



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

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June 2023

Chapter Website: hotmoaa.org

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Greetings

Remember the date – June 10, 2023! Our golf fundraising event will be here in a little more than a WEEK and that time will go fast. I call upon each of YOU to help make our fundraising efforts a success through individual donations, by working with the Fundraising Team in soliciting donations from businesses and individuals, and/or volunteering at the golf tournament.

As of May 31, 30 members have donated \$14,000 to our fundraising effort. However, we need more of you to contribute to support our programs; for example, we have 30 scholarship applicants this year, an almost ten-fold increase over last year. Our scholarship and grant programs help prepare those who will lead in the future both in the uniformed services and at the community level.

Last month, we donated \$1,000 each the Veterans One Stop and Baylor Vets program. Over the next two months we will award \$1,000 to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization, \$500 to the Stan Parker Foundation and \$150 to the Special Forces Foundation. Our donations to local and national veteran support organizations will assist those who are serving, have honorably served our nation and their dependents.

We need everyone's help to achieve the level of donations necessary to fund all our service programs. Please contact Vince Tobola to donate and for more details on soliciting donations and/or helping at the golf tournament. *Remember, a portion of our Chapter Coin sales go to our fundraising.*

Things to remember in June 2023:

- D-Day, June 6
- Unknown WWI American Soldier going to be laid to rest in Oise-Aisne American Cemetery, June 7
- Women's Veterans Day (Texas), June 12

- Flag Day, June 14
- Army Birthday, June 14
- Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday, June 23
- PTSD Awareness Day, June 27

A special thank you to our members who donated their time to personally present cash grants to JROTC/ROTC awardees. Kudos to Harold Rafuse and the scholarships team who are evaluating our scholarship candidates for 2023. It makes a difference!

Duty/Honor/Country---Always Serving

v/r

Michael Slavens

JUNE SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Charles "Doc" Anderson, Stan Brubaker, Dennis DeGraff, Mary Hanes, Ted Lawson, Gerry Milnor, Sarah Preddy, Renee Swann, Susie Rowe, Billie Sawyer, Don Schreiber, Kay Sullivan and Savanna Urban.

Anniversaries: Charles and Patsy Norman Farr and Bill and Gerry Milnor.

CONGRATUATIONS TO ALL

JUNE CHAPTER MEETING UPDATES

- **There will be no chapter lunch or dinner meeting in June due to the June 10th, Saturday golf scramble scholarship fundraiser.**
- The next **Board meeting** will be held on **Tuesday, June 20, 2023, 5 p.m.** at Uncle Dan's BBQ and Rib House that is located at 1001 Lake Air Drive.
- For save the date notice, the next chapter meeting will be a luncheon in the President's Suite at McLane Stadium on Thursday, July 20. Guest speaker will be State Rep. Charles "Doc" Anderson and we plan to have scholarship awards.

Upcoming Events and Information Items

2023 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES

Chapter member dues are still \$25 for renewing members. Member renewals can be paid at a chapter meeting or mailed to HOT Chapter MOAA, PO Box 23964, Waco, TX 76702.

The Board is always looking for prospects to join the chapter; please contact Bill Porter, 254-495-5601 or Vince Tobola, 254-709-5795 with prospect names.

Reminder that our website, hotmoaa.org, does have the 2023 chapter membership application form plus copies of newsletters. Newsletters are sent to members monthly, by e-mail or regular mail.

There is a MOAA national membership form at the chapter website: hotmoaa.org. **Basic membership is free** and the form shows fees for annual and life memberships. Note: MOAA National is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. The web address for MOAA's online legislative Take Action Center is www.moaa.org/takeaction.

COST OF LIVING PROJECTION

An early prediction for the 2024 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) applied to military retirement, Social Security, and other federal payments predicts a continued increase in prices, but a final figure far below last year's 8.7% rate.

An analyst for The Senior Citizens League (TSCL), a nonprofit advocacy group affiliated with TREA: The Enlisted Association estimates next year's figure at "around 3.1%" in a May 10 press release. While a 3.1% hike would be a significant drop from last year and the 5.9% increase in 2021, those two years are the outliers – aside from those years, the adjustment hasn't topped 3% in more than a decade.

LOCAL FAMILY EVENT NEAR WEST

The Western Belle Farm spring festival last dates are on 11 – 14 June. It is a family farm with variety of activities with farm activities, live music, flower fields and more.

