

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE – MAY 2023

We had planned to send you a survey to help the Association continue to organize GREAT reunions & find ways to keep our brotherhood connected at future reunions with as many brothers as possible. Several projects took priority, like the Linden Texas Event memorializing our KIA SSgt O’Neal Rucker as part of the Air Force & Space Association’s 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War; the Air Force Academy Vietnam Aircraft Unit Memorials Plaque Dedication (see the article in this FC); & our Washington DC Reunion Kick-off. We will work on sending you the survey soon.

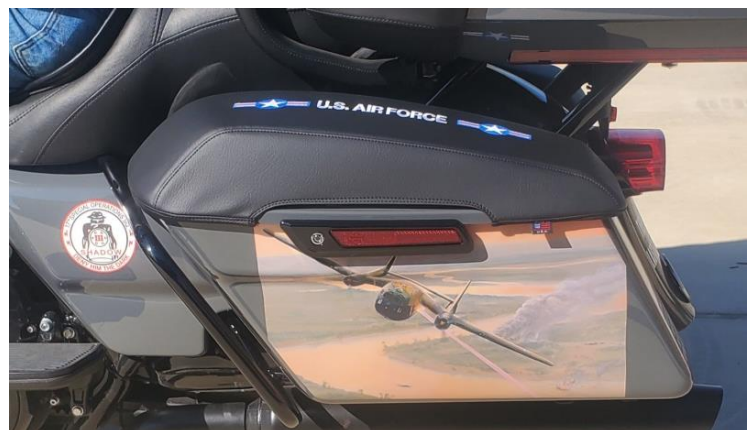
We included more details about the Reunion events, menus, & tours in this Firing Circle. We’ll include more in monthly Flash Messages & on our Facebook page. Got questions? Contact [John Cootz](#).

Who’s already signed up for the Reunion: Charles & Debra Blackmon, Eugene Caruso, Allen & Barbara Chandler, John & Denise Cootz, Roy Davis & Paula Pascoe, Lloyd & M.E. Froelich, Wayne & Lynette Laessig, Dale & Jeanette Martin, Jim Quigley, Bob Safreno & Sandy Paxton, Terry & Theresa Sarul, Tom & Marisa Weisenfluh. **Read on & learn how to join these great folks!**

John Cootz
President

LINDEN. TEXAS FOLLOW-UP

Jim Ray attended the February event commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War in Linden Texas hosted by the Air Force & Space Association & assisted by our AC-119 Gunship Association. The event focused specifically on our 18th SOS Stinger KIA Crew Chief, SSgt John “O’Neal” Rucker. Jim’s relationship with the Rucker family began with him riding his motorcycle in O’Neal’s honor in 2012 & meeting all the Ruckers. He still rides for O’Neal today. Jim has been working on his classy '22 HD Ultra and sent us these pictures of what it looks like so far. Great job, Jim!



2023 AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION REUNION XXIII IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

As we told you in our Flash message, our 23rd Reunion is moving forward, just with one change: we had to move our Reunion dates to November 8-12, 2023! Now, we'll be there when the weather is better, with no changes to our planned events, tours, rooms, or pricing! November is peak tourist time for the hotel so our original price is now even a greater bargain for hotel rooms & meals. Our Reunion Hotel's corporate plans to renovate their convention rooms were delayed for two years due to COVID. They are now catching up & our Crystal City Hilton is scheduled to be renovated from August to early October. You might see the hotel name listed as Hilton Crystal City – or – Hilton Arlington National Landing. They're the same hotel; the renovation includes renaming it to Hilton Arlington National Landing. For those driving to the reunion, fall colors will be in their full glory into early November. And lodging does include breakfast buffet for two!

Reunion & Tour Registration

First, use this link: [2023 AC119 Reunion Schedule_Tours_Hotel Information](https://www.events.afr-req.com/e/AC-119Gunship2023) **NOTE:** it's smart to read this info BEFORE you register or reserve a room. After you've read up on the schedule & agendas, use this AFR link to register for the Reunion & Tours: <https://www.events.afr-req.com/e/AC-119Gunship2023>. Listed below are all registration, tour, & meal costs for the reunion. You'll send your payment in the form of check or money order payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC, with your cancelled check serving as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You can pay by credit card; a 3.5% convenience fee will be added to credit card charges & is non-refundable. Please complete your registration before October 10, 2023. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. **NOTE:** if you need to cancel (full or partial) after you register, contact the AFR Office directly at 757-625-6401.

