



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

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September 2018

**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

“See you in September...”

Back to school, return from vacation travel, first day of hunting season, the end of meteorological summer (hopefully!), high school and college football...all these mark the beginning of an exciting autumn. To begin, I want to present you with a quick snapshot of our dinner meeting agendas. For September, we will host Colonel William Pailles, USAF Astronaut, Manned Spaceflight Engineer Program, who flew on STS-51-J, Atlantis, in October 1985. Dr. Sue Burdett Robinson, a licensed professional counselor who works with veterans at the Waco One-Stop, will speak on generational differences of veterans at our October dinner. November will feature Brad Livingstone, a World War II historian, discussing lessons learned and reflections on his extensive interviews with WWII veterans. (You may recognize Mr. Livingstone from his association with Dr. Livingstone of Baylor) And certainly mark your calendars for our December dinner featuring The Morticians for our Christmas Dinner dance.

Autumn also brings opportunities to serve. One aspect of our mission as the Heart of Texas Chapter is to support veterans. In the Interstate 35 corridor between Waco and Temple, there are 500 permanent residents in the VA Hospital system. As you may well guess, there is a tremendous need for basic necessities such as socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, brushes, shampoo, and soap. We will be collecting these items at our next two dinner meetings, and a box will be set up at the registration table. KWTX and Waco Scottish Rite are also offering drop off locations. If you so desire, monetary contributions will also be accepted and Waco Scottish Rite has agreed to match cash donations up to \$2500.

This season is also the time we look forward to selecting leaders for our next year of service. Our Nominating Committee is headed up by Bobby Sammon, with Michael Slavens and Jim Milam assisting. Serving as an officer is a great privilege and responsibility, and I am certain you have the skills and wherewithal to lead our Chapter for the year 2019. Our Nominating Committee members will be at the dinners and will be talking to you regarding opportunities to serve. If you miss speaking with any of them, feel free to contact Bobby Sammon at 254 715-2450.

One item of interest at each Board meeting is how many members we have as a local Chapter. To date, we have 85 dues paying members, of which only four are spouse members. Our local Chapter by-laws permit spouses of military officers to become members of our Heart of Texas Chapter. Let me encourage spouses to become members. Spouse members are eligible to serve as officers and directors in our local Chapter.

If you are a golfer and read the recent article in the Waco Tribune-Herald about the limited Waco golf course options, you may want to participate in the CenTex MOAA Scholarship Golf Tournament scheduled for 24 September 2018 at the Wildflower Country Club in Temple. CenTex MOAA Chapter is a sister chapter whose members have supported our spring golf fundraiser. Information can be found on their chapter website: [www.centexmoaa.org](http://www.centexmoaa.org)

I look forward to seeing each of you at our September dinner meeting and hearing about our national astronaut training program from Colonel William Pailles, as well as his experiences of space travel. Until then, “Never Stop Serving!”

Respectfully,  
Dennis DeGraff

## Upcoming Events and Information Items

### SEPTEMBER 20 THURSDAY DINNER MEETING AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM, GUEST SPEAKER, COLONEL WILLIAM PAILES, USAF ASTRONAUT

**\*\*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: Caesar salad with crisp romaine hearts, brioche croutons, grated parmesan cheese, and club made Caesar dressing, Top Butt Sirloin, Fried Chicken, 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 18 September, 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 men's attire as collared shirts and slacks, coat and/or tie optional and ladies' attire as desired.**

**2018 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES** The Board is always looking for prospects to join the chapter. Please contact Vince Tobola, 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 1<sup>st</sup> and prorated for new members later in year. 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, **September 25, 2018**, 5 p.m., at the Waco Cottonwood Creek Golf Course Clubhouse.

### **US AIR FORCE ANNIVERSARY**

In 1947 President Truman signed the National Security Act which established this new defense organization, and along with it the creation of the US Air Force as an independent service, equal to the US Army and US Navy. The official birthday of the US Air Force is 18 September 1947.

