

“Taps,” The Distinctive Bugle Melody Played at U.S. Military Funerals and Memorials

How Did ‘Taps’ Originate? “Taps” was originally used as a lights-out signal to soldiers at night and dates back to the American Civil War. In July 1862, U.S. General Daniel Butterfield and his brigade were camped at Harrison’s Landing, Virginia, recuperating after the Seven Days



Battles near Richmond. Dissatisfied with the standard bugle call employed by the Army to indicate to troops it was time to go to sleep, and thinking the call should sound more melodious, Butterfield reworked an existing bugle call used to signal the end of the day. After he had his brigade bugler, Private Oliver Wilcox Norton, play it for the men, buglers from other units became interested in the 24-note tune and it quickly spread throughout the Army, and even caught on with the Confederates. The tune is a variation of an earlier bugle call known as the “**Scott Tattoo**”, which was used in the U.S. from 1835 until 1860. It was arranged in its present form by the Union Army Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield, a Medal of Honor recipient. Butterfield commanded the 3d Brigade, 1st Division, V Army Corps, Army of the Potomac while at Harrison's Landing, Virginia in July 1862, and wrote it to replace the customary firing of three rifle volleys at the end of burials during battle. Butterfield's version in July 1862 replaced the previous French *Pour Eteindre les Feux* bugle call used to signal “**lights out**”. Butterfield's bugler, Oliver Wilcox Norton, of East Springfield, Pennsylvania, was the first to sound the new call. Within months “**Taps**” was used by both Union and Confederate forces.

It was officially recognized by the United States Army in 1874. Captain John C. Tidball, West Point Class of 1848, started the custom of playing “**Taps**” at military funerals. In early July 1862 at Harrison's Landing, a corporal of Tidball's Battery A, 2nd U.S. Artillery, died. He was, Tidball recalled later, “**a most excellent man**”. Tidball wished to bury him with full military honors, but, for military reasons, he was refused permission to fire seven rifles three times over the grave. Tidball later wrote, “**The thought suggested itself to me to sound 'Taps' instead, which I did. The idea was taken up by others, until in a short time it was adopted by the entire army and is now looked upon as the most appropriate and touching part of a military funeral.**” As Tidball proudly proclaimed, “**Battery A has the honor of having introduced this custom into the service, and it is worthy of historical note.**” It became a standard component to U.S. military funerals in 1891.

Continued on Page 3 “Taps”

President’s Corner

Spring is here with summer just around the corner and even though



we are taking a few months reprieve from meetings, our mission continues. There are still needs and means to

engage with the community, whether it’s supporting fellow veterans, honoring our past or giving back through service.

Many of us took part in Memorial Day events throughout the area honoring those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Our presence and participation in these events reinforces our commitment to our fellow service members; past, present and future. We also just concluded another awards evolution under the leadership of LTC Bob Habermann and LTC Dave King. We successfully recognized JROTC cadets at sixteen local high schools, several CAP Squadrons and presented MOAA ROTC and SWVA Scholarship awards to distinguished cadets in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

Thanks to all who continue to volunteer in the recognition and presentations to our future leaders. Thanks to the efforts of CDR Lee Ensley, working with MOAA’S Community Outreach Program, the Chapter was once again able to present a \$2500 supporting grant to “Vittles For

2025 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Presidents Corner Cont'd from page 1

- PRESIDENT**
CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)
- FIRST VP**
LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret)
- SECOND VP**
LTC David MacNamee, USAF (Ret)
- SECRETARY**
LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret)
- TREASURER**
COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret)
- PROGRAMS**
COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret)
- CHAPLAIN**
LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret)
- MEMBERSHIP CHAIR**
COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret)
- VCOC REPRESENTATIVE**
CAPT Matthew K Haag USN (Ret)
- LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS REP**
LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret)
- PERSONAL AFFAIRS REP**
LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret)
- NEWSLETTER EDITOR**
COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret)
- FACEBOOK EDITOR**
CDR Lee M Ensley, USN (Ret)
- WEBMASTER**
CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)
- PUBLIC AFFAIRS**
LT Garrett (Gary) Sayre, USN (former)
- AWARDS CHAIR**
LTC David King, USA (Ret)
- SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**
CPT Larry Johnson, USAR (former)
- BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE**
LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret)
- COMMUNITY SERV VOL REP**
LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret)
- PAST PRESIDENT**
CAPT Matthew K Haag USN (Ret)
- SURVIVING SPOUSE REP**
Mrs. Mary Lou Summers
- DIRECTORS**
COL Robert F Brown USA (Ret)
CAPT Roger Burnett, USN Ret
CAPT Richard Cocrane, USN (Ret)
COL Thomas J Dalzell, USMC (Ret)
CDR Lee M Ensley, USN (Ret)
LTC Dave Gilleran, USA (Ret)
CAPT Matthew K Haag USN (Ret)
LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret)
LTC Steve Jamison, USA (Ret)
CPT Larry Johnson, USAR (former)
LTC David King, USA (Ret)
LTC David MacNamee, USAF (Ret)
COL John Miller, USA (Ret)
CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)
LT Garrett (Gary) Sayre, USN (former)
Mrs. Mary Lou Summers
Ms. Evelyn Cox

Vets” at our annual picnic.

Thanks to all who made our annual Chapter barbecue picnic in May another success. Our successful engagement with our State and National legislators was evident as we heard their commitment to support our efforts. They know who we are and what our priorities are when we contact them.

More than ever, our legislative efforts should remain a priority. You can accomplish your part by remaining aware of the issues. At the barbecue, you heard our representatives encourage our comments through their websites, social media and mail. We also have the MOAA Legislative Action Center at www.moaa.org/takeaction to send pre-formatted messages to your legislators. You can also contact our national representatives via MOAA’s toll-free Capitol Hill hotline at (866) 272-MOAA (6222).

We had a successful year in recruiting new members, most effectively by word of mouth. In your social and professional conversations, look for potential new members and pass the word by inviting them to one of our meetings starting in September.

To the Board Members of the SWVA MOAA Chapter, a special “THANK YOU” for all of your hard work, ideas and your commitment to serve the chapter. The chapter is grateful for your experience and wisdom which strengthens our mission. And thanks to COL Tom Dalzell who does an incredible job of organizing engaging programs and has more interesting programs in store starting again in September.

So, even though we are not meeting formally, our mission continues and the watch word from the bridge is “Steady As She Goes”.

Remember that we are all ambassadors of our organization. Your ideas, comments and suggestions are always encouraged. Thanks for all of your hard work and remember to “**NEVER STOP SERVING**”.

OUR MISSION

As the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, the Southwest Virginia Chapter’s mission is to advocate for a strong national defense, be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and a source of social fellowship for our members.

OUR VISION

To Be An Influential Military Organization in Southwest Virginia.



Continued from Page 1 "Taps"

Not long after Butterfield created "**Taps**," it was played for the first time at a military funeral, for a Union cannoneer killed in action. The man's commanding officer, Captain John Tidball, decided the bugle call would be safer than the traditional firing of three rifle volleys over the soldier's grave, a move which couldn't been confused by the nearby enemy as an attack. As for the name "**Taps**," the most likely explanation is that it comes from the fact that prior to Butterfield's bugle call, the lights-out call was followed by three drum beats, dubbed the "**Drum Taps**," as well as "**The Taps**" and then simply "**Taps**." When Butterfield's call replaced the drum beats, soldiers referred to it as "**Taps**," although this was an unofficial moniker, according to "**Taps**" historian and bugle expert Jari Villanueva. He notes that Butterfield's bugle call was officially known as "**Extinguish Lights**" in American military manuals until 1891. Since that time, "**Taps**" also has been a formally recognized part of U.S. military funerals. Today at Berkeley Plantation, the historic estate located at Harrison's Landing, there's a monument commemorating the origins of "**Taps**" at the site. Berkeley Plantation also happens to be the birthplace of Benjamin Harrison V, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and William Henry Harrison, the nation's ninth president.



Horace Lorenzo Trim is often credited for a set of words intended to accompany the music:

*Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky;
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.*

*Fading light, dims the sight,
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright.
From afar, drawing nigh, falls the night.*

*Thanks and praise, for our days,
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, neath the sky;
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.*

*Sun has set, shadows come,
Time has fled, Scouts must go to their beds
Always true to the promise that they made.*

*While the light fades from sight,
And the stars gleaming rays softly send,
To thy hands we our souls, Lord, commend.*



*Continued on Page 4 "**Taps**"*

Continued from Page 3 "Taps"



WELCOME ABOARD

Captain Martin Robertson United States Navy, Retired

Captain Martin Robertson, originally from Erie, Pennsylvania, enlisted in the Navy in 1988 and was commissioned in 1998. He retired after 36 years of honorable and dedicated service to our country.

Captain Robertson's most recently served as the Commodore of Amphibious Squadron Eight. During this tour, as Commander of the BATAAN Amphibious Ready Group, he oversaw planning and operations for four ships, a fleet surgical team, and detachments provided by the naval beach group and tactical air control squadrons totaling over 2,200 Sailors. He led the group through pre-deployment work ups, followed by an eight-and-a-half-month deployment that included operations in the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. As a result of operations conducted in the Red Sea to combat Houthi aggression and ensure the continued flow of shipping, his task group was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon and Navy Expeditionary Medal.