Hotel

Hilton Arlington National Landing; 703-418-6800; 2399 Richmond Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202

Reservation Information Please call the number above & reference the AC-119 Gunship Association or book directly at <https://book.passkey.com/event/50394539/owner/1694/home>

Group Name: AC-119 Gunship Association.

Room Rate: 1 King or 2 Queen Beds – either option at \$139 (+14.25% sales tax) & includes breakfast for two.

Reunion room rates are available Nov 6 thru 13, 2023. BUT, Oct 17, 2023 is our group cut-off date; after October 17 the Hotel will accept reservations at the contracted rate based on room availability. **Cancellations** must be received 24 hours prior to arrival date or there will be a charge of one night's room plus tax.

AC-119 Gunship Reunion Schedule

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

1400 - 1800 Reunion Registration Open **NOTE:** a \$30 Reunion Fee for each attendee is required & allows us to fund the Hootch beverages & munchies plus and KIA Family first-time attendees.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

0800 - 1000 Reunion Registration Open

0800 - 2200 Hootch Open

0900 - 1630 City Tour (\$72 per person includes bus & guide): See the sites of our nation's capital during a driving tour of Washington, D.C. Ride by the Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, WWII Memorial, the Mall, Capitol Building, Washington Monument, White House, & other notable monuments & federal buildings. Free time will be allowed at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Afterward, stop at the Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center, which is the largest building (3.1 million square ft) in Washington, DC & is the first & only federal building dedicated to both government & private use. While there, enjoy lunch on your own at the Reagan Building food court - named one of the "best family food courts" in DC. Following lunch, head to the National Museum of the Navy. This flagship museum is located in the former Breech Mechanism Shop of the old Naval Gun Factory on the grounds of the Washington Navy Yard. Explore permanent & temporary exhibits including Steel Navy, Great White Fleet & more. Be sure to stop in the Gift Shop where Navy themed items are available. A photo ID is required for entrance to the Ronald Reagan Building & National Museum of the Navy. 0900, board bus, 1630 back at the hotel. Lunch on your own.

1300 - 1600 Arlington National Cemetery & Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Tour (\$61 per person includes bus & escort): Board the bus for a trip to Arlington National Cemetery. There, board an open-air tram with stops at President John F. Kennedy gravesite, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Iwo Jima Gate, General Pershing Gravesite & Arlington House. Enjoy time on your own to visit the Welcome Center upon arrival & before you depart. Next stop will be to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This US national memorial honors service members of the U.S. armed forces who fought in the Vietnam War. In the same area you can also visit the Vietnam Women's memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial & the World War II Memorial. 1300 Board bus, 1630 back at hotel. *A valid state or government issued photo ID is required for entrance to Arlington Cemetery

1500 - 1900 Reunion Registration Open

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

0800 - 0900 Reunion Registration Open

0800 - 2200 Hootch Open

0930 - 1500 Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center Tour (\$52 per person includes bus & escort): This museum, part of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air & Space Museum, is dedicated to the preservation & display of its collection of historic aviation & space artifacts. Located in Chantilly, VA, the facility has large aviation & space exhibit hangars. The museum currently has over eighty aircraft & dozens of space artifacts on display including the Space Shuttle Discovery, an SR-71 Blackbird, Boeing 367-80 Jet Transport, Concorde, Fox Alpha, Air France, Martin B-26B-25 MA Marauder "Flak-Bait" & the B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay." For lunch, enjoy Shake Shack favorites including burgers, hotdogs, chicken sandwiches & fries. Don't forget your shake, including two shakes exclusive to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center only. Pre-packaged salads & sandwiches are also available. You may tour the exhibits at your own pace, but there is a lot of walking, so please wear comfortable shoes. 0930 board bus, 1500 back at the hotel. Lunch on your own.

1030 - 1430 Odyssey Lunch Cruise (\$107/per person includes bus, escort, & lunch cruise): Enjoy a two-hour lunch cruise with live entertainment, narration, & a plated lunch, onboard the Odyssey DC, a one-level climate-controlled, glass-enclosed vessel. Elegantly sailing North under the low bridges of DC for up close views of the monuments. Relax while you cruise the historic water of the District of Columbia, Maryland, & Virginia. Your captain will point out landmarks like the Washington Monument, Ft. McNair, Washington National Airport, General's Row, & Old Towne Alexandria. After lunch enjoy a stroll & the fresh air on the outdoor decks. 1030 board bus, 1430 pm back at hotel **NOTE:** Boat boards at 1115 & cruise is 1200 – 1400.

