

**Association President's Message – May 2020**

**Greetings from New Jersey fellow AC-119 Gunship Brothers and families!!**

We are in a global situation unlike anything we have ever seen in our life-times. My everyday activities are extremely altered compared to what was previously a life of normal retired guy. Nonetheless, I have taken on again the responsibility to lead the Association moving forward. Thankfully, the members of the Board of Directors, appointed officers, and committees are still working, focused on continued success. We are fortunate to have dedicated and conscience folks participating. The Shadow and Stinger spirit is as strong as ever.

**REUNION 2020 IS CANCELLED!**

It saddens me to announce that the Board has decided that the Association will postpone the Ft. Walton Beach reunion until 2021. We considered all of the uncertainty associated with the Oct. timeframe, we've had meaningful discussions with the Four Points Hotel staff (Thank You Gus Sininger), we discussed many of our member's health concerns, and then we envisioned a reunion requiring social distancing and face masks. No way will that work. Will there be another spike in "the curve?" Will a therapeutic or vaccine be widely available? No one knows if this is the perfect decision. Personally, I love FWB and will miss all the activities we would be doing. Thankfully, reunion coordinator Jerry McDonald for the Branson, MO reunion is willing and able to work on moving that reunion from 2021 to 2022.

Thank you to Association newsletter editor Don Luke, for pulling the May newsletter together. Please, thoroughly check it out. Beyond all the routine news, there is so much information regarding: the raffle for a highly customized semi-auto Kimber Classic .45 ACP pistol; new items in the Quartermaster's store; an ongoing request for copies of your Special Orders from our Outreach Committee chairperson Ev Sprouse; the Sponsorship Program, and more.

I pray that if we all do the correct things to stay safe, we will get past this global crisis and stay healthy.

All the best,

Mike Drzyzga



**NOTE:** Doug Wohlgamuth is processing your Reunion Registration refunds, and you'll receive those shortly. If you already reserved a hotel room at the Four Points, please contact them direct at 850-243-8116 to cancel!! There are no cancellation fees.

## Outgoing President's Message

To my AC-119 Gunship Brothers, families, and friends,

I never really wanted or asked to be President of the Association, and even said as much when I accepted the position. Since my election, I've tried my best to help the Association, and I feel we've made major improvements in some areas. Along the way, however, we faced a number of unexpected challenges, which took a lot of effort to resolve. I thought we had finally turned the corner and things would run better, but new issues kept coming up that caused me much more stress than I needed.

My doctor has been after me for quite a while to cut back on the amount of stress in my life. Unfortunately, I've had too many friends unexpectedly pass away in the past few months, and I would prefer not to join them. Between my responsibilities as your President, my ongoing health concerns, problems with my extended family (siblings), and discussions with my immediate family members, I regretfully decided it was time to resign from my position as your President. I hope you can understand my decision, but I think it's in the best interest for both my health and the Association's.

At this point, I'm still planning on attending the reunion at Fort Walton Beach in October, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Jerry Hester  
Immediate Past President



***Note:** Due to space constraints in the previous Firing Circle, Jerry' Hester's Outgoing President's message was not included.*

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### **Reunion Photo Request from Past Reunions for Project**

Hello all AC-119er's, I need your help. I'm working on a little project and I am looking for pictures from past reunions. Table Pictures at the Saturday night Banquets are especially sought after, candid pictures and fond memories of those who are no longer with us. We will accept photographs or digital pictures. Each picture **MUST** have the NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS in that picture, and please include the REUNION YEAR. You can send photographs or digital pictures to me, Andrea Drzyzga 37 Pecan Lane, Oak Ridge, NJ 0438 or email [secretaryAC119@optonline.net](mailto:secretaryAC119@optonline.net). I will return your photographs!!

Please only send 1-3 of your best photos. We are looking for good representation of our 20 years of reunions! We will sort through as many as we can, we may not be able to use all that we receive during one particular year

Andrea Drzyzga

Secretary

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## AC-119 Association Membership Updates

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Members:

- Frank Baehre, Life 521, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Richard Hendrickson, Life 522, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Crew Chief
- Kenneth Hall, Life 523, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS
- Robert Lyall, Life 524, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- Frederick Dietsch, Life 526, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV/NOS
- Clifford Thomas, Life 527, 71<sup>st</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> SOS, FE
- Robert McNamara, Life 528, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Charles Wildes, Life 529, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- David B. Kuhn, Life 530, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Jerry Wood, Life 531, 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> SOS, FE
- James Quigley, Life 532, 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV/NOS/FLIR
- Robert S. Piercy, Life 533, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, IO
- Jim Russell, Life 534, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV
- Karl R. Bossi, Life 535, 71<sup>st</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> SOS 14<sup>th</sup> SOW, EOD
- Joseph Sullivan, Life 537, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Air Crew
- Gary L. Smeal, Life 538, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Ground Crew
- John C. Chris Chandler, Life 539, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Kenneth W. Nash, Life 540, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Shadow Instructor Gunner
- Robert C. Brown, Life 541, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- Gregory J. Dittmore, Life 542, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, IO
- Robert E. "Bobby" Carwile, Life 543, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- Bruce A DeWoody, Life 545, Instructor Gunner at Lockbourne
- Greg Blackmon, Life 546, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gun Shop
- Fred Gockel, Associate Life 536, Hurlburt, 1983-92. Mx/Flt Eng on AC-130, Special AC-47 project for El Salvador (Peace Asp) 1985, and Colombia (Peace Emerald) 1987

