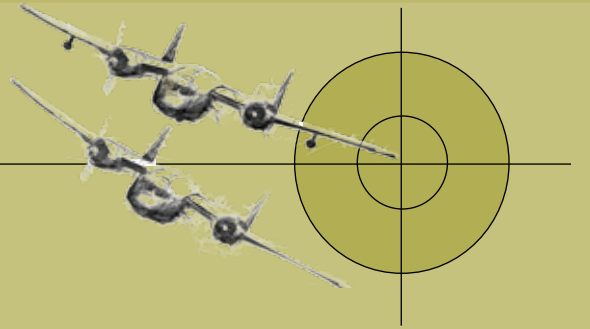


Firing Circle



Winter 2013

A Newsletter of the AC-119 Gunship Association

Flight of the Stinger 40 YEARS LATER



"I can't tell you how good I felt, how moved I really was, to see it up and flying."

Captain John Hupe spent a year building his model airplane, flew it once, and crashed it. On page 10, 40 years later, you can read about the resurrection and final flight of the *Hupe Stinger*.



John Hupe at our recent 2012 AC-119 gunship reunion, with his model ready for a mini version of "Flight of the Phoenix."



John Hupe in 1972, with remnants of his model.

(Story on page 10)

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"Fortifying the Brotherhood"

by Lt Col Kevin D. "Hubie" Huebert, 18 FLTS/DO

First, I would like to say a huge THANK YOU to all the members of the AC-119 Gunship Association! Thank you for your service, thanks to your families, and thank you for your generous welcoming of the 18 FLTS to be a part of your 13th Annual Reunion!

Maybe it was coincidence, sheer dumb luck, or maybe your reunion committee just had that wonderful foresight, but the theme this year "*Fortifying the Brotherhood*" did not need a tweak – it hit the target. When Gus came to the 18 FLTS for our building dedication, we discussed the possibilities of inviting the members of the 18 SOS to our squadron to see our new facility and how we honored the historical 18 SOS lineage. After some discussions, we decided the best opportunity would be during the reunion this fall as it was being held in Ft Walton Beach. It was at this time Gus mentioned John Hupe's mini-Stinger model and sent pictures of the first flight. He asked if we would be interested in displaying the model in the squadron – IF John would be willing to donate the plane! I was thrilled with the prospect of displaying this historical model in our squadron.

Over the summer months the plan began to develop and mature. What was once a simple "hang the model in the squadron" thought, rolled into the awesome idea of flying the plane one more time (thank you Lee Kyser)! The reunion committee did an outstanding job coordinating and bringing together the assets needed to have a fini-flight for the mini-Stinger. We in the 18 FLTS worked the plan for the open house and provided equipment to help facilitate the fini-flight. **Ms. Anissa Rush** (18 FLTS media support) spent countless hours compiling the 18th historical video montage – an eye-watering tribute to our history, including showcasing our current capabilities in test.

At last, we were ready for the open house. As I discussed that morning, we will have more historical patches (cut out of wood) in the auditorium and conference rooms. We also will be hanging the nose art that was painted by **TSgt Roy Gentry**, AC-130H sensor operator and one of many skilled test directors in the 18 FLTS.

I also need to say thank you to the **1st Special Operations Logistic Readiness Squadron** – without their support with transportation, the event would not have run as smoothly! Additional praise goes to the 4th SOS and 19th SOS who allowed us to visit the AC-130U that was being used as a ground-training device that day.

What an opportunity – showcase the new building while meeting the gunship forefathers! Nearly 100 gunship heroes and their families visited on Friday. The questions you asked sparked several fantastic stories from your days in Vietnam. Additionally, it was an opportunity for the 18 FLTS to showcase some of our current work. The squadron was buzzing with pride as the old Stingers mixed with the new Stingers. Even though this was focused more on the 18th side, we definitely wanted to make sure the 17th and 71st felt welcome too – you did just

(Continued on next page)



AC-119 model presentation to the 18th Flight Test Squadron:
 L-R: Mike Plummer, Gus Sininger (AC-119 Association President), Lt. Col. Duke Pope (18th FLTS/CC), Lt. Col. Kevin "Hubie" Huebert (18th FLTS/DO), Rob Campbell, John Hupe, Lee Kyser, (project coordinator) .

as much for the future of gunships, and we thank you for attending!

