



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

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February 2019

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Here we are already one month into 2019 and it is hard to believe that the last two years flew by as fast as it did. I mention the last two years since they were noteworthy for many reasons. First of all, our MOAA chapter enjoyed continued success in many ways, largely due to the leadership of Dennis DeGraff. Without revealing too many secrets, let's just say that during the Board of Director's and Scholarship/Golf meetings Dennis kept us focused on what is important and ensured that there weren't too many black eyes. OK, no black eyes. Additionally, the dedication shown by our Board of Directors, Committee members, and our membership ensured that deserving young folks received scholarships from our Chapter. Also, several local groups and organizations enjoyed our continued support and assistance.

As with every month of the year, February is a time to enjoy the Super Bowl Commercials and Snacks, remember the challenges endured by President's Washington and Lincoln, and plan something extra nice for all our special Valentine's.

As for Valentine's Day, Martha West, school teacher and wife of MOAA member Al West, has invited us to attend the 6th Annual Valentine's for Veterans event on February 14th. Keynote speaker will be Col Tommy Williams, teacher and Air Force pilot. The event begins at 10:00 AM and will take place at the Kopperl ISD school gymnasium located at 175 CR 1240, Kopperl, Texas. This is a very special event that honors Veterans of all eras.

As a reminder, it is time to renew your HOT MOAA Chapter membership which is only \$25.00. Also, plan to support and attend our upcoming Golf Tournament for Scholarships that takes place on Friday, May 10 at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course in Waco.

I would like to thank Dr. Bill Milnor for his presentation at our January monthly meeting at the Baylor Club. His perspectives on drug addiction were enlightening and remind us of the sobering reports from the VA that state that "the number of veterans who are addicted to opioids has doubled since 2002".

By the way, it is that time of year again to sign up to attend Freedom Ball 2019. For a night of dinner and dancing call (254) 757-5600 or go to FreedomBallWaco.com. Hope to see you at the Waco Convention Center on March 2.

As always, we have a lot going on, but we can "Never Stop Serving".

Respectfully,
Gary Urban

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2019

21 Mar, Thursday, RCC, Dinner meeting, Guest speaker, Nancy Parrish, talking on the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) WWII program.

18 Apr, Thursday, RCC, Dinner meeting, Guest speaker or entertainment to be announced.

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

20 Jun, Thursday, RCC, Dinner meeting with speaker or entertainment to be announced

18 Jul, Thursday, RCC, Dinner meeting with speaker or entertainment to be announced

Ridgewood Country Club is located at 7301 Fish Pond Road

HEADS UP NOTICE APRIL AIR SHOW

The Heart of Texas Air Show will be held at TSTC on April 6 -7 with feature performances by the USAF Thunderbirds. Theme is "Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future". More show details and ticketing information are available at web site: www.heartoftexasairshow.com .

Upcoming Events and Information Items

FEBRUARY 21 THURSDAY DINNER MEETING AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM, GUEST SPEAKER, DENNIS DEGRAFF ON WWI INDIAN CODE

TALKERS

****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 lettuce, cherry tomatoes, English cucumber, red cabbage, parmesan cheese with ranch and Italian dressing, chicken fried steak, tilapia, Chef's choice of starch, vegetable and two desserts, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea or Hot Tea and Coffee. Please note new dinner charge is now **\$33** 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 19 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 fall/winter code is effect with gentlemen's attire as coat and tie and ladies' attire as desired.

FREEDOM BALL 2019

The Freedom Ball, honoring soldiers both past and present and Gold Star families, will be held on Saturday, March 2, 2019 in the Brazos Ballroom at the Waco Convention Center, 100 Washington Avenue, Waco, Texas. It includes dinner and dancing with entertainment by The Walton Stout Band. Tickets are \$125 per person; \$50 for veterans and active duty military; and table of 8 for \$800. Tickets are available on line at FreedomBallWaco.com or call 254-757-5600. This is hosted by the Greater Waco Chamber and Greater Waco Aviation Alliance.

Proceeds from the Freedom Ball are used to market the aviation assets of Greater Waco and to provide scholarships to high school and college students pursuing careers in aviation and engineering related fields.