He previously served as the Commanding Officer of USS Princeton (CG 59) and USS Bainbridge (DDG 96) and was Executive Officer of USS Rentz (FFG 46). Other sea duty assignments include USS Cowpens (CG 63), USS Ross (DDG 71), USS Pioneer (MCM 9), USS Normandy (CG 60), USS Nicholas (FFG 47) and USS Wainwright (CG 28).

Ashore, he served at the Pentagon as the Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy, Officer in Charge of the Center for Surface Combat Systems Detachment Mayport, Battle Watch Captain and Action Officer at U.S. Fleet Forces Command and Task Force 80, Maritime Operations Officer at Allied Joint Force Command Naples, and Leading Petty Officer and Command Career Counselor at Surface Combat Systems Center Wallops Island.

He earned a Master of Arts Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies with a Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Ethics from the Naval War College, Master of Arts Degree in Military Studies with a specialty in Naval Warfare from American Military University, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Old Dominion

University.

His awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Commendation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Top Snipe and Distinguished Graduate Awards from Surface Warfare Officer Schools Command, and various other personal, unit and service awards.

Captain Robertson is married with four children and one granddaughter. He and his wife Aradia reside in Vinton, Virginia.



THE MOAA SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER AWARDS PROGRAM

MOAA JROTC MEDAL AWARD

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC), presents the **MOAA JROTC Medal Award** each year to recognize an “**outstanding**” JROTC cadet or midshipman at 15 local high school JROTC units, 3 CAP units and 1 Sea Cadet units in Southwest Virginia in their respective schools JROTC program who demonstrate “**exceptional**” potential for military leadership.

The **MOAA JROTC Medal Award** consists of a red, white, and blue ribbon, which is 1 and 3/8 inches in width along with a bronze disc pendant that is 1 and 5/8 inches in diameter, and a matching service ribbon, a certificate of presentation, and a certificate folder.

- Be in the last year of the JROTC program, customarily in his/her senior year of high school.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Be of high moral character
- Demonstrate a high order of loyalty to his unit, school, and country.
- Demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership.



MOAA ROTC MEDAL AWARD

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC), presents the **MOAA ROTC Medal Award** each year to recognize an “**outstanding**” ROTC cadet or midshipman at Virginia Tech and Radford University in their respective schools ROTC program who demonstrate “**exceptional**” potential for military leadership.

The **MOAA ROTC Medal Award** consists of a red, white, and blue ribbon, which is 1 and 3/8 inches in width along with a bronze disc pendant that is 1 and 5/8 inches in diameter, and a matching service ribbon, a certificate of presentation, and a certificate folder.

To be eligible for the MOAA ROTC Medal Award, the cadet or midshipman must:

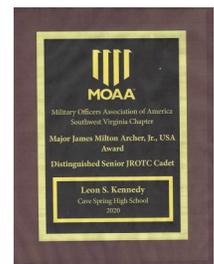
- Be in the next-to-last year of the ROTC program, customarily in his/her junior year at the university.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Be of high moral character.
- Demonstrate a high order of loyalty to his/her unit, school, and country
- Demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership.



MAJ JAMES MILTON ARCHER, JR., USA AWARD

In 2020 the Southwest Virginia Chapter established a new award to recognize a “**distinguished**” JROTC “senior cadet or midshipman” in the respective schools JROTC program who has demonstrated “**superior**” military leadership during his/her time in the program. The new award will also be presented to Cadets participating in the United States Air Force Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol program completing his/her senior year of high school or home-school equivalent . The new award is the **MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award**. The award is made possible due to a generous contribution from the Archer Family in memory of their father Major James Milton Archer, Jr., USA. The new award consists of an 8”x10” walnut plaque, \$50 remuneration, and a presentation letter in a certificate folder. Eligibility for the **MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award**, the cadet or midshipman must:

- Be in the last year of the JROTC program, customarily in his/her senior year of high school.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Be of high moral character
- Demonstrate a high order of loyalty to his unit, school, and country.
- Demonstrate superior military leadership.



MOAA SWVC JROTC-ROTC-ARCHER-AWARD CEREMONIES 2025

Each year the Southwest Virginia Chapter solicits nominations for the MOAA JROTC/ROTC Medal Awards and the Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award from 15 local high school JROTC units, 3 ROTC units, 3 CAP units and 1 Sea Cadet unit. Chapter Awards Chair LTC Robert Habermann prepares the award packages and presentation folders, forwards them to the respective school and arranges for chapter members to attend the awards ceremonies and present the awards to the recipients.

On Monday 7 April 2025 Chapter Awards Chair LTC Robert Habermann presented the MOAA JROTC Medal Award and Archer Award to 2nd Lt Anna Stevenson from the Roanoke Composite Squadron Awards Ceremony.

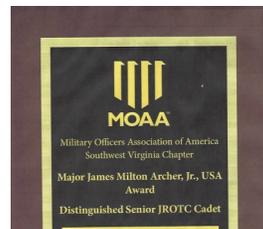


LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) addressing the Roanoke Composite Squadron during the 7 April 2025 MOAA SWVC JROTC and Archer Award Ceremony.

LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) presenting the SWVC Chapter Archer Award to AFJROTC Cadet 2nd Lt Anna Stevenson from the Roanoke Composite Squadron.



LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret) presenting the MOAA JROTC Award to AFJROTC Cadet 2nd Lt Anna Stevenson from the Roanoke Composite Squadron. Looking on are her parents.



Major James Milton Archer, Jr.
USA Award



MOAA JROTC Medal

Continued from Page 7 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

The **William Byrd High School Navy National Defense Cadet Corps** held its first Military Ball at the Charles R. Hill Community Center on 17 April 2025. The cadets were in charge of the event, which began with a reception, followed by dinner and an awards ceremony. Cadet Lt. Commander Leighann Wood, the commander of the William Byrd NNDCC, welcomed guests, including speaker Captain Gary Powers, president of the Military Officers Association of America, Byrd’s Interim Naval Science instructor Senior Master Sgt. Paul Richardson, Jason Suhr and Mark Jones from the RCPS Career and Technical Education program which supervises the NNDCC, WBHS Principal Travis Anderson, future Naval Science instructor Command Senior Chief Shawn Wingle, and Vinton Mayor Brad Grose. Capt. Powers talked not only about his time in military intelligence work, but about the core values of the US Navy – honor, courage, and commitment. During the ceremony which followed, SMSgt. Richardson, assisted by Capt. Powers and Senior Chief Wingle, presented awards to the cadets.



Command Senior Chief Shawn Wingle, SMSgt. Paul Richardson, CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)

CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)



CAPT Gary Powers presenting the 2025 MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet Alexis Short

CAPT Gary Powers presenting the 2025 MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet Nathaniel Hale

Continued on Page 9 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

Continued from Page 8 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”



CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) presenting the Southwest Virginia Chapter, MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award, to Cadet LeNorah Garcia

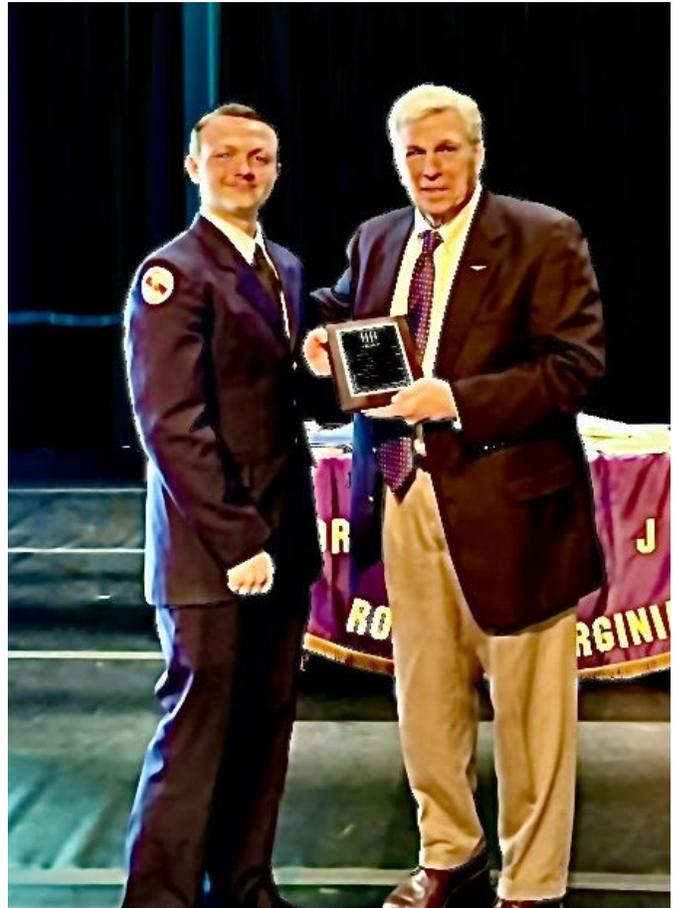
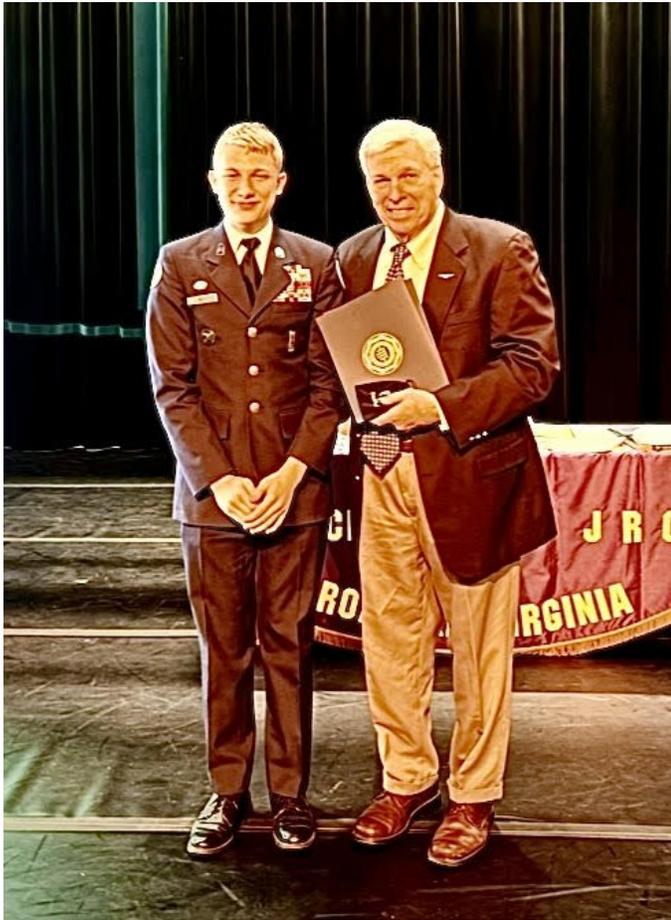


