

## Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On

By Rachel Carnell, A Strategic Assessment Memo (SAM) published by the Global Ideas Center in Berlin on the Globalist February 23, 2026

**Was the American revolution really the most important event in history since the birth of Christ?**

With the United States gearing up for the 250th anniversary of its founding revolution this year, historians are marking the moment. Most prominently to date, the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns produced “**The American Revolution**,” a 12-hour series that he hopes will help a polarized United States find common ground.

Burns’ beautifully crafted television documentary emphasizes the ideas of liberty that drew the disparate 13 colonies together to resist British rule. As Burns explained in a November appearance with Stephen Colbert, for anyone, regardless of their politics, “**understanding the story of us helps to put you back together again.**”

**The most important event in history since the birth of Christ?**

In his conversation with Colbert, Burns leaned into American exceptionalism. He described the American Revolution, in his view, as “**the most important event in history since the birth of Christ . . . the beginning of the time when human beings were no longer subjects but citizens.**” While that view is certainly not shared universally around the globe, Burns’ motivation is clear: he hopes his work may inspire American citizens to find shared meaning in their history.

**Beyond American exceptionalism**

However, American exceptionalism is not the only lens through which to view the Revolution of 1776. Several important books published over the last year offer broader historical contexts for the American origin story. In “**Patriots Before Revolution: The Rise of Party Politics in the British Atlantic, 1714-1763**,” University of Alabama historian Amy Watson locates the origins of the American Revolution in the English and Scottish patriot Whig movements. They arose in opposition to excise taxes on the British population proposed by Prime Minister Robert Walpole in the 1730s. |

**In the footsteps of these British opposition politicians at the time**

The American Patriots followed in the footsteps of these British opposition Whigs (known as “Patriots”) in their organizing strategies and their deft deployment of the press. Watson reminds us, moreover, that this transatlantic opposition movement was not merely anti-excise but focused on a shared political vision that was “militant, expansionist, confederal and free.” This movement spoke the language of liberty but was often pro-slavery, pro-war and in favor of Westward expansion into Native American lands.

**The constraints on monarchical power**

Stanford historian Dan Edelstein takes an even deeper historical dive in his book titled “**The Revolution to Come: A History of an Idea from Thucydides to Lenin.**”

*Continued on Page 3 “Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On”*

## President’s Corner



Let me begin by telling you a little about myself. I am a native of Washington, D.C., and I graduated from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1969, where I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army. Thereafter, I earned my Juris Doctor (1972) and Master of Laws in Government Contracts (1986) from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

After completing active duty, I joined the Army Reserves and retired in 1998 as a Lieutenant Colonel. For almost 15 years as a reservist, I served with the Military Traffic Management Command (now the United States Transportation Command) in Bayonne, NJ, and in Sunny Point, NC, where I was assigned as a contracting officer.

The Command's role was to partner with the commercial transportation industry as the coordinating link for DOD surface transportation requirements. Our military organization supplied Europe and the Middle East with everything from guns to butter. In essence, we worked with local labor unions to load and unload

Presidents Corner Cont'd on page 2

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**Presidents Corner** Cont'd from page 1

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ships. From 1992 to 1998, I served on a three-judge appellate court-martial panel, adjudicating appeals from Army reservists.

In my civilian career, I was appointed to the federal administrative judiciary in 1990 and served as a judge for 25 years before retiring from the bench in 2015. Before that appointment, I served as General Counsel of the Benefits Review Board of the United States Department of Labor, and I practiced law at private firms in Washington, DC, and Phoenix, AZ.

I have served on our Chapter's Board of Directors since 2015. Before serving as President, I held the roles of First Vice President, Awards Chair, and Legislative Chair.

As President, my focus will be on three key areas: expanding our Chapter's membership, identifying new leadership, and creating more opportunities for our members.

The year 2026 is a special year for our Nation—the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone offers us an opportunity to pause and reflect on our Nation's history, honor the contributions of these remarkable patriots, and look ahead to chart America's future on the world stage.

Our Nation was created as an experiment in representative government, based on the premise that it would be bound not by monarchy but by a commitment to a novel set of values, including liberty, equality, self-government, and certain inalienable rights. Our Nation has remained steadfast to these principles ever since.

The Southwest Virginia Chapter plans to mark the 250th anniversary of our founding at our monthly meetings, featuring programs and information about the American Revolution, with a special focus on events that occurred here in Southwest and Central Virginia. Please join us!

If I can be of any help to you or if you would like to learn more about our Chapter or our monthly programs, please feel free to contact me at Habermanor@aol.com.

Robert S. Habermann, LTC USA (Ret)

**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* **“Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On”**

In Edelstein’s view, the American Revolution followed the playbook of 17th-century British revolutions that emphasized the Greek historian Polybius’s belief in **“the well-balanced constitution.”** In such a regime, the monarch’s power was held in check by other governmental powers — in the case of England, that of Parliament. The constraints on monarchical power following the English Revolution of the 1640s and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 shaped the American founders’ belief in checks and balances to create “a more perfect Union.” In 1787, the founders created a constitution designed to prevent future **“disunion.”**

**Preventing a future “disunion”**

A vital feature of the American Constitution is Article V, which allows for amendments that facilitate change. Key amendments enacted in the wake of the American Civil War in the mid-19th century and the Civil Rights movements in the mid-20th century show the power of amendment to promote progress without revolution.