### **GUEST SPEAKER – WILLIAM PAILES**

William Arthur Pailes (Colonel, USAF) (born June 26, 1952) was a USAF astronaut in the Manned Spaceflight Engineer Program during the mid-1980s. He served as a Payload Specialist on STS-51-J Atlantis (October 3–7, 1985).

Pailes was born in Hackensack, New Jersey, but considers Kinnelon, New Jersey, to be his hometown. He is married and is a former deacon and treasurer of his church in El Segundo, California. He now teaches the AFJROTC Program at Temple High School in Temple, TX. He is the Senior Aerospace Science Instructor. Pailes graduated from Kinnelon High School in Kinnelon, New Jersey in 1970. He then received his Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado four years later. From 1974 to 1975 he attended pilot training at the Williams Air Force Base, Arizona where he trained as a HC-130 rescue pilot in the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. In 1978, he attended the Squadron Officer School. Pailes received his Master of Science degree in Computer Science at Texas A&M University in 1981.

He was an HC-130 pilot in Air Force Rescue from December 1975 to July 1980 in McClellan Air Force Base, California and Royal Air Force Base, Woodbridge, England. He was then Manager, mini-computer operating systems software development, from January 1982 to December 1982 at Headquarters Military Airlift Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He was a Manned Spaceflight Engineer from January 1983 at USAF Manned Spaceflight Engineering Program, Los Angeles Air Force Station, California. From August 2002 to 2011 he was the instructor of the AFJROTC Program, Corsicana, Texas, as a JROTC Senior Aerospace Science Instructor. From August 2011 to present, he has been the instructor of the AFJROTC Program, Temple, Texas, as a JROTC Senior Aerospace Science Instructor.

Pailes flew as a payload specialist on STS-51-J Atlantis (October 3–7, 1985) which launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, and returned to land at Edwards Air Force Base, California. STS-51-J was the second Space Shuttle Department of Defense mission. It was also the maiden voyage of the Atlantis orbiter. Pailes traveled over 1.6 million miles in 64 Earth orbits and logged more than 97 hours in space.

## SENATE LEGISLATIVE ITEMS

At the end of August, the Senate advanced three important bills including the VFW-supported S. 899, the *Veterans Providing Healthcare Transition Improvement Act*, which would ensure veterans who work for VA are able to attend medical appointments for service-connected health conditions within their first year of employment, without having to take unpaid leave.

The Senate also passed H.R. 2147, the *Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018*, which would require VA to increase the number of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists who assist justice-involved veterans in receiving the treatment they need, instead of being incarcerated for crimes that were associated with untreated or undertreated service-connected health conditions. Both S. 899 and H.R. 2147 have passed by the House and Senate and now head to the president's desk.

The Senate also advanced H.R. 6157, which would provide appropriations for the Department of Defense to carry out its mission, including an additional \$10 million to enable the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to identify the service members whose remains were recently returned by North Korea and reunite them with their loved ones — a mission the VFW fully supports.

## VA AWARDS \$200M IN VETERAN HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

Recently, VA announced plans to provide \$200 million in funding for the Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD) which supports homeless veterans. The funding is expected to support more than 13,000 beds for veterans in need across the country. Within the provided funding, \$2.7 million will be awarded to 12 special need-based grants that support homeless veterans with chronic mental illness, women veterans, and veterans taking care of minor dependents. The GPD program was established in 1994 to provide support and services to programs across the country taking care of homeless veterans in need of housing stability.

## OPTIONS COMING FOR NEW DENTAL AND VISION PLANS

### **The new dental and vision plans - who, what, where, and when?**

Retirees and their family members are eligible to enroll in one of the FEDVIP dental and/or vision plans. Members of the retired reserve, non-active Medal of Honor recipients, and survivors also are eligible to enroll in FEDVIP.

For the first time, most active duty family members will be eligible for vision coverage through FEDVIP. If eligible, they may enroll in a plan for self-only, self-plus-one, or self and family coverage. To be eligible for vision coverage, the individual must be enrolled in a TRICARE health plan; this includes TRICARE for Life (TFL).