1600 - 1800 Reunion Registration Open - Turn in Banquet Seating

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

0800 - 2200 Hootch Open – Closed During Meet & Greet

1700 - 2000 Meet & Greet (\$46) with cash bar

1700 - 2000 Reunion Registration Open - Turn in Banquet Seating

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

0800 - 1700 Hootch Open (closed During Banquet)

0900 - 1100 Association Annual Meeting

1700 - 2200 Dinner **Banquet** with cash bar. Options are:
Herb Marinated Flat Iron Steak (**\$52**)
Seared Free Range Chicken Breast (**\$50**)
Fresh Catch of the Day (**\$52**)
Vegetarian Entrée (**\$50**)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

0900 - 1700 & 2000-2400 Hootch Open (closed During Farewell Dinner)

1700 - 2000 Farewell Buffet (\$50) with cash bar

MORE

Armed Forces Reunions Inc (AFR) Cancellation & Refund Policy: if you cancel prior to Oct 10, 2023, AFR shall process a full refund less a non-refundable AFR \$10 per person fee. If you cancel after that date, AFR will refund you to the fullest extent their vendor commitments & guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable \$10 per person AFR fee. **NOTE:** AFR can only take cancellations Mondays-Fridays 9:00am-5:00pm Eastern Time. Call 757-625-6401 to cancel reunion & obtain a cancellation code. Refunds will process 4-6 weeks after the reunion.

Discounted Parking for the hotel is \$10 per day plus tax. **NOTE:** Drivers must stop by the Front Desk to pre-pay & mention they are attending the AC-119 Gunship Reunion to receive the discounted parking rate. They will be provided a parking pass & instructions to enter/exit the garage.

Shuttle The hotel has an on demand shuttle to / from Reagan National Airport between 4:30am – 12:00am. Please pick-up your bags before calling 703-418-6800; the shuttle should arrive shortly after you call & will pick you up at the Hotel Shuttle Shelter.

* If you fly into Dulles, take shuttle from Dulles to Reagan & call for shuttle pick-up from Reagan National Airport.

* Hotel offers local shuttle service for destinations within a two mile radius; front desk can assist with arrangements.

* The above is subject to change.

Wheelchair Rental ScootAround rents both manual & power wheelchairs by the day & week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for details & to make reservations.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

- Tom Milligan, Honorary Life #587, O-2 Birddog FAC “*Sundog 29*” on *Stinger 41* rescue.
 - Les Nunn, Honorary Life #588, Tan Son Nhut JAG, Shadow 78 Crash Review Board, assisted *Stinger 41* Awards project
 - J.D. Rudman, Annual Member, AC-130U Spooky II crewmember, 4th SOS Hurlburt AFB FL
 - Lamar Smith, Honorary Life #586, Lead A-1E “*Sandy*” on *Stinger 41* rescue.
 - Tom Waskow, Honorary Life #585, O-2 Birddog King FAC “*Sundog 40*”, on *Stinger 41* rescue, and *Stinger 41* Awards Committee.
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FINAL FLIGHT

We remember our human frailty & 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.

