

### Association President's Message – July 2022

Greetings from NJ to AC-119 Gunshippers, friends, and family! I hope summertime 2022 is treating everyone well.

1. Branson, MO, Reunion XXII, Sept 28 - Oct 2, 2022: Take a look at the Who's Coming list and see all of the AC-119ers attending this year – I'm excited, we're expecting a great turn-out. I am hopeful the trend will continue to see more of our younger family members attend. The reunion flyer and registration forms are on the Association's website. Also, V.P. Roy Davis sent out an email FLASH message so you can easily order various reunion T-Shirts. GREAT SELECTION, get 'em now! Here's the link: **Custom Ink Group Orders - GUNSHIP REUNION**. This is a cost-effective way to reduce our inventory and eliminate hauling shirts across the USA. Thank you again, Roy! **NOTE:** For many of you planning to attend this reunion, IF you have an AC-119 neck lanyard from a previous reunion to hold your name tag, PLEASE remember to BRING IT with you to Branson. If you want a new "Neck Wallet" from the Branson Chamber of Commerce, contact Jerry McDonald, reunion coordinator at: **jmshadow6869@yahoo.com**.
2. Stinger-41, 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary reunion: On May 2, 2022, 50 years after the tragic loss of Stinger-41, the survivors and those involved with the recovery of our heroic brothers, along with special friends and family members, gathered at Davis-Monthan AFB to engage in a special reunion. A heart-felt thank you to Yami Sledzinski and Roy Davis to make this awesome event a reality. Roy did a great video capturing the event, which you can get to on the Association's Web Site, but here's a direct link: **Stinger 41 Reunion - YouTube**
3. Stinger Gunner JD Hughes: In the previous *Firing Circle*, I requested for any info' from those of you who knew JD Hughes. I received no reply. Yes, I was disappointed to tell the 1<sup>st</sup> SOW Wing historian at Hurlburt that we could not provide any personal info of JD. I suppose JD's flight suit will be on display somewhat missing personal info about JD.
4. AC-130W Stinger-II farewell at Cannon – see a summary in the *Firing Circle*.  
Board member Terry Sarul was invited to join AC-47 and AC-130 crew members to speak about Gunship history and operations in SEA. His presentation was June 16, 2022, at the EAA Museum in Oshkosh, WI, during the full-week air show called Air Venture. This is a very huge and prestigious annual event. They only gave each presenter 20 min, and I am sure Terry was challenged to fit the AC-119 story, our history and accomplishments, into such a short time. He put an impressive PowerPoint slide presentation together. They also did an audio podcast that you can listen to at **EAA's The Green Dot — U.S. Air Force Gunships Panel – Hangar Flying**
5. "Guns-Hot SCOOP #1" – From our Quartermaster Gus Slinger: **The Web store DOES NOT HAVE ANY MORE Wooden 119 Models in stock. THEY ARE ALL SOLD!** Due to a change of vendor owners, we cannot order any more at the old price of \$130. If you want to buy a wooden K Model, you can try EBAY, TAILWINGS, or AIRCRAFTSPACE. Unfortunately, they are much higher \$\$ than when we had them. Please do not try to order one from our Web Site; we do not carry them any longer. Thank You.
6. "Guns-Hot SCOOP #2" - Shadow IO, Allen Chandler, published a book covering his USAF career. It is available at Amazon as a Kindle file or as a paperback. Congratulations Allen, great work, and a shout-out to Roy Davis for helping Allen with the process. It is awesome to become an author! Here's a link: **Amazon.com: My Walk Home: 21 Years in the United States Air Force eBook : Chandler, Allen: Kindle Store**
7. Lastly, I must give another special recognition to Wayne and Liz for keeping the Association's web site fresh and current, and to our Facebook team for posting a lot of interesting current events! Your Association continues successfully due to many individuals donating time and energy.

OK now, onward to Branson! Hope to see many of you there. Continue to have a safe and healthy Summer 2022!! Be smart, be kind, be courageous, and be yourself.

Mike Drzyzga, President (2015-2022)

## 2022 AC-119 Gunship Reunion XXII

September 28 – October 2, 2022 at Branson, Missouri

**“53 Years of Remembrance of the AC-119 Gunships”**

In 2000 our Association’s Founding Fathers got us together to affirm our place in military and SEA history. 400 of us met at Fort Walton. Since then, we have held reunions every year, except 2020, at locations all over our great country doing exactly what our Founding Fathers set out to do. Since then, we added more reasons to get together, like renewing old friendships, making new friends, and including family members of our honored KIAs. Show your family, friends, and history your pride in being a part of this AC-119 Gunship family. Join us at **the Radisson Hotel** in Branson, MO and be a part of **“53 Years of Remembrance of the AC-119 Gunships!”** We will notify you and update the website if anything changes. **The important thing right now is to complete your Hotel Reservation** and your **Reunion Registration!** Shadow Jerry McDonald is our Branson Reunion Coordinator. If you have a question, contact him at [jmshadowvet6869@yahoo.com](mailto:jmshadowvet6869@yahoo.com) or 417-793-3738.

