



Heart of Texas Chapter (TX-07)
Military Officer Association of America
P.O. Box 23964 Waco, TX 76702-3964

Volume MMXX, Issue V

May 2020

Chapter Web Site: hotmoaa.org

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Greetings,

Here we are a few days into May 2020. For most of us the month of May is traditionally a very active time. Highlights of course include Mother's Day on the 10th and Memorial Day on the 25th. Additionally, many of us that belong to the numerous military related organizations usually participate in meaningful local events at such places as the Doris Miller VA, cemeteries in our area, churches and the Waco Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Things are a little different this year but these special days are no less meaningful. We still honor the Mom's in our lives and those who gave their all in the military.

Additionally, Congress has officially recognized May as National Military Appreciation Month. We can still thank Active Duty and Veterans and their family members for their service through letters, telephone calls, and electronic means.

Our current situation is still leading to cancellations and plans for our usual projects are on hold. We have cancelled our membership meeting this month. Also, we have voted to cancel our annual golf tournament fundraiser for scholarships due to earlier closure of the golf course, uncertainty on group events, and time constraints. We are considering the next tournament to be in June 2021; however, this is subject to change. Your Board of Directors will continue to evaluate our options for future activities.

Just because our ability to move around is somewhat restricted, that doesn't mean we can't stay informed. I believe that National MOAA does a good job of reporting on military and medical issues that may impact us through their Military Officer magazine and their Digital Edition of the Magazine. This month you will find timely articles

titled: "TRICARE Refund Coming to Thousands of Military Retirees", "This Bill Would Waive TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy Copays During the COVID-19 Crisis", "Report Solidifies MOAA's Concerns With Proposed Commissary-Exchange Merger", "What Will Civilian Health Care Cuts Mean for TRICARE Beneficiaries?", plus numerous articles of general interest.

It is once again time to Volunteer. HOT Chapter MOAA Committees play a vital part to ensure our success. We currently have openings on the following Committees: **Objectives, Website, Legislation, Personal Affairs, Fund Raising/Benevolence Foundation, Audit, Budget, Newsletter, Public Relations, Scholarship and Spouse Liaison**. Please contact me or a Board Member to volunteer your time and expertise.

We hope to get back to a regular membership meeting schedule in the near future. Our thanks to our members for recommending guest speakers and I ask that you give us some recommendations for live entertainment. Please contact Bill Milnor with your recommendations.

As always, we welcome recommendations for new members to our Chapter. Please contact Bobby Sammon or any board member to recommend a new member. Your involvement continues to be greatly appreciated. We have three new members on board so far in 2020.

Please have a safe and meaningful May and continue to help your neighbors and fellow Veterans who are in need of encouragement and assistance. God Bless you, your family, current and former military personnel plus the greatest country on earth, "The United States of America".

Respectively,

Gary J. Urban

Upcoming Events and Information Items

PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2020

Ridgewood Country Club (RCC) at 7301 Fish Pond Rd.

- 21 May dinner meeting cancelled.
- 5 Jun fundraiser golf tournament cancelled and to be rescheduled in 2021.
- Other monthly meetings currently remain on Ridgewood Country Club schedule for the 3rd Thursday, July thru November, except for December with dinner meeting on the 2nd Thursday. Meeting schedule again pending on current health safety measures.

HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

- Board meetings have been postponed until further notice due to current local government health safety measures.

MAY SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Patsy Burdett, Bob Corwin, Sandy Corwin, Patty Pirko, Robert Powers, Sam Wright and John Wells.

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

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. Web site is wacochamber.com. However, events are postponed due to health situation.

BIG INCREASE IN TELEHEALTH

According to VA officials, the agency has been preparing for the COVID-19 outbreak since January, when it “began tracking pneumonia of unknown origin with 40 cases surfacing in China.”

Thanks to early prep work, VA rapidly started implementing the \$17.2 billion funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, when it was released in early April.

