



## Association President's Message - July 2019

### **Greeting fellow Gunshippers, friends and family.**

Happy summertime to all. I know there has been so much nasty springtime weather across the USA. Many of our associates felt some set-back from the weather. Hopefully your summertime will be enjoyable. Excitement is growing for our reunion in Salt Lake City. Andrea and I have our flight reservations from Newark, NJ (EWR) to SLC. As many email threads and Facebook posts demonstrate, we are looking forward to a special time with those that can attend. If you are already registered, and you do not see your buddies name on the Who's Coming list, get on the phone and encourage them to attend. Our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary will only happen once!

**New Member of the Zipper Club.** On June 4, I had five arteries by-passed during open heart surgery. All went well, and I am on the road to full recovery. I discovered that very many of my friends and associates in this Association, and the American Legion, and the Senior Club in town, have a long incision down the chest that looks like a zipper, hence the "zipper club". For those of you who caught this news on our Facebook Page, and sent lots of love, prayers and well-wishes – **thank you!** It has been difficult working while on pain meds, and I feel that I am falling behind. Nevertheless, your Board and all its committees are working full throttle to keep the Association moving in the correct direction. On a side note, it pains me to see in the past month so many of our senior members and families – serious illness, medical set-backs and losses. This is clearly a sign of the aging of our Associates, and in my mind, a very compelling reason to make it to the Salt Lake City reunion in September

**Successful "outreach" efforts.** One of our very "busy" Associates is Ev Sprous. Ev took the initiative and has been successfully locating folks that we've just lost contact with. He started with the 71<sup>st</sup> SOS and unfortunately learned that the reason we lost contact is that our guys have passed. But, on a way happier note, he also made some contacts with guys who didn't know about us or reconnected some who hadn't updated their personal contact info. I spoke with a 71<sup>st</sup>/17<sup>st</sup> SOS Pilot who is thrilled we found him, and is coming to SLC (his 1<sup>st</sup> reunion), AND he is signed up to do a personal history video. Great job Ev, Thank You.

**Personal Interview (Oral History) Videos.** Here is a very newsworthy update. Almost all of the personal video interviews are easily viewed from an easy to get-to link: <https://island-escape.com/AC119/> on the Association's web site, which was reorganized to put all our history book stories, interviews, and personal stories on one page. A big Thank You goes to Roy Davis, with help from Everett Sprous and Jerry Hester to attain this achievement. Also remember that the Association is supporting new video sessions at the SLC reunion. Many reunion registrants have signed up already. I encourage you to help tell the story of the AC-119 gunships – do it not for yourself, but do it for your family's history.

**T-Shirts for 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion:** Since this is a special reunion, we decided to make a special t-shirt. These t-shirts can be ordered on-line until August 7<sup>th</sup>. The T-shirt orders are going strongly – as of this note, more than 80 are ordered. Woo-hoo!. The cost per shirt is approximately \$18.50 plus tax. There is 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. If you have any questions call Roy Davis at 253-549-2044 or email at [roy@island-escape.com](mailto:roy@island-escape.com). **LAST DAY TO ORDER IS AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup>**. Link: <https://www.customink.com/g/wvq0-00bu-h3fe>. You can also find a link to this Order Form on the Association Web-site under the Quartermaster's page

One of the featured stories in this Firing Circle is the **50<sup>th</sup> Homecoming Anniversary celebration of the 71<sup>st</sup> SOS reservists return to Columbus, IN. Thank you** to Jim Alvis for writing a super summary of this very special event. Keep scanning your inbox!

That's it for now,  
Yours in Service,

Mike Drzyzga, President 2016-2019

**2019 – Reunion XX, Salt Lake City, UT, September 6-8**  
**“Celebrating 50 Years of Brotherhood”**

We have been working diligently to organize the many pieces and parts that will result in a great 20<sup>th</sup> Reunion Anniversary and 50<sup>th</sup> SEA Anniversary AC-119 Gunship Reunion in Salt Lake City. The Little America Hotel is providing great accommodations for all our reunion events. [Reunion Registration](#) is up and running on the AC-119 Association Website. [Registration](#) for the [Reunion](#) and [Hotel Reservations](#) are two separate processes. Secure [Reunion Registration](#) payment is available using PayPal, Credit card, or Check.