The Friday event was truly a squadron planned and executed event. Everyone pitched in to help. I do want to point out several individuals who remained behind the scenes but without their dedication and support, the day would not have been as special as it was: **MSgt John Hickman** (who could not be with us this weekend); **TSgt Sean Haugan** our picnic coordinator, **SSgt Brandon Boyd** (overall event planner/coordinator), **MSgt Mark McKinney** (transportation/gate access), **Mr. Bonifacio Perez** (photography, hallway window design, and trophy creator), and **Mr. Chuck Carey** (videographer).

Maj Gregg Holasut provided the sound-system for the fini-flight on Saturday. Several families attended the flight and enjoyed the model plane. It was another eye-watering event to see the hand-made AC-119 model take to the skies one more time! John – you designed an incredible model that flew beautifully (with the aide of the Eglin Model Airplane Club). The crew checklist and target on the ground further enhanced the moment. What another wonderful day – perfect weather too.

That night, the commander (**Lt Col Duke Pope**) and I accompanied by our wives attended your banquet. Yet another enjoyable event – I will never tire of hearing your war stories.* During the evening, **Mr Fred Rider** presented the squadron with his party suit. It will be displayed next to **Fred Graves'** in the squadron. Thank you! My goal is to find a way to display the party suites so both sides are visible with patches and decorations. I'll submit photos to the AC-119 Association once we finalize displays.

Finally, on Monday several members of the **Eglin Model Airplane Club** (restored the mini-Stinger) and the AC-119 Association returned to the 18 FLTS to present the model plane to the squadron. This model will be on loan from the AC-119 Association to the 18 FLTS for display in the open space above the front door. When you exit the elevator upstairs, you will look to your left (towards the glass) and see the mighty Stinger in an attack orbit.

I look forward to adding these historical artifacts to our squadron's heritage and I invite you back anytime. For those who do not live in the local area, I'll try to pass pictures of the updated walls, etc., once we get all the pieces in and hung. For those in the local area, maybe we can get together again in the future and you can see the improvements for yourselves! Fortifying the brotherhood from Vietnam Veterans to modern day testers – 18 SOS to the 18 FLTS Stingers!

To all the members of the AC-119 Association – I say thank you for your generosity and hospitality you showed throughout the weekend. You really made the 18 FLTS feel welcomed as part of your organization. **Thank you!**



Past President's Final Notes

Well another reunion has come and gone and by all accounts it was a very good reunion. We had a full agenda for all 4 days of the reunion. Thursday night started out with authentic Thai food at the local Bangkok House.

Friday morning the 18th Flight Test Squadron (FLTS) hosted us. We were picked up by bus and taken to Hurlburt Field for a tour of their facilities. A briefing and a tour of the new Gunships on the Flight Line were also conducted. After a BBQ lunch provided by the 18th, we were taken to the Base Air Park where the 'Shadow' and 'Stinger' Monuments are located for a small memorial for our fallen hero's. The word from our participants was that "we were treated with much respect, the men and women of the 18th FLTS were professional and dedicated, and they went out of their way to make us feel welcome and appreciated."

The **Friday Meet & Greet** was a house full with plenty of food for all, and Stormin' Norman providing the music.