But as Harvard historian Jill Lepore points out, **“the constitution has not been meaningfully amended since 1971,”** given the difficulty of achieving the necessary two-thirds majority in Congress and ratification by three-quarters of the fifty states. In **“We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution,”** she warns: **“A constitution too easily amended leads to chaos. But a constitution too difficult to amend leads to chaos too.”** Lepore wonders **“whether the Constitution can endure”** without the plausible possibility for future amendments.

**France’s new conception of revolution**

While the Constitutional Convention of 1787 further solidified Americans’ commitment to avoiding disunion, two years later, the French Revolution launched with what Edelstein describes as a new conception of revolution.

Rather than being based on the classical playbook described by Polybius, the French Revolution, and subsequent ones around the globe, trusted in the Enlightenment ideal “that public opinion, when properly guided, would converge on the correct answer.” This view, however, “faced a serious test in 1789,” when different factions of French revolutionaries proposed different forms of government.

**Trusting public opinion.**

As Edelstein explains, **“These divisions among revolutionaries were doubly problematic. From an Enlightenment perspective, they were unforeseen. Progress was supposed to bring consensus. The only logical explanation, for each group, was that the others were wrong.”**

Punishing or executing those with dissenting views became part of modern revolutionary practice, a practice that also often included installing a dictator. As Edelstein explains, **“The modern version of history, when acted upon in a revolution, does not inevitably lead to political terror, but it predisposes revolutionary actors to use it.”**

Even as Edelstein explores the revolutionary dictatorships that arose around the globe in the 19th and 20th centuries, he identifies **“the greatest revolutionary threat today”** as the **“phenomenon of democratic backsliding”** where a **“regime shifts seamlessly from democracy to dictatorship.”**

**Conclusion**

In much the same way that Lepore identifies the threat to democracy in our gradually declining ability to amend the Constitution, Edelstein is concerned about an imperceptible and unnoticed backsliding in any constitutional democracy. **“Our biggest fear,”** he concludes, **“should be that no one even notices the revolution to come.”**

The backsliding into dictatorship is something the American founders themselves anticipated. As Ken Burns documents in *The American Revolution*, the founders crafted the delicate system of checks and balances in our Constitution because **“they feared that a demagogue might incite citizens into betraying the American experiment.”**

For those of us who value the ideals that the American experiment represented, these lessons from revolutionary history remind us that we must stay vigilant to preserve them.

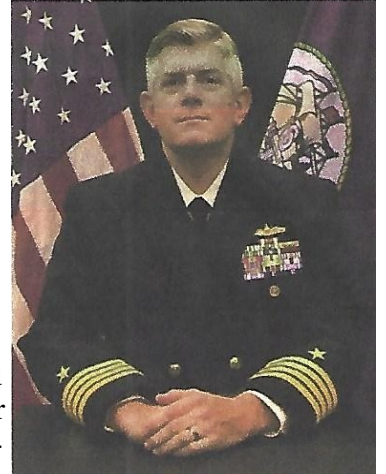


# WELCOME

## **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 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 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 at U.S. Fleet Forces Command, 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 two grandchildren. He and his wife Aradia reside in Vinton, Virginia. Since retiring, he spends his time supporting our nation's veterans, playing with his grandchildren, and entrepreneurial pursuits.



**The New Mercy Care Center Foundation**  
**A Safari to Kenya and Tanzania and Making a Difference in the Lives of Children in Africa.**

On Thursday 15 January 2026 Bethany and Charlie Butcher presented a program on “The New Mercy Care Center Foundation; A Safari to Kenya and Tanzania and making a difference in the lives of children in Africa.”. The Mercy Care Center Foundation is a US-based non-profit focused on raising funds to feed and educate children in the Mathare Valley slums of Kenya, providing a safe environment and Christian teaching through the New Mercy Care Centre Academy.



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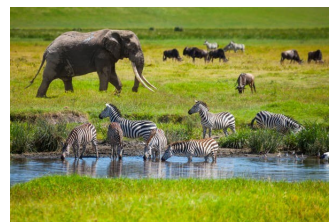
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THE STUDENTS

THE TEACHERS

THE MATHARE VALLEY





Chapter President LTC Robert Habermann presents Bethany and Charlie Butcher with the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA “Cup” in appreciation of their engaging and insightful presentation, “The Mercy Care Center Foundation (MCCF): A Safari to Kenya and Tanzania—Making a Difference in the Lives of Children in Africa.”

The sharing of memories from their trips and their work with our membership, along with their stories and experiences, brought the mission of the Mercy Care Center Foundation vividly to life and underscored the meaningful impact of their work.

Thank you for sharing your time, your stories, and your passion for MCCF. Your presentation was highly informative, thought-provoking, and deeply appreciated by all in attendance.

## **DO YOU KNOW YOUR SERVICE BIRTHDAY?**

### **U.S. Army – June 14, 1775**

The Army is the nation's oldest military branch, established on June 14, 1775 — a year before the Declaration of Independence. The Continental Congress created the Continental Army to coordinate the military efforts of the colonies against Great Britain during the Revolutionary War. Today, the Army celebrates its birthday with ceremonies, historical displays, and (of course) cake. As of 2025, the Army is 250 years old.

### **U.S. Navy – October 13, 1775**

Just months after the Army was formed, the Continental Congress authorized the purchase of ships to disrupt British supply lines — marking October 13, 1775, as the Navy's official birthday. Though the Navy was disbanded after the Revolution, it was reestablished in 1794. The modern Navy celebrates with fleet-wide observances, balls, and heritage events. In 2025, the Navy turns 250 years old.

