



Heart of Texas Chapter  
Military Officer Association of America  
P.O. Box 23964 Waco, TX 76702-3964

Volume MMXVIII, Issue II

February 2018

**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

Happy Valentine's Day!

Flowers, chocolate, jewelry, romantic dinners for two, all to celebrate the love we have for our sweethearts. Each month we recognize, and hope to not miss anyone, the anniversaries of our members. Back of the napkin math suggests close to 3000 years of togetherness for our collective members. However, I do know we have incomplete information on our membership roster, and to ensure we do not miss any anniversaries, and birthdays as well, we will make a concerted effort to update our roster this month. Whether you receive an update request by mail or email, please send us your response so we can be as accurate as possible. And if you still need to pay your chapter dues for the year, please submit the membership form with your check. This form is another way you can keep us informed of these significant dates. I am encouraged by the hard work of the Freedom is Not Free planning committee. We have already secured key sponsors for different aspects of the golf tournament, but a vital need is team sign ups. This is where each of you can contribute. The registration forms are available at the meetings, and also are included with our monthly newsletter. Your help in signing up golfers for this scholarship fundraising event is essential. You can give the forms to friends you know who golf, and while you may know enough to comprise a foursome, single golfers are welcome as well. The key message in recruiting participants is all raised funds go directly to scholarships for outstanding students demonstrating a firm commitment to serve our community and nation. This is our 20<sup>th</sup> annual tournament and over those 20 years, our Chapter, yours and mine, has awarded approximately \$250,000 in scholarships for college attendance, JROTC and Young Marine grants, and grants to veteran service organizations. Think for a moment about the impact a quarter of a million dollars has

had on young lives and veterans, and how you can be directly involved in continuing this commendable pursuit!

Our February dinner meeting will feature Dr. Kenneth E. Stevenson, a former B-52 Command pilot and Air Force Academy instructor. Dr. Stevenson has an outstanding record of service to the Air Force and to our nation through his initiatives working with believers and youth. The exciting part of Dr. Stevenson's service is his work studying the Shroud of Turin, which many believe to be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. You have the opportunity to hear a renowned expert on the Shroud of Turin present evidence and testimony, and I highly encourage you to come and listen to Dr. Stevenson. Dr. Stevenson truly personifies the motto "Never Stop Serving!"

I discussed membership; Freedom is Not Free Scholarship fundraising, and our next meeting. I look forward to seeing each of you this month. And I want to thank each of you for all you do and the unseen ways you help to make our Chapter successful. Never stop serving!

Respectfully,  
Dennis DeGraff

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2018**

**15 March**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, David Smith on "Audie Murphy".  
**21 April, Saturday**, Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Scramble, Cottonwood Creek GC  
**17 May**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, Joyce Denke, "Donut Dolly"  
**21 June**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, speaker or entertainment to be announced.  
**19 July**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, speaker or entertainment to be announced.  
**Ridgewood Country Club is at 7301 Fish Pond Rd.**

## Upcoming Events and Information Items

**FEBRUARY THURSDAY DINNER MEETING**  
**AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM**  
**GUEST SPEAKER, KENNETH STEVENSON**  
**ON THE SHROUD**  
**\*\*SOCIAL HOUR: 6:00 P.M. \*\*, \*\*CALL TO**  
**TABLES 6:30 P.M. \*, \*INTRO &**  
**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INSTALLATION**  
**OF 2018 SLATE, 6:35 P.M. \*\*, \*\*DINNER 6:55**  
**P.M.\*\*, \*\*DRAWING & GUEST SPEAKER**  
**7:55 P.M.**

**MENU:** Caesar salad with crisp romaine hearts, brioche croutons, grated parmesan cheese and club made dressing, Chicken Breast and Tilapia, Chef's choice of starch, vegetable and two desserts, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea or Hot Tea and Coffee. \$30 per person, payable at registration table, cash or check made to HOT Chapter MOAA. Please call Vince Tobola, 772-5251 or e-mail vtobola@aol.com, NLT Tuesday 13 February, 6:00 p.m. for sign-ups. After this time, please contact as soon as possible if plans change and desire to attend and we will work to accommodate you at the dinner meeting.

**NOTE: The winter dress code is effect with gentlemen in coats and tie and ladies' attire as they prefer.**

**2018 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES** The Board is always looking for prospects to join the chapter. Please contact Vince Tobola, [vtobola@aol.com](mailto:vtobola@aol.com) or call 709-7489 cell if you need an application form or a chapter introduction letter or have questions. Chapter member dues are \$25 and due starting January 1st. These can be paid at the dinner meeting or mailed to the PO Box address on first page of newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support.

