



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

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May 2018

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

April showers bring May flowers (?)!

Our Texas springs challenge the above adage in that we experience the amazing bounty of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes well before April, and this past April was particularly dry. Perhaps May will bring the showers of needed rain to feed our thirsty lawns, gardens, and fields of corn and cotton. We did receive needed rain on April 21st, and fortunately we were able to complete 12 holes of golf in our Freedom Is Not Free scholarship golf scramble before ending early due to lightning. We had a great time and I was encouraged by the members who came out to help. Fundraising totals are still being tabulated, but the scholarship process is well under way, and I look forward to the support we are able to award to promising and productive students pursuing higher education. Our Chapter encourages these young leaders through the scholarship program, and I salute each one of you for your support.

This month, my father would have been 92 years young, but he passed from this life about 10 months ago. He was one of the millions called to serve during World War II, and he served in the Navy as a radioman on a destroyer in the Pacific. Although he was discharged with no record of service-connected disability, as he aged, some of his experiences manifested themselves in his overall health. My father was fortunate to have received certain care benefits through the VA, one of which was in home assistance for bathing. A close friend of mine phoned me the other day and asked about possible assistance for his father, also a World War II Navy veteran. He had just received a call from his mother who relayed she and his father were both on the floor from falling, and were working to get back up. She said they were not injured, and by the time my friend arrived, the parents were up and moving around. I directed my friend to the Veterans One Stop, specifically to the Veterans Service Officer. For those veterans who have never required or sought VA services, they

can help sorting through the bureaucratic paperwork associated with VA care. Even though a veteran may not be service-connected disabled, there are services the VA provides to all veterans. We continue to serve when we can help veterans we encounter by directing to the right sources of help.

Two House of Representative bills have been introduced this legislative session addressing military retired pay and disability compensation. HR 303, Retired Pay Restoration Act, addresses the retirement pay offset and disability compensation for veterans with 40% or less disability rating. HR 333, Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act, addresses the disability pay offset for medically retired veterans and their medical retirement pay, as well as the HR 303 population. You can show support for these bills by going to the MOAA website and the legislative link, and send a prepared message to our Congressman and two Senators. The MOAA website automatically sends your message to the Congressional offices at the click of the mouse. Staying engaged with our elected officials ensures we continue our advocacy for military veterans and their families.

This month also brings the end of the local school year, and I want to say thank you to our Chapter members who present MOAA JROTC awards to young high school cadets. Our support for these young people is an encouragement for their continued success in high school. I also want to invite you to our monthly meeting on 17 May to hear a special guest speaker, Joyce Denke, one of the more than 600 American Red Cross "Donut Dollies" who served in Vietnam and Korea. Joyce was assigned to Vietnam in 1970 and worked six months with the Marines at Cam Ranh Bay and six months in Da Nang with the Army and Air Force, bringing a touch of home to our troops overseas. Please join us in hearing an especially interesting and inspirational account of Joyce's service to our country. And as always, seize the opportunities to serve: "Never Stop Serving!"
Respectfully, Dennis DeGraff

Upcoming Events and Information Items

MAY 17TH THURSDAY DINNER MEETING
AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM
GUEST SPEAKER, JOYCE DENKE, "DONUT
DOLLIE"
****SOCIAL HOUR: 6:00 P.M. **, **CALL TO**
TABLES 6:30 P.M. *, *INTRO &
ANNOUNCEMENTS , 6:35 P.M. **, **DINNER
6:55 P.M., **DRAWING & GUEST**
SPEAKER 7:55 P.M.

MENU: Garden salad with crisp romaine hearts and iceberg, cherry tomatoes, English cucumber, red cabbage and parmesan cheese served with ranch and Italian dressings, 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 15 May, 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 summer dress code is effect with gentlemen attire as collared shirts and slacks, with coat and/or tie optional 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 or call 709-5795 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, **May 22, 2018**, 5 p.m., at the Waco Cottonwood Creek Golf Course.