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 and has a great free Museum. You can [Register](#) for the [Reunion](#) at <https://www.ac119gunships.com/reunion/upcoming-reunion/>

**Please remember, [Hotel Reservations](#) are not part of the [Reunion Registration](#) and you must contact the hotel separately.** Call 1-800-437-5288 to reserve your room & tell them you are with the AC-119 Gunship Association; or you can use their website <https://reservations.travelclick.com/4650?groupID=2413875>. **BOOK NOW!** To guarantee you get our Reunion rate, you must reserve your room by August 4, 2019. **NOTE:** as President Mike Drzyzga described in his recent Flash Message, we had promised to reduce the Salt Lake City (SLC) Anniversary Reunion costs using Sponsorships/Donations and some of our Association funds we’ve been carrying over year to year. Great News, promise fulfilled! If you haven’t yet registered for our SLC Anniversary Reunion, new lower fees are in effect! Our new, reduced Event fees are: Meet & Greet **\$35**; Banquet **\$45**; and Farewell BBQ **\$40**! The Little America Hotel rates are reduced to **\$139** per night (all charges and tax inclusive)! If you already registered, you will love this news: You’ll find a refund check in your Registration packet for the difference between what you paid and the revised (reduced) fees.

**Who’s Coming To The 2019 AC-119 Reunion**

Jeff Baker	Ron & Patty Gilbert	Dave Olsen
Frank & Shirley Bartlett	Karen Graves	Dan & Jacque Olson
Jack & Carolyn Bastin	Rich Hall	Vern & Betty Raveling
Tad & Tricia Berkebile	Jerry & Ellen Hester	George & Becky Renfroe
Jim Boyd	Ron & Carol Hinton	Gary & Becky Rubingh
Liz (Webmaster) & Don Buss	Baby Huey Hunter	Terry Sarul
Bruce & Jo Anna Byrd	Jake & Charlotte Jacobson	Jim & Christine Shope
Pete & Dean (Brother) Chamberlain	Mike Krauss	Gus Sininger
Don & Peggy Craig	Wayne & Lynette Laessig	Ski & Yami (Lust) Sledzinski
Roy Davis & Paula Pascoe	Ralph & Joyce Lefarth	Ev Sprous
Mike & Andrea Drzyzga	Donald Luke	Larry Swanson
Wade Dunn	Col Mac, Nancy, & JP Mac Isaac	Greg & Lois Terral
Dan & Kay Eramo	Dale & Jeanette Martin	Loren & Judi Van Duyn
Allen & Judy Evans	Jim Mattison	Dave & Mary Voisey
Larry & Sue Fletcher	Cash McCall	Hans & Karen Wurfel
LeRoy & Rose Frahm	Larry & Susie Mersek	Doug Wohlgamuth
Lloyd & Mary Ellen Froelich	Bruce Milne	John & Laura Wolff
John, Victoria, & John Funk Jr	Dan & Geri O’Leary	Bill & Paula Zito
Mario & Thelma Alfaro & Guests Anthony & Jessica Perez		
Jim & Elaine Montgomery & Guests Bruce & Marlene Artis		
Bill & Wilma Tyler & Daughter Cheree & Steve Bachmann		
Chuck & Stephanie Williams; children Kate E, Hannah, Jack, James, Charlie, Alex, Matthew, Elesa Huibregtse		

Quartermaster’s Notice: The Quartermaster’s entire inventory **will not** be hauled to Salt Lake City. Therefore, if you want to obtain Association shirts, coins, hats, mugs, or other items **PLEASE** order them through the Association’s web site – **AT LEAST two weeks prior to the reunion**. Browse to: [www.ac119gunships.com](http://www.ac119gunships.com), then click on “Quartermaster’s” drop down menu, and click on “Store”. It’s ALL there!

**Future Reunion Planning**  
**2020 – Reunion XXI, Ft Walton Beach, FL**

Gus Sininger and Larry Hunter volunteered to host and coordinate our 21<sup>st</sup> reunion at Ft Walton Beach, FL. Gus and Larry are actively moving forward with the organization and planning for the reunion, checking hotels and other facilities to be utilized for the reunion. Two legacy Special Operations units at Hurlburt (the 18<sup>th</sup> FLTS and the 73<sup>rd</sup> SOS Shadows) will also welcome us again.

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**AC119 Association Membership Updates**

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Members:

- George Hoffman, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Maint, Associate Life 501
- Tony La Rosa, son of 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Gunner Bob La Rosa, Associate Life 129
- Lt Col Matt Shrull, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Commander, Honorary Life 496
- Larry K Swanson, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Phase Dock Maintenance, **Life 500**

The Association also appreciates very much those “annual” members who respond promptly to the regular request to renew your membership.