### **U.S. Marine Corps – November 10, 1775**

Formed at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia (**yes, a real tavern**), the Continental Marines were established on November 10, 1775, to serve as naval infantry. The date was restored as the official birthday in 1921 by Marine Corps Order No. 47. Marines worldwide honor it with a traditional cake-cutting ceremony, reading of the 1921 order, and a birthday message from the Commandant. In 2025, the Corps celebrates 250 years.

### **U.S. Air Force – September 18, 1947**

While air power existed before World War II, it wasn't until the National Security Act of 1947 that the U.S. Air Force became its own branch, separating from the Army Air Forces. The Air Force celebrates September 18 with base events, flyovers, and heritage displays. In 2025, the youngest of the "traditional" armed services turns 78 years old.

### **U.S. Coast Guard – August 4, 1790**

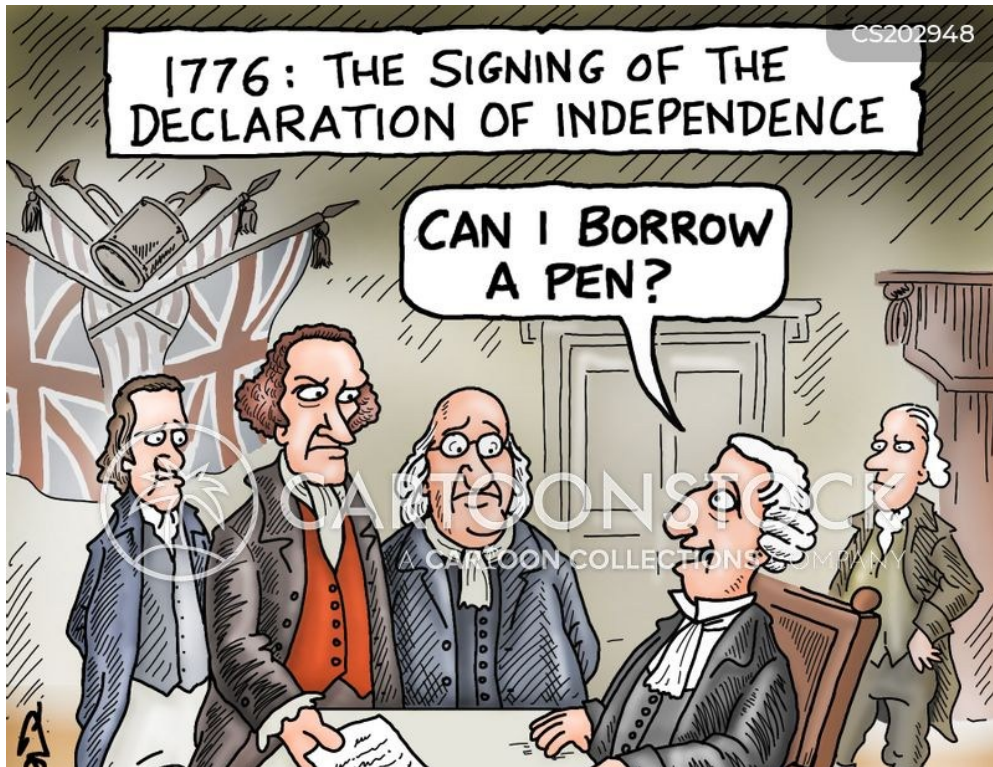
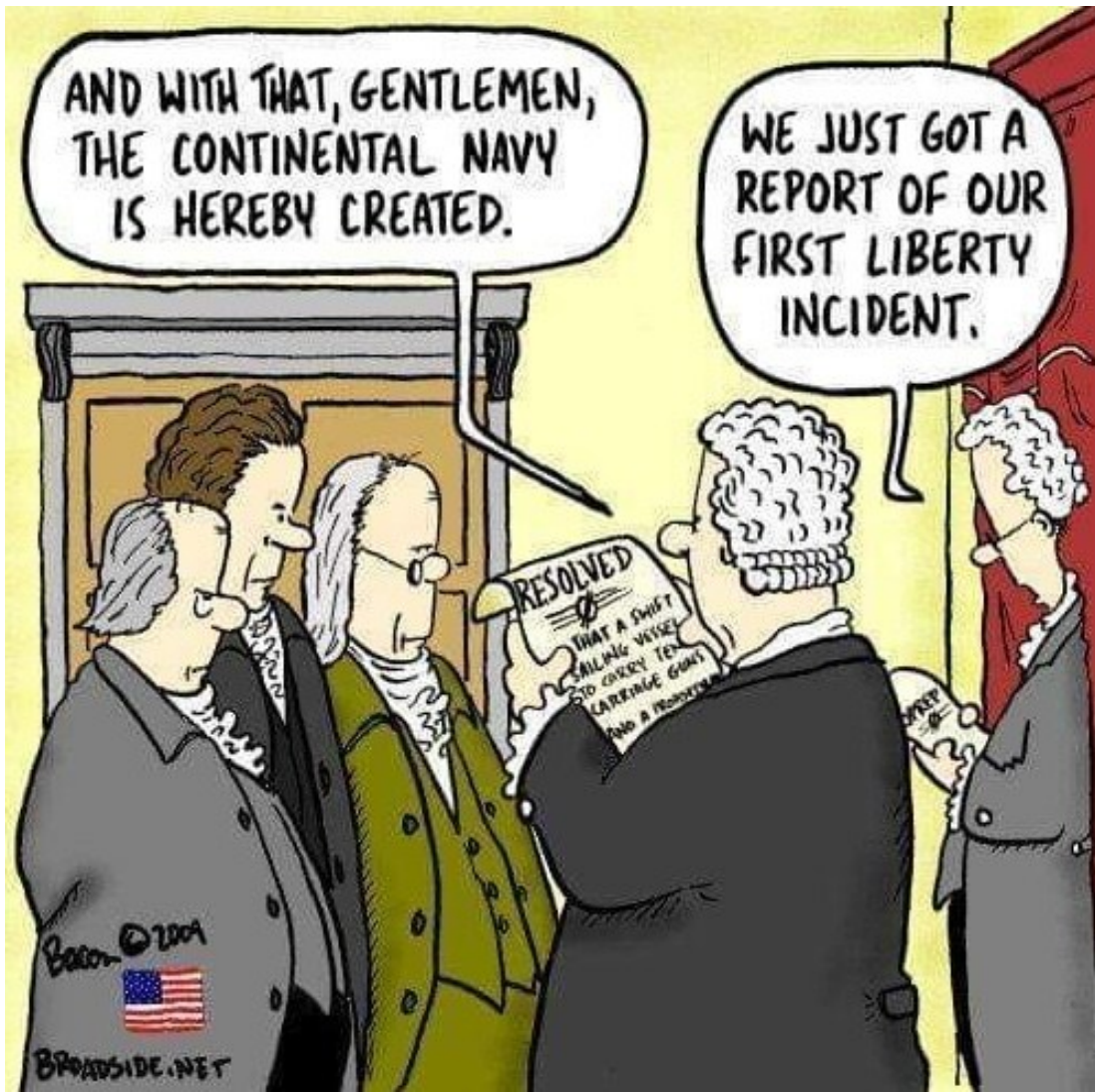
The Coast Guard traces its roots to the Revenue Cutter Service, established on August 4, 1790, by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton to enforce tariffs and prevent smuggling. Over time, it merged with the U.S. Life-Saving Service to become today's Coast Guard — a unique organization that serves both military and law enforcement roles. As of 2025, the Coast Guard is 235 years old.