### **HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING**

The monthly Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, **February 27, 2018**, 5 p.m., at the Waco Cottonwood Creek Golf Course.

### **SPOUSES BRIDGE CLUB LUNCH**

The next Bridge Club session will be held on 22 February 2018. The contact is Carole Hardeman, 744-1198 and also thanks to Carole as the club sponsor for the bridge activity.

### **MEMORIAM – JAMES LOWE**

James Lowe was born Oct. 7, 1940 and passed away on Jan. 17, 2018 at the age of 77. Jim was a retired Major in the United States Army. He served three tours in Vietnam, and one tour with Desert Shield/Desert Storm. He was also a member Past Master of the Waco Masonic Lodge #92, and involved with Karem Shriners. He leaves behind to cherish his memories, wife, Carol, of 33 years; brothers Mike and Ellis; sisters Sherrill and Mickey Sue; son Jimmy; daughter Linda and her husband Ronnie Honey; and grandsons Christopher and Billie Honey.

### **FEBRUARY SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION**

**Birthdays:** Bill Bewley, Penny Flood, Pam Holmes, Jim Igleheart, Bob Lull, Jim Milam, Nancy Pfanner, Anne Ratajczak, Claire Raineri, Bob Rochell, Mike Russell, Vince Tobola,

**Anniversaries:** Al and Martha West, Bob and Libby Rochell, Ken and Anne Ratajczak, Wayne and Barbara Purselley, and Joe and Karen Augeri.

**Congratulations & best wishes to all on your special day.**

### **ANNUAL FREEDOM BALL 2018**

The tenth annual Freedom Ball with the theme "Forever grateful, never forgotten" will be held on Saturday, March 24, 6 to 11 p.m. at the Waco Convention Center, 100 Washington Avenue, Waco. The Greater Waco Chamber and Greater Waco Aviation Alliance present this unique event that provides Central Texas with the opportunity to honor military personnel, both past and present and Gold Star families. Entertainment will be by the King David Band and the national anthem will be sung by Holly Tucker. Tickets are \$125 a person, \$50 for veterans and active duty personnel and table of 8 for \$500. Tickets are available at [www.FreedomBallWaco.com](http://www.FreedomBallWaco.com) or can call 254-757-5600.

### **HEADS-UP NOTE ON SPRING AIR SHOW**

The Heart of Texas Airshow will be held at TSTC Airport on April 7 -8, 2018 with the main feature being an air performance by the NAVY Blue Angels.

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND ISSUES**

### **RECENT HOUSE BILLS**

The Veterans Choice Program - a temporary program established in 2014 to address massive wait times plaguing the VA's health system - continues to limp along until Congress can pass the broader measures needed to improve veterans' health care. Shortly after Dr. David Shulkin was confirmed as Secretary of the VA in early 2017, MOAA expressed support for his continuation of reform efforts from the prior administration but warned of the tough road ahead in balancing the often competing priorities of Congress, the White House, the VA, and the American public.

To some veterans, not much has changed from this time last year as they again wait for Congress to agree on a bill to replace Choice and consolidate all VA community care programs into a single program for veterans accessing care through private providers.

"There's been a series of starts and stops throughout 2017 and up to this point in regards to moving legislation through both chambers of Congress," says Cmdr. René Campos, USN (Ret), MOAA's government relations veterans' health care expert. "Progress is being prevented by major differences in bill language in current versions of Senate and House community care bills as well as disagreements regarding to how to pay for the reforms."

This time last year, Shulkin faced a looming deadline to extend Choice before it expired in August. Ultimately, Congress appropriated \$2.1 billion to extend the program, allowing additional time to put a new program in place. Then, on Dec. 20, the VA notified Congress that funding for Choice was expected to be exhausted sometime in early to mid-January 2018.

As we closed out the books in 2017 for the first session of the 115th congress, President Donald Trump approved \$2.1 billion in emergency funding for Choice as part of a larger stop-gap funding bill to keep the government open until Jan 19. In the beginning of 2018, MOAA again reported a tougher than usual political and fiscal environment with lawmakers needing to address a significant amount of unfinished business left over from 2017. That unfinished business - namely Congress and the administration being unable to agree on a final spending bill to keep the government open - resulted in a three-day government shutdown, followed by another three-week continuing resolution.