In an April 8 press release, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie stated, “Since the President signed the CARES Act, VA has been moving quickly to implement the President’s intent to hire new staff, take care of homeless veterans, use our cutting-edge telehealth technology to keep appointments, and to help state-run veterans homes.”

In weekly briefings to organizations like MOAA, Wilkie said he sees this telehealth phenomenon not only growing, but sees the crisis stressing VA’s health system “in a good way.” The rapid expansion of virtual services will serve as benchmarks for the future, especially for veterans in rural areas and tribal communities.

From March to April, VA went from delivering 45,000 telehealth appointments to over 154,000.

For mental health services, VA data indicates veterans are using an app called VA Video Connect to consult with their provider via their computer, tablet, or phone.

Some comments from those using VA telehealth services say they have been impressed at how the technology works and the availability of services. In many cases, telehealth appointments for mental health services have been easier and quicker to access than in-person appointments.

According to VA, “in March, mental health providers completed more than 34,000 appointments with Veterans using VA Video Connect, an increase of 70% from the 20,000 appointments made in February, before the pandemic.”

Here’s VA’s breakdown of the increases:

- **Telehealth** group therapy conducted more than 2,700 visits in March, a jump of more than 200% from the prior month.
- **Mental health care and consultation** delivered by phone rose to more than 154,000 appointments in March, up 280% from the 40,000 appointments in February.
- **Vet Centers** across the nation held more than 47,000 virtual appointments in March, a 200% increase from February. These counseling sessions dealt with mental health issues.

MOAA National is grateful for VA’s efforts to keep veterans safe, and they look forward to working with the department as it continues to expand services to meet the needs of veterans during the crisis.

If you are a veteran in crisis — or you’re concerned about a veteran — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1** or send a text message to **838255**.

PROPOSED COMMISSARY-EXCHANGE MERGER

A DoD-commissioned task force may have underestimated the costs of a commissary-exchange merger and overestimated the savings it would produce, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released April 30.

The report's findings are consistent with MOAA National's concerns regarding the cost associated with a venture this large. GAO highlighted gaps in the business case analysis (BCA) produced by the task force, including:

- Overestimation in the reduction of costs of goods sold.
- Methodological concerns with cost estimates of information technology costs.
- No cost analysis for expenses that will be associated with moving the location of a consolidated headquarters.

The Military Coalition, a group of military and veterans service organizations (including MOAA) with a combined membership of 5.5 million, has been vocal in ensuring costs do not impact morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) projects funded through Exchange profits.

The task force initially estimated consolidation will cost \$700-\$810 million in the first five years and \$80 million annually thereafter. Senior defense officials stated seed money for the first year would be fronted by the services; however it is unclear where they will get this money and what programs will suffer because of it.

MOAA National wants to ensure safeguards are in place for MWR funding and the defense resale system, and that any cost savings associated with a merger go directly to MWR funding and family programs.

BILL TO PROTECT STUDENT VETERANS SENT TO BECOME LAW

Early in May, the Senate passed H.R. 6322, the *Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020*, which was previously passed by the House. If signed into law, the bill would ensure student veterans who are engaged in work study programs can continue to receive their work payment checks, along with their housing payment allowance. This bill would also make sure student veterans whose schools are closing due to the COVID-19 crisis are not penalized any months of their GI Bill entitlements while this pandemic is still impacting the country.

DOD REDUCTION OF MEDICAL BILLETS

Military families are worried that with changes coming to the military health system that include outsourcing some care to community providers, they won't be able to find quality providers or access decent care.

In some locations, families already are facing problems, said members of the Defense Department's Military Family Readiness Council on April 29. For example, at Newport, R.I., military personnel face difficulties finding good pediatricians for their children, while in Europe, service members and their dependents have had trouble accessing mental health services, including via telemedicine.

They also worry that as the Defense Department pursues plans to restructure the military health system, the problems will get worse.

"We are having difficulty finding quality providers that are in the network. Is there anything being done to encourage civilian providers to participate with Tricare, or is there any real incentive for them to work with Tricare?" asked Jill Waters, a pediatric nurse and wife of an Army recruiter in Michigan, speaking to Defense Health Agency Director Lt. Gen. Ronald Place.

