

August 2025

## Five Reasons why Members of the AC-119 Gunship Association Should Attend this Year's 25th Reunion

As July ends, I'm reminded that in two weeks I'll turn 80. Recently, I was reflecting on my life through the questioning of some civilian friends who had not been in the military. One of the questions they hit me with was "why do you guys reunite so much?" I've been asked that question many times and my reply is usually the same, *We Reunite to Remember!*

As the years pass, our reunions serve as a vital link to the past, offering members of our Association an opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and share experiences that might otherwise fade with time. For members of the AC-119 Gunship Association, this year's upcoming *25th reunion* is more than just a gathering—it's an essential milestone in preserving the legacy of our service and camaraderie. Let me take a moment to give you five reasons I'll attend this year's reunion:

1. **Our Reunions Enable us to Honor the Past:** The *Vietnam War* was a defining chapter in American military history. Gunship crews, who flew perilous missions to support ground troops, played a pivotal role in the conflict. The 25th reunion provides a moment to honor the sacrifices, bravery, and dedication of these individuals. It's an opportunity for our members to reflect on their shared history, remember fallen comrades, and ensure that the story of their service is not forgotten.
2. **Our Reunions Preserve a Brotherhood:** Military service creates bonds that last a lifetime. For many, the relationships forged during combat are deeper than those formed in any other aspect of life. A reunion offers a chance to reconnect with old friends, relive stories, and reignite the sense of brotherhood that transcends time. These gatherings offer veterans a rare chance to meet others who truly understand the experiences they shared during the war in Southeast Asia.
3. **Our Reunions help with Healing and Reflection:** The emotional toll of war can linger for years, and it's not always easy to talk about those experiences with family or friends who weren't there. Reunions offer a supportive environment where veterans can speak freely, share their feelings, and find healing in the company of others who understand their journey. Our *AC-119 Gunship 25th reunion* serves as a time for reflection, allowing members to process their past while finding strength in shared memories.
4. **Our Reunions, Hopefully, help us Pass the Torch:** We're not getting any younger and as time moves forward, the importance of passing on the legacy of service becomes more significant. For younger generations—whether they are children, grandchildren, or newer veterans—the reunion offers a chance to learn about the history of AC-119 gunship air and ground crews and the pivotal role they played in the *Vietnam War*. By attending, our members contribute to preserving the memory of their service for future generations, ensuring that their story continues to be told.
5. **Our Reunions Create New Memories and New Friends:** As Wayne Laessig is fond to say, "Though it's a time to reflect on the past, reunions are also about making new memories." After 25 years, this reunion promises to be a celebration of survival, resilience, and the enduring spirit of those who served. It's an opportunity to meet new faces, strengthen existing friendships, and create memories that will carry forward for another quarter-century.

So, to conclude why I attend, it's simple, the *25th reunion of the AC-119 Gunship Association* is more than just a social gathering. It's an opportunity to reflect, heal, honor fallen comrades, and preserve a shared legacy for generations to come. For those who served in the skies over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and those who maintained the gunships, this reunion is a rare and invaluable chance to reconnect with the past and celebrate the enduring bonds of service and once again remind us "*We Reunite to Remember!*"

I Look forward to seeing many of you and your families in Ft. Walton Beach in November.

YITB (Yours in the Brotherhood)  
Bill Petrie  
AC-119 Gunship Association President