### **U.S. Space Force – December 20, 2019**

The newest branch of the U.S. Armed Forces was established on December 20, 2019, when the National Defense Authorization Act was signed into law. The Space Force organizes, trains, and equips forces to protect U.S. interests in space. Its birthday is celebrated with ceremonies and STEM outreach events. In 2025, the Space Force turns 6 years old.

### **U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps – January 4, 1889**

Though its origins go back to 1798's Marine Hospital Service, the Commissioned Corps was formally established on January 4, 1889, as a uniformed service dedicated to public health. Officers serve in various roles, including health, science, and engineering, across the nation and abroad, often alongside other armed services during emergencies. In 2025, the USPHS Commissioned Corps will be 136 years old.



**Dental & Vision Benefits for Surviving Spouses**

Surviving spouses of military service members have different dental and vision coverage options depending on the sponsor’s status at the time of death. If the sponsor dies while on active duty, the Department of Defense covers 100% of the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) premium for the surviving spouse and eligible dependents for up to three years. Vision coverage is not included in this benefit but can be obtained separately through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) at the survivor’s expense.

After the three-year period—or in cases where the sponsor was retired or not on active duty at the time of death—surviving spouses may enroll in FEDVIP dental and vision plans, paying the full premiums. FEDVIP offers multiple carriers and coverage levels, allowing survivors to choose plans that best meet their needs. Enrollment is available during the annual Federal Benefits

**Dental & Vision Benefits for Surviving Spouses**

| <b>Sponsor Status at Time of Death</b>           | <b>Dental Coverage</b>       | <b>Vision Coverage</b> | <b>Who Pays Premiums?</b>   |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Active Duty<br>(less than 3 years since death)   | TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) | FEDVIP vision plans    | DoD pays 100% of dental premiums; survivor pays for vision if elected |
| Active Duty<br>(more than 3 years since death)   | FEDVIP dental plans          | FEDVIP vision plans    | Survivor pays premiums for both dental and vision                     |
| Retired Service Member<br>(any time after death) | FEDVIP dental plans          | FEDVIP vision plans    | Survivor pays premiums for both dental and vision                     |

**IN MEMORIAM**

Jacqueline “Jackie” F. Brown, of Roanoke, Virginia, passed away peacefully on February 28, 2026. She was the beloved wife of COL Robert “Bob” Brown, USA (Ret). Jackie was born on June 26, 1946, in Burlington, North Carolina.

# “Helicopters in The Vietnam War—A Personal Perspective”

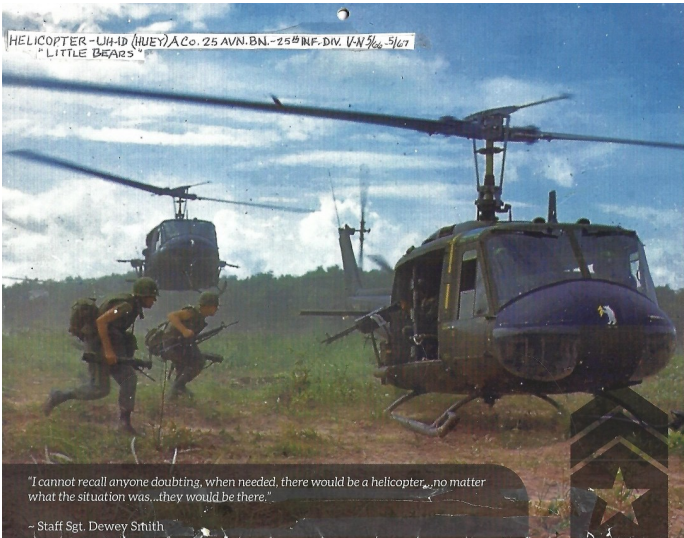
On Thursday 19 February 2026, Larry Johnson, CAPT USA (Fmr), a Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot presented a program on “Helicopters in The Vietnam War—A Personal Perspective”.