Since 2013, the Defense Department has undertaken efforts to restructure what was once a \$50 billion health care system. The stated goal of the effort is to improve services while reducing costs by cutting redundant programs and systems that existed in triplicate under separate Army, Navy and Air Force medical commands.

But that effort grew substantially under the fiscal 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, which gave administrative authority of military hospitals and clinics to the Defense Health Agency and subsequently realigned the service medical commands to shift their focus toward caring primarily for active-duty personnel.

The transformation plans call for reducing the number of civilian beneficiaries, including retirees and their family members, seen at military hospitals in locations where comparable health care services are available in the local community under Tricare.

But as DHA and the services pursue these sea changes, troops and families are trying to sort out what health care services will be available down the road.

Go to moaa.org web page and check Advocacy named area for more information.

CONCERN ON RELIANCE FOR CHINA DRUG SUPPLIES

MOAA continues to make progress toward a possible TRICARE pharmacy copay waiver during the COVID-19 national emergency.

Reps. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.) and Elaine Luria (D-Va.) have introduced H.R. 6573, the Help our Heroes Access Medicine Act, authorizing DoD to waive TRICARE prescription copays during national emergencies.

While the legislation stops short of mandating a copay waiver, it outlines the decision criteria Congress expects DOD to use in evaluating a waiver during such emergencies. By doing so, it makes the intent of Congress clear: TRICARE mail order pharmacy copays should be waived under the current circumstances.

The bill not only gives DOD flexibility in using the authority to waive copays, but also ensures officials can use this legislation in future national emergencies.

As Congress considers the next round of coronavirus stimulus legislation, MOAA is reaching out to the Senate side to encourage a companion bill.

Please join us in our efforts by encouraging your member of Congress to support H.R. 6573.

TEXAS MOAA CHAPTER ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Members of the Greater Dallas and North Texas chapter of MOAA founded in 2014 the Veterans Center of North Texas (VCONT), a nonprofit that assists veterans and their families with accessing needed benefits and services. Today, about 13 members of the chapters — which merged this year to become the Greater Dallas and North Texas Chapter — support VCONT.

Lt. Col. Charles Kelley, USAF (Ret), chapter transition liaison, said chapter members were inspired to start VCONT after seeing statistics from the George W. Bush Institute indicating 65% of the approximately 165,000 veterans in the North Texas area have no idea where to go to obtain information about benefits or help with issues they face in trying to maintain productive lifestyles.

Since its inception, VCONT has assisted more than 3,000 veterans and families with employment, military benefits, financial and legal

assistance, housing, transportation, and counseling, among other services.

Key to the success of this program is working with other community groups and maintaining a network of service providers, so when veterans come to VCONT, they can be connected with the correct provider to assist with their immediate and long-term needs.

In both 2018 and 2019, the chapter received a Community Outreach Grant from the MOAA Foundation, which helped to provide the seed money for a new VCONT program, one that aids veterans in need of emergency temporary shelter, food, and transportation.

Kelley said he and others realized the need for this type of assistance after a young couple with two babies came into the VCONT office about three years ago. “They were sleeping in their car, and no agencies had money to assist them because it was December and they were out of funds,” Kelley explained. “We passed the hat in our office and got them into a hotel. After that, we said we were never going to let that happen to a family again.”

The grants have allowed VCONT to develop a program where emergency funds are reimbursed by the chapter so veterans in need can receive immediate assistance. “While VCONT collaborates with other agencies ... these and other partners are often out of funds or their in-take process takes several days to several weeks — in many cases, too late to prevent an eviction or loss of utilities,” Kelley said.