Saturday was also a full day starting with our **Membership Meeting** in the morning. Although we did get 12 New Gunshippers to come to this reunion our membership is getting smaller. A new Board was elected and a change to our DOC's was made to make room for more board members. We added 3 new members-at-large and changed the Board Member-at-Large position to a Past President position, creating a total of 8 board members. Your new **Association President is Wayne Laessig, Vice President; Bob LaRosa, Past President; Gus Sininger, Secretary; Mike Drzyzga, Treasurer; Doug Wohlgamuth, and the 3 Members- at-Large are Jim Dunn; Joe Goryl and Jim Mattison.** Additionally, A VA representative gave a briefing on benefits for the spouses and us.

We then all car-pooled to a local field for the **flight of the AC-119K model gunship.** The model was originally built by John Hupe back in 1972, briefly flew then crashed. He shipped it home with the idea of rebuilding it some day, but as we all know things get in the way of best laid plans. So with the reunion in Fort Walton this year Lee Kyser thought it would be great to see it fly again. Lee made contact with John and convinced him to bring it to Fort Walton before the reunion after making contact with a Radio Control Model Club to see if they would help rebuild the plane. They said they would and they did just that. With all of us holding our breath, John got to participate in the flying demonstration by using dual controls. He was able to fly it and bring it in for a successful landing. After the flight, John said he would donate the model to the 18th FLTS for display in their building entrance.

Saturday evening was **Banquet night at the Elk's Club** just down from the Hotel. With no guest speaker this year we announced our new Board Members and held a raffle. Association member Ron Soderquist donated a new, customized, Competition Match AR-15 rifle. The AR-15, which was on display, will be raffled off at our reunion in San Antonio, Texas in 2013.

I gave out three awards, two **Above and Beyond Awards for outstanding contributions**, and one Magellan award. One Above and Beyond Award was given to **Ron Soderquist**, which was delayed from last year, as he was not at that reunion. One was also given to **Tony "Pakman" Pakutinski.** The **Magellan Award** is given to the one that travels the farthest to get to our reunions, and that one went to **Henry "Buck" Buchanan.**

Sunday was Golf day but I think they got rained on and I don't know who won it. The Gulf Shrimp Broil had to be held in the Breakfast area of the Hotel, but boy was it good.

All in all it was a moving reunion, with everything coming off without a hitch. It was very gratifying for me to see another successful get-together.

Although I'm no longer your Association President, I am still on the Board and in the mix of things as always. And as always, I look forward to seeing you all at **Reunion XIV, in San Antonio.**

P.S. In this newsletter there is more information on the AR-15 Raffle!

Yours in the Brotherhood
Gus Sininger, Past President.



Get your piece of history

From Ron Soderquist.

- Colt H-Bar Sporter Match Grade AR-15
- CAL. .223 OR 5.56 NATO
- Custom baked on finish
- A-2 Sight System. Fully adjustable rear, front adjustable for elevation
- Custom presentation grade walnut wood stocks

**Drawing to be held at the
San Antonio Reunion.**

It's one (1) Ticket for \$10, Six (6) Tickets for \$50, Thirteen (13) Tickets for \$100. Send your Check to Doug Wohlgamuth 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL. 33543-5726.

You can win this customized one-of-a-kind semi-automatic rifle, complete with a custom wood display case, plaque with the "lady of the Night" poem and the 71st, 17th and 18th SOS squadrons listed.

This unique rifle was custom built to honor Captain Terence Courtney and the sacrifices of the crew of **Stinger 41**. The crewmembers of stinger 41 are also listed on the weapon. In addition, the names of the three crewmembers that are "still on duty" are laser etched on the butt stock.

"I also hope to draw attention to the dedication of each person who flew and supported our "lady of the night". As time goes on, we tend to let our memories dim from time to time, it is a good thing to bring forth our past and remember what the word "brother" means."

Ron Soderquist, FE
18th SOS



Important Reminder for Association Members

If you change your contact information, email or postal mail address, please remember to contact the Association Secretary with your updates. Also, mailing costs are increasing, If you are getting the Newsletter by postal mail, and are able to read it on a computer, please tell the Secretary to change the distribution list from postal to email.