- William "Andy" T. Anderson, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, IO
- Duane Arnold, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV
- Oscar Ferrell, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV
- Kenneth "Festus" Keister, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, FE
- Dan O'Leary, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV
- David T Olsen, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- David Rush, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Weapons Maintenance
- Andrew Scherer, Close friend of Bob La Rosa
- John Windsor, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot

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

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**Final Flight**

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:

- Henry “Hank” Alau, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Nav, passed on March 6, 2019
- Bob La Rosa, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Gunner, passed on May 25, 2019.
- Fred Rider, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Gunner, passed on July 5, 2019.
- Tom Sullivan, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Nav, April 6, 2019

Our Membership Coordinator, Ev Sprous, continues his Outreach Initiative to find our lost AC-119 air & ground crew. Through Ev’s efforts and our AC-119 Facebook site we refreshed out contact with several of our AC-119 Gunship family – welcome to all! We also learned of many who have passed on, some years ago, some recently.. While it’s sad to know some of our guys are gone, it does give us some closure, and it reinforces how important it is to get together to refresh old friendships & make some new ones at Reunions.

- Fred Boling, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Pilot, passed on October 11, 2011
- Paul Crotty, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Nav, passed on February 12, 2010.
- Ben McPherson, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Pilot, passed on March 29, 2017.
- Bruce Mohan, 71<sup>st</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Maintenance, Passed on July 1, 2015.
- Spencer Nichols, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Nav, passed on September 7, 1997
- Duane O’Berg, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Nav, passed on May 16, 2012
- William O’Brien, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Pilot, passed on February 1, 2016
- Frank Richards, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Nav, passed on March 12, 2017
- Frank Rostkowski, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Pilot, passed on April 27, 1989
- Marcus Schultz, 56<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Fire Control, passed on July 28, 2018.
- Art Serumgard, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger IO, passed during December 19, 2003.

We also note with sadness, the passing of Betsy Alau, wife of 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Nav Hank Alau, April 19, 2019; and Marilyn James, wife of our first Association President & 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Pilot Chuck James, April 23, 2019

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! PLEASE consider coming to our 50<sup>th</sup> SEA Anniversary Reunion in Salt Lake City this September 4-8, 2019 to refresh and enjoy the friendships you forged, before you sadly see their names posted here. Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/> & our Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>

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### **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 **SAVE** us a lot by avoiding postage, printer paper, envelopes, ink cartridges, etc. Contact Association Secretary Ralph Lefarth, via email at [ralph-l@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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 602 members** – not just directly related AC119ers, but also history buffs, AC-130 folk (including some new 73<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com), or (MST) Cell phone: (302) 249-1499.

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### **2019 - 71st SOS Reservists 50th Anniversary Homecoming Reunion**

**Courtesy of Jim Alvis**

Thursday June 6, 2019 was a day to remember for 71<sup>st</sup> SOS reservists. Approximately seventy-five reservists and seventy-five family members and guests gathered to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 71<sup>st</sup>'s return home from Vietnam. The event was the single largest gathering of 71<sup>st</sup> reservists since arriving home on 6 June 1969.

Dixie Wall began to plan for this event last fall and she did a fantastic job. Kudos to Dixie and her helpers and benefactors for making such a memorable event. A lunch was served in the Columbus Municipal Airport Terminal Building followed by a few announcements and the introduction of special guest Lt Col Matt Shrull, Commander of the current day 71<sup>st</sup> SOS at Kirtland AFB, NM. Lt Col Shrull presented a beautiful framed graphic of the CV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft to the Vietnam era 71<sup>st</sup> SOS. The print will be on display in the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum.

A second surprise announcement was made by Nick Firestone, President of the Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum. He announced the museum is in the process of purchasing a C-119 for static display at the Columbus Municipal Airport. Since the museum was dedicated in 1992 there have been ongoing discussions and a desire to acquire a C-119, since it best represents the longest residing aircraft type at Bakalar from 1942 to 1970. The museum is seeking donations to help make it happen <http://www.atterburybakalarairmuseum.org/>



Special banner for reservists to sign



Special coffee mugs for attending reservists



Group photo in front of Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum



Five of many 71st aircraft maintainers



Celebrating the 50-year homecoming



Lt Col Matt Shrull, current 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Commander



One of three C-141As delivering 71<sup>st</sup> reservists back home on 6 June 1969.



Future site of a C-119 aircraft at the Columbus Municipal Airport