



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

Volume MMXVIII, Issue VXII

December 2018

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Merry Texas Christmas, You All..."

As we see the month of December before us, we'll all observe the traditions we've established within our families. For Debby and me, that means dusting off the Christmas 78s and cranking up the Victrola to listen to Bing Crosby, the Andrews Sisters, Gene Autry, Frank Sinatra, Lionel Hampton, and the list goes on. I particularly remember Ernest Tubb singing the above lyrics, and usually would hear him on some radio show wherever I was stationed. So before I write any more, let me wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas!

"May your days be sunny and bright..."
Looking back on the year, we, the Heart of Texas Chapter of MOAA, can be excited for the lives we've touched, whether through scholarships for young energetic students, or gifts to assist our veterans in our VA hospitals, or encouraging the fine works of our local Veterans One Stop. This month, we will again have the opportunity to present the Spirit of America Medal, and this year's recipient is the Veterans One Stop. I encourage you to be at our dinner meeting December 13th to show your support. Our Chapter will also present a Certificate of Merit to the Veterans One Stop.

December brings the opportunity for each of you to renew your membership in our Heart of Texas Chapter. Your dues support and sustain our Chapter in the minimal expenses necessary for our continued service to our community and nation, as well as supporting the development of future leaders. Thank you in advance for renewing your membership for 2019 and sending a check for your dues. In doing so, we join the national MOAA in the mission of "Never Stop Serving".

"Merry Texas Christmas, You All!"

Our December 13th dinner meeting will once again feature the ever popular Morticians to play for our listening and dancing pleasure! And for what has become an HOT MOAA Christmas tradition, let me encourage you to wear your dress uniform so as to properly shimmy and shake to the rockin' tunes the Morticians are known for. Of course, we can also expect to hear Christmas favorites. I invite each and every one of you to enjoy an evening of reminiscing, fun, and fellowship. And if you are already traveling for Christmas, please accept a Merry Christmas from me.

Respectfully,
Dennis DeGraff

Upcoming Events and Information Items

DECEMBER 13 THURSDAY DINNER MEETING AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM, ELECTION FOR 2019, AWARDS CEREMONY AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

BY THE BAND, THE MORTICIANS

****SOCIAL HOUR: 6:00 P.M. **, **CALL TO**

TABLES 6:30 P.M. *, *INTRO &

ANNOUNCEMENTS ELECTION & AWARDS,

6:35 P.M. **, **DINNER 6:55 P.M.,**

****DRAWING & ENTERTAINMENT 8:05 P.M.**

MENU: Caesar salad with crisp romaine hearts, brioche croutons, grated Parmesan cheese and club made dressing, top butt sirloin, chicken

breast, 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 11 December, 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 fall/winter code is effect with gentlemen's attire as coat and tie and ladies' attire as desired. Military uniforms are welcome

for this dinner meeting.

2019 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 1st 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.

2019 HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

The monthly Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, **January 22**, 5 p.m., at location to be announced. There will be no Board meeting in December due to the holidays.

ENTERTAINMENT – THE MORTICIANS

The Waco-based Morticians have been a mainstay of the Central Texas music scene since the band was formed by five high school students in 1965.

Devoted to classic rock from the '50s, '60s and '70s, the group earned "Best Oldies Band" for 2006, 2007 and 2008 from the Music Association of Central Texas and has been voted "Best Band" in Central Texas in the Waco-Tribune Herald's Annual Reader's Poll several times. Band members have come and gone over the years, but The Morticians' distinct sound has always remained.

DECEMBER SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Christine Brinegar, Beau Crosby, Kris Ford, Carol McHaney, Alan Nolan, Ann Nolan, Larry Pennington, Barbara Purselley, Rusty Rowe, Ann Speed, and Gary Urban

Anniversaries: Jim and Joan Alexander, Golda and Nancy Eldridge, John and Nora Householder, Charles and Verna LaStrapes, Alan and Ann Nolan, Don and Pam Schreiber, and Paul and Norma Thronburg,

Congratulations & best wishes to all on your special day.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2019

17 January, Thursday Lunch Meeting, Baylor Club 4th Floor North Room, guest speaker will be Dr. Bill Milnor talking on his perspectives on the medication crisis in the U.S.

21 February, Thursday dinner meeting, RCC, speaker or entertainment to be announced.

21 March, Thursday dinner meeting, RCC, guest speaker, Nancy Parrish, talking on the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) WWII program.

10 May 2019, Friday Afternoon, Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Tournament, Cottonwood Creek Golf Course.

AFROTC AWARDS

Three awards were presented at the November 15th dinner meeting. All cadets were distinguished graduates from summer field training and will be entering active duty upon graduation. Our thanks to all with your support to the annual fundraiser golf tournament with donations, sponsors, participants as well as individual donations to our scholarship program during the year that make these scholarship awards possible.