Senior cadets received special medals to wear on their graduation robes. From left are Senior Chief Wingle, Cadets Noah Nicely, Savannah Powell, Mason Truslow, Devin Clark, and LeNorah Garcia, and Capt. Powers.

Continued on Page 10 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

Continued from Page 9 "MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies"

On Thursday 8 May 2025 CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret) attended **The Patrick Henry High School Air Force JROTC** Awards Program. Patrick Henry High School - Roanoke, VA's JROTC unit, was recently awarded an "Exceeds Standard" rating by the Department of the Air Force for the unit's formal Unit Assessment. This is the highest rating attainable! The assessor praised the strong school support, cadets' professionalism, impressive drill and color guard performances, extensive community outreach, robust wellness program, and the positive relationships within the AFJROTC unit. Thank you to MSgt. Terry Mills for his outstanding leadership and dedication to providing a positive experience for his cadets., and thank you to our students for their dedication, discipline, and commitment to excellence



CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret) presenting the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet Caden Irby of the Patrick Henry High School AFJROTC Unit on 8 May 2025.

CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret) presenting the SWVC Chapter Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet Brenden Hunley of the Patrick Henry High School AFJROTC Unit on 8 May 2025.



Continued on Page 11 "MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies"

Continued from Page 10 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

On Friday 16 May 2025 chapter member Larry Horne, LT. USN (Former) attended the **Bedford High school Army JROTC awards program, part of the Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center.** The Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is a program offered at the Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center to students in grades 9-12 from all three base schools. The program teaches students character education, student achievement, wellness, leadership, and diversity. It is a cooperative effort between the Army and Bedford County Public Schools to produce successful students and citizens, while fostering a more constructive and disciplined learning environment in the base schools. MOAA Southwest Virginia Chapter Awards were presented by Mr. Larry Horne, a graduate of Bedford High School (1962), and a MOAA member, Vietnam veteran, and past President of the Bedford Internal Alliance.



Mr. Larry Horne presenting the MOAA JROTC Medal Award to Cadet McKenzie I. Crow of the Bedford County High School Army JROTC program.

Mr. Larry Horne presenting the SWVC Chapter Major James Milton Archer, Jr. USA Award to Cadet Levi E. Nichols of the Bedford County High School Army JROTC program..

Continued on Page 12 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

Continued from Page 11 “MOAA SWVC Awards Ceremonies”

On Tuesday 22 April 2025 Southwest Virginia Chapter member LTC David King, USA (Ret) attended the **Dan River High School Army JROTC Awards Program**. SFC Michael Coder presided over the program. LTC King presented Cadet SSG Amelia Stump with the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) JROTC Medal Award. Cadet CSM Jacob Kinser was presented the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, The **MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award**. The award consists of an 8”x10” walnut plaque, \$50 remuneration, and a presentation letter in a certificate folder



Cadet SSG Amelia Stump receiving the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) JROTC Medal Award from Chapter member LTC David King, SA (Ret)



Cadet CSM Jacob Kinser receiving the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA, **MAJ James Milton Archer, Jr., USA Award** from LTC David King, USA (Ret). The award consists of an 8”x10” walnut plaque, \$50 remuneration, and a presentation letter in a certificate folder

Continued from Page 12 "MOAA SWVC Awards Program"

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER LEADERSHIP AWARDS

In 2009 the Board of Directors of the Southwest Virginia Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America established two Leadership Awards to be presented to ROTC Cadets /Midshipmen at Virginia Tech/Radford University during each academic year. Recipients are to be juniors or who will be starting their final year in the coming fall of the academic year. Each Leadership Award was named after a General Officer who was a member of the Southwest Virginia Chapter.

The first award is **The General William B. Rosson Leadership Award** and the second award is the **Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey Leadership Award**.

The Leadership Awards were established to recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership while a member of the Virginia Tech/Radford University ROTC Program. Each Leadership Award consists of an appropriate framed award certificate and a \$500 monetary award. Criteria and application formats were coordinated through the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets and the three ROTC units. The Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC units at Virginia Tech and the Army ROTC unit at Radford University shall submit no more than two (2) nominations each for the leadership awards. The two nominations are to be made and approved by the respective heads of the ROTC units for endorsement and forwarding. The Southwest Virginia Chapter Leadership Award Selection Committee shall select the two (2) Leadership Award recipients from the eight (8) nominations submitted.

General **William Bradford Rosson** (25 August 1918 – 12 December 2004) commanded the U.S. Army, Pacific from October



1970 to January 1973. He was commissioned in 1940 through ROTC and saw combat in World War II, earning the Distinguished Service Cross for valor on the Anzio Beachhead in Italy. He also fought in North Africa, Sicily, France, and Germany. General Rosson obtained his bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Oregon. After retirement from the military he earned a Master of Letters degree in International Relations from New College, Oxford University in England. His military schooling includes the U.S. Army War College and the National War College. Major command experience for Rosson includes Commanding General for Task Force Oregon (Provisional), Commanding General for I Field Force, and Commanding General, Provisional Corps, for the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Later he was Deputy Commander for the same command. Rosson concluded his career as Commander in Chief of the United States Southern Command in Quarry Heights, Panama Canal Zone. Additional assignments include serving in General Eisenhower's NATO headquarters in Paris, and duty with the French Forces in Vietnam in 1954. Because of this experience, he was valuable to General Westmoreland as Chief of Staff for the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam. Rosson also served as Director of the Plans and Policy Directorate, J5, for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C.. In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest decoration for valor, General Rosson's awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart.

In 1962, German magazine *Der Spiegel* featured him on its front page. He died on 12 December 2004, of a heart attack in his home in Salem, Virginia. Rosson was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Continued on Page 13 "MOAA SWVC Awards Program"

Continued from Page 13 "MOAA SWVC Awards Program"

Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey (29 May 1918 – 23 February 2016) United States Army served in World War II and



the Vietnam War. He was born on 29 May 1918 in Somerset, Kentucky, the youngest of three brothers. He attended the University of Kentucky graduating in 1940. He enlisted in the Army in May 1940. In November 1942 he was serving with the 39th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division when it was deployed to French North Africa in Operation Torch. In February 1943 he was appointed as Aide-de-camp to General Harold Alexander. For performance of this role he was awarded the Order of the British Empire (MBE). In November 1943 he was reassigned to the 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. In February 1944 he was appointed commander of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment at Anzio. The 3rd Infantry Division was later withdrawn from Italy and then deployed in Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France in August 1944.

On 7 September 1944 his command post at Besançon was attacked by a German force. Corporal Robert D. Maxwell fell on a German hand grenade absorbing the blast with his body and saving Ramsey from serious injury. Maxwell was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions. In early May 1945 his 3rd Battalion and the 1st Battalion were ordered by regimental commander Colonel John A. Heintges to capture Berchtesgaden, Adolf Hitler's mountain retreat which they successfully achieved on 4 May. Ramsey initially refused to allow Gen-

eral Philippe Leclerc to cross a bridge into the area until he received confirmation that the 7th Regiment had captured Berchtesgaden. He was assigned to the Infantry School as an instructor in 1946, he then served with the War Department General Staff. He attended Command and General Staff College in 1949–1950. In 1954 he was appointed as deputy, and later as Secretary, of the Joint Staff of the United Nations Command and Far East Command. In 1957 he was transferred to Fort Benning where he commanded the 14th Infantry Regiment and then the 1st Infantry Brigade. I

n September 1958 he became the G-1 of the U.S. Army Infantry Center. In July 1959 he was assigned to South Korea and served as the U.S. Army Advisor to the Korean National Defense College until August 1960. He returned to the Department of the Army General Staff in September 1960, serving in the Office of the Chief of Legislative Liaison. In April 1963, he became executive officer of the Office, Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development. On 1 March 1966 he was appointed Deputy Chief of Information under Brigadier General Keith L. Ware. In December 1968 he was appointed deputy commander of 1st Logistics Command in South Vietnam.