The current TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan (TRDP) will end Dec. 31, 2018. TRDP members currently using Delta Dental may enroll during the 2018 federal benefits open season (Nov. 12 to Dec. 10) in their choice of FEDVIP dental plans. **TRDP enrollees must take action to enroll in a FEDVIP plan to receive dental benefits starting Jan. 1, 2019. When TRDP ends, there will be no automatic enrollment in FEDVIP.**

For the latest information, we recommend visiting [TRICARE.benefeds.com](http://TRICARE.benefeds.com). Please check back frequently; information such as the established 2019 costs will be updated as it becomes available sometime this fall. Beneficiaries also can sign up to receive alerts when new information is added.

### **With all of the changes to the TRICARE program, will TFL be affected?**

No. Generally, none of the changes to the TRICARE program will affect those beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE for Life.

Most changes have occurred in the TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select health plans. However, as described above, the current TRICARE dental plan for all retirees is changing.

### **Why have TRICARE's cost shares gone up so much?**

Since Jan. 1, military beneficiaries have experienced unexpected increases in TRICARE fees. These increases resulted from DoD's unilateral decision to change its fee schedules from a percentage-of-cost model to flat-rate fees for TRICARE Select. These structural fee changes disregarded the intention of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which said service members and their families would be grandfathered from health care cost-share increases. Both TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select fees, however, were subject to steep increases.

Of specific interest to beneficiaries is the cost share increases associated with specialty care appointments. For instance, mental health and physical therapy visits are considered specialty care. This change generates significantly higher out-of-pocket costs than under the previous TRICARE Standard or Extra, and they are higher than many civilian plans.

## **NEW ARMY COMMAND**

The Army's new command to enhance soldier lethality and develop new battlefield technology will be led by Gen. John Murray. President Donald Trump nominated Murray after Defense Department announced Army Futures Command would be located in Austin, Texas. Murray earned his fourth star in a ceremony Aug. 24, just before the command's activation. Murray, commissioned as an infantry officer from The Ohio State University in 1982, has served in leadership positions and commanded at the highest levels of the Army over his 36-year career. He is the first commanding general of Army Futures Command.

Here's is information on the command:

1. Austin, Texas was selected as headquarters from a list of 150 metropolitan locations. Leaders selected Austin for its proximity to industries in science, engineering and math; proximity to private-sector innovation; access to top tier universities; and quality of life.
2. Army Futures Command will support modernization efforts in the areas of long-range precision fires, combat vehicles, vehicle lift platforms, mobile and expeditionary networks, soldier lethality and air and missile defense.
3. The command is not without its critics or challenges. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) filed an amendment to the defense appropriations bill that would prevent funding Futures Command until the Government Accountability Office completes two investigations. The GAO is looking into the Army's rationale and plans for establishing the new command and its potential effect on small business.
4. Once funded, there will be four sub-organizations with specialized expertise working under Futures Command HQ. Those sub-organizations are Futures and Concepts, which will identify and prioritize capability development needs; Combat Development, which will conceptualize and develop solutions for identified needs and opportunities; Combat Systems, which will refine, engineer and produce developed solutions; and Cross Functional Teams, which use experimentation to enable the Army to rapidly develop solutions for equipment and warfighters.
5. A six-member team will begin initial operating capability. Within a year, officials said Futures Command will have a staff of about 500 troops and civilians.

## **PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2018 - 2019**

**18 October**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, Guest Speaker, Dr. Sue Burdett Robinson, PhD Licensed Professional Counselor talking on issues among the different generations of veterans.

**15 November**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, guest speaker, Brad Livingstone, WWII Historian talking on his interviews with local WWII veterans.

**13 December**, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, live entertainment by the band, The Morticians.

**2019 Dinner Meetings** to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday except for May.

**10 May 2019**, Friday Afternoon, Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Tournament to be held at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course, Waco.

## **SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION**

**September Birthdays:** Jim Buehrig, Deb by DeGraff, Mary Duty, Elizabeth Bett Garcia, Jerry Gordon, Bill Matta, Bill Perdue, Tim Pfanner, Matt Pirko, Robert Ross, and Madeline Sweeney.