UPCOMING CHAPTER ELECTION FOR 2019 AT DECEMBER DINNER MEETING

The Board has approved the proposed 2019 slate of officers and directors for the annual election and the slate is shown below. The election will be conducted at the 13 December 2018 dinner meeting and installation ceremony will be conducted at the January 2019 dinner meeting. The recommended slate of officers and directors for 2019 follows:

President – Gary Urban
1st Vice President – Joseph (Joe) Augeri
2nd Vice President – Bobby Sammon
Treasurer – Vince Tobola (Nomination for Appointment)
Secretary – Paul Thronburg (Nomination for Appointment)
Immediate Past President – Dennis DeGraff

DIRECTORS:

Dr. Harold Rafuse	Dr. Mike O’Bric
Jimmie Hanes	Roland Duty
Bob Lull	Don Speed
Bill Sawyer	James “Jim” Milam
Michael Slavens	

2019 COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE INCREASE

The 2019 COLA for military retired pay, Survivor Benefit Plan annuities, Social Security checks, and VA disability and survivor benefits will be 2.8 percent. It will first appear in the January 2019 checks. It is based on annual trends and factors such as energy commodities, shelter (housing), and transportation services. The 2.8 percent 2018 COLA will be the second-largest COLA of the past decade, trailing only the 3.6 percent COLA year of 2011.

BLUE WATER NAVY BILL CONTINUES TO BE STALLED IN THE SENATE

In July, the House unanimously passed H.R. 299, the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018*, to end the injustice of denying Vietnam, Korean DMZ, and Thailand veterans who suffer from life-threatening health conditions related to exposure to Agent Orange the care and benefits they deserve. This important bill continues to be stalled in the Senate and the VFW needs your help to make sure this bill is passed before the end of the year. Contact your senators to demand that the Senate passes H.R. 299.

BENEFIT INITIATIVES

VA announced some benefit improvements to help service members and veterans in need-see how these improvements may help you or someone you know:

Benefits Delivery at Discharge Program- new improvements allow service members filing disability claims between 90 to 180 days before they separate from service to receive a decision on their claim within 30 days of discharge.

Veterans Impacted by Super Typhoon Yutu and Hurricanes Florence and Michael - VA declared the typhoon in the Northern Mariana Islands and hurricanes in Florida, North Carolina and Georgia significant disasters to warrant prioritizing and moving veteran benefits appeals claims to the top of the list for resolution.

Free Federal Agency Legal Assistance - VA joined with the Departments of Labor, Justice, Defense, Homeland Security, and others, committing to improving and increasing access to free legal services for veterans facing eviction or home foreclosures, driver's license revocations, child support or those with other critical needs that impact their ability to work or seek health care.

WACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The HOT Chapter is a member of the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce so chapter members can attend chamber events and not pay non-member costs. The Chamber is located in downtown Waco at 101 S. 3rd Street (254 757-5600).

- **Thursday, Dec. 6, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** Networking Forum at the Baylor Club.
- **Thursday, Dec. 13, 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.,** Small Business PowerHour: The Biggest Challenge Every Business Faces: TALENT at the Greater Waco Chamber. Speaker is senior vice president of Spherion Staffing Services, who has over 25 years experience and is involved in supporting Spherion franchise business owners in more than 50 U.S. offices. Lunch is free. Please RSVP at web site, WacoChamber.com.
- **Wednesday, Dec. 19, 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.,** 1000 Friends of Waco at Greater Waco Chamber. Roundtable discussion focusing on Greater Downtown Waco and various updates from agencies working in the downtown area, which includes the City of Waco, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Public Improvement District and the Greater Waco Chamber.

VA.GOV REDESIGN.

After gathering feedback from over 5,000 veterans, service members, their families, caregivers and survivors, VA took a bold step forward in modernizing its homepage to help veterans navigate the website to get at the content they need, quicker and easier. With 10 million visits a month to the website, customers frequently voice their complaints and frustration with the layout and navigability, saying it focused too much on presenting information about VA as an organization and not what customers need.

“Veterans, their families, caregivers and our many customers have successful online transactions in their day-to-day lives,” Wilkie said. “They should expect the same exceptional digital experience coming to VA. Our customers will receive a more simple and intuitive experience when accessing our online front door - the new VA.gov.”

TRICARE FEES FOR 2019

It is important to remember the open season enrollment, runs from Nov. 12 through Dec. 10, 2018. The good news is, the majority of existing TRICARE Prime and Select fees will not go up; the very few that do will be adjusted based on the retiree COLA (projected to be 2.8 percent as of August 2018). TRICARE for Life is not at all affected. The not-so-good news is, the current fee structure largely will remain in place. For example, TRICARE group A retirees will continue to pay \$41 for specialty appointments and \$29 for primary care appointments. These rates will be formally established in October. Most beneficiaries will recall the TRICARE fee structure changed Jan. 1, 2018, to require much higher cost shares.

2019 FEDVIP DENTAL AND VISION PLANS

Starting in 2019, dental and vision insurance plans for military retirees and their families will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). If you're eligible, the first opportunity to enroll in a plan is during the Federal Benefits open season, which started **Nov. 12 and continues to Dec. 10.** To compare FEDVIP plans and rates before open season begins, go to <https://tricare.benefeds.com>.

VA RESEARCHERS NAMED TIME

MAGAZINE'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Two scientists conducting research with VA, Dr. Ann McKee and Dr. Tony Wyss-Coray, were named to TIME Magazine's list of the 50 most influential people in health care. McKee works at the VA Boston Healthcare System as chief of neuropathology and is the director of VA's brain bank. Her research is focused on identifying and understanding chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) — a degenerative condition caused by repeated brain injuries. Wyss-Coray works in Palo Alto, Calif., as a senior research scientist and associate director of the Center for Tissue Regeneration, Repair and Restoration. He is also a professor of neurology and neurological sciences at Stanford University. His research focuses on the effects of aging and immune responses on the brain and the role of Alzheimer's in brain degeneration and memory loss.

STROKE SIGNS

Someone in the United States suffers a stroke every four minutes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions. Every minute a stroke goes untreated and blood flow to the brain is blocked, a person loses 1.9 million neurons. As a result, he or she can lose speech, movement, memory and other functions.

Know the signs of a stroke and seek immediate medical attention if you suspect you or someone else is experiencing one.

According to the National Stroke Association, symptoms of a stroke include, but are not limited to, sudden:

- Weakness or numbness in your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body.
- Confusion or trouble speaking or understanding what others are saying.
- Trouble seeing in one or both of your eyes.
- Trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance and coordination.
- Severe headaches with no obvious cause.

Note the time so you can tell a doctor when the first symptoms occurred. Timing is critical when treating a stroke. The sooner you receive treatment, the greater your chances of a full recovery.

FUTURE BUDGET YEAR POSSIBLE CHANGES

President Trump's recent call for a 5 percent cut across every federal department includes the Defense Department, Defense News confirmed in an October 27 report.

What does all of this mean for service members and retirees? Potential reductions could mean:

A military pay raise for fiscal year 2020 that is below the Employment Cost Index

Another possible push to reduce the calculation for Basic Allowance for Housing (especially with regard to dual military couples)

And increases in TRICARE fees for beneficiaries.

Defense News reports the new topline defense budget will be \$700 billion, not the \$733 billion that the Pentagon had been planning for most of the past year. The new topline number is down from the \$716 billion approved in the FY2019 defense budget.

Deputy Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan on Oct. 26 indicated that this will not be a one year blip, but rather part of a flattening of budgets. At the Military Reporters and Editors News Conference, Shanahan said, "When you look at the \$700 billion, it's not just for one year drop down, [or] a phase, it's a drop and then held constant over the future years defense program, a five year projection included in every budget."

Congress will have the final word in the outcome of the FY2020 defense budget, once the administration's proposal hits the Hill early in the New Year, and given the changes in Congress after the November elections. As a new Congress will be seated, no outcome is certain.

Also requiring congressional action in FY2020 are the reductions that would come with a return of the mandated sequestration cuts required under the 2011 Budget Control Act. Without further legislative action by Congress, these reductions will also directly impact the FY2020 defense budget.

All of this portends that after two years of sustained growth in the defense budget, there will now be proposed reductions and cutbacks to defense spending and programs. This means that reductions will have to be found and those cuts can often start with pay and benefits.

SERVICE CHIEFS COMING BUDGET INPUTS

The services are expected in early December to deliver their preliminary draft of the fiscal 2020 defense budget to the Defense Secretary. They will have to navigate the challenge of complying with President Donald Trump's request of cutting \$33 billion from the defense budget request. Potential savings could come from troop levels, new or substantially higher health care fees, or caps to military pay.

Mattis and the White House are expected to receive the budget proposals in early December. The services will likely provide the Defense Secretary with a budget at multiple spending levels. This will highlight the potential tradeoffs that will be needed if the administration follows through with its newly proposed \$700 billion top line, or if Congress fails to reach a new budget deal for 2020. Congress is currently operating under a two-year budget deal, set to expire at the end of December 2019. If Congress fails to reach a new spending arrangement, previously agreed to budget caps will return, DoD will be forced to take a \$71 billion budget cut.

2019 TEXAS STATE LEGISLATURE

The Texas Legislature will convene for its 86th legislative session on Jan. 8. The Texas Legislature only meets during odd-numbered years, and lawmakers have to be prepared to hit the ground running as soon as the 140-day session begins. "The speaker's race will be one of the very first things the House does," said Susan Nold, the director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life. "Just this week we've seen Rep. Dennis Bonnen of Angleton saying he has the support to be elected the next speaker."

The Speaker of the Texas House sets the legislative agenda in Texas's House of Representatives. Aside from identifying the next speaker, Greenberg said it will be harder to tell which issues will define the new legislative session. Some possible contenders include financial legislation, school finance and online voter registration.

Nold said while the Senate and the House may have their own priorities, usually the Governor plays a big part in determining which issues are going to be prioritized.



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NOTE: JAN. 17 LUNCH MEETING BAYLOR CLUB