On 1 June 1969 he was appointed as commander of the 23rd Infantry Division. The Mỹ Lai massacre, conducted by units of the division, became public in November 1969 and he assisted the military commission headed by General William R. Peers in its investigation. On 17 March 1970 his command and control helicopter crashed into jungle approximately 7 miles (11 km) west of Chu Lai Base Area killing two onboard and wounding him and others. The survivors were eventually rescued 18 hours later. Due to his injuries he was evacuated to the U.S. and replaced as division commander by Major general Albert E. Milloy. On 14 July 1970 he was appointed United States Army Provost Marshal General and he served in that role until 20 May 1974 when the role was abolished.

He retired from the Army on 1 August 1974. He died on 25 February 2016 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His decorations include Distinguished Service Medal (2), Silver Star (3), Legion of Merit (2), Distinguished Flying Cross and Bronze Star (4), Purple Heart (5), Air Medal (17), Gallantry Cross with Palm, Armed Forces Honor Medal First Class, Croix de Guerre and Order of the British Empire.

Continued on Page 15 "MOAA SWVC Awards Program"

Continued from Page 14 “MOAA SWVC Awards Program”

VIRGINIA TECH CORPS OF CADETS MILITARY AWARDS CEREMONY

On Thursday 1 May 2025 Southwest Virginia Chapter members attended the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Academic Year 2024-2025 Military Awards Ceremony. Numerous Service Awards, VPI Awards, Joint Awards, Olmsted Foundation Scholar Awards, University Honors and Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Awards were presented to selected Cadets in front of the entire Corps of Cadets. The Southwest Virginia Chapter was honored to participate in the awarding of the MOAA ROTC Medal Awards and the Southwest Virginia Chapter Leadership Awards.



The Southwest Virginia Chapter General William B. Rosson Leadership Award was presented to (R), Senior Air Force Cadet Tyler Mandel and the Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey Leadership Award was presented to Senior Air Force Cadet Vincent Favazzo (L), by chapter member COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret) at the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Military Awards Ceremony 1 May 2024.



Chapter member COL Thomas Dalzell USMC (Ret) presents the MOAA ROTC Medal Awards to Cadet Vincent Favazzo, (L), Cadet Evan Clymer, (R) and Cadet Walker Berndt at the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Military Awards Ceremony 1 May 2024.

NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

On Saturday 29 March, 2025 members of the Southwest Virginia Chapter participated in a National; Vietnam War Veterans Commemoration Ceremony at the Salem, Virginia Veterans Hospital auditorium. Chapter members attending included COL John



L to R: Dr. Scott Nixon, Deputy Chief of Staff, Salem VAHCS; COL John Miller, USA (Ret); Fred Fralin, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, Roanoke Valley, Chapter 81; COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret) the guest speaker.

Miller, USA (Ret), COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret) and CPT Larry Johnson, USAR (former).

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 was signed into law by U.S. President Donald J. Trump, designating every March 29 as *National Vietnam War Veterans Day*. This special day joins six other military-centric annual observances codified in Title 4 of the United States Code §6, among them Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

29 March is a fitting choice for a day honoring Vietnam veterans. It was chosen to be observed in perpetuity as March 29, 1973 was the day United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disestablished and also the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. In addition, on and around this same day Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war.

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration honors all veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time

from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location, and their families. *November 1, 1955* was selected to coincide with the official designation of Military Assistance Advisory Group-Vietnam (MAAG-V); *May 15, 1975* marks the end of the battle precipitated by the seizure of the SS Mayaguez.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that today there are between **6 and 7 million U.S. Vietnam veterans living in America and abroad**, along with *millions of families of those who served* during this timeframe. We make no distinction between veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period. All were called to serve and none could self-determine where they would serve.

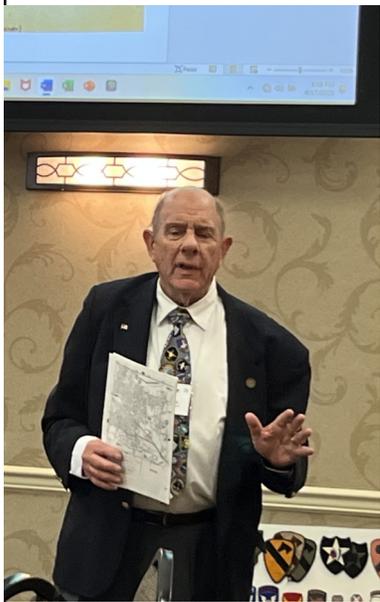
Additional Background: U.S. involvement in Vietnam started slowly with an initial deployment of advisors in the early 1950s, grew incrementally through the early 1960s and expanded with the deployment of full combat units in July 1965. The last U.S. personnel were evacuated from Vietnam in April 1975. This national commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense, and launched by the President to thank and honor our Nation's Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

In 2007, the 110th Congress incorporated language in House of Representatives (H.R.) 4986 authorizing the secretary of defense to conduct a program commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. H.R. 4986 was signed into law as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2008 by U.S. President George W. Bush on January 28, 2008. U.S. President Barack Obama officially inaugurated this Commemoration at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. on Memorial Day, May 28, 2012. Section 598 (Public Law 110-181) of the 2008 NDAA specifically addresses Commemoration activities.

Congress outlined a total of five objectives for The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, with the primary objective being to thank and honor Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the Nation, with distinct recognition of former prisoners of war and families of those still listed as missing in action. The four remaining objectives highlight the service of our Armed Forces and support organizations during the war; pay tribute to wartime contributions at home by American citizens; highlight technology, science and medical advances made during the war; and recognize contributions by our Allies. By Presidential Proclamation, The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration will continue through Veterans Day, November 11, 2025.

THE GHOST ARMY

On Thursday 17 April 2025 COL Hobie Pillsbury, USA (Ret) presented a program on the World War II "Ghost Army". The **Ghost Army** was a United States Army tactical deception unit during World War II officially known as the **23rd Headquarters Special Troops**. The 1,100-man unit was given a unique mission: to deceive Hitler's forces and mislead them as to the size and location of Allied forces, while giving the actual units elsewhere time to maneuver. Activated on 20 January 1944, the Ghost Army arrived in Europe in May shortly before D-Day and returned to the US at the end of the war in July 1945.



During their tenure, the Ghost Army carried out more than 20 deception campaigns, putting on a "traveling road show" using inflatable tanks, sound trucks, fake radio transmissions, scripts and pretense. Their story was kept a secret for more than 50 years after the war, until it was declassified in 1996. The unit was the subject of a PBS documentary *The Ghost Army* in 2013. In February 2022, members of the Ghost Army were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, citing their unique and highly distinguished service.

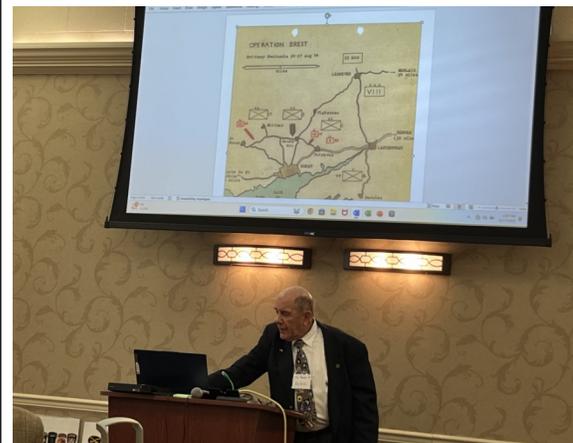
The Ghost Army was never actually commanded by General Patton (since it never really existed!). Included was a 'show and tell' collection of genuine patches from most of the fictitious divisions of the "**First U.S. Army Group**" (**FUSAG**). The presentation included pictures that tell the story of one of the most successful military deceptions of all time. Most credit Eisenhower with the Allied success on D-Day, but perhaps Hitler deserves the honor as he could have released reserve armored forces capable of easily destroying the beachhead, but was absolutely convinced Normandy was just a feint and he had to wait for the "real" invasion by Patton's

FUSAG. presentation on the Ghost Army.

The Ghost Army was created by U.S. Army planners Ralph Ingersoll and Billy Harris, and led by Colonel Harry L. Reeder. Inspiration for the unit came from the British units who had honed the deception technique for Operation Bertram during the battle of El Alamein in late 1942. The unit had its barracks at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and was fully formed at Camp Pine, New York (now Fort Drum), before sailing for the United Kingdom in early May 1944. In Britain they were based near Stratford-upon-Avon, and troops participated in Operation Fortitude, the British-designed and led D-Day deceptions of a landing force designated for the Pas-de-Calais. Some troops went to Normandy two weeks after D-Day, where they simulated a Mulberry harbor at night with lights intended to draw German artillery from the real ones. After this the

entire unit assisted in tying up the German defenders of Brest by simulating a larger force than was actually encircling them. As the

Allied armies moved east, so did the 23rd, and it eventually was based within Luxembourg, from where it engaged in deceptions of crossings of the Ruhr river, positions along the Maginot Line, Hürtgen Forest, and finally a major crossing of the Rhine to draw German troops away from the actual sites. Ghost soldiers were encouraged to use their brains and talent to mislead, deceive, and befuddle the German Army. Many were recruited from art schools, advertising agencies and other occupations that encouraged creative thinking. In civilian life, ghost soldiers had been artists,[6] architects, actors, set designers, engineers and lawyers. Although the 23rd Headquarters Special



Troops consisted of only 1,100 soldiers, the contingent used equipment pioneered by British forces such as dummy tanks and artillery, fake aircraft, and giant speakers broadcasting the sounds of men and artillery to make the Germans think it was upwards of a two-division 30,000-man force.[3] The unit's elaborate ruses helped deflect German units from the locations of larger allied combat units. The unit consisted of the 406th Combat Engineers (which handled security), the 603rd Camouflage Engineers, the 3133 Signal Service Company Special, and the Signal Company Special.