**Radisson Hotel, 120 South Wildwood Dr, Branson, MO 65616**

- **Room Rates:** All are Double Queen Room or King Room and will include 13.35% tax



[Single/Double occupancy \\$92.95 + tax](#); [Triple \\$97.95 + tax](#)

[Quad \\$102.95 + tax](#) Hot breakfast is included, served 6:30–11:00 AM

**Phone Reservation:** call 417-335-5767. Use Block Code:

2108ACGUAS. Let them know you are with the AC-119 Gunship

Association. **Online Reservation is at:**

[www.radissonhotelsamericas.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-branson](http://www.radissonhotelsamericas.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-branson)

Input occupancy, and select Promotional Code ACGA under Special Rates. Select room type and follow procedures to reserve the room.

You have till August 29, 2022 to reserve your room and receive the

Reunion rate, which are valid from Mon Sept 26 through Wed Oct 5, 2022 as long as rooms are available on the extended dates.

### **REGISTER FOR THE REUNION**

- **Register Online:** go to <https://www.ac119gunships.com/reunion/upcoming-reunion> and register, then send your check to Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573. Please print your registration confirmation email and bring it with you to the reunion. **NOTE:** the fees for PayPal and credit card payments cost the Association over \$800 last year. That’s more than we can afford, so we’re going back to payments by checks or money orders only. If you cannot pay by check, call Doug at 813-781-5728 (East coast time). **Reunion Registration cut-off date is September 1, 2022.** If you cancel on or before this date you will receive a refund. You also have the option of making a donation instead of getting a refund. If you cancel after September 1, 2022, we will have to pay contracted funds so no refund will be available. However, we understand unforeseeable circumstances may take place, so please talk to us if you need to cancel for family emergencies or losses.
- **When you arrive:** Head over to our Reunion Table to pick up your **Reunion Registration** packet. This will include your name tags, event tickets, etc. If we are not there when you arrive, check in with the Hotel desk and go to the Hootch to pick up your packet.

### **REUNION SPECIAL INFORMATION**

- **Silent Auction:** if you want to contribute, something that fits in luggage works well. If you have an item you think needs to be bid upon as an active auction item, please contact Jerry and he will coordinate with our auction team on whether it will be a silent or active auction item.
- **Special Raffle: Commemorative Kimber 45 Pistol** crafted and donated by Cherokee Firearms gunsmith Ron Soderquist. This Classic model 1911 is Stainless Steel with Combat Trigger; ambidextrous

safety; in a special box; includes AC-119 commemoration pistol grips; two magazines, carrying case, and gun lock. Raffle tickets are 1 for \$10; 6 for \$55, and 13 for \$110 (LIMIT 100 Tickets per person). You can buy your tickets from Doug Wohlgamuth now or at the Reunion; you don't need to be present to win! Send your check or money order to Doug Wohlgamuth, 504 Shea Place, Sun City Center, FL 33573-5726.

- 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 and Sear
- Original Rosewood Grip Panels Will be Included when sent.
- Custom Engraved Grips: AC-119 Association Patch on one grip panel and Brothers image on the other
- Flat Checkered Main Spring Housing
- Open Mag Well
- Fitted Barrel Bushing with Guide Rod
- Fiber Optics Sights Installed
- Slide has "Vietnam 68 – 73" and the 71st, 17th and 18th SOS engrave



• **Oral History Videos and Bios:** Over 250 of our air and ground crew plus family members and spouses have made oral history videos and/or written bios. New Videos and bios are posted on our Association website at <https://www.ac119gunships.com/bios-videos-and-stories>. Videos may be done solo or with your spouse, crew, or other crew members. If you have not made a video or written a bio, we encourage you to do so. You can sign up to do a video or bio when you complete your Reunion Registration.