SPOUSES BRIDGE CLUB LUNCH

The next Bridge Club session will be held on 24 May 2018. The contact is Carole Hardeman, 744-1198 and also thanks to Carole as the club sponsor for the bridge activity.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2018

21 June, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, guest speaker or entertainment to be announced.

19 July, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, proposed educational scholarship awards.

16 August, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, guest speaker or entertainment to be announced.

10 May 2019, Friday Afternoon, Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Golf tournament **Ridgewood Country Club is at 7301 Fish Pond Rd.**

MAY SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Bob Corwin, Sandy Corwin, Verna LaStrapes, Bill Owen, Patty Pirko, Robert Powers, and John Wells.

Anniversaries: Tim and Nancy Pfanner, Ray and Rosemary Sancton, and Doug and Pat Young.

Congratulations & best wishes to all on your special day.

V-E DAY COMMEMORATION

Visitors to Washington, D.C., in coming week are invited to the National World War II Memorial on Tuesday, May 8, for an 11 a.m. ceremony to mark the 73rd anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe. As part of the commemoration, WWII veterans will place wreaths at the memorial's Freedom Wall in remembrance of the more than 400,000 Americans and 60 million people killed worldwide during the deadliest military conflict in human history.

COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE UPDATE

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers from around the country for a market basket of consumer goods and services. All taxes directly associated with the purchase and use of items are included the index.

Collectively, the CPI is also used to adjust annuities for other federal retirees, survivors, and Social Security recipients. The March 2018 CPI is 243.463 or 1.6 percent above the FY COLA baseline. The CPI for April 2018 is scheduled to be released on May 10, 2018.

POSSIBLE CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT FEES FOR TRICARE FOR LIFE

Many military beneficiaries are getting frustrated over unexpected and disproportional increases in their TRICARE service fees. The fee changes have been implemented across just about every fee category. However, TRICARE for Life (TFL) beneficiaries, a perennial target, are currently unscathed by the budget knife. But just because DoD did not include any specific fees for TFL in its budget submission this year does not mean Congress will not try to slip some new fees into the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) during the markup process.

As recently as last fall, Congress raised pharmacy fees for everyone. Those increases reduced the amount of the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset for military widows. Essentially, the dramatic increase in pharmacy copayments is funding the reduction of SBP/DIC, also known as the widows' tax. Compound these increases with DoD's end run of all the other TRICARE fee increases and you get the picture: Beneficiaries are funding and offsetting their own earned benefits. And you can bet Congress will again look for money anywhere they can get it.

This is why MOAA is on guard to prevent any attempt to establish a new enrollment fee for TFL. TFL beneficiaries already pay more for their health care coverage than any other uniformed service beneficiaries. And now they are paying much more for their medications, too, and will continue to do so with the planned increases in the out-years.

Congress was thoughtful in its establishment of TFL enacted in 2001, deeming it a commitment of a grateful nation. Before TFL, TRICARE beneficiaries immediately lost their TRICARE coverage when they became Medicare eligible at age 65 (including those who were Medicare-eligible due to disability). This positioned them at the same level of coverage as U.S. citizens who had never served the full 20-plus year careers in the uniformed services. However, Congress recognized health care coverage was an important benefit earned through decades of service and sacrifice - and one that should be sustained over the lifetime of the service member and their family.

TFL, which has no enrollment fee, was set up to be the second payer after Medicare pays first. To be eligible, individuals must be TRICARE- and Medicare- eligible and have purchased Medicare

Part B coverage. Out of all of the TRICARE benefit plans, this one has been the most successful and is tremendously popular with the age-65-and-over beneficiary population.

The reality continues to be that personnel costs are not rising to be more than a third of DoD's budget. This has been consistent for the past several decades. And more specifically, TFL's costs have actually decreased or flattened.