Continued. on Page 18 "Ghost Army"

Continued from Page 17 "Ghost Army"

The 406th Combat Engineers handled security. The officers were Captain George Rebh (commander), Lt. William George Aliapoulos (3rd Platoon) was awarded the Bronze Star for service during Operation Brittany, Lt. George Daley (1st Platoon), Lt. Ted Kelker (HQ Platoon) and Lt. Thomas Robinson (2nd Platoon) as documented in the book *Ghosts of ETO*. The book states that Captain Rebh "**While training in the desert Rebh had decided that, as combat engineers, his men needed to know not only engineering skills but how to do the job of an infantry men as well. He worked them in infantry tactics during nights and weekends until they reached a fair level of proficiency.**"

The **visual deception** arm of the Ghost Army was the 603rd Camouflage Engineers. It was equipped with inflatable



tanks, cannons, jeeps, trucks, and airplanes that the men would inflate with air compressors, and then camouflage imperfectly so that enemy aerial reconnaissance could see them. They could create dummy airfields, troop bivouacs (complete with fake laundry hanging on clotheslines), motor pools, artillery batteries, and tank formations in a few hours.

Many of the men in this unit were artists, recruited from New York and Philadelphia art schools. Their unit became an incubator for young artists who sketched and painted their way through Europe. Several of these soldier-artists went on to have a major impact on art in the postwar US. Bill Blass, Ellsworth Kelly, wildlife artist Arthur Singer, and Art Kane were among the many artists who served in the 603rd.

The 3132 Signal Service Company Special handled **sonic deception**. The unit coalesced under the direction of Colonel Hilton Railey, a colorful figure who, before the war, had "discovered" Amelia Earhart and sent her on the road to fame. Aided by engineers from Bell Labs, a team from the 3132 went to Fort Knox to record sounds of armored and infantry units onto a series of sound effects records that they brought to Europe. For each deception, sounds could be "mixed" to match the scenario they wanted the enemy to believe. This program was recorded on state-of-the-art wire recorders (the predecessor to the tape recorder), and then played back with powerful amplifiers and speakers mounted on halftracks.

These sounds were audible 15 miles (24 km) away.

Radio deception, "Spooft radio", as it was called, was handled by the Signal Company. Special Operators created phony traffic nets, impersonating the radio operators from real units. Different Morse code operators each have their individual style of sending or "**fist**"; the Signal Company operators mimicked a departed operator's style so that the enemy would not detect that the real unit and its radio operator were long gone. It was thought impossible to mimic an operator's fist, but the Ghost Army Signal Corps Special was able to do so.



To

Continued on Page 19 "Ghost Army"

Continued from Page 18 - **“Ghost Army”**

To complement existing techniques, the unit often employed theatrical effects to supplement the other deceptions. Collectively called "atmosphere", these included simulating actual units deployed elsewhere by the application of their divisional insignia, painting appropriate unit insignia on vehicles and having the individual companies deployed as if they were regimental headquarters units. The same few covered trucks or lorries, with just two troops in the visible seats near the rear to appear to be full of motorized infantry, would be driven in a loop to look like long convoys. "MPs" (military police) would be deployed at cross-roads wearing appropriate divisional insignia and some personnel would dress as divisional generals and staff officers visiting towns where enemy agents or scouts were likely to see them. A few actual tanks and artillery pieces were occasionally assigned to the unit to make the "dummies" in the distance appear more realistic.

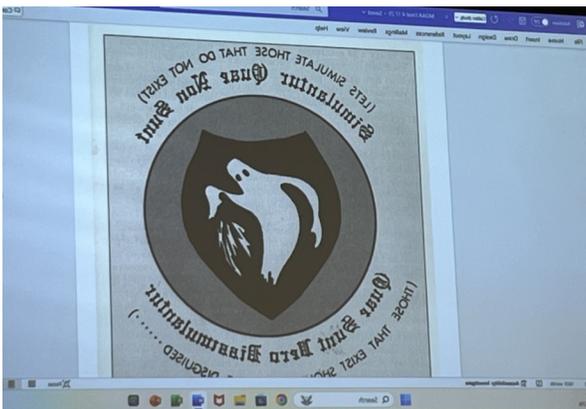
Recognition. On Tuesday, 1 February 2022, President Biden signed into law S. 1404, **The Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act**, which provides for the award of a Congressional Gold Medal to the Ghost Army, in recognition of their unique and highly distinguished service in conducting deception operations in Europe during World War II. On 21 March 2024, two-years after President Biden signed the **Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act**, the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony was held at Emancipation Hall in the United States Capitol. In attendance were three of the seven surviving Ghost Army soldiers: 100-year old Mr. Bernard Bluestein of Hoffman Estates; 99-year old Mr. John Christman of Leesburg, New Jersey; and 100-year old Mr. Seymour Nussenbaum of Monroe Township, New Jersey. The awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal is the culmination of a nearly seven-year effort by dozens of volunteers led by Mr. Rick Beyer, president of the Ghost Army Legacy Foundation, to honor and demonstrate gratitude for this unit's heroic efforts, which were kept secret for so long.



The Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal



Three of the seven surviving Ghost Army soldiers: 100-year old Mr. Bernard Bluestein of Hoffman Estates; 99-year old Mr. John Christman of Leesburg, New Jersey; and 100-year old Mr. Seymour Nussenbaum of Monroe Township, New Jersey.



Unofficial “Ghost Army” patch.

Continued from Page 19 "Ghost Army"



Rita and COL Hobie Pillsbury, USA (Ret)



Benny Johnson and wife Joyce



CAPT, USN (Ret) Marty Robertson and wife Aradia



2ndLT, USA (former) Bill Russell and wife, Becky.



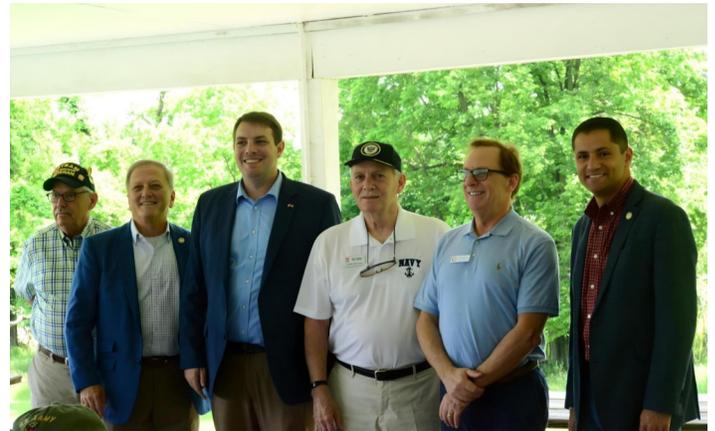
CAPT Gary Powers and LTC Steve Jamison



CAPT Powers presenting the SWVC Chapter "Cup" to COL Hobie Pillsbury in appreciation for his outstanding presentation on the "Ghost Army"

15 MAY 2025 MEMBERSHIP BBQ PICNIC MEETING

On Thursday 15 May 2025 the Southwest Virginia Chapter gathered at the American Legion Post 3 shelter facility in Salem, Virginia for a BBQ picnic catered by Mission BBQ in Roanoke. As part of the chapter emphasis on Legislative Action, invitations were sent to local and state legislators to meet with them in a relaxing and social setting and to let them know where we stand on the issues affecting the military and veterans. Each representative was given time to address the members on what they are doing to further veterans goals and objectives. Chapter President CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) was Master of Ceremonies and welcomed all to the gathering and introduced all guests present. Musical entertainment was provided by Mr. Marc Baskind, a local musician raised in the heart of the Mississippi Delta (Greenville) and influenced by jazz, blues, and the classics. Marc plays some country but his forte is variety: Billy Joel, James Taylor, oldies, etc.



January Gerow, President “Vittles for Vets” accepting a MOAA Community Outreach Grant check for \$2,500 to support the “Vittles for Vets” program from Chapter members CDR Lee Ensley and CAPT Gary Powers both who are Board Members of “Vittles for Vets”. CDR Ensley wrote and submitted the MOAA Community Outreach Grant request for the chapter.

Chapter members and local representatives attending the BBQ picnic. L to R: Chapter member Joe Obenshain, Virginia State Senator 3rd District Chris head, Virginia State Senator 19th District David Sutterlein, Chapter President Gary Powers, Virginia Delegate 40th District Joseph McNamara, Virginia Delegate 38th District Sam Rasoul.



New Survivor Benefit Plan Payment Setup Coming Soon for Some Retirees

By: Kevin Lilley, MOAA's digital content manager
April 22, 2025



Retirees who pay monthly Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP) premiums via "[direct remittance](#)" instead of having the premium deducted from their retirement pay must change how they submit those payments in the coming months.