Since the shutdown, Chair Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee has asked the White House for recommendations on how to improve the Senate bill, which overwhelmingly passed out of the committee last November in an attempt to forge differences between his bill and the bill of Chair Phil Roe (R-Tenn.), which has yet to receive a vote in the House committee.

Recently the administration offered additional recommendations for the Senate bill and sought to bring costs more in line with the House bill (\$54 billion and \$39 billion, respectively, over five years), signaling the desire for any bill brought forward to have a plan to pay for the massive reform. So here we are with time closing on the Feb. 9 deadline, there is no long-term reform bill or funding in sight. "One thing is clear: Every day there is a delay in reforming VA community care and getting a 2018 funding bill for the VA in place is a day of uncertainty and unnecessary stress for those veterans relying on the VA for their health care," says Campos.

### **VIETNAM WALL IN MEMORY PROGRAM**

#### **ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS**

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) created the In Memory program in 1999 to honor Vietnam veterans whose lives were cut short as a result of their service such as illnesses associated with Agent Orange exposure, PTSD, and other causes. A plaque dedicated near The Wall in 2004 reads: *In Memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice.* This program began in 1999 and has since honored over 3,200 veterans.

Applications for an *In Memory Day* ceremony this June are now being accepted. The application deadline is March 9. Application can be found at [inmemory@vvmf.org](mailto:inmemory@vvmf.org) or for more info call, 202-393-0090. Along with the application there are two documents required in the application process: a copy of the death certificate and a copy of the DD214. Examples of proof of service in Vietnam that are listed on the DD214 are: Vietnam Service Medal or Vietnam Campaign Medal or Vietnam Service Ribbon.

### **WACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

The HOT Chapter is a member of the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce so chapter members can attend chamber events. The Chamber is located in downtown Waco at 101 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (254 757-5600).

- **Wed., Feb 21, Waco Chamber of Commerce, 10:30 – 11:30.** 1000 Friends of Waco would like to invite the community to participate in our monthly roundtable discussion focusing on Greater Downtown Waco. This monthly meeting series includes updates from various stakeholders working in the greater downtown area including: the city of Waco, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Public Improvement District and the Greater Waco Chamber.
- **Thurs., Feb 22, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.,** Hour on Economy, Cooper Room, Greater Waco Chamber. This quarterly luncheon event at the Greater Waco Chamber is designed specifically for local business professionals and to provide an update on “our economy in one hour”. Recent economic development news and data are also presented that attendees can use in their business. Cost is \$10. Register on web site or call 757-5600.

### **VA RESUMES APPLICATIONS FOR NEW VETERANS ID CARD**

After temporarily suspending applications for the recently created veterans identification (ID) cards due to high demand, VA is once again accepting applications. The new veterans ID card was created by the *Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015* so veterans who do not have a Veterans Health Identification Card are able to prove their veteran status without having to carry their DD-214. The cards are valid only for proving military service and cannot be used for VA or military benefits. To apply for a Veterans ID card veterans must first sign up at [Vets.gov](http://Vets.gov) and “[Apply for a Printed Veteran ID Card](#)”. To do so, you will need an official government ID that has a photograph (passports are acceptable) and you will need to provide additional data such as a Social Security Number. Another advantage of the card is that veterans can now more easily obtain veteran discounts that many online and brick and mortar stores provide.

### **TRICARE RETIREE DENTAL PLAN ENDING**

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan (TRDP) will sunset on Dec. 31, 2018. The program will not be replaced by a TRICARE alternative. However, retirees currently using or eligible for TRDP will have the option to secure dental coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). This newly designed option was included in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act with the legislated start date of 2019. All TRICARE retirees and their families are eligible for both the dental insurance and vision coverage. Active-duty family members are only eligible for vision coverage. In order to have dental or vision coverage in 2019, interested individuals **must enroll during the open season — Nov. 12-Dec. 10, 2018.** There is no automatic transition for those already enrolled. For example in 2018 the FEDVIP had 10 dental and four vision carriers from which to choose; Delta Dental was included. Carriers and rates for 2019 will be available in fall of 2018.

Here are some kinds of coverage TRICARE beneficiaries will with get with FEDVIP (besides more choices):

- No wait period for most dental services
- No annual maximum benefit for some dental plans
- Regional and national dental networks
- No deductible for some vision plans
- No limit on brands for frames or contacts for some vision plans
- Discounts on LASIK offered by some vision plans.