INITIAL COMMENTS ON HOUSE 2019 BUDGET

At the end of April, the House Armed Services Subcommittees completed their Fiscal 2019 budget mark-ups to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Full mark-ups are expected by May 9th. Some key provisions are:

- Extends a 2.6% pay raise to service members, the highest in nine years
- Authorizes increased end-strength across the Air Force, Air Reserve, and Air Guard
- Makes permanent the Career Intermission Program, which allows service members to take a break from active service
- Overhauls to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to include specialized tracks for service members depending on whether a service member wants to attend college, start a business, or enter the workforce when they leave the military
- Requires the DOD to include cyber and space in its quarterly readiness report
- Advances Artificial Intelligence, hypersonics, and directed energy weapons
- Establishes a floor of 479 air refueling tanker aircraft in the Air Force inventory subject to the results of the Mobility Capability and Requirements Study 2018
- Recommends full funding for the B-21 Raider bomber program
- Requires the Secretary of Defense to provide a detailed cost estimate and baseline schedule for the F-35 continuous capability development and delivery program.

MEDICARE HELP ON HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Medicare's "Compare" website can assist. Medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare gives detailed information 17,000 nursing homes nationwide. Medicare.gov/hospitalcompare provides information on 4,700 hospitals. Medicare.gov/homehealthcompare lets you locate home care agencies in your area and check on their services.

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. 3rd Street (254 757-5600).

- **Thurs, May 17, 7:45 – 9 a.m.**, Technology Business Briefing on “Driving Innovation Through IT”, by Tony Hart, Regional Sales Director, Data Systems Technology Solutions. Free breakfast at BRIC, 100 Research Parkway. RSVP to dmccutchen@wacochamber.com or call 757-5636.
- **Thurs., May 17, 11:45 doors open, 12 noon – 1:00 p.m.** program on Small Business Hour: Practical Strategies for reaching your best prospects through digital advertising at Greater Chamber of Commerce. Bring your own lunch. Please RSVP by registering on site or calling 757-5600.
- **Thurs, May 17, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.** Business After Hours at KWTX-TV News Channel 10, 6700 American Plaza. This is come and go networking event.
- **Wed., May 23, Young Professionals Industry Tour, 12 Noon – 1:00 p.m.** at Englander DZIGNPAK, 701 Texas Central Parkway. Guest speaker is Hal Whitaker, President of Englander dZignPak. Lunch will be provided and the event begins at 12 noon. Please RSVP at web site or by calling 757-5600.

VETERANS BREAKFAST AT WOODWAY, MAY 19TH

Part of the Woodway Roadrunner Festival includes a free breakfast for veterans on May 19th from 8 – 9 a.m. at the Arboretum’s Pavilion. Guest speaker will be Melissa Gentsch. No reservations are required.

COMBAT MARINE OUTDOORS BENEFIT GALA DINNER ON MAY 31ST

This event will be held at the Baylor Club and guest speaker is Lt. Col. Allen West. Tickets are \$100 each. More information can be found at combatmarinesoutdoors.org. Combat Marine Outdoors organization provides dream hunts and outdoor adventures for severely wounded Marines, soldiers, airmen, sailors and Navy corpsmen.

GUEST SPEAKER – JOYCE DENKE

Joyce Denke is now a resident of Riesel, Texas but in the past had several assignments with the Red Cross, including a year in a war zone.

While in her final year at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, she heard of a special program called the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas, or SRAO. The program was offered by the American Red Cross and she had two options: Korea or Vietnam. She chose Vietnam.

In 1970, after completing her degree in Sociology, she received training in Washington, D.C. with the Red Cross. Joyce was one of more than 600 women who would take their turn overseas.

The young women were nicknamed “Donut Dollies”, after receiving the moniker in World War II for passing out donuts and coffee to the men. Though it was often too hot for coffee, Joyce said the main purpose was to boost morale of the troops and get their minds off the war, even if it was for a little while. While in Vietnam, she worked for six months with Marines at Cam Ranh Bay and six months in Da Nang with the Army and the Air Force. Joyce served more than seven years with the Red Cross, “providing a touch of home to our troops”.

Joyce welcomes the opportunity to speak about her service in Vietnam and was recently honored to lead the pledge of allegiance at the Texas Capital Vietnam Memorial dedication. She was also featured in a documentary film called “A Touch of Home, the story of the Red Cross girls in Vietnam”. service in Vietnam and was recently honored to lead the pledge of allegiance at the Texas Capitol Vietnam Memorial dedication. She was also featured in the documentary film called “A Touch of Home, the story of the Red Cross girls in Vietnam”. The best days for Joyce are when she sees a veteran and walks up to thank him. In exchanging conversation about Vietnam, they then wind up hugging in grateful appreciation of each other..... sometimes a really long hug....