Affected retirees should have received instructions on making the change from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in March, according to a [recent article at DFAS.mil](#) , but some retirees with outdated contact information may not get the materials. **No action is required from those whose SBP/RCSBP payment is deducted from their retirement pay.**

[RELATED: [Change Your Address With DFAS](#) | [Change of Address Request Form \(DD Form 2866\)](#)]

In June, SBP/RCSBP payments that had been submitted to the Treasury Department's Centralized Receivables Service must be submitted instead to DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay. Those who receive a bill via postal mail will receive new payment instructions with their June invoice. Those who make automated payments can act early to set up new payment options:

- **Pay DFAS Electronically:** Fill out [this online form](#) with payment information. Retirees will need their billing statement and either bank account or debit card details.
- **Request a VA Deduction:** Those paying by direct remittance often do so because their retirement pay is offset by VA disability compensation. To have SBP/RCSBP premiums deducted from VA payments, fill out [this online form](#) and [upload it to DFAS online](#) or mail it to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Retired Pay, 8899 E 56th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200.
- **Pay DFAS by Mail:** Send monthly premium payments to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, DFAS-CL, SBP Remittances, P.O. Box 979013, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000.

[MOAA WEBINAR RECORDING: [What You Need to Know About SBP](#)]

For more information on the changeover or other DFAS issues, contact the agency at (800) 321-1080 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Eastern, or visit the [DFAS Customer Service webpage](#).

Get Answers to Your Medicare and TRICARE For Life Questions From MOAA

By: Kevin Lilley, MOAA's digital content manager
April 23, 2025



Many retirees who leave service after 20 years will have been out of uniform for decades when they turn 65 and their TRICARE coverage ends.

And while DoD will mail out details on Medicare, TRICARE For Life, and related topics in the months leading up to a retiree's 65th birthday, planning for this major transition should begin many months – maybe even years – before those notices arrive. That's why MOAA has produced [Transitioning Into Medicare and TRICARE For Life](#), a publication exclusive to Premium and Life members that covers:

- **Your Health Care Roadmap:** How the move into Medicare/TRICARE For Life coverage works, and what steps you'll need to take along the way.
- **Using Your Benefits:** Everything from how to file a claim to what forms you should bring to the doctor's office, plus details on using other insurance programs and finding care (and coverage) overseas.
- **Common Questions (and Answers):** Worried about your pharmacy benefit? Considering an insurance supplement? Unsure how to calculate your premium? MOAA has you covered.

Premium and Life members can [download the full guide](#) in PDF format or [browse the contents online](#). Not a Premium or Life member? Learn more about [joining MOAA or upgrading your membership](#).

[RELATED: [What Is IRMAA, and What Does It Mean for My Medicare Premium?](#)]

More MOAA Resources

The guide is one of more than a dozen [member-exclusive publications](#) offering everything from financial guidance to family and survivor resources to details on your service-earned benefits. Members also have full access to [MOAA's TRICARE Guide](#) and can check for monthly updates to [MOAA's TRICARE Toolkit](#).

Not seeing the answer you're after? Premium and Life members will find more resources, and can reach out with their specific questions, via MOAA's [Ask the Experts](#) website.

MOAA Insurance

From long-term care coverage to TRICARE supplements and much more, see what products are best for your personal peace of mind.

[Learn More](#)

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY 26 MAY 2025

On Monday 26 May 2025 chapter members participated in a Memorial Day Ceremony at the Salem, Virginia veterans hospital auditorium. The program was hoisted by the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council and its member organizations including the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA. Chapter member COL John Miller, USA, (Ret) was the Master of Ceremonies.



COL John Miller, USA (Ret) Master of Ceremony



Mr. Jay Kincannon, President
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council



Ms. Rebecca Stackhouse, Executive
Director Salem VAHCS

After introductions opening remarks were made by Jay Kincannon, President, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council. Welcome remarks were made by Ms. Rebecca Stackhouse, Executive Director Salem VAHCS followed by presentation of the colors, the National Anthem and the invocation. The guest speaker was Ms. Melissa Gaona co-anchor of local TV station WDBJ7 who spoke about her service in the US Army.



Ms. Melissa Gaona co-anchor of local TV station
WDBJ7 who spoke about her service in the US
Army.



Veterans and guests in attendance at the Memorial Day Celebration at the
Veterans hospital auditorium

Cont'd. on Page 24 “ Memorial Day Celebration 26 May 2025

”
Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins were presented to veterans present who had not previously been recognized for their service their service during the Vietnam era as a lasting memento of the Nation's thanks.



Guests then moved to the main foyer of the hospital for the unveiling of a print of a painting “**Purple Heart**”, part of the Vietnam Combat Art Program. The assembly then moved outdoors for the Memorial Wreath Laying at the Main Entrance Garden.



MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERY
26 MAY 2025

On Monday 26 May 2025 Southwest Virginia Chapter members participated in the annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia made possible due to an ongoing partnership between DVS and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery Volunteers including: The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the Celanese Corporation, the Dublin Fire Department, the Dublin Lions Club, the Dublin Police Department, the NRV Community Services , the Pulaski County Parks & Recreation Department, the Pulaski County Public Safety Department , the Pulaski County Sheriff 's Department, the Radford University, the United Auto Workers Local 2069, and the Volunteers Woodman Life Chapter 14.

Southwest Virginia Chapter President Gary Powers, USN (Ret) was the Master of Ceremonies. The keynote speaker was LTC Adrien G. Humphreys, Commander, Radford Army Ammunition Plant . The program included:

- Motorcycle Rider Entrance.....Motorcycle Riders from Various Organizations
- Program Commences..... Andrew Shields Meeks Bagpipe |
- Master of Ceremonies.....Gary Powers, CAPT, USN (Ret)
- Presentation & Posting of the Colors.....Roanoke Composite Squadron Civil Air Patrol
- National Anthem..... Rodney Christman, Soloist
- Pledge of Allegiance..... Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery Ambassadors
- Invocation.....Rodney Christman Pastor, Endless Possibilities Church, Galax
- Welcome..... Debbie Lyons, Mayor, Town of Dublin
- Keynote Remarks..... Adrien Humphreys, Lieutenant Colonel, USA, Commander, Radford Army Ammunition Plant
- Moment of Silence in Honor of Gold Star FamiliesCAPT Gary Powers, USN, (Ret)
- Placing Wreaths...Placing wreaths symbolizes our national commitment to respect and honor the memories of our fallen heroes and sacrifices they made to defend our freedoms
- Rifle Salute.....Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery Honor Guard
- Taps.....Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery Honor Guard
- Amazing Grace..... Andrew Shields Meeks



Master of Ceremonies Southwest Virginia Chapter President CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)



Color Guard Roanoke Composite Squadron Civil Air Patrol

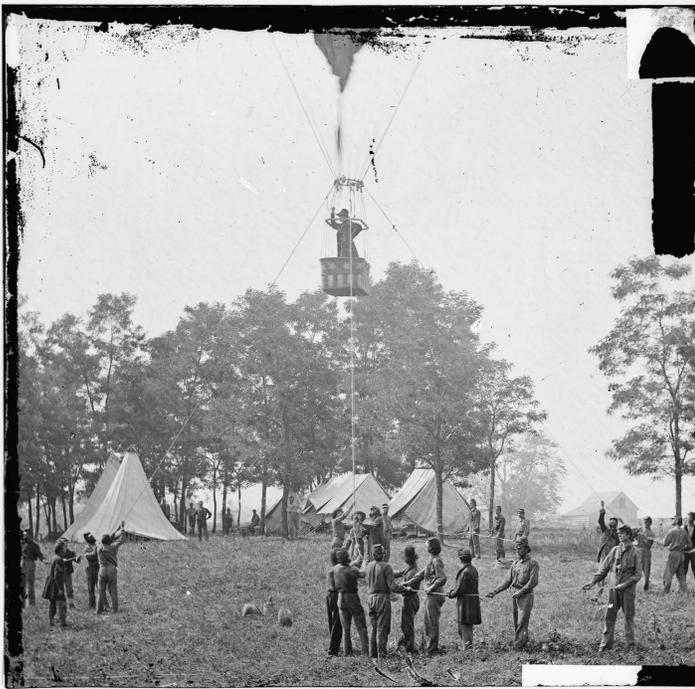


Keynote Speaker - Adrien Humphreys, Lieutenant Colonel, USA
Commander, Radford Army Ammunition Plant

ABRAHAM LINCOLN APPROVED A BALLOON CORPUS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

In 1861, shortly after the start of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln authorized the creation of an aerial surveillance organization known as the Union Army Balloon Corps. Before the war, balloonists were usually carnival performers, but that all changed thanks to aeronaut Thaddeus S.C. Lowe. On July 11, 1861, Lowe was invited to demonstrate his ballooning skills for the president, who hoped to use hot-air balloons for aerial reconnaissance missions in the war.

During his demonstration, Lowe ascended 500 feet into the air and relayed a telegraph about what he saw to Lincoln's staff. After the successful showcase, Lincoln offered Lowe the role of chief aeronaut in the Balloon Corps, which formally began operations that October. The purpose was to gather intelligence about the Confederate Army's location and relay it to Union troops on the ground, who could then fire on the army from a great distance without even seeing the enemy. The fleet grew to include seven balloons, some of which were tethered to barges in the Potomac River that effectively served as early precursors to the modern aircraft carrier. Though the surveillance proved strategically beneficial, many Union officers, including General George B. McClellan, were concerned about the safety of the balloons. Lowe ultimately resigned his post on May 7, 1863, and the Balloon Corps were dissolved shortly thereafter.



Thaddeus S.C. Lowe of the Union army's Balloon Corps observing battle from the balloon *Intrepid* during the Peninsular Campaign of the American Civil War, May 1862.