Larry Johnson is a Roanoke native and was a member of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets graduating in 1962 with a degree in Building Construction and commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He attended basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and then helicopter flight training at Fort Walters, Texas and Fort Rucker, Alabama. Arriving in Vietnam in 1966 Capt. Johnson was assigned to A Company, 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, as a helicopter pilot flying the “Huey” helicopter

The Iconic Huey Helicopter of The Vietnam War was the Bell UH-1 Iroquois, better known as the “Huey.” The Huey was the primary utility helicopter of the U.S. military. The Huey did it all from transporting personnel, the wounded and the fallen, troop insertions and extractions, delivering food and medicine, and landing and takeoff from hot landing zones (LZ’s). The Huey was a thin skinned aircraft that took a lot of punishment but always showed up for our guys on the ground. Thanks to the fearless pilots, crew chiefs and gunners, the troops on the ground knew, from that all too familiar sound, “whop-whop-whop”, that help was on the way.

Captain Johnson’s aviation unit was located at Cu Chi near the Tay Ninh combat base in III Corps North West of Saigon near the Cambodian border. From there his unit flew almost daily courier, supply, troop insertion and/or extraction and medevac missions in support of U.S, South Vietnamese and allied forces operating in the tactical area of operation, (TAOR).



Capt. Johnson in front of unit designation board



Capt. Johnson (left) with his crew chief and gunner

The assigned missions were all carried out over hostile territory in support of counterinsurgency operations often incurring hostile fire. Captain Johnson provided several instances during his tour of duty that still bring back memories of the hazards inherent in repeated aerial flights over hostile territory. On 23 June 1966 while piloting his helicopter he received a radio call asking for medical evacuation of wounded troops. Flying to the designated pickup zone, he observed heavy enemy automatic weapon fire in and around the area. With complete disregard for his own personal safety, he flew his aircraft into the small landing zone and extracted the wounded troops. Throughout the approach, the landing and the climb out from the pickup zone, the aircraft was subjected to heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. All the while his well trained gunners returned suppressing fire on the enemy positions. For this action, under fire, which permitted the rescue of wounded soldiers, he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device.



On another mission on 18 March 1967 he was aircraft commander of a flight of seven helicopters assigned the mission of extracting the combat elements of an infantry unit from an unsecure area prior to darkness. The first three lifts were rapidly evacuated. On the fourth lift hostile fire was received from the East of the pickup zone. This required a change in approach. Immediately after departing the pickup zone on the fourth lift his helicopter was subjected to enemy fire and one aircraft was hit. While enroute for the fifth and final lift he was notified that the pickup zone was under intense enemy fire. Although the infantry unit was pinned down by intense small arms fire and automatic weapons fire, he maneuvered his aircraft into the area under heavy enemy fire minutes before darkness they were successful in extracting all the troops in the pickup zone without a casualty. For this action under fire, which successfully extracted the infantry unit without a casualty, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Then there were some other missions. On one supply mission from Tay Ninh he was requested to fly five body bags with U.S. service member remains to the morgue in Saigon. Not a word was spoken on that special mission. On another mission he was requested to fly a critically wounded service man to the hospital. Checking later he was notified that the individual had died. The medic told him, that he had died but at least he died in clean sheets.

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There were some 40,000 helicopter pilots in the Vietnam War. Captain Johnson was detailed to Saigon during the war to review the flight records of some 6,000 helicopter pilots. Shown here on the street's of Saigon.



At rest at camp at Cu Chi outside his "hooch"



A Company, 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, was designated the "Little Bears".



Inside quarters at Cu Chi near the Tay Ninh combat base in III Corps North West of Saigon near the Cambodian border.



Chapter President Bob Habermann presenting the Southwest Virginia Chapter "Cup" to Larry Johnson in appreciation for his outstanding presentation to the membership.

## THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### THE AMERICAN'S CREED

I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the people, by the people, for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states; a perfect union one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its Flag, and to defend it against all enemies - William Tyler Page.

## THE PREAMBLE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

### THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Francis Scott Key  
(verses 1 and 4)

O say can you see by the dawn's early light  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose board stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming  
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air  
Gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there.

Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand  
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power the hath made and preserved us a nation!

Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto, "In God is our Trust!"  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and home of the brave!



On Thursday 19 March 2026 the Southwest Virginia Chapter held it's monthly membership meeting at Healing Strides in Boones Mill, Virginia. **Healing Strides of VA (HSVA)** is a non-profit organization established in 1991. Their mission is to promote wellness for people facing personal challenges who can benefit from equine-assisted activities and therapies in a safe, supportive environment. Their staff is professionally licensed, certified, or trained in their respective areas of expertise to serve the community! Healing Strides proudly provides a range of equine-assisted services to individuals, families, and groups in our community. These include Therapeutic Horsemanship, Equine-Assisted Mental Health, Education and Coaching, and programs that support veterans and their families. The program was presented by Carol Young, CEO and Ashley Arney, Director of Development.



Carol Young is a lifelong horsewoman and has been the CEO of Healing Strides since 2009. She believes strongly in the power of connection and relationship--between people, horses, families, and the community. During her tenure as CEO, Carol has been a staunch advocate for supporting our military service members and their families, establishing the Veterans' Program at Healing Strides in 2011.