VA NUMBERS

Here are some facts on scope of VA operations. 9.7 million veterans uses at least one VA service in fiscal year 2016. There are 145 VA hospitals, 300 VA vet centers, 1,231 VA outpatient clinics and 135 VA-run national cemeteries. There are approximately 377,000 VA employees, largest federal government agency with DOD being first.

CHANGE AT VA AND OPEN NEEDS FOR NEW SECRETARY

Dr. David Shulkin officially has left the VA, with number of successes from his time as secretary. Though this departure might be construed a number of ways, his many accomplishments over the past year and during his prior role as undersecretary for VA health affairs serve as a foundation for the next VA secretary to build upon. Here are some highlights:

Enactment of legislation to reform the VA claims appeals process. The outdated and inefficient VA claims process not only was an unwieldy burden to veterans but also to the VA. The implementation of the new claims process is underway and will require adequate resourcing (specifically in manpower and information technology) for long-term success in veterans obtaining better, faster claims decisions.

Expansion of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The update to this educational benefit included removing the 15-year expiration date, expanding the types of programs it may be used for, and other important modernizations that keep the benefit relevant to the current job market and veteran population.

Expansion of mental health care for veterans. Shulkin prioritized mental health care and suicide prevention throughout the agency and expanded care for veterans, among other important changes. While Shulkin's tenure has many high points, other areas remain unfinished that the next VA secretary must keep on his radar or risk significant problems within the veteran population. These include:

VA community care, or CHOICE. This legislation still has not been enacted and will have to be the new secretary's top priority, as the CHOICE program is set to run out of money in May.

Expansion of the VA's caregiver program to pre-9/11 veterans. This legislation is essential to veterans in dire need of assistance due to the progression of their disabling conditions. Shulkin was in agreement that the program should be expanded to these veterans, using certain parameters to keep costs under control. The next secretary should push this legislation over the goal line, as everyone - the VA, veterans' service organizations, Congress, and veterans - seems to agree the program must be expanded to include these veterans.

Toxic exposures. Many groups of veterans remain disabled due to toxic exposures they endured at Fort McClellan, Ala., and in Korea, Guam, Iraq,

and Afghanistan, without a change in the law governing these exposures and the conditions they cause, veterans will be left suffering the consequences of wars from decades ago. MOAA and other veterans' organizations have worked extensively with the VA and Congress to change laws to ensure these veterans receive the benefits they earned through their brave sacrifices, and it will be essential for the VA to keep the momentum moving in the right direction.

Despite personal feelings on both sides about Shulkin's departure, the focus must be on ongoing issues that need immediate attention. The next VA secretary needs to be prepared to hit the ground running.

PROTECTING VETERANS AGAINST FRAUD

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the AARP Fraud Watch Network recently launched Operation Protect Veterans — a nationwide campaign to warn our military and veterans about scams and fraud schemes that target them. A recent survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago showed that 16 percent of U.S. veterans have lost money to fraudsters, compared to 8 percent of nonveterans. More worrisome is 80 percent of respondents reported being targeted by scams directly related to their military service or the veterans' benefits they receive. A major component of the Operation Protect Veterans campaign includes distributing printed brochures at more than 37,000 post offices to warn veterans about the scams.

B-52 SHATTERS VIETNAM-ERA RECORDS

More than four decades ago, the Air Force's iconic B-52 Stratofortress set records as it pounded North Vietnamese targets during Operations Linebacker II. But during its recently concluded two-year deployment to the Middle East to fight the Islamic State and the Taliban, the BUFF – Big Ugly Fat Fellow- smashed through those milestones.

According to an April 12 news release, the 23rd Bomb Squadron launched its 400th consecutive B-52 mission without a delay due to maintenance. This broke a B-52 streak that had stood since December 1972, when the Air Force carried out 11 days of massive bombing in North Vietnam. During the first three days of Linebacker II, 312 sorties were launched without a maintenance cancellation.



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