Norm Evans

The ceremony was beautiful, as Lt Col Jeff McMasters replaced Lt Col Iversen as the commander of the 73rd Special Operations Squadron.

Norm Evans presented Col McMasters with an Honorary AC-119 Association Life Member certificate, an AC-119 Association coin, and a copy of the AC-119 Association Shadow and Stinger history book after the ceremony.

Col McMasters told Norm he remembers us from last year, when some of our members came to the squadron's activation; telling Norm that he is honored and very thankful for the gifts; and is looking forward to working with us in the future.

Lt Col Jeff McMaster is the Operations Officer, 73d Special Operations Squadron, located at Hurlburt Field, FL. He is responsible for planning, preparing, and executing AC-130J missions supporting joint special operations. The AC-130J will recapitalize Air Force Special Operations Command's legacy fleet of gunships, providing close air support, interdiction, and armed escort to special operations and conventional forces. Prior to assuming his current position, Lt Col McMaster served as the Executive Officer to the Director of Operations, United States Special Operations Command.



Lt Col McMaster received his commission in May 2002 from Air Force Officer Training School at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He is an AC-130J instructor pilot with more than 3,600 flight hours, including over 1,700 combat hours.

EDUCATION

1995	University	Bachelor of Science Degree in psychology, Texas Christian University
2008		Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB, AL
2009		Master's Degree, University of West Florida, FL
2012		Air Command and Staff College, by correspondence
2014		Master's Degree, Naval Postgraduate School, CA



Hurlburt Stinger Artwork – Gus Sininger



Lt Col Rafael Bosch, the new Commander of the 18th Special Operations Flight Training Squadron (SOFTS) at Hurlburt, had their metal shop fabricate this great 3-D representation of the Stinger and Gun, to proudly show both their heritage and our legacy!

Col Bosch invited Gus to review the artwork, mounted on a cement pedestal centered on a cement platform, and displayed at the 18th SOFTS building on Hurlburt..