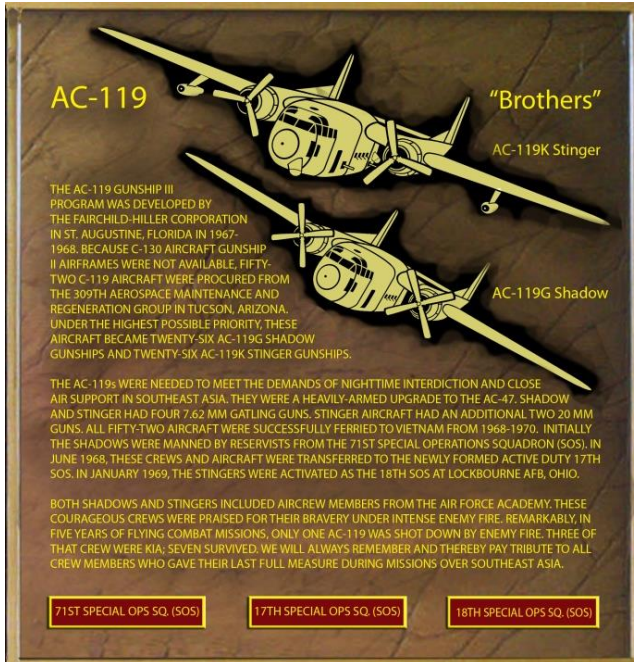
- Anton “Tony” Bautz, 18th SOS Stinger Pilot & Life Member #73 passed on February 28, 2023.
- Marcus A. Brewer, 18th SOS Stinger Navigator & Life Member #23 passed on July 19, 2022.
- William F. Doersam, Sr, 18th SOS Stinger Gunner & Life Member #184 passed on December 20, 2015.
- Donald “Don” Gerlinger, 18th SOS Stinger Pilot passed on November 1, 2009.
- Richard Grimsley, 17th SOS Shadow & AU-24 Gunner, & Life Member #262 passed on December 19, 2022.
- Robert L. “Bud” Hintzen, 18th SOS Stinger Navigator passed on December 31, 2020.
- Joseph C. Hoffman, 18th SOS Stinger Navigator passed on April 11, 2019.
- Jerome C. Jarnick, 17th SOS Shadow Navigator/NOS passed February 28, 2023.
- Hugh M. “Mike” Langley, 71st SOS Shadow passed on May 21, 2022
- Glenn R. Loveall, 18th SOS Stinger Pilot passed on July 22, 2016.
- Donald C. Lyles, Sr, 18th SOS Stinger Flight Engineer & Life Member #74 passed on Oct 6, 2012.
- Terrence “Terry” Moore, 17th SOS Shadow Maintenance & Life Member #241 passed on July 2, 2022.
- James “Jim” E. Pueppke, 18th SOS Stinger Pilot passed on November 26, 1977.
- Jerold E. “Jake” Thomas, 71st & 17th SOS Shadow Gunner passed on January 3, 2021.
- James M. Tilton, 18th SOS Stinger Flight Engineer passed on March 22, 2022.
- Ernest “Ernie” J. Weege, 18th SOS Stinger Navigator passed on March 20, 2021

See <https://www.ac119gunships.com/mail-call/mail-call/> & <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195912423919726> for additional details. We try to reconnect with our remaining living crewmates but we find many who are already deceased. **PLEASE** visit <https://www.ac119gunships.com/membership-contact-information/alpha-roster> to add any names or contacts you have.

LAST ORBIT

1. Extending our Gunship Legacy: US Air Force Academy AC-119 Gunship Plaque Dedication.

On June 13, 2023 there will be a dedication ceremony at the Air Force Academy's South East Asia Pavilion for our AC-119 Gunship plaque. The 20"X20" bronze plaque was artist designed & is shown at left below.



In honor of the event, we designed a t-shirt. They cost \$30 plus tax & shipping, are black & come in both men & women's sizes. Profit & donations from their sales go into our KIA Family Fund. Last date to order is May 15th. Click here to buy one: [T-SHIRT ORDER FORM](#)



The AC-119ers below are attending the Plaque Dedication. If you'd like to join them, contact John Cootz: john_cootz@reagan.com or 281-728-0874.

Attending so far: John & Denise Cootz and daughter, Van Criswell with his wife and a friend, Mike & Andrea Drzyzga, Bob & Janet Dydo, John Forbes with his wife, Mike Krauss, Dave & Rosemarie Kuhn and son, Don Luke, Col Mac and son John Paul Mac Isaac, Robert McNamara with his wife and son, Roy Davis & Paula Pascoe, John Santivasci, Mark Tarpley, Dave Voisey, and there is room for a few more!!

2. **Oral History Videos** For those of you who have not made an oral history video (OHV) we now have another way to make one without coming to a reunion. And for those of you who have an OHV, here is an opportunity to do another. Videographer is Frank Palmieri lives in Melbourne, Australia & he is an admin of the group Facebook site [Vietnam Air War Group](#). He has done an oral history video of Terry Sarul & is willing to do others in our Association using Facebook Messenger. For more info message Frank on Facebook or contact Terry Sarul bluemax1965@comcast.net or 574-400-9472. For a sample of Frank's work, click on this link: [TERRY SARUL OHV](#)

3. **SAVE US \$\$ PLEASE** remember to contact your group POC, 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 & use an EMAIL ADDRESS, SEND IT to your unit POC, or our Membership Coordinator NOW to have 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 Sprou, at ac119kstingerunner@gmail.com or call (520) 528-9444.

FUTURE REUNION

2024 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion XXIV

Our 2024 Reunion XXIV is planned for Colorado Springs & we will use the same professional event coordinator, Armed Forces Reunions, as our upcoming Washington DC Reunion.