Reunion XIII Ft. Walton Beach, FL



Firing Circle 6

Re
Ft



Union XIII
Walton Beach, FL

Firing Circle 7

San Antonio Reunion September 26- 29, 2013 at the El Tropicano Hotel on the RiverWalk

Our 14th AC-119 Gunship Reunion includes Reunion or Tour events from September 26th through 29th (Thursday through Sunday), as well as tons of great things to see or do while you're in the San Antonio area!

The *El Tropicano* is situated on the banks of the San Antonio River and is one of the original RiverWalk's hallmark hotels; a well-kept & super bargain for the location, with our Hootch Room opening right onto part of the RiverWalk. Features included free full breakfasts for AC-119 Reunion folks staying in the hotel, high-speed internet, a fully equipped fitness centre & heated outdoor pool. Breakfast, lunch & dinner are served at the hotel's restaurant, **Mangos**, which offers American & Latin cuisine. Our hotel rates are \$122.59 all inclusive, plus \$9.00 per day if you'll be parking a car. Our Reunion rates are good from September 20th through October 3rd (dependent on availability) – a great deal for those wanting to take a longer vacation to see more of this great part of Texas! Guests can also enjoy a smoothie or coffee at **Expreso**, the hotel's on-site cafe. For \$1.10 you can hop a trolley to get almost everywhere downtown, or \$4 for an all-day pass, or \$15 for a half-fare Big Pass good for unlimited rides on all regular, express & streetcar service throughout the month indicated on the pass.

Some planned Reunion Events & Activities are:

Sept 25th

12 PM: Hootch opens & stays open till 6 PM Sunday night in Trinidad Room of the El Tropicano Hotel. Soda, Beer, & Snacks FREE to Reunion Attendees, except "during" Friday Meet & Greet, Saturday Banquet & Sunday BBQ. Bring your picture albums & memorabilia to share – we'll scan pictures & documents for inclusion in our AC-119 Historical Archives. Videotape sessions (sign up in the Hootch) all weekend – tell your stories about AC-119s for our kids, your family, friends, & history.

Thursday, Sept 26th

8:45 AM – 4 PM: Group Tour: To be determined.

Friday, Sept 27th

6 PM – 10 PM: Meet & Greet in the El Tropicano Casino Room. Buffet Style. Fee \$29. Dress casual or Party Suits; Pay as You go Bars.

Saturday, Sept 28th

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM: Membership Meeting in El Tropicano Casino Room.

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM: Spouses Meeting in the El Tropicano

6 PM – Happy Hour in El Tropicano Casino Room. Dress, Suit, or Party Suit; Pay as You go Bars.

7 PM – Banquet Dinner

9 PM – Association Awards & Raffles

Sunday, Sept 29th

9 AM - Golf Tournament: Green Fees \$20; details from Doug Wohlgamuth & Col Mac

5 PM – 9 PM - Farewell Tex-Mex BBQ in El Tropicano Casino Room, Buffet Style. Fee \$28. Dress casual; Pay as You go Bar.

For more information
Watch future Newsletters and the website

President's Message



Greetings all! We had a Great! Fort Walton Reunion with some long-lost friends showing up....a friend once told me old friendships are for always and he was right. You can say the same for the new friendships made at our reunions. First and foremost...Lots of folks deserve a loud **Thank You:**

- **Gus Sininger** – fantastic Reunion Coordinator AND President for about the last eleventy-seven years!
- **Lee Kyser** – the idea man behind the “reflight of the Hupe” – with an all-star cast including John Hupe, the Eglin Radio-Controlled Modellers Club, and the 18th FLTS. Stay tuned for a future DVD from JP Maclsaac on “Then and Now – A Stinger Model’s Story”.
- **18th Flight Test Squadron** – so many to thank for graciously hosting us to meet and swap stories with today’s Air Force Warriors. Hubie, a huge Sierra Hotel to all and thank you for joining us at our Banquet with your Commander Lt Col Duke Pope and your (as Gus put it) oh-so-easy-on-the-eyes spouses :>)
- **Everyone who brought something for our raffle** – we appreciate it!! **Ron Soderquist**, your rifles and pistols will become treasures for the lucky raffle winners!
- **Debbie Barbee and Gus** – many thanks for the Shadow and Stinger ascots! We learned most of our necks are a ‘lot’ bigger now and we hope to have more for next reunion!