## REUNION AGENDA

### Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>

- **Reunion Registration**
- **Hootch** is opened daily from 0800-2200 except during our Meet & Greet, Banquet, and Farewell BBQ. Hootch snacks and beverages are free (donations are always welcomed and appreciated ☺)
- **1730: Dixie Stampede** is Dolly Parton's dining and entertainment venue. Their website is at <https://dpstampede.com> **BUT don't sign up there.** Sign up via your Reunion registration!  
\$54.07 ages 10 years and up, \$29.21 ages 3-9 years. Cut off date is July 15, 2022.

### Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup>

- **Reunion Registration and Hootch**
- **1600 Showboat Branson Belle.** riverboat cruise includes entertainment, 3-course meal, & viewing deck. Their website is <https://www.bransonshows.com/activity/ShowboatBransonBelle.cfm> **BUT don't sign up there.** Sign up via your Reunion registration!  
\$54 for an Adult ticket, \$37 for a Child ticket. Cut off date is August 29, 2022.

### Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup>

- **Reunion Registration and Hootch**
- **Meet and Greet!** –Hospitality Room TableRock A 1700 - Cash Bar 1800 – Dinner Introductions of Reunion newcomers, special guests, and KIA Family

**\$26 per person**

Assorted Meat and Cheese Tray  
Fresh Garden Vegetables with Dip Tray  
Tortilla Chips with Salsa  
Swedish Meatballs, Spicy Chicken Wings, BBQ  
Cocktail Mini Smokies  
Pork and Vegetable Eggrolls  
Turkey & Ham Sandwich Pinwheels  
Water, Coffee, and Iced Tea.

**Bronze Kid's Buffet**

**\$14 per person**

Chicken Tenders and BBQ Meatballs  
Spring Rolls with Sweet and Sour Sauce  
Salsa and Fresh Fried Tortilla Chips  
French Fries

**Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>**

- **Association Membership Meeting**
- **Hootch**
- **Banquet – Hospitality Room TableRock A 1700 – Cash Bar 1800 – Dinner**

<b>\$42 per Person</b>	<b>\$30 per Person</b>	<b>\$28 per Person</b>
Prime Rib w/Creamy Horseradish Sauce	Chicken Mansfield	Tortilla Crusted or Plain Tilapia
All served with Choice of Ozark Salad (Mixed Greens, Tomato, Red Onion, Cucumber) with Raspberry Vinaigrette or Ranch Dressing, or Caesar Salad with Feta Cheese; plus Vegetables, Potato, Rolls & Butter, Chef's Choice of dessert, Water, Iced Tea, Coffee.		

<b>Bronze Kid's Buffet \$14 per person</b>
Chicken Tenders and BBQ Meatballs Spring Rolls with Sweet and Sour Sauce Salsa and Fresh Fried Tortilla Chips

**Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- **Early Golf Tournament: \$10.** Jerry McDonald will coordinate details with golfers
- **Hootch**
- **Farewell BBQ - Hospitality Room TableRock A 1700 - Cash Bar 1800 – BBQ**

**\$26 per Person**

Smoked Beef Brisket and Shredded BBQ Pork w/Buns  
Deviled Egg Potato Salad  
Baked Beans, Sweet Buttered Corn  
Green Beans with Bacon, Garlic, Onions  
Homemade Cobbler  
Water, Iced Tea, and Coffee

**Bronze Kid's Buffet**

**\$14 per person**

Chicken Tenders and BBQ Meatballs  
Spring Rolls with Sweet and Sour Sauce  
Salsa and Fresh Fried Tortilla Chips

**Who's Coming to Branson, MO Reunion**

Henry & Maria Alau	Janis & Ben Goryl	Larry Middleton
Paul, Mark, & Mike Beagley	David & Mary Ann Hathaway	Jim & Jackie Ray
Tad & Patricia Berkebile	Jerry & Ellen Hester	Terry & Theresa Sarul
Greg & Debbie Blackmon	Ron & Carol Hinton	Gus Sininger
Jim & Joann Boyd	Larry Hunter	Jerry & Diane Snyder
Gene Caruso	Jake & Bev Jaeckle	Ronnie & Venita Soderquist
George Chapman	Wayne & Lynette Laessig	EV Sprous & Ruth Chapman
John & Denise Cootz	Pono Jesse Lau & Melvin Jackson	Ken & Veronika Stearn
Mike & Andrea Drzyzga	Ralph & Joyce Lefarth	Dan Thompson & Peggy Papon
Jim & Tina Farrell	JP Mac Isaac	Wilma Tyler, Cheree & Steve Bachmann
Leroy & Rose Frahm	Dale & Jeanette Martin	Loren & Judi Van Duyn
Rod Friese & Dave King	Cash McCall	Dave & Mary Voisey
Mary Ellen & Lloyd Froelich	Sonja McDuffie	Tom & Marisa Weisenfluh
Sam & Debbie Gallo	Larry Mersek & Susie Ryslinge	Doug & Karen Wohlgamuth
Ron & Patty Gilbert		

**What are the rest of you waiting for? Any of you getting any younger??**

## **Association Board Selection**

This fall at the reunion membership meeting we will elect a new slate of Board of Directors. The Board consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Prior President, and up to three Board Members at Large. A slate consisting of these positions will be selected by the current Board of Directors and presented to the voting members in attendance at the reunion membership meeting. A majority vote is required for approval of the new Board members.