**September Anniversaries:** Billie and Mauve Sawyer, Pete and Susan Patrick, and Rusty and Janet Glover.

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

## **V-J DAY COMMEMORATION**

There was a commemoration event at the National World War II Memorial on Sunday, Sept. 2, to mark the 73rd anniversary of Victory over Japan day, signally the end of WWII. For the commemoration, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial and the National Park Service hosted a ceremony and wreath presentation at the World War II 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.

## **VA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM TO EXPAND**

VA is beginning the process of hiring more counselors to help reduce the backlog of claims and wait times for users of this program. VR&E counselors are supposed to have a 1 to 125 counselor-to-case ratio, but the current ratio is much higher. The increased workload for counselors has led to delays in processing of claims and payments for the past few years. This program currently has more than 120,000 participants, and hopefully the additional counselors will help veterans utilize this incredibly valuable program more effectively.

## 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).

- Thursday, Sept. 20, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Monthly Roundtable for 1000 Friends of Waco at Waco Convention Center, Texas Room North 115.
- **Tuesday, Oct. 2, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.,** Membership Luncheon at the Lee Lockwood Library & Museum Event Center, 2801 W. Waco Drive. Guest speaker will be the Honorable Kent Hance, Chancellor Emeritus of the Texas Tech University System. Cost is \$25.00 per person. Please RSVP at web site, WacoChamber.com.

## EXPLOSIVE SOUVENIRS ARE UNSAFE

Veterans sometimes unknowingly put themselves, their families, and neighbors in danger by keeping munitions as war souvenirs or keepsakes. Veterans and their families also incorrectly assume such munitions are safe because they are frequently handled or because the munitions are old. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) continues to be concerned with the type and number of military munitions they recover voluntarily each month from veterans and from the families of deceased veterans. The ATF reports about 50 recoveries every month of munitions ranging from hand grenades and smoke grenades to mortar rounds and landmines. No matter what you call them — souvenirs, war mementos, duds, or simulators — munitions are dangerous by design and should never be considered safe. This has led the Department of Defense to launch a new campaign against souvenir munitions and explosives called the 3Rs Explosives Safety Education Program, which instructs people to: **recognize** the danger souvenir munitions pose to yourself, your family and neighbors; **retreat**, do not disturb, touch, or move it; and **report**, call 911 and advise the police.

## MILITARY RETIREMENT COLA

There are several different Consumer Price Index (CPI) measurements and all CPIs are based on what the "average" consumer pays for what the government considers a basic "market basket" of items everybody needs to buy. So when prices go up, the COLA for military retirement, VA benefits, and social security will increase too.

Each year, the government takes the CPI average for the third quarter (July to September) and compares it to the same period for previous year. As of July 2018, the CPI had increased 2.9 percent from 2017. So, if there is zero inflation for August or September, you may be looking at a 2.9 percent pay raise for 2019. The more likely situation is at least a 3.1 or 3.2 percent increase for next year. That would be the highest increase since 2012. This is not final but will see COLA number before end of the year.

## SENATE ON APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The Senate on Aug. 23 wasted no time in passing its version of the fiscal year 2019 defense appropriations legislation as part of an \$856.9 billion "minibus" spending package (H.R. 6157).

The Senate has not moved this fast on the appropriations bill in the better part of a decade. The legislation was passed following two days of debate, by a vote of 85-7. The legislation supports funding the measures in the FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), including the 2.6 percent pay raise for troops. But the approval process is not done yet, and there is a chance Congress would instead pursue a continuing resolution and more budget uncertainty.

The Senate bill, which approved \$674.9 billion in discretionary defense spending, will now be reconciled with the House version of the FY2019 defense spending legislation in conference when the House returns in September. The House passed their defense spending bill, on June 28, by a vote of 359-49, approving \$674.6 billion in discretionary spending for defense.

Congressional leadership has maintained a pace to have both the NDAA and appropriations bill completed and signed into law by the President before Oct. 1, the start date of the new fiscal year. There is a concern, however, that other non-defense related political issues in this midterm election year, might slow down or even possibly derail this effort forcing a potential situation that could lead to a continuing resolution (CR) instead of a fully funded NDAA.





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