We lost too many friends and loved ones in 2012 and I know they’ll always be in our hearts – and at every reunion. Let us all remember **Don Jerrels**, 71st SOS; **Bob McNew**, **Ed McCallion**, 17th SOS; **Frank Zemanick**, **Fred Blum**, **Bill Feezor**, and Art Perry’s wife **Joyce**, 18th SOS; and dear friend **Chuck Lunsford**.

There were also lots of good things happening in 2012 like making contact with the **73rd SOS** at Cannon AFB flying new AC-130W *Stinger* II Gunships, previously known as the MC-130W Dragon Spear. **Mac Maclsaac and Bob LaRosa** visited the 73rd and they’re now our 4th Heritage Squadron along with the **18th FLTS** at Hurlburt, **17th SOS** flying MC-130P Combat Shadows out of Kadena, and **71st SOS** flying CV-22 Ospreys out of Kirtland. **Larry “Doc” Fletcher** worked with the Air Commando Association’s leaders to increase recognition of the AC-119’s significant role in the Vietnam War. His AC-119 article “Gunships III” is in the Fall 2012 issue of *Air Commando Journal*. **Tony “Pakman” Pakutinski** started an AC-119 Spouses Facebook page – check it out at Shadownandstinger Spousegroup.

Reunion 14 will be in San Antonio – where almost all of us started in the Air Force. Lots to see and do thanks to **Jerry and Ellen Hester**, our San Antonio Reunion Coordinators.

Reunion 15 will be back in Albuquerque, NM at the MCM Elegante on September 17th through 21st, 2014 with a fantastic rate of \$87 (tax inclusive). Plans include an El Paso day as well as activities with our **71st SOS** Heritage Squadron at Kirtland AFB. Thanks to Mac Maclsaac for replicating his Reunion Coordinator role on one of our most successful reunions in ABQ in 2006.

My Goals for 2013...

-Double the names we have contact with on our Master Contact list;
-Have another great Reunion in San Antonio *with more of us there*;
-Archive/record more videos;
-Stay healthy and happy!

*The Best for 2013 to you and yours from me and mine,
Wayne & Lynette Laessig*

Firing Circle 9

Flight of the "Stinger"

40 Years later

By Tracy Conner / Contributing Writer
Published in the North Ft. Walton Daily News
Friday, October 5, 2012

NICEVILLE – It's midmorning on a Saturday on the Mullet Festival grounds, and there's a lot of activity going on. Soccer is being played on a couple of the fields, and baseball on another. A group of grandfatherly types has gathered there too, anticipating the second-ever test flight of a model airplane with a lot of history behind it.



"A lot of us are very emotionally involved in this," says Ron Van Putte, who has been in the Eglin Aero Modellers club, building and flying remote-control model aircraft, for 40 years. "It's not even my airplane and I'm really shaking. We just want this to work so badly."

The airplane is a radio-controlled model of an AC-119K *Stinger* gunship. It belongs to 69-year-old John Hupe of Wamego, Kan., who designed and built it from scratch in 1972, while he was flying the real thing out of Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand as part of the 18th Special Operations Squadron.

Hupe spent a year building his model airplane, flew it once, and crashed it. "One engine quit and it fell into a mud hole," he recalls all these years later. "Honestly, though, it didn't bother me a bit. I was done with my year in Vietnam, and I was going home. I was smiling all the way."