Beneficiaries are encouraged to start getting information and pre-enrollment communications through the web site set-up just for this program. The website, [www.TRICARE.benefeds.com](http://www.TRICARE.benefeds.com) is up and running this month.

### **VETERAN POPULATION**

The “Gulf War-era” veterans are those who have served from 1990 to present day. In 2016, that group became the largest living group at 7.2 million or 45% of all veterans. Vietnam War-era veterans accounted for 6.6 million or 42% of the war time veteran population. VA claims there were 16,021,000 war time-era veterans living last year.

## **GUEST SPEAKER – KENNETH STEVENSON**

Born in Pittsburgh's Hill District in 1947, Ken fell in love with aviation and worked diligently toward achieving his dream to become a pilot. In 1965, Congressman William S. Moorehead held a competitive appointment from which Ken was chosen as the first man of color from the Tri-State area to attend the United States Air Force Academy. After a rigorous climb at the Academy he went on to attend Pilot Training and in 1970 his lovely wife Mary pinned on those coveted Air Force wings.

Assigned to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) as a B-52 co-pilot Ken flew 210 combat missions over Viet Nam including 5 of the eleven raids over Hanoi which ended the war, earning ten Air Medals and three Distinguished Flying Crosses for his service. He also advanced to command his own B-52 crew at the age of 25 and was one of the youngest commanders in SAC.

Following his tours in SEA Ken was assigned to the faculty of the Air Force Academy where he taught English and flying.

Devoting much time to community service, he was instrumental in re-establishing the annual Black Arts/Awareness Festival at the Academy, and served as Officer-in-Charge of the Commandant's Way of Life Committee, which serves the needs of minority cadets. Joining Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity he followed in the footsteps of his Air Force mentor Gen. Daniel Chappie James and participated in a number of service projects through the organization and developed the group's Thanksgiving program to feed the needy. The Kappa Alpha Psi program has no overhead and is conducted by volunteers using food donated by local merchants. As a result of his contribution to the organization, he was elected to its Board of Directors and to the office of Historian after only one year with the fraternity. In 1979, the U.S. Jaycees selected Stevenson as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of America along with then governor Bill Clinton, the late John Denver and Admiral Bud Flanigan. Congressman William S. Moorehead of Pittsburgh, who had granted Stevenson his Air Force Academy appointment, also recognized him in the Congressional Record for his outstanding achievements. From 1978 to 1985, Dr. Stevenson worked for International Business Machines (IBM) as a marketing representative and a corporate pilot, where he received the IBM 100% Club award for two consecutive years.

In 1985, Ken and his wife Mary founded the Everlasting Covenant Christian Ekklesia in Dutchess County, New York. What began as a small group bible study held in the couple's basement, grew into a culturally diverse congregation of over 700 that maintained great outreach in the community including hospitals, prisons, shelters and feeding the hungry.

In addition to the church and its ministries, in 1990 the Stevensons also established Everlasting Covenant Christian Academy, a private Christian school for the pursuit of excellence in all life disciplines. In 2003, Ken established Renaissance Academy of Pittsburgh Alternative of Pittsburgh of Hope Charter School. Unfortunately after 4 years of academic excellence for some 240 students that saw the youngsters improve their math scores nearly 40% and reading scores nearly 30%, the four-star school's Charter was not renewed. Ken's commitment to his calling as a minister of the Gospel continues to bless many around the world. He has been directly involved in Missionary work in Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Israel and by outreach to Bolivia, Africa, Surinam, the Netherlands and even Russia.

Dr. Stevenson served as Recording Secretary for the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP). He accompanied the American scientific team to the Turin in October 1978 when it joined a select few international scientists to study this linen and analyze it for DNA and other evidence of its age, origins and use. Many believe the shroud is actually the burial cloth in which the body of Christ was wrapped when he was removed from the cross. Stevenson edited The Proceedings of the 1977 United States Conference of Research on the Shroud of Turin. and was the author and co-author of three internationally known best sellers in the United States on the subject: Verdict on the Shroud, The Shroud and the Controversy and Image of the Risen Christ. In 1985 Ken and Mary produced "Behold The Man" a documentary aired annually on Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Dr. Stevenson has appeared on numerous secular and religious television programs, including GMA, Today, Cornerstone and CBN to name a few.