Basically, this means that individuals interested in becoming a member of the Board will have to let President Mike Drzyzga know prior to the August Board meeting on 9 August 2022. This will allow the new Board members to be better prepared to begin their new duties.

A description of Board member positions is in our ByLaws at [ASSOCIATION BYLAWS](#). If you are interested in becoming a Board member or want to nominate someone (with their concurrence), be sure to let Mike know no later than 9 August at [drzyzga513@hotmail.com](mailto:drzyzga513@hotmail.com)

## **AC119 Association Membership Updates**

We give a warm welcome to our new Life Members:

- James Wellman, Life Member #560, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Maintenance – Gun Shop.
- Mark Tarpley, Life Member #561 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Nav/NOS.
- Matt Robeck, Associate Life Member #562, Patriot Rider, Marshall Mullens Trike.
- Christine Schnell, Associate Life Member #563, Sister of 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Pilot Tommy Hamman, KIA.
- John Paul Mac Isaac, Associate Life Member #564, Association Videographer.
- Liz Buss, Associate Life member #565, Association Webmaster.
- Julian “Les” Alford, Life member #566, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS IO.
- Stanley Baker, Life member #568, 20<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Gunner.
- Bruce Shearer, Associate Life #569, U S Army Huey Helicopter FE/Gunner, Extracted Stinger 41 KIAs from An Loc.
- John Deslauriers, Associate Life #570, U S Army Huey Helicopter FE/Gunner, Extracted Stinger 41 KIAs from An Loc.

## **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. We raise a glass to all. R.I.P. Brothers.

- Don Carlson, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow and 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Pilot, passed June 18, 2022.
- Donald Foster, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Gunner, passed June 21, 2022
- Donald Gray, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Maintainer, passed May 7, 2022
- Michael R. Kiely, 71<sup>st</sup> Shadow Navigator, passed April 2, 2019.
- Charlie Meier, 17<sup>th</sup> SOS Shadow Pilot, passed May 10, 2022.
- Terry L. Treat, 18<sup>th</sup> SOS Stinger Maintainer, passed April 13, 2022.
- Michael B. Turner, 71<sup>st</sup> SOS Shadow Crew Chief, passed December 26, 2021.

We also lost the Father of Gunships, Honorary AC-119 Member Col Ron Terry, who passed April 5, 2022.

Additional details are on our Association Mail Call at <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> and our Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726>. Ev Sprous and his Outreach Team do a super job locating, contacting, and reconnecting with our remaining living crewmates but 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.

## **AC-119 Gunship Association members attend AC-130 W Stinger II Retirement Ceremony**

On June 1, 2022, the US Air Force officially retired its AC-130W Stinger II aircraft from the active inventory. Through the courtesy of one of our association's Legacy Squadrons, some AC-119 Association members were there at Cannon AFB in Clovis, NM to observe the ceremony.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, which flew the AC-130W, invited our association to attend and five members were able to make the trip. Steve Mac Isaac, Everett Sprous, and Don Luke drove in from Arizona, and Jerry Hester and Larry Barbee made the trip from Texas.

They were warmly greeted by 16th SOS squadron members and the squadron commander, Lt. Col Paul Andrews, in the squadron break area where memorabilia, photographs and models of gunships, including AC-119s, and even a copy of our Association's History Book, were displayed.

After the informal get-together, the group crossed the street to the squadron hanger where bleachers and a podium were arranged for the formal ceremony. Two AC-130s were parked in front of the hanger. One was an outgoing AC-130W Stinger II, the other an AC-130J Ghost Rider, the type that now all the gunship squadrons will be the flying.