Ashley Arney is the Director of Development and Community Relations at Healing Strides, where she builds community partnerships and supports the programs that serve our Veterans and participants. While she doesn't have a military background herself, her husband served 22 years in the Navy, making this work deeply personal to her. She has a strong appreciation for the connection between people and animals.

*Continued from Page 15 "Healing Strides"*

Carol and Ashley provided information on the various programs offered and personal stories of individuals helped in those programs. The **Finding Your Stride Program**, 8-week equine-assisted service program that aims to support children and adolescents ages 6-17 who are living with personal challenges, which may include physical, emotional, and cognitive deficits or disabilities. This program offers participants the chance to acquire and refine supportive skills, enabling them to work towards achieving developmental milestones they may have missed.

The **Mental Health Horsemanship Program**, a mounted and/or unmounted program that is focused around building life skills and resiliency, facilitated by a licensed therapist and a Certified Riding Instructor. The **Parenting from the Barn Program**, an eight-week, ground-based Coaching Parenting Course. Each week, participants engage in a self-assessment and acquire targeted parenting skills, including setting boundaries, addressing age-appropriate behaviors, and ensuring effective communication with children. This program has yielded significant success, empowering parents to build stronger connections with their children, co-parent, and/or partner.

The **Power Tools for Living Program**, an educational program structured to address specific life skills designed to teach seven core emotional health skills that are essential for success at all ages and in all relationships, school, family, work, and community. This preventative emotional health program teaches Respect, Responsibility, Relationship Skills, Boundaries, Empathy, and Choices/Consequences.

The **Recreational Therapy Program**, a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals. These services are designed to restore, remediate, and rehabilitate a person's level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness, as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in everyday life situations. This service is provided by a nationally credentialed Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS).

The **Veterans Group Program** is focused on an innovative personal growth and well-being program that incorporates horses, which aims to address symptoms related to post-traumatic stress, depression, and the challenges of transitioning to civilian life. This program follows the Arenas For Change (ARCH) program, a global, values-driven community and training framework for professionals—coaches, therapists, and educators—that integrates horses, nature, and story-based methods to foster mental health and personal growth. It offers certifications, online courses, and in-person workshops, focusing on the "SEEN™ key-stones" framework, (Sense of Self, Empowering. Mindset, Externalizing Story, and Natural Flow) in therapeutic and facilitative contexts to help clients feel seen, heard, and transformed.



Ashley and Carol discussing the programs and answering questions as Chapter President LTC Bob Habermann looks on.



Chapter members attending the program. Posters and photos on the wall show various individuals who participated in programs at different stages of their participation.

*Continued on Page 17 "Healing Strides"*

*Continued from Page 16 "Healing Strides"*

The Bond Between Humans and Horses is amazing. Horses are known for their sensitivity and intuition, and possess a remarkable ability to mirror human emotions and respond to nonverbal cues. This unique quality forms the foundation of equine-assisted therapy and hippotherapy, where the therapeutic relationship between humans and horses serves as a catalyst for healing. Horses, as prey animals, are highly attuned to their surroundings (neuroception) and can sense fear, anxiety, or distress in humans (interoception). Through interactions with horses, individuals are encouraged to experience their emotions in a safe and supportive environment. Horses, with their nonjudgmental nature and unconditional acceptance, offer a unique platform for survivors to develop trust and assertiveness. As survivors learn to communicate effectively with horses, they often experience a newfound sense of empowerment and self-worth. Veterans struggling with PTSD have reported reduced symptoms and improved coping mechanisms after participating in equine-assisted programs. Similarly, survivors of abuse or accidents have found solace and healing through their interactions with horses. In the serene presence of these majestic creatures, individuals find solace, strength, and a renewed sense of purpose. In the dance between human and horse, healing takes flight, one hoofbeat at a time.



A video of a veteran sharing his story of how he found solace, strength and a renewed sense of purpose by participating in the equine-assisted program at Healing Strides.



Chapter member and Healing Strides volunteer LTC David King providing information on the use of horses in the military and in U.S. history



Chapter member and Healing Strides volunteer LTC David King providing information on famous horses in history owned/used by famous personalities,



Chapter member and Healing Strides volunteer LTC David King presenting awards for correct answers to a horse quiz to Chapter member CAPT Gary Powers.

Continued from Page 17 "Healing Strides"



Ashley Arney showing where program participants learn about mounting and dismounting horses.



Chapter members being briefed in the Tack room where saddles and other riding equipment is stored. Each horse has it's own Tack equipment.



Saddles and riding equipment in the Tack Room



Ashley Arney providing information and background on one of Healing Stride's horses "Icefield", also known as "Ice".



Ashley Arney and Betsy Osborne providing information and background on one of Healing Strides horses, "Avery"

Continued on Page 19 "Healing Strides"

Continued from Page 18 "Healing Strides"



Ashley Arney briefing the members in the paddock area



Chapter members listening to the presentation on Healing Strides programs.