Union army Balloon Corps ground crew filling the balloon *Intrepid* at Fair Oaks, Virginia, May 1862, during the American Civil War.

Balloon Corps, civilian aeronautical unit (1861–63) created during the American Civil War to provide aerial surveillance of Confederate troops for the Union army. Balloons supported Union campaigns from ground stations and naval vessels in the Peninsular Campaign, the capture of Island Number Ten, the Savannah Campaign, and the Battle of Chancellorsville. Most balloonists before 1861 made their living as carnival performers and itinerant “professors” of chemistry. Both Thaddeus S.C. Lowe of New Hampshire and John La Mountain of New York combined entertainment with long-distance test flights. Both men also employed balloons as aerial observation platforms for the Union army.

Aeronauts used their balloons in free flights and in tethered ascents. Free flights proved difficult because wind direction varied according to altitude. Aeronauts guided their balloons upward by emptying 100-pound (45-kg) sandbags carried as ballast, and they descended by venting hydrogen from the envelope (the actual balloon portion of the lighter-than-air craft) and then riding the easterly or westerly air currents.

Cont'd. on Page 29 “**Balloon Corps During The Civil War**”

Continued from Page 28 “Balloon Corps During The Civil War”

That method of navigation proved hazardous on several occasions when balloonists drifted into Confederate-occupied territory in Virginia. On April 19–20, 1861, Lowe undertook an experimental night flight from Cincinnati, Ohio, that had no military objective and was intended to land in the vicinity of Chesapeake Bay. Instead, he landed in South Carolina only a week after the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, causing him to make his way back to Cincinnati by wagon, train, and steamboat. The Balloon Corps generally conducted only tethered ascents rising to 500 feet (150 metres), which afforded a 15-mile (24-km) range of vision, depending on the terrain. Tethered ascents kept the balloon generally stationary but required ground crews of up to 30 soldiers to quickly raise and lower the balloon, which was threatened by Confederate artillery and sharpshooter fire on every launch and descent. Tethered ascents improved the aeronauts’ observations but also immediately gave away the position of the ground station—usually collocated with the division or corps headquarters to expedite the transmission of observations. Thus, Confederate bombardment often fell on the headquarters as well.

Lowe began operations in Washington, D.C., where he demonstrated the balloon’s military applicability for U.S. Pres. Abraham Lincoln, whereas La Mountain worked at Fort Monroe, Virginia, observing Confederate activity in the summer of 1861. La Mountain’s tethered balloon ascent from the steam-powered gunboat *Fanny* on August 3, 1861, is considered by many scholars to be the first flight from a precursor of the aircraft carrier. His final vessel-launched ascent was from the *Adriatic* on August 10. Lowe followed by ascending from the first boat modified for balloon operations, the *George Washington Parke Custis*, on November 11, 1861. The *Custis* supported balloon operations along the Potomac River and accompanied the army during the Peninsular Campaign.



Union army Balloon Corps ground crew working on aeronaut Thaddeus S.C. Lowe's balloon near Gaines Mill, Virginia, during the American Civil War, June 1, 1862; photograph by Mathew Brady.

Lowe and his assistant aeronauts flew the balloons *Intrepid*, *Constitution*, and *Washington* during the Peninsular Campaign with the Army of the Potomac with mixed results. Lowe’s ascents at Yorktown could not shake Union Gen. George McClellan’s mistaken conviction that Confederate forces there outnumbered his own or inspire him to attack the weakly defended Yorktown lines. The Balloon Corps’s most famous and controversial contribution was Lowe’s warning of an impending Confederate attack against the Union III Corps at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862. Lowe contracted malaria shortly after that battle.

The Balloon Corps made no significant intelligence contributions to the Seven Days’ Battles (June 25–July 1) and deployed to Harrison’s Landing, on the James River, with the remainder of the Army of the Potomac. The aeronauts operated from naval vessels along the James River in July 1862 but did not take part in the Battle of Antietam in September.

Lowe’s assistant aeronaut John Starkweather observed Confederate positions around Savannah, Georgia, after the capture of Fort Pulaski on April 15, 1862. McClellan had assigned aeronaut John Steiner and the balloon *Eagle* to Gen. John Pope’s Army of the Mississippi in February 1862, but Pope ignored them. In March and April 1862, however, Flag Officer Andrew Foote employed Steiner and the *Eagle* as an aloft artillery-spotting platform against Confederate positions on the Mississippi River’s Island Number

Ten (about 55 miles [88 km] below Cairo, Illinois). The officer with whom Steiner ascended recommended firing corrections to the mortar boats in Foote’s flotilla. Aided by the corrections, the naval mortars wrecked many Confederate guns, allowing Pope’s forces to capture New Madrid, Missouri, and the island on April 7, 1862, but Foote made no mention of Steiner’s contribution in his official report after the battle.

Cont’d. on Page 30 “Balloon Corps During The Civil War”

Continued from Page 27 “Balloon Corps During The Civil War”

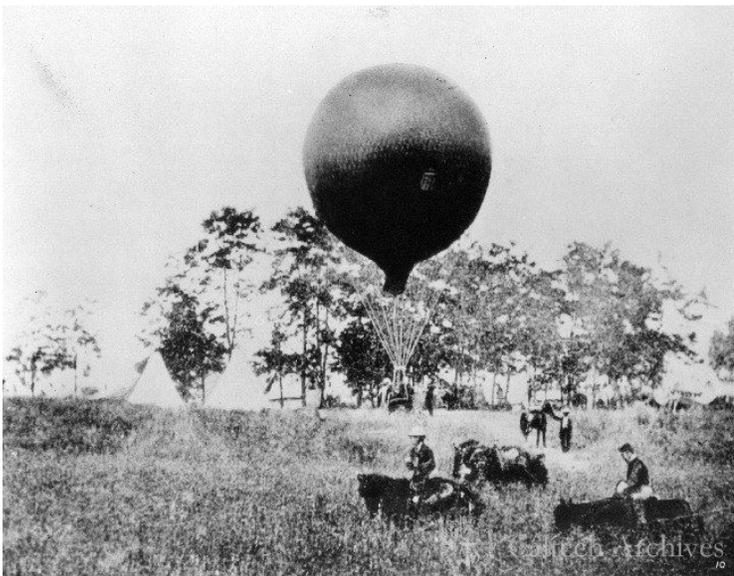
Balloons operated in Falmouth, Virginia, supporting Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside’s operations before the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, but, attempting to lull into complacency the Confederates positioned across the river, Burnside ordered the balloons grounded for several days right before the battle, thus possibly depriving himself of observations of Confederate troop movements that might have proved invaluable in the conflict. Union balloons operated for the last time during the Battle of Chancellorsville (May 1–5, 1863); however, fog and winds combined to minimize the balloons’ flights and usefulness as observation platforms.

Both Lowe and La Mountain used portable hydrogen generators to inflate their balloons. Whereas La Mountain built his own generator, Lowe obtained the support of the Washington Navy Yard to construct large portable hydrogen generators that fit on a standard army wagon. That portable system generated hydrogen through the careful mixing of iron shavings and sulfuric acid inside a copper-lined box and pumped it into the silk envelope through a series of tubes and coolers.

Conservative generals proved reluctant to employ the balloons. They dismissed the balloons as ridiculous carnival attractions and the aeronauts as obnoxious charlatans. Commanders remained comfortable with long-established methods of intelligence collection through scouts, spies, prisoners, and deserters. It is true that the aeronauts’ intelligence reports remained frustratingly vague throughout the war and irritated battlefield commanders. Reports drafted by officers who had traveled aloft with them tended to be more precise, but commanders rarely assigned their officers to balloon duty. Those conditions, combined with

Lowe’s acrimonious relationship with his final staff supervisor, Capt. Cyrus B. Comstock, led to Lowe’s resignation from the army on May 7, 1863.

The aeronauts’ ability to observe Confederate positions and support Union artillery fire was an important accomplishment. However, the Balloon Corps had no decisive operations, and it faced indifference (and, in some cases, hostility) to the new technology of flight. It also suffered from ineffective intelligence reporting and individual personality conflicts. As a result, the Balloon Corps was dissolved in May 1863.



Surviving Spouse Corner: Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter

(This article originally appeared in MOAA's Council and Chapter News update, which is delivered monthly in [The MOAA Newsletter](#). Read the latest Council and Chapter News [here](#).)

By [Micki Costello](#), Surviving Spouse Advisory Council



MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter is an affinity group whose members can share information and ideas in a virtual environment with others seeking to work together adjusting to a new "normal."

The Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter meets quarterly through a teleconference. Eventually, we hope to have all 50 states represented in our membership. There are no dues, and this chapter is intended to be an enhancement to, not take the place of, geographic chapters. Several weeks in advance of each meeting, an email is sent to members alerting them to the date and time of the gathering; a follow-on email with instructions for joining the free telephone conference is sent several days prior to each meeting. The call is kept to about one hour, and topics for discussion have included SBP-DIC offset updates, financial discussions, and information from MOAA national as well as other items of interest.

We recognize everyone has busy lives; therefore, members participate to the extent they are able. While the chapter is geared toward surviving spouses and surviving spouse liaisons, any MOAA spouse is welcome for membership. MOAA's mantra "Never Stop Serving" is espoused to make a difference locally, statewide, and nationally.

For additional information or to join MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter, email mssvc02@gmail.com. An [online application](#) also is available.

MOAA Charities

Chapter members are encouraged to consider the following MOAA Charities in your planned giving.

- Support MOAA Charities by shopping with Amazon Smile
- Consider a bequest to The MOAA Foundation
- Consider a bequest to the MOAA Scholarship Fund
- Contributing cash and securities to MOAA Charities
- Setting up a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)
- Establishing a Designated Scholarship
- How Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs) can provide income for life
- Donating via an IRA Charitable Rollover/Qualified Charitable Distribution

DO YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA undertakes annual MOAA Medal awards presented to distinguished JROTC Cadets/Midshipmen in 14 area high schools and the four ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University? Did you know that these awards recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for leadership while a member of their respective JROTC/ ROTC Programs? These JROTC/ ROTC awards consist of a MOAA Medal Award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the MOAA Medal Awards, presentation folders and mailing costs.

Did you also know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA has established two Leadership Awards presented to ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University during each academic year? Recipients are to be juniors or who will be starting their final year in the coming fall of the academic year. The Leadership Awards were established to recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership while a member of the Virginia Tech and Radford University ROTC Programs. The two Leadership Awards each carry a \$500 monetary award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the two Leadership Awards, presentation folders and the two \$500 monetary awards.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA was a strong supporter of the Military Family Support Center. However, the Military Family Support Center has gone out of operation. The Southwest Virginia Chapter looked into new options to restart the mission to identify and provide for the morale, welfare, and informational needs of military families (of all branches and components) who reside outside of the established support networks. During 2024 the chapter signed a partnership agreement with VFF to be able to provide food assistance in the form of credit cards to needy military families. In 2024 the SWVC received a \$2,000 grant from MOAA and \$250 in personal donations to support the VFF program.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA also supports the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia each year providing a MOAA Mobile Vehicle and with the Christmas Wreath Laying Program providing and placing wreaths on veterans' grave sites. The Chapter funded and dedicated a "Memorial Bench" at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia in honor of LTC James "Pat" Green, USA (Ret) who was the person most responsible for getting the cemetery located at Dublin, Virginia.

These programs are extremely important for the SWVC to continue as the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, to be an advocate for a strong national defense, to be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and to be a source of social fellowship for our members. The chapter has no regular financial stream except for chapter dues or donations. During the coming year we will be asking for your personal and financial support of our outreach programs and our monthly membership meetings.



MOAA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 119TH CONGRESS

As the legislative slate is wiped clean for the 119th Congress, grassroots support becomes even more vital to achieving MOAA's advocacy objectives. MOAA needs your help to keep momentum for existing priorities such as the Major Richard Star Act, which would benefit tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans and had the support of two-thirds of Congress at the end of last session. We also need your work on behalf of new objectives and emergent issues, often via immediate action to keep up with the stop-and-go pace of legislation. To keep connected, ensure you are signed up for [The MOAA Newsletter](#) and [register as an advocate](#) at our Legislative Action Center.

Here is a look at MOAA's priorities, in support of the 50th anniversary of our all-volunteer force and to address the challenges facing our uniformed community. Note: Our advocacy team remains active on many other issues not listed here; our priorities will be shaped throughout the year depending on concurrent successes or emerging issues that warrant an all-hands approach. Additionally, we share many interests with The Military Coalition and other stakeholder groups, and leverage those relationships to expand our reach on Capitol Hill.

- Compensation and Service-Earned Benefits
- Military Housing
- Health Care for Currently Serving and Retirees
- Health Care and Benefits for Veterans
- Service Families
- Survivors
- Guard and Reserve

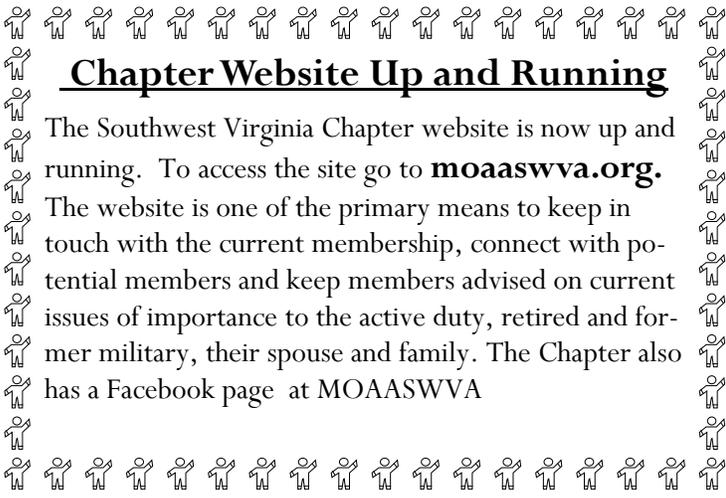
As protecting health care and service-earned benefits is a challenge, MOAA will press forward to engage Congress to shape outcomes in these vital areas. There are steep hills before us. Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$30 trillion and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion. Because of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be ready to reach out to your legislators and keep that engagement going as necessary to make sure your voice is heard. **Details at <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2024-news-articles/advocacy/tricare-for-life,-star-act,-housing-help-will-anchor-moaas-spring-advocacy-push/>**

VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS/JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL 2025 INITIATIVES (Adopted at the September and December 2024 JLC meetings)

- JLC Initiative 2025-01 - Verification of Veteran Status – Arrest, Jails, and Prison
- JLC Initiative 2025-02 - Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans
- JLC Initiative 2025-03 - Virginia National Guard Tuition
- JLC Initiative 2025-04 - Suffolk State Veterans Cemetery Expansion
- JLC Initiative 2025-05 - Women Veterans Day

A summary of the approved 2025 JLC Initiatives Policy papers for each initiative can be accessed on the JLC webpage at: <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2>





Chapter Website Up and Running

The Southwest Virginia Chapter website is now up and running. To access the site go to **moaaswva.org**. The website is one of the primary means to keep in touch with the current membership, connect with potential members and keep members advised on current issues of importance to the active duty, retired and former military, their spouse and family. The Chapter also has a Facebook page at MOAASWVA

WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON AT MOAA?

- Legislative Accomplishments?
- Legislative TAKE ACTION Center?
- Publications and Reports?
- Military Officer Magazine?
- Newsletters?

Log on to MOAA.org

**MOAA Southwest Virginia Chapter
P.O. Box 3090
Roanoke, VA 24015-1090
Email: info@moaaswva.org
Webpage: www.moaaswva.org
Facebook: MOAA SWVA**

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC) of MOAA are a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and their surviving spouses.

UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

A REMINDER THAT A GREAT LUNCH IS PROVIDED AT EACH MEMBERSHIP MEETING

18 September 2025. Board of Directors meeting. Program by Dr. Brian K. Unwin, MD, Chief of Geriatrics & Palliative Medicine, Carilion on **“The Cost of Aging”** and/or **“The Cost of Not Aging.”**

16 October 2025. Program by Major General William Seely III, USMC (Ret), Commandant, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets on the **“Status of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets”**.

20 November 2025. Board of Directors meeting. Program by Mr. Jeff Vick on **“The Peoples Republic of China's Military-Civil Fusion Threat”**

18 December 2025. Board of Directors meeting. Program by MOAA National representative for installation of Officers and Board of Directors for the year 2026 and provide an update on MOAA issues, the PACT Act, NDAA for 2026.

Other Programs Being Considered:

Ms. Bethany Butcher. **“The New Mercy Care Center Foundation”**. **A Safari to Kenya and Tanzania and making a difference in the lives of children in Africa.**

Mr. Larry Johnson, CAPT USA (former), Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot on **“Helicopters In The Vietnam War—A Personal Perspective”**.

CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) on **“The Role of Naval Intelligence During the Cold War”**.



**CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP
as of 30 June 2025**

Regular Members 73
 Surviving Spouses 6
 Total Members 79
 Talk to a fellow officer about joining the Southwest Virginia Chapter!

JOIN THE CHAPTER

Looking to join the Southwest Virginia Chapter? Want more information on how to join and become involved? Check us out on the chapter website at moaswva.org or on face book at [moaswva](https://www.facebook.com/moaswva) then Contact COL Bob Brown, USA (Ret), Chapter Membership Chair at (540) 904-2810 or email at rbbrown68@gmail.com.



**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER - ENROLLMENT/RENEWAL FORM**

Name (First ,Middle, Last, Rank) _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____
 Branch of Service _____ Retired _____ Active Duty _____ NG _____ Former Officer _____
 Date of Birth _____ Spouse Name _____ MOAA Membership ID No. _____

Annual Chapter Dues are \$30.00. Widows (ers) dues are \$15.00. Dues for those entering MOAA between 1 July and 31 December are \$20.00. Please mail dues payment to: **MOAA, Southwest Virginia Chapter, P.O. Box 3090, Roanoke, VA 24015-1090**

Note: The Chapter Newsletter *The Communique* is published quarterly and sent to the membership by email. Printed copies will be provided upon request. The next issue will be published at the end of September 2025.

Featured in This Issuer
 Presidents Corner
 "Taps," The Distinctive Bugle Melody Played at U.S. Military Funerals and Memorials.
 "The Ghost Army"
 New Survivor Benefit Plan Payment Setup Coming Soon for Some Retirees
 Abraham Lincoln Approved a Balloon Corps During The Civil War
 Surviving Spouse Corner: Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter

Bring a fellow officer and their spouse to our next meeting.



NEVER STOP SERVING!



Military Officers Association of America
 Southwest Virginia Chapter
 P.O. Box 3090
 Roanoke, VA 24015-1090