The website is westernbellefarm.com with info on admission fees and open times. The phone is 254-447-7422. The address is 7929 Heritage Parkway, West, TX 76691. It is about ten miles north of Waco.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2023

- **June 10, Saturday morning**, Annual scholarship golf fundraiser tournament will held with registration start 6:45 a.m. and golf scramble start at 8:00 a.m. Location is City of Waco Cottonwood Creek Golf Course, 5200 Bagby Avenue in Waco. Open to the public and all military. More info is on the website at hotmoaa.org plus the golf or contact Vince Tobola, 254-709-5795 or vtobola@aol.com for assistance.
- **July 20, Thursday, Lunch in President's Suite at McLane Stadium**. Guest Speaker will be Representative Charles "Doc" Anderson and presentation of educational awards. Registration table will open at 11 a.m.
- **17 August, Thursday, Dinner in the Media Room at McLane Stadium**, Guest speaker will be Waco Police Chief Sheryl Victorian. Registration table will open at 5 p.m.
- **21 September, Thursday, Dinner in the Media Room at McLane Stadium**, The guest speaker will be Dr. Moshinske on end of life preparation. Registration table opens at 5 p.m.
- **19 October, Thursday, Dinner in the Media Room at McLane Stadium**, the guest speaker will be David Bonner, who is a military historian. Registration table opens at 5 p.m.
- **16 November, Thursday, Lunch or Dinner and location to be announced**. Guest speaker coordination in progress.
- **14 December, Thursday, Dinner in President's Suite at McLane Stadium**. Guest speaker is MOAA Headquarters rep., Capt. Frank J. Michael, USN (Ret) with national updates plus Live Entertainment by the band, The Morticians. Registration table opens at 5 p.m.

2023 GOLF FUNDRAISER LUNCH CHANCE

For those that do not play golf, you can attend for the BBQ catered lunch at cost of \$12 per person. You will also be able to check the silent auction items out. Lunch starts around 12 noon. Please contact Vince Tobola, by Wed. 12 noon if you are planning to attend so we have a good count. Contact Vince at 254-709-5795 or vtobola@aol.com. You can also contact Vince on any questions on the tournament or if you have donations or players to sign-up for 10th event.

TRICARE PRESCRIPTION PRICES IN 2024

TRICARE pharmacy users will see cost increases in 2024 as the Defense Health Agency implements prescription medication copays set by the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

That same legislation gives DOD authority to adjust copays for 2028 and beyond to reflect changes in the cost of pharmaceutical agents and prescription drug dispensing. MOAA already has started discussions on Capitol Hill to establish guardrails on this authority, with the goal of legislation to limit DOD increases on prescription drug copays.

As of Jan. 1, 2024, TRICARE copays for prescription drugs will increase as follows:

TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery (Up to a 90-Day Supply)

- Generic formulary drugs: from \$12 to \$13
- Brand-name formulary drugs: from \$34 to \$38
- Non-formulary drugs: from \$68 to \$76

TRICARE Retail Network Pharmacies (Up to a 30-Day Supply)

- Generic formulary drugs: from \$14 to \$16
- Brand-name formulary drugs: from \$38 to \$43
- Non-formulary drugs: from \$68 to \$76

Prescriptions obtained at military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies still will have zero out-of-pocket cost.

CONNALLY HS JROTC CADET AWARD

On left, we have Gary Urban presenting a MOAA certificate, a MOAA medal set and cash grant for \$150.00 to cadet Erik C. Kinzer.



MAY 18 DINNER GUEST SPEAKER

In photo, we have 1st Vice-President Ken Ratajczak presenting MOAA pen and chapter coin to the guest speaker, Dennis Kruse. Dennis presented a talk dealing with practical self-defense issues for individuals. One of primary items worth repeating is to practice situational awareness of your current environment in public or at an event to try to notice and prepare for any unusual activities.



KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, with the North Korean army's invasion of South Korea. In honor of the millions of Americans who served in the three-year conflict, The Korean War Veterans Memorial was dedicated in 1995 in Washington, D.C. A primary feature is the memorial's mural wall. A new addition was completed in 2022 – The Wall of Remembrance – includes the names of 36,574 American service members and more than 7,200 members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army who gave their lives defending the people of South Korea. Perhaps, the most iconic feature of the memorial is the 19 stainless steel statues representing the service members who fought in the war.

A blue rectangular graphic with the MOAA logo (three vertical bars) and the text "MOAA INSURANCE PLANS". Below the logo is the slogan "Standing with you at every stage." in white text. At the bottom, it says "1-800-247-2192 • www.moaainurance.com/plans" and a small number "97017" is visible in the bottom right corner.

97017

Member Spotlight – Dr. Harold Rafuse, Past President, HOT Chapter, MOAA



In his distinguished United States Air Force (USAF) career, Dr. Harold Rafuse was a Senior Pilot, Senior Space Operations Commander, Space Surveillance Expert, Command Missileer, Master Acquisition Manager (Department of Defense [DoD] Level III Certified), and Master Instructor. He was a flight commander and academic instructor for three years at the USAF Officer Training School, an adjunct professor for four years at the Air Force Institute of Technology teaching graduate and post graduate courses in DoD program planning, budgeting, and execution. For 12 years Dr. Rafuse was a Senior Program Manager on two major satellite and intercontinental ballistic missile programs. Additionally, he held senior positions at Headquarters Air Force Systems Command, Headquarters USAF and was research associate in the USAF's Executive Management Program and a senior science and technology advisor to the Office of the President of the United States.