Ken and Mary have four grown children, Jeichelle, Kenneth III, Sean, and Angela, and twelve grandchildren, and now reside in Waco, Texas.



**Heart of Texas Chapter TX07, MOAA**  
**P.O. Box 23964**  
**Waco, TX 76702-3964**

Address label

**2018 H.O.T. MOAA OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**President**

Dennis DeGraff, COL, USAF (ret) (Debby)  
 585 Willow Grove Rd., Waco, TX 76712 [dennisdebby@earthlink.net](mailto:dennisdebby@earthlink.net)

**1st Vice President**

Gary Urban, Maj, USAF (ret)  
 6379 Rosenthal Pkwy, Lorena, TX 76655 [garyurban1@inbox.com](mailto:garyurban1@inbox.com)

**2nd Vice President**

Bobby Sammon, LtCol, USAF (ret) Donna)  
 6662 S. 12<sup>th</sup> St. Dr., Waco, TX 76706 [bgsammon@gmail.com](mailto:bgsammon@gmail.com)

**Secretary**

Paul Thronburg, 1LT, USA (Norma)  
 910 E. Burseson Ave, Mart, TX 76664 [tmartmgb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tmartmgb@sbcglobal.net)

**Treasurer**

Vince Tobola, LtCol, USAF (ret)  
 1704 Laurel Lake Dr. Waco, TX 76710 [vtobola@aol.com](mailto:vtobola@aol.com)

**Immediate Past President**

Jim Milam, COL, USAF (ret) (Laura)  
 9021 Ledge Stone Dr, McGregor, TX 76657 [jimmilam@aol.com](mailto:jimmilam@aol.com)

**Chaplain**

John Wells, COL, USA (ret) (Su)  
 14043 Horseshoe Cir, Waco, TX 76712 [coljtw@yahoo.com](mailto:coljtw@yahoo.com)

**Surviving Spouse Liaison**

Carol McHaney  
 3309 Pioneer Circle, Waco, TX 76712 [carol\\_mchaney@mygrande.net](mailto:carol_mchaney@mygrande.net)

**Legislative Liaison**

Jon Ker, COL, USA (RET) (Terri)  
 279 Buffalo Run, Valley Mills, TX 76689 [jon@jonker.com](mailto:jon@jonker.com)

**Directors**

Dr. Harold Rafuse, LtCol, USAF (ret.)  
 Dr. Mike O'Bric, CAPT, USMC (Karen)  
 Jimmie Hanes, COL, USAF, (ret) (Mary)  
 Roland Duty, LT, ANG, (Mary)  
 Bob Lull, COL, USA (ret) (Penny)  
 Don Speed, CAPT, USAF (Ann)  
 Billie Sawyer, MAJ, USAF (ret) (Maeve)  
 Jim Milam, COL, USAF (ret) (Laura)  
 Michael Slavens, LtCol, USAF (ret) (Marsha)

**ELECTED OFFICIALS**

U.S. Senator John Cornyn 517 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Website: <a href="http://www.Cornyn.senate.gov">www.Cornyn.senate.gov</a> 202-228-2856	Chase Tower 221 West Sixth St, Suite 1530 Austin, TX 78701 512-469-6034, FAX 512-469-6020
--	--

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz  
 B40B Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510  
 202-224-5922

U.S. Rep. Bill Flores 1505 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515 Website: <a href="http://www.flores.house.gov">www.flores.house.gov</a> 202-225-6105; fax 202-225-0350	(Waco office) 400 Austin Ave, STE 29 Waco, TX 76701
--	---

**USEFUL NUMBERS**

MOAA Capital switchboard hotline 1-800 272-6622  
 MOAA Membership 1-800 245-8762

**Free Weekly E-mail Legislative Updates**

Subscribe to MOAA's Free Weekly E-mail Legislative Updates:  
[\(https://www.moaa.org/\)](https://www.moaa.org/) click on Legislative Action Center or call (800) 234-6622 (MOAA) to get the information.

***INSIDE THIS ISSUE:***

***PRESIDENT MESSAGE & UPCOMING EVENTS***  
***FEBRUARY 15 DINNER MEETING – GUEST***  
***SPEAKER, KEN STEVENSON***  
***LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND ISSUES***  
***CHANGES IN TRICARE DENTAL PLAN AND***  
***DENTAL & VISION INSURANCE OPTIONS IN 2019***  
***CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENTS***  
***MARCH 24 FREEDOM BALL INFO***