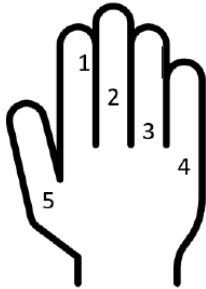


JOHN COOTZ – ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE – NOVEMBER 2022

Greetings from Texas to all AC-119 Gunship Associates, family, and friends. I hope this letter finds you happy and well. Here are my thoughts on our identity as Association members.

We each took an oath that brought us together as brothers. That is where we started. Now our mission is to preserve our brotherhood. We do that through reunions, the website, our historical archives, and preserving our heritage through ceremonies and memorials.

While interacting with you, I find you still carry the USAF core values.



1. Integrity First.
2. Service Before Self.
3. Shared Values.
4. Aim High in Everything to Achieve Our Mission.
5. Excellence in All We Do Fueled by Innovation.

I am proud to be your President and will do my best to stay faithful to our values. Always feel free to share your thoughts with me. Now, on to some other important topics.

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP FOR YOUR HONOR FLIGHT?

At no cost, this program provides the invaluable opportunity for a personal thank you for every WWII, Korean, and Vietnam war veteran to receive his or her long-overdue day of honor. The deep and meaningful connections established among traveling veterans, and the passion of Honor Flight’s volunteers always shine through true and clear. The Honor Flight experience provides a life-altering sense of pride for the remarkable senior men and women war heroes. An application can be accessed at <https://www.honorflight.org>.

AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY IS IMPORTANT.

I encourage every AC-119er who served in SEA to get an Agent Orange Registry exam. It’s totally free and is an opportunity to get a good evaluation of current health conditions. Other benefits to joining are the opportunity to learn about a possible presumptive condition so you can make a claim and potential family benefits. You are eligible for a comprehensive evaluation even if you are not enrolled in the VA system. To sign up for an Agent Orange Registry exam, contact a coordinator near you using this link [Environmental Health Coordinator](#). A coordinator will help you schedule an exam with a provider.

AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION SURVEY.

Within the next week, you will be receiving a survey from the Association. The responses will help the Association continue to organize GREAT reunions and find ways to keep our brotherhood connected at future reunions with as many brothers as possible. Please take 15 minutes to provide your input when you receive the survey. Thank you in advance for your thoughts and ideas.

GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION FUTURE PROJECTS TO HELP THE BROTHERHOOD STAY CONNECTED.

In addition to our reunions, we want to implement some new ideas that will help us stay connected throughout the year. This year, we will start sending out American Greeting electronic cards. We will be able to send cards for birthdays (please let us know your birthday month only), illness (let us know about yourself or family members) and eventually holidays (like Christmas and Veterans Day).

We would like to use the website to highlight family and holiday traditions, family military traditions (like family members who serve), and hobbies. We would like to request then and now photos from you that could be used on the website or at reunions. I think I can find a childhood picture that you will never associate with me as an adult. I will share some of my info and stories and I hope that you will do that also.

ASSOCIATION'S MISSION TO PRESERVE OUR FIXED-WING GUNSHIP HERITAGE AND HISTORY.

We continue to make progress on the US Air Force Academy's Southeast Asia Memorial Pavilion that includes Vietnam Aircraft Unit Memorial Plaques. Many of you have participated in this project. The dedication ceremony should occur in the second quarter of 2023. All of our brothers in the 71st SOS, 17th SOS, and 18th SOS are showcased on our plaque.

The Association is also working with the Air Force Association on a 50th Vietnam Anniversary Celebration. Part of this celebration will be to honor John O'Neal Rucker, an 18th SOS member, in Lindon, Texas along with family and friends. He was the last American who died at Da Nang during the Vietnam War and was the last enlisted casualty. Association representatives will participate in the ceremony.

ASSOCIATION WEBSITE.

The Association has a great website that is both attractive and informational. I would be remiss if I did not thank Wayne Laessig and Liz Buss for all their creativity and effort. Thank You!

I hope you stay safe, healthy, connected to each other, and happy in the coming year.

John Cootz
President