The Portales High School Band provided talented musical support for the ceremony and after the National Anthem and the "Air Force Song" Lt. Col Andrews spoke of the deployments and achievements of the Stinger II aircraft by tail number. He listed the number of rounds fired by the weapons systems on the airplanes and the "Firsts" for various advances in technologies first tested and proven on the aircraft. He also mentioned the future of the retired airplanes, some to be used as training platforms and some destined for storage. He thanked the attendees for coming, mentioning the Vietnam era Stingers, and introduced the guest speakers, Colonel Taylor, the 27<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing Commander, and Major General Farrell, the Deputy Commanding General of Joint Special Operations Command. Each of these officers spoke briefly. Then the aircrews for the fly-over in the two aircraft were introduced individually, and they did the pre-flight and launched.

After the fly-over, the ceremony was ended and the guests returned to the squadron to be served cake and to say goodbye. Once again, our hats are off for the hospitality of the 16<sup>th</sup> SOS. Such continued contact and interaction with our legacy active duty units is important to preserve the heritage and traditions of the Airmen who fly the Gunships.



Some old Gunship dudes. Jerry Hester-IO AC-119K Stinger, Steve Mac Isaac-Pilot AC-119K Stinger, Larry Barbee-Navigator AC-119K Stinger, Donald Luke-Crew Chief AC-47 Spooky, Kevin Stefanovski-Gunner AC-130H and AC-130U, Joseph-Caesar Archangel-Gunner AC-130 H, Ken Hallmon-FE AC-130 W Stinger, Everett Sprous-Gunner AC119K Stinger

## Administrative Updates and Reminders

1. Our website has a new feature called **Meet Your Brother – Spotlight of the Week**, where we've randomly selected one of your Bio Stories and created a link directly to it. Our goal is to give everyone visiting our website the opportunity to learn a little more about the men who flew and supported our AC-119s. Go to any main page on our website and you'll see a "Widget" link on the side of the page. **NOTE on Oral History Videos and History Book Bios:** Over 250 of our air and ground crew, plus family members and spouses, have made oral history videos and/or written History Book bios. New videos and bios are posted on our Association web site. Videos may be done solo or with your spouse, crew or other crew members. If you have not made a video or written a bio, we encourage you to do so. You can sign up to do a video or History Book Bio when you complete your Reunion Registration. Click on this link for some tips for making a video or writing a bio. **Bio and Video Info and Samples.**

2. **Extending our Gunship Legacy:** United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) AC-119 Plaque Project (info at <https://www.70seapavilion.com/>) Good news on this project to include our AC-119 as one of the heritage gunships in SEA; others associated with us are actively interested. Col Mac is now officially the Chair of the "USAFA AC-119 Plaque Committee", he is in communication with the others on this. Picture shows Spectre example. Send your best donation, none too big or too small to Steve Mac Isaac, 6449 Coventry Hills Dr NE, Rio Rancho, NM 87144. The memo space on your check should say for AC-119 Gunship Plaque, made out to AC-119 Gunship Association. Questions, call Col Mac at 302-249-1499, or e-mail [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com)



3. 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 very much want to keep in contact with you. If you receive the *Firing Circle* by walking to the mail box after its postal delivery, AND you have and use an EMAIL ADDRESS, TELL Mike Drzyzga, Roy Davis, your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW if you want future Newsletters and 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, at [ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com](mailto:ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com) or call (520) 528-9444.
4. Are you interested in some AC-119 Gunship historical facts, current events, interesting dialogue, photos and 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 723 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/>. Also, there are Facebook Pages dedicated to "Air Force Gunners", "Air Force 462 Weapons", "Happy Valley – Phan Rang" (almost 1400 members), and "U.S. Military Veterans - News you can use" – very interesting pictures and history, current news, and other valuable information.
5. **Awards and Decorations** coordinator Steve "Col Mac" 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.
6. **WE NEED YOU TO SEND US YOUR SPECIAL ORDERS.** Please send Ev Sprous copies of your special orders. These are needed to help our comrades with claims and family members after their loved one passes. Send them to Everett Sprous at [ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com](mailto:ac119kstingergunner@gmail.com) or 639 E. Orchard Lane, Gilbert, AZ 85296 or call Ev at (520) 528-9444. Please do this as soon as possible.

7. **Books:** Our web Store has 7 books written about and by AC-119ers. Their experiences and legacy are treasures to read, learn from, and enjoy! These include our original History Book; a History book with all the original plus new Bios; a book of Stories; *Spooky, Spectre, and the Man* by Mike Friel about Ron Terry's battles to create and utilize fixed-wing gunships; a book of the cartoons that were our way of inserting humor into SEA; *The Gunship Chronicles* by Larry Barbee including his Stinger 41 story; and *History of Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar* by Wendell Cosner. Your actual selections and purchase in the store are via Amazon.

### **Future Reunion**

**2023 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXIII will be in Washington, D.C.**