### New Annual Members

- Nanci Browning, widow of Donald Browning, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Don Bott, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV/NOS
- Mitch Dorger, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV/NOS/FLIR
- Tom Newbold, 415<sup>th</sup> SOTS
- Rev Kenneth Packard, 14<sup>th</sup> AMS, Comm
- Richard Williams, 71<sup>st</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- Gary Zeiler, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Gunner
- Stephen Zolock, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Robert Aspinwall, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV/NOS
- Berny Bradach, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV
- Chuck Batula, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Clyde Groninga, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Crew Chief
- Bruce Maxwell, 56<sup>th</sup>, Maintenance
- Charlie Meier, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS, Pilot
- Charles Pollock, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, pilot
- Kenneth Vath, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, Ground Crew
- Donald Calvert, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS, NAV

## Final Flight

We remember our human frailty, and the strength of our brotherhood, in the loss of these who joined our Final Flight. You might notice that some who took their Final Flight did so long ago. Ev Sprous and his Outreach Team do a super job locating, contacting, and reconnecting with our remaining living crewmates. They also find many who are already deceased. They can only reconnect us with our remaining living Brothers if they know who to look for! **PLEASE** visit <https://www.ac119gunships.com/membership-contact-information/alpha-roster> and add any missing names or contacts you have. 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:

- Larry P. Anduss, 4<sup>th</sup> SOS AC-47 Nav, passed June 13, 2019
- Doug S. Blair, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Gunner, passed on March 14, 2020.
- Ray Bortz, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Gunner, passed on December 25, 2007
- Robert “Bob” Derr, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Pilot, passed in December 2019
- Duane Ferneau, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Maintenance, passed on January 20, 2020
- Seth “Bert” Hodges, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Nav, passed on November 19, 2019
- Jack Pilson, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS FE, passed in May 2002
- William G. Pugh, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS FE, passed on March 4, 2020
- James “Jim” Sands II, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Maintenance, passed on February 6, 2020
- William Ubinger, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Nav, passed on September 19, 2011
- Eugene “Gino” Veltre, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Nav, passed on September 19, 2011
- Lance A. Weyrough, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Maintenance, passed on February 24, 2000
- Donald F. Zeorlin, AC-119 Maintenance, passed on September 11, 2011

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call site <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> and our Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>. Lastly, please visit <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!

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### AC-119 Commemorative Pistol Raffle

- Kimber Classic Stainless Steel 1911 Style Pistol
- .45 ACP Caliber with 5-inch barrel
- Combat Trigger and Beavertail Grip Safety
- Ambidextrous Extended Thumb Safety
- Tactical Hammer & Sear
- Flat Checkered Main Spring Housing
- Open Mag Well
- Fitted Barrel Bushing with Guide Rod
- Night sights Installed (May be changed to fiber optics)
- Original Rosewood Grip Panels Will Be Sent Included
- Custom Engraved Grips Will Be Fitted with Association Patch on one grip panel, the Brothers image on the other grip panel
- Custom Box for Storage
- Slide will have Vietnam 68 – 73 and the 71st, 17th & 18th SOS engraved



**NOTE:** Photo shows a typical Kimber Stainless pistol, not the final customized pistol provided by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. The actual pistol will be on display at the 2021 Ft. Walton Beach reunion and the drawing will be held at the 2022 Branson Reunion.

## Commemorative Pistol Raffle Tickets Are:

- 1 For \$10.00
- 6 For \$55.00
- 13 For \$120.00
- **LIMIT 100 Tickets per person.**

Pay by Paypal to [dawohlgamuth@gmail.com](mailto:dawohlgamuth@gmail.com). Put "Pistol Bids" in the PayPal subject line.

You can also send Doug a check or money order TO: Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726. Be sure to indicate that the payment is for the Pistol raffle.

Winning ticket will be drawn at the 2022 Branson, MO reunion.

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## Important Email Address Changes

Please make note of the following email address changes:

Everett Sprous's new email address is "[ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com](mailto:ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com)"

Andrea Drzyzga's new email address is "[secretaryac119@optonline.net](mailto:secretaryac119@optonline.net)"

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## Request From Ev Sprous For Copies of Military Orders

Please check your lockers, check your desks, check your binders, check your computers and check the old shoe boxes. If you have copies of orders, awards, decorations or anything else from your time with the AC-119 gunships and haven't already provided a copy to Ev Sprous for the Association Records Collection, make a paper copy and mail it to Ev Sprous at 2615 N. Columbus Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85712. Most orders have more than just one name on them. You may have the missing piece of paper that helps Col Mac get a long overdue award, or to help validate a VA claim, for a fellow AC-119 Gunshipper.

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## REUNION T-SHIRTS – 2020 COVID 19 / 2021 VERSION

Surprise!!! This is the new 2021 version of our reunion t-shirt. The date on the front has been changed to 2021 so this t-shirt will work for Fort Walton Beach next year. The back lists the 2020 Reunion as COVID-19 2020 with FWB 2021 added. The t-shirts come in short sleeve, long sleeve men's and women's styles. There is a choice of four colors and the prices range from \$10.66 to \$13.95 (plus shipping) for up to XL, and slightly more for larger sizes. This is bound to be a collector's item (as the 2020 t-shirt already is :->)! To check out the design or order t-shirts, click on this [T-SHIRT ORDER FORM](#). Questions call Roy Davis at (253)549-2044



## Administrative Updates & Reminders

1. PLEASE remember to contact your group POC, the Membership Coordinator (Ev Sprous), or the Association Secretary (Andrea Drzyzga) 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, Roy Davis, your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW if you want future Newsletters & FLASHES sent via email. You can **SAVE** us a lot by reducing the cost of postage, printer paper, envelopes, ink cartridges, etc. Contact Association Membership Coordinator Ev Sprous, via email at [ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com](mailto:ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com) or call (520) 528-9444.
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, tablet or cell phone, then you have to join the Association's **Facebook page**. It now has **over 632 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.