

2022/2023 John Cootz President's Messages

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – March 4, 2023 – Reunion Flash Message

Reunion XXIII

Hilton Crystal City, Washington, DC

Wednesday, November 8 – Sunday, November 12, 2023 (New Dates!)

“54 Years Remembrance of AC-119 Gunships”

Reunion Coordinator — Armed Forces Reunions

Greetings to all AC-119ers, Family and Friends,

I am thrilled to share this news with you, we are ready to celebrate another great reunion. I am always amazed to see us celebrate life as brothers. We became brothers in Vietnam. I watched fellow AC-119ers share their brotherhood at the Linden, TX, 50th Vietnam Commemoration in February. We will be sharing that brotherhood at the Air Force Academy in June at the dedication of our AC-119 Gunship bronze plaque at the Vietnam Pavilion. And the Washington D.C. reunion will allow us to share our lives with each other again. We have a special camaraderie with a very unique experience that bonds us together. Let's keep the dream alive. See you all there.

John Cootz, Association President

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WOW! Lots to cover:

1. **Short version:** Y-E-S our 23rd Reunion IS moving forward, just with one change: our Reunion Hotel's corporate headquarters decided to renovate the hotel when we planned to hold our original Reunion, and we had to move our Reunion dates to November 8-12, 2023!
 - o Bummer....., BUT the good part of this is that we'll be there when the weather is better, with no changes to our planned events, tours, rooms, or pricing!
2. **Longer version (if you like details):**
 - o Hilton convention room renovations were delayed for two years due to COVID. They are now catching up and our Crystal City Hilton is now on the schedule for August-early October.
 - o Yes, 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.
 - o The Hilton Hotel and our contractor Armed Forces Reunions (AFR) worked closely with the Association to find the best possible solution.
 - o They agreed to keep all pricing the same as originally planned at the Hilton. All room availability will remain the same and we will have newly renovated reunion rooms.
 - o Our banquet is now on Veterans Day.
 - o The weather is mild the first half of November which makes the tours easier.
 - o November and December are peak tourist times for the hotel so our original price is now even a greater bargain for hotel rooms and meals.
 - o For those driving to the reunion, fall colors will be in their full glory into early November.

- Lodging does include breakfast buffet for two!
3. **So..., How do you sign up?**
 4. **FIRST**; use this link to see the Schedule, Tour, and Hotel information: [Schedule, Tour, and Hotel Information](#).
NOTE: read these BEFORE you register or reserve a room – and please, PRINT them.
 5. **THEN**, use the AFR links below to register for the Reunion and Tours, and reserve your room:
 - Reunion and Tour Registration link: <https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/AC-119Gunship2023>
 - NOTE:** if you need to cancel (full or partial) after you register, contact the AFR Office directly at 757-625-6401.
 - Hotel Reservation link: <https://book.passkey.com/event/50394539/owner/1694/home>
 6. We'll include more details about the Reunion, event Menus, local area sights, and more in monthly Flash Messages and on our Facebook page.
 7. Got questions? Contact [John Cootz](#)

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