ADVOCACY THROUGH MOAA NATIONAL WEB PAGE

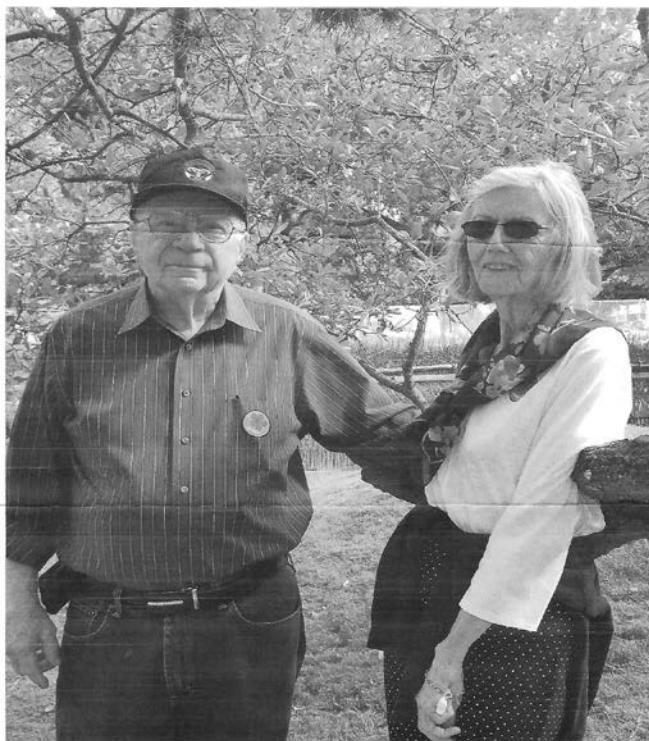
Chapter member who belong to MOAA can assist with Advocacy efforts by logging into MOAA.ORG and clicking on the ADVOCACY item. This will go to the page that will list various current hot topics of interest. The page provides an easy opportunity to click on item to send an e-mail to elected representatives on the various issues.

CANCELLATION OF CITY OF WACO LOCAL EVENTS

The City of Waco has announced the formal cancellation of the summer Brazos Nights Concert series and the annual 4th of July Celebration on the Brazos and Fireworks.

NEW MEMBER FOCUS FOR KENNETH MAYS, COL, USAF, (RET)

Ken recently joined HOT Chapter this year. He is married to Gay Mays. He has two children and she has two children. Ken's first wife passed away in 2007. His flying career was mostly fighters along with a tour in Training Command. He had a varied career in the USAF. This included an exciting tour with the Italian Air Force, based at Vecinza Italy. The four and one-half years in the assignment were a wonderful education and he saw parts of the world he had just dreamed about. His official travels took Ken to most countries in central Europe and extensive amount of time in Greece, Turkey and Malta. The highlight of his career was 140 combat missions in the F-105 Thunderchief in Southeast Asia flying out of Korat Thailand. One hundred of these missions were into North Vietnam with 60 to the Hanoi area. He was also fortunate to head the office at Headquarters Tactical Air Force that brought the Stealth Fighter into the inventory. After 28 wonderful years with the Air Force, he retired in 1982 and moved to his ranch in the Spring Valley community near Waco. Ken was a building contractor for 15 years along with ranching. With age, Ken says he has slowed down a bit and now spends a lot of time turning wood into beautiful bowls, vases, platters and lamps.



HISTORY NOTES ON WORLD WAR II

More than 16 million Americans served in World War II. Allied forces accepted Germany's unconditional surrender 75 years ago, ending the war in Europe.

There were 213 Medal of Honor recipients in the European Theater of Operations between 1941 and 1945.

World War II was aptly named. As battles rages around the world, U.S. troops first arrived in Europe in 1942, captured their first enemy-held territory on the continent in 1943, famously invaded France in 1944 and forced the Nazi surrender in 1945.

First troops arrived on January 26, 1942 in Europe at Ulster, Northern Ireland.

From November 8-11, 1942, Allied forces landed in Algeria and Morocco as part of Operation Torch. The Tunisia Campaign ended in victory on May 13, 1943, allowing the Allies to turn their focus to Italy.

The first U.S. strike on Germany on January 27, 1943 occurred when U.S. bombs hit Wilhelmshaven in the first all-American attack on Germany.