Harold is a graduate of the Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and the Defense Systems Management College, Program Manager's Course. He holds a Ph.D. in Systems Engineering, Integration, and Management; a MBA; and undergraduate degrees in Chemistry and Chemical Technology.

After the Air Force, Dr. Rafuse served as a Vice President, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) for eight years where he managed multiple DOD systems engineering and technical assistance programs. He also served as a senior scientist and team leader to the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency ensuring Russian Federation compliance with the provisions of Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) I in the dismantlement and destruction of nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles and sea launched ballistic missiles.

An innovator, Dr. Rafuse was co-founder, owner and Managing Director of Advanced Concepts and Technologies International and, co-owner and Managing Director, Aurora Aviation and Aurora Avionics. Additionally, he co-founded the School of Engineering and Computer Science at Baylor University and serves on the Board of Advocates at the School. He founded the Baylor University Aviation Sciences Program and serves on that program's Board of Advisors. Additionally, he co-founded the School of Engineering and Computer Science at Baylor University and serves on their Board of Advocates. For three years, Dr. Rafuse was an assistant professor at Baylor University teaching operations research, leadership, and management courses. He also serves on the Board of Directors of nine other different aerospace and aviation organizations. Harold has two grown children and is married to the former RoseMary Mayes.

MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY AT HEWITT PARK

There was a Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony held at Hewitt Park starting at 9 a.m. Norma Thronburg was the master of ceremonies. Part of the ceremony was the placement of various wreaths at the park veterans' memorial. Bill Porter placed the flower wreath during the ceremony on behalf of the Heart of Texas Chapter MOAA. Below is a photo of the chapter wreath after the ceremony was over and other wreaths had been removed.



VA HIRING PUSH EXPECTED TO STOP INCREASED VA CLAIMS FROM ADDING TO AGENCY BACKLOG

The Department of Veterans Affairs expects to end 2023 with a record number of veterans filing disability claims, but the recent hiring push at the agency should help expedite the process and not add to its backlog of unresolved cases, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said Tuesday.

The VA's backlog of claims, which are cases waiting more than 125 days for a decision, has remained at roughly 200,000, despite the increase in filings triggered by the passage last year of a law that expanded toxic exposure benefits.

The Sgt. 1st Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, or PACT ACT., became law in 2022. Now millions of additional veterans could be eligible for disability benefits because of exposure that they might have had to toxins, such as those that emanated from burn pits used to rid overseas military bases of trash and other materials during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill also covers veterans exposed to toxins during the Vietnam War.

The VA is approaching 600,000 claims filed through the PACT Act since President Joe Biden signed it in August. The law included a \$5 billion Toxic Exposure Fund to cover the increased demand on the agency to help avoid problems caused by a similar expansion of coverage years earlier. More than 611,000 claims backlogged following a court decision that allowed for Vietnam veterans to get re-evaluated for claims filed for exposure to the pesticide Agent Orange. The VA anticipated the PACT Act's passage and began using extra funds to ramp up its hiring efforts. Since then, it increased its Veterans Benefits Administration staff by 20%, McDonough said.

Last year, the VA received a record-breaking 1.7 million claims for benefits. This year has already seen 30% more, he said.

The VA Secretary, McDonough, made his trip to Texas to discuss the PACT Act and see the progress being made to get benefits to veterans, their families and surviving spouses. The trip also aimed to reach veterans about the benefits now available to them and encourage them to file a claim. One of his larger concerns is ensuring

the VA can compete to hire medical providers despite the private sector's ability offer more money.

Central Texas is the third fastest growing region for veterans across the country with two new facilities opened last year in Killeen and Copperas Cove, and two more slated for San Marcos and Pflugerville, McDonough said. As part of McDonough's tour through Texas, which is home to about 1.5 million veterans, he has planned visits in the next two days to VA offices and medical facilities in Austin, San Antonio and Houston.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) STATUS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps continue to add to its ranks. But not fast enough. Onboarding new service members' takes time, and those already in uniform are contending with a packed and evolving workload in the face of extreme weather and evolving weather patterns.

"The demand for officers is just growing exponentially," said Rear Adm. Nancy Hann, director of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps. Hann, who is also a member of MOAA's board of directors, is in the process of launching several new personnel policies to help strengthen the force and retain its members. There are also new ships and aircraft on the horizon to support an evolving mission set.

Climate change is having "impacts on extreme weather, the severity of extreme weather, the occurrence of extreme weather," Hann said, making NOAA Corps' research and surveying in high demand. "We're seeing demand increase in all extreme-weather forecasting," Hann said. This includes areas like snow melt, flooding, fish movements, wildfire predictions, and coastal resilience. This data has both economic and national security implications, Hann said.

"Our job is to figure out what's happening and how we can prepare," she said. "How we can prepare the American public as well as work with our allies to share our best practices and our knowledge."

The NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020 allowed for the service to grow from 321 to 500 officers. Progress has been slow but steady, Hann said: The service currently has 342 members, 43 shy of its goal. "We're working to fill the gap as quickly as we can," Hann said.

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Address label

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