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 will be prorated for new members joining 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, **February 26, 2019, 5 p.m.**, Cottonwood Creek Golf Course Clubhouse meeting room

FEBRUARY SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Bill Bewley, Pam Holmes, Jim Igleheart, Terri Ker, Bob Lull, Jim Milam, Nancy Pfanner, Claire Raineri, Anne Ratajczak, Bob Rochell, Mike Russell, Ennis Sullivan, Vince Tobola and Su Wells.

Anniversaries: Joe and Karen Augeri, Jim and Jerrie Buehrig, Wayne and Barbara Purselley, Ken and Anne Ratajczak, Steve and Palmira Robertson, and Al and Martha West.

CONGRATUATIONS TO ALL

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, Feb 14th, 7:45 – 9 a.m.** Technology Business Briefing with speaker, Dr. Brian Garner, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Baylor University shares how biomechanical advancements, including his mechanical horse-riding simulator, are changing healthcare. This is free and includes free breakfast. This is held at the BRIC, 100 Research Pkwy and starts promptly at 7:45 a.m.
- **Thursday, Feb. 28th, 12 Noon – 1:00 p.m.,** Hour on the Economy at Greater Waco Chamber, Cooper Room. This quarterly luncheon provides an update on "our economy in an hour" to review recent economic development news and data. Lunch cost is \$10. Go to web site wacochamber.com to register or call 757-5600.

PENTAGON DELAYS BUDGET RELEASE

The Pentagon is set to release its FY 2020 budget on March 12, six weeks later than expected. The delay technically violates a 1990 law requiring the president's budget to be submitted no later than the first Monday in February, but there's no penalty for being late. Previous administrations of both parties have delivered budgets late.

The delay increases the likelihood of a continuing resolution, a stopgap spending measure, later this year, as lawmakers will have less time to work on the legislation.

The 35-day government shutdown was cited as one of the reasons for the delay. That means the March 12 release could be moved again if another shutdown occurs once temporary funding for about a quarter of the federal workforce expires on Feb. 15. Such a funding lapse would mean Coast Guard and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps members, as well as some U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps members working with unfunded agencies, again would report for duty without pay.

Reports of what to expect in the administration's defense budget request have varied anywhere between \$700 billion and \$750 billion, although the administration has signaled it will be closer to the latter figure.

A six-week delay in submitting the budget adds to an already full plate for Congress. Lawmakers will have to strike a new budget deal by the end of the year to avoid returning to sequester spending levels. Those levels were first established in a 2011 deficit reduction law. Absent a new agreement, the Defense Department would face automatic cuts of almost \$54 billion in 2020.

BIPARTISAN HOUSE BILL WOULD END "WIDOW'S TAX"

Legislation introduced by Reps. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) and John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) would end the deduction of Survivor Benefit Plan annuities from Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to survivors of fallen service members, also known as the "widows tax. The change would mean that in cases where military service led to the death of a service member, DIC would be paid in addition to the SBP annuity. About 67,000 military survivors would benefit from this legislation, with the current offset costing them about \$12,000 annually. However, this still needs to continue thru the legislative process and hope this session will be more successful compared to the past.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COMMENTS ON SHUTDOWN COSTS

According to a new report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the 35-day government shutdown cost the U.S. economy \$11 billion -- \$3 billion of which will likely never be recovered.

The shutdown, the longest in U.S. history, sent ripples throughout the economy. The agency revised its outlook on economic projections, saying the level of real gross domestic product in the first quarter of 2019 will be cut by 0.2 percent.

"Among those who experienced the largest and most direct negative effects are federal workers who faced delayed compensation and private-sector entities that lost business," the report says. "Some of those private-sector entities will never recoup that lost income."

While federal spending was simply delayed during the shutdown, the effects will have consequences for quite some time. People affected by the shutdown - like all the members of the Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps, and members of the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service serving with unfunded agencies -- may be reluctant to go out or return to their previous spending habits.

There may also be tax implications for federal employees who receive back pay in a lump sum. Some federal employees will have additional taxes withheld when they get paid.

In addition, the report says the shutdown hurt the Internal Revenue Service's ability to enforce compliance with tax, and will likely result in \$2 billion in lost revenues. That means Congress will have less money to appropriate on issues important to MOAA members, like improvements to TRICARE or VA benefits.