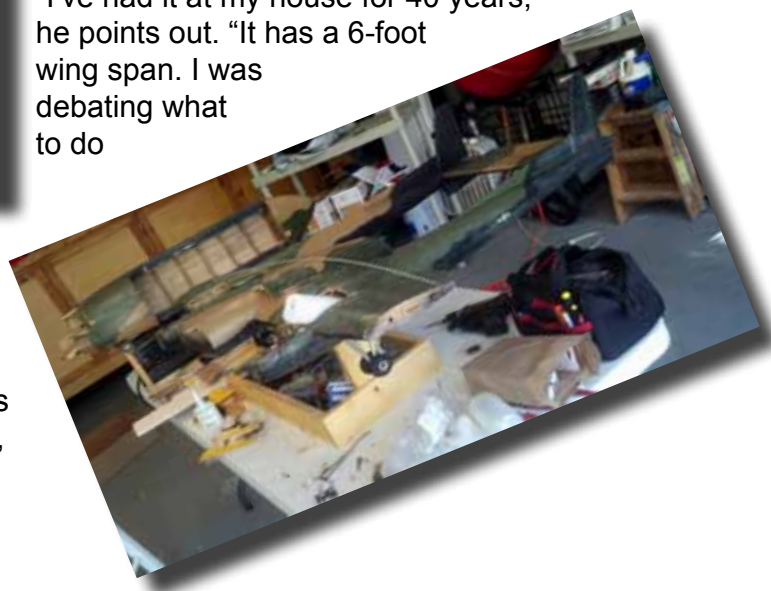
Hupe's model came home to Kansas too, and there it sat, boxed up. It became part of the lore of the AC-119 Association, whose members started having annual reunions a dozen years ago. An idea was floated: How about this time, we get the thing fixed, and fly it at the 2012 reunion, to be held Sept. 26-30 in Fort Walton Beach?



Hupe himself was thrilled at the thought. "I've had it at my house for 40 years," he points out. "It has a 6-foot wing span. I was debating what to do

with it, donate it to someone? Put it in a museum? I have three sons but they don't have room in their homes for something that size."

So in July, Hupe carted his prized possession to Fort Walton Beach – a 1,100-mile-drive from Kansas – and handed it off to the Eglin Aero Modellers Club, whose members had agreed to restore the airplane and make it fly again. Last weekend, Hupe was in town again, to see them make good on their pledge.





And it wasn't just any flight. Back in its heyday, the AC-119 flew over the Ho Chi Minh Trail "to try and stop the movement of ammunition, troops, guns and everything else the NVA was moving from North Vietnam to South Vietnam," explains reunion attendee James Dunn, a 75-year-old retired lieutenant colonel from Michigan.

So the model airplane's demonstration flight would be a simulation over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, circa 1972. There was a mission checklist (*in large print*), a target vehicle and even special effects (*a bit of fireworks to look like gunfire from the aircraft*). It all went off without a hitch. "It was very much a success," reports Hupe, who was even able to be at his plane's controls for a short while. "I can't tell you how good I felt, how moved I really was, to see it up and flying."



Afterward, members of the AC-119 Association formally presented Hupe's model airplane to their modern-day counterparts at the 18th Flight Test Squadron at Hurlburt Field, who plan to put it on permanent display.

"It seems to me to be the best spot in the world for it," Hupe says. "They know the history of it. It pretty well made my day, doing that. It's such a fitting place for the model to go."





On August 22, 2012, Gus Sininger, AC-119 Gunship Association president, presented *Stinger* and *Shadow* gunship Lithographs to George W. Jones, the AF Armament Museum's Director.

Mark Your Calendars

Reunion XIV
 San Antonio, TX
 El Tropicano

September 26 - 29, 2013

Reunion XV
 will be in Albuquerque
 Sep 17 - 21, 2014

Help Save Association Resources

If you receive multiple copies, or wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, contact Association secretary Mike Drzyzga at [drzyzga513@hotmail.com] so we can update our mailing list.

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