Happy 91st Birthday COL Thomas Dalzell



Group Picture



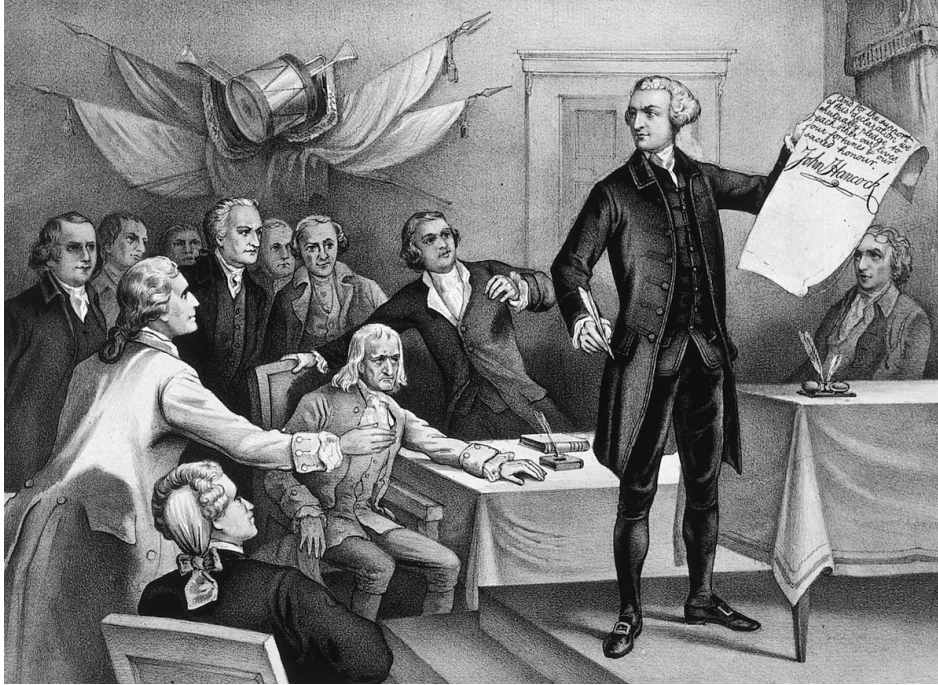
Chapter President LTC Bob Habermann presenting a check for \$250 to Healing Strides CEO Carol Young, Ashley Arney Director of Development and Community Relations and Healing Strides volunteer LTC David King.



Chapter President LTC Bob Habermann presenting the Chapter "Cup" to Healing Strides Ashley Arney, Director of Development and Community Relations and CEO Carol Young in appreciation for the excellent presentation and tour of Healing Strides and their mission.

## John Hancock: The First President of Congress Post-Independence

By Dean George, The Epoch Times 25 March 2026



**On July 4, 1776, John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress put his signature to the Declaration of Independence, watched by fellow patriots. Printed by Currier & Ives. MPI/Getty Images**

John Hancock was the first President of Congress after the country won its independence; he was arguably also its the most popular. A successful merchant and renowned American patriot, Hancock was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and he was also twice elected United States President of Congress Assembled.

Hancock operated a thriving mercantile business before he got involved in politics. He utilized his vast personal fortune for local philanthropic causes and to support groups opposing unfair British taxation policies. His willingness to defy the British made him an icon of colonists. His personal popularity is evident considering he served as a nine-term governor of his native Massachusetts. During his first term as president of Continental Congress, one of that body's order of business included the reviewing and revising of the draft of the Declaration of Independence prepared by the Committee of Five. After the bill was drafted, Hancock ensured the resolution for independence passed, hence why his name appears first on that founding document. As President of Congress at that time, it could be said that John Hancock was the country's first president after America declared its independence.



Engraved portraits of the signers of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, including John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, and two future presidents; Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, on July 4th 1776. Kean Collection/Archive Photos/Getty Images

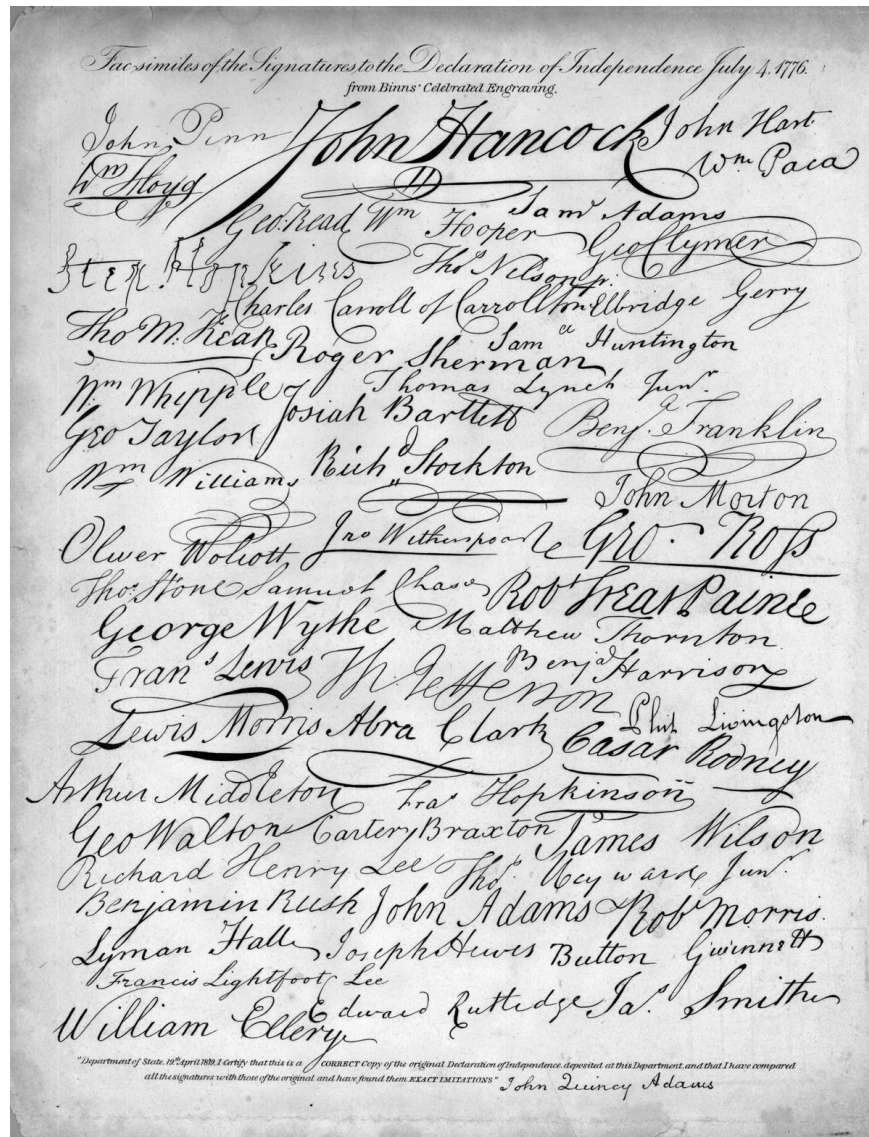
*Continued on Page 21* **“John Hancock”**