On August 17, 1943, the Allies took the island of Sicily off the coast of south-western Italy. The air campaign began on May 14 and the ground attack started July 9.

On June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, France, kicking off Operation Overlord. The Normandy campaign would last until July 24.

On August 25, 1944, GI's from the 4th Infantry Division 38th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron were the first Americans to enter the city.

From Dec. 16, 1944 to Jan. 25, 1945, some 600,000 GIs participated in the largest battle in American history. Fought in Luxembourg and Belgium, the battle, part of the Ardennes Campaign, turned back the last significant German offensive of the war.

On April 25, 1945, near Torgau, Germany, on the Elbe River, U.S. soldiers from G Co., 273rd Inf. Reg., 69th Inf. Div., met up with troops from the Soviet Union.

On April 29, 1945, German forces unconditionally surrendered in Italy, ending the war there.

On May 7, 1945, in Reims, France, Germany officially surrenders, ending fighting in Western Europe. Fighting in Eastern Europe would last another day.



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

Address label

2020 H.O.T. MOAA OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Gary Urban, Maj, USAF (ret) 254-715-6560
 6379 Rosenthal Pkwy, Lorena, TX 76655 garyurban1@inbox.com

1st Vice President

Bill Milnor, COL, USA (ret) (Gerry) 254-694-4468
 416 HCR 2224E, Auillas, TX 76622 oldognew@gmail.com

2nd Vice President

Bobby Sammon, LtCol, USAF (ret) Donna) 254-715-2450
 6662 S. 12th St. Rd., Waco, TX 76706 bgsammon@gmail.com

Secretary

Paul Thronburg, 1LT, USA (Norma) (254) 876-3303 (home)
 910 E. Burseson Ave, Mart, TX 76664 tmartmgb@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer

Vince Tobola, LtCol, USAF (ret) (254) 709-5795
 1704 Laurel Lake Dr. Waco, TX 76710 vtobola@aol.com

Immediate Past President

Dennis DeGraff, COL, USAF (ret) (Debby) 254-848-9212
 585 Willow Grove Rd., Waco, TX 76712 dennisdebby@earthlink.net

Chaplain

John Wells, COL, USA (ret) (Su) coljtw@yahoo.com
 14043 Horseshoe Cir, Waco, TX 76712 254-776-1143

Surviving Spouse Liaison

Carol McHaney mchaneycarol8@gmail.com
 3309 Pioneer Circle, Waco, TX 76712 (254)716-6376

Legislative Liaison

Jon Ker, COL, USA (RET) (Terri) (254) 934-2018
 279 Buffalo Run, Valley Mills, TX 76689 jon@jonker.com

Directors

Dr. Harold Rafuse, LtCol, USAF (ret.) (RoseMary) (254) 717-8112
 Jimmie Hanes, COL, USAF, (ret) (Mary) (254) 848-5493
 Roland Duty, LT, ANG, (Mary) (254) 722-8939
 Bob Lull, COL, USA (ret) (Penny) (254) 751-7824
 Don Speed, CAPT, USAF (Ann) (254) 366-5528
 Jim Milam, COL, USAF (ret) (Laura) 254-845-1310
 Michael Slavens, LtCol, USAF (ret) (Marsha) 703-898-9173
 David Bartholomew, Col, USAF (ret) Susan 214-681-3854
 Joe Augeri, Maj, USAF (ret) Karen 254-366-2544
 Carol McHaney 254-716-6376

ELECTED OFFICIALS

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

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

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

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/>) click on Legislative Action Center or call (800) 234-6622 (MOAA) to get the information.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PRESIDENT MESSAGE
CANCELLED MAY MEETING & JUNE
FUNDRAISER GOLF EVENT MOVED TO 2021
LEGISLATION AND VA UPDATES
COVID-19 AND HEALTH RELATED ARTICLES
INFO ON CHANGES IN MEDICAL BILLET
POSITIONS & COMMISSARY/EXCHANGE OPS
FOCUS ON NEW MEMBER – KENNETH MAYS