The reduced revenues may also embolden lawmakers to pursue more serious measures to cut costs.

NEW CHAPTER WEB SITE

The chapter web site is now active at hotmoaa.org. It includes information on the chapter and ongoing events. The scholarship fundraiser golf tournament information has now been added. Forms can be downloaded for golf registration and for donation/sponsorships. The golf tournament will be held on Friday, May 10th at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course. Registration starts at 11 a.m., lunch available at 11:30 a.m. and tee-off at 1 p.m.

MOAA TAKEAWAY ON THE STATE OF UNION ADDRESS

President Donald Trump told the nation on Tuesday night, the 5th, that “great nations do not fight endless wars,” pledging to move toward a political solution in Afghanistan while touting military success against ISIS and promising to decrease troop presence in Syria.

Trump's State of the Union also addressed recent reforms at the Department of Veterans affairs, plans to “fully rebuild the United States military,” and national security concerns from NATO to North Korea - Trump will meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the end of February in Vietnam for their second summit.

While many of these proposals received applause from lawmakers and others in attendance, the warmest response of the night may have come for three D-Day veterans - Pfc. Joseph Reilly, Staff Sgt. Irving Locker, and Sgt. Herman Zeitchik - who were among the honored guests at the speech.

Key takeaways for the military community from the address, which was pushed back a week due to the partial federal government shutdown:

1. VA accountability: Reflecting on bipartisan accomplishments, Trump highlighted the VA Accountability Act, which was introduced in 2017 and was among MOAA's legislative victories that year. The law gives VA Secretary Robert Wilkie increased flexibility to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee, including leaders, for misconduct or poor performance. “We passed VA accountability, so we can finally terminate those who mistreat our wonderful veterans,” Trump said.

2. An end in Afghanistan? Trump said he has “accelerated our negotiations to reach a political settlement” that would end the 19-year war, crediting the “unmatched valor” of American service members with putting such a solution within reach. “We do not know whether we will achieve an agreement -- but we do know that after two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace,” Trump said.

3. Leaving Syria. “When I took office, ISIS controlled more than 20,000 square miles in Iraq and Syria,” Trump said. “Today, we have liberated virtually all of that territory from the grip of these bloodthirsty monsters.” The president pledged a “warm welcome home” for service

Members deployed to Syria, though work will continue with allies to “destroy the remnants of ISIS.”

. Protecting American security. Trump said the final part of his agenda is to protect America's national security, including defense budgets of \$700 billion last year and \$716 billion this year. Trump said other nations, which are part of NATO, are also paying their fair share for security. “For years, the United States was being treated very unfairly by friends of ours - members of NATO - but now we have secured a \$100 billion increase in defense spending from NATO allies,” he said.

5. Targeting health care costs. While not mentioning TRICARE or military health care specifically, Trump did pledge to work to “lower the cost of health care and prescription drugs,” including a proposal that would require health care companies to “disclose real prices to foster competition and bring costs down.”

PROPOSED LEGISLATION FOR COAST GUARD GOLD STAR FAMILIES

Federal lawmakers have introduced new legislation to ensure surviving spouses of Coast Guard members will continue to receive Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payouts during future government shutdowns.

Reps. Mark Green (R-Tenn.) and Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii), who are both Army veterans, have introduced the Protecting Gold Star Spouses Act of 2019. MOAA supports the bipartisan bill, H.R. 847, which would ensure the benefit continues during any lapse in funds for the Department of Homeland Security that would normally derail the payments.

Unlike those serving under the Department of Defense, more than 40,000 members of the Coast Guard worked without pay during the recent shutdown – the longest in U.S. history.

“Gold Star families have suffered enough - they don't need to be used as political pawns during games of partisan brinkmanship,” said Green, a Life Member of MOAA who served as an infantry officer and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. “As a military veteran, I know many Gold Star families that have overcome devastating loss and adversity. The last thing they need is to worry whether or not they will receive their next check.”

BLUE WATER NAVY VET WINS FEDERAL APPEALS COURT RULING

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit reversed a decade-old ruling recently that potentially paves the way for the return of earned disability benefits for some 90,000 so-called Blue Water Navy veterans from the Vietnam War. The case, *Procopio v. Wilkie*, had VA Secretary Robert Wilkie being sued by Navy veteran Alfred Procopio, who was denied service connection for prostate cancer and diabetes mellitus because he never stepped foot on dry land or served within Vietnam's inland waterways. Procopio, was assigned aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, which was stationed inside Vietnam's 12-mile territorial waters. Both of his illnesses are listed among the VA's 14 presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange.

The Appeals Court focused on the intent of the 1991 Agent Orange Act, which was to grant a presumption of service connection for certain diseases to veterans who "served in the Republic of Vietnam." At issue was whether service within territorial waters constituted service "in the Republic of Vietnam." By a 9-2 decision, the Appeals Court ruled it did. There is a concern still since the VA can always appeal the ruling and Congress has yet to pass a Blue Water Navy bill. It is encouraging at least to now have a court of law support Blue Water Navy veterans and hopefully this will lead to the care needed by this group of Vietnam War veterans.

VETERANS BENEFITS FAIR, SAT. 9TH

Every year the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB) co-hosts Veterans Benefits Fairs across the state of Texas. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), VLB staff members travel around the state to talk with Texas Veterans, Military Members and their families, about their benefits in person. These benefits fairs are free "come and go" events that promote various resources available to Veterans and Military Members in Texas including land, home and home improvement loans, as well as Texas State Veterans Homes and Cemeteries, and the Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Representatives from the VA and TVC are there to answer questions about things like health care, disability and pension claims, employment and education benefits, and much more. **It will be held 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Doris Miller VA Medical Center Sat. 9th. It is free and has come and go events.**

GUEST SPEAKER – DENNIS DEGRAFF

Colonel Dennis J. DeGraff, US Air Force, retired, was born in Cleburne, Texas, grew up in Houston, and graduated from Baylor University with a BS in mathematics. He served his first 11 years in the Air Force as a scientist, analyzing communications and radar signals at the Air Force Electronic Warfare Center, conducting aircraft maintenance and sustainability studies in the Air Force's Soviet MiG squadron, and directing the analysis of flying test data for the initial operational test of replacement radars for the Distant Early Warning line across the Alaskan and Canadian arctic. While assigned to the Air Force Military Personnel Center, Colonel DeGraff learned and mastered the complex algorithms and data systems for managing Air Force military, Guard and Reserve, and civilian personnel requirements. This transition into the master personnel architecture led to his leadership and direction in the formulation of deployment systems necessary to move the Air Force from its Cold War structure to a rapid mobility force. Colonel DeGraff was the chief of total force management on the Air Staff on September 11, 2001, where his office and team were approximately 150 yards from impact of American Airlines flight 77. Upon recovery, his team led Air Force planners on the recruitment, training, and sustainment of vital Air Force skills needed to prosecute the War on Terror. Colonel DeGraff was selected to be the Director of Personnel for the post-war interim government of Iraq, serving for nearly 18 months in Baghdad, Iraq. Upon Iraqi Transition to Sovereignty, he was assigned to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, serving as Director of Personnel, Manpower, and Services (A1) and Director of Staff to Commander, United States Air Forces, Europe. Colonel DeGraff retired in 2008 and returned to Waco, Texas. He is married to the former Deborah Stambaugh of Winkelman, Arizona and they have three grown children.

WACO EVENTS AND MORE WEB SITE

Given the more interest Waco has gained in recent times, there is a multi-use web site to check: wacoheartoftexas.com. It maintains an daily calendar of events for Waco and the area plus guides and information on shopping, dining, lodging, info on free silo district shuttle, the magnolia trail and more. There are published guides available as visitor's guide, coupon book, shopping guide, and such. One coming event is Spring Time at the Silos, Mar. 14-16 but as said, many other events of interest are also listed in the calendar.



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FEBRUARY 21, 2019 DINNER MEETING AT RCC

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND LOCAL INFO

MARCH 2 FREEDOM BALL INFO

VETERANS BENEFITS FAIR SAT. 9TH AT DORIS

MILLER VA BY TX VETERANS LAND BOARD

ONE ADDED NOTE THAT THE

DINNER COST HAS CHANGED TO \$33