Continued from Page 20 "John Hancock"

### The Wealthy Merchant-Turned-Statesman

John Hancock made his fortune the old-fashioned way; he inherited it. However, he also had a talent for making money on his own. At the time of the American Revolution, Hancock was one of the richest men in the 13 colonies due to a thriving mercantile business inherited from his uncle. When Hancock was 7, his father died and his mother sent him to live with his paternal uncle, Thomas Hancock and his wife, Lydia. Thomas Hancock made his fortune importing manufactured goods from England and exporting timber, rum, whale oil, and fish. Thomas and Lydia were childless and raised John as their own. He graduated from the Boston Latin School at age 13, then enrolled at Harvard. In 1754, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree at age 17.

After graduation, Hancock returned to his uncle's mercantile firm, the House of Hancock, where he did clerk duties, managed shipments and corresponded with London suppliers. In 1760, he was sent to London to represent the House of Hancock in business negotiations and spent a full year there learning about transatlantic trading. By 1763, his uncle had promoted Hancock to equal partner in the firm, granting him more responsibility in company decisions and profit-sharing. Upon his death in 1764, Thomas Hancock left the entire proprietorship to his 27-year-old nephew. The inheritance included the House of Hancock trading house, real estate, ships, and inventory valued in the tens of thousands of pounds. Young Hancock rebranded the firm John Hancock & Co and continued to expand the firm's growth and influence.



The signatures on the Declaration of Independence. Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Continued on Page 22 "John Hancock"

*Continued from Page 21* “John Hancock”

The 1765 Stamp Act was the catalyst that prompted Hancock’s involvement in politics, though it wasn’t his first run-in with the British affecting his shipping business. The Stamp Act was the first internal tax levied without colonial assent. It led to widespread protests across the colonies, organized by groups like the Sons of Liberty, an organization that included Hancock, Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, James Otis, and others. Hancock’s popularity with colonists only grew with his financing and public participation in colonial resistance activities, smuggling goods aboard his ships to evade British taxes, and a popular speech he gave on the fourth anniversary of the Boston Massacre. He was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1766 and as a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774. One year later he was elected the third President of Congress at age 38.



“Bostonians Reading the Stamp Act,” an illustrated leaf from “Cassell’s History of the United States” by Edmund Ollier, 1874–1877. Public Domain

### First and Second Presidential Terms

Hancock’s first term as President of Congress spanned nearly two and a half years, the longest continuous presidency of the Continental Congress. Within the first month of leading Congress, he helped create the Continental Army. He also named George Washington as its Commander-in-Chief. In his second month, he presided over the passage of the Declaration of Independence. Hancock also spearheaded the issuance of continental currency to fund the war effort and chaired a Marine Committee that created a small fleet of frigates to battle the British Navy. Hancock’s second term, which ran from Nov. 23, 1785 to June 5, 1786, produced no tangible accomplishments due to the weakness of the Articles of Confederation, chronic absenteeism by delegates, and public frustration with Congress. Hancock was also frequently absent since he suffered from gout. Although he wasn’t directly involved with drafting or voting on the act, Hancock was the nominal head of Congress when the Land Ordinance of 1785 was first implemented. That act set rules for the orderly settlement of the western territories acquired by the United States after the Revolutionary War.

Hancock’s primary contribution in his second term as president of Congress was lending his name and reputation to that body. It helped provide continuity and respectability to a young government struggling to find its way before the passage of the Constitution a few years later.

## 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

## 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 Vitals For Vets (VFF) to be able to provide food assistance in the form of credit cards to needy military families. In 2024 and 2025 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.



## 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**

**16 April 2026.** Board of Directors' meeting. Program by Mr. Eric Monday, General Council, Roanoke Regional Airport Commission on "**Southwest Virginia in the Revolution.**"

**21 May 2026. Picnic and BBQ at the American Legion Post 3** on Apperson Drive in Salem, Virginia. Lunch catered by Mission BBQ, special music by Marc Baskind, and remarks by special guests.

**17 September 2026.** Board of Directors meeting. A program by Mr. Jeff Vick, professor of Political Science at Roanoke College, on **Kazimierz Pułaski**, considered the father of American cavalry, or on **Our Foreign Founding Fathers**, discusses Pułaski, von Steuben, Kosciuszko, and others.

**15 October 2026.** No Board meeting. A program by Mr. Al McLean, an attorney in Roanoke, on the **Skirmish at Pearisburg**, a small 1862 Civil War battle fought in Southwest Virginia in Giles County.

**19 November 2026.** Board of Directors meeting. A program by Mr. Patrick Henry Jolly (a direct descendant of Patrick Henry and researcher) on **Patrick Henry**. He appears in costume.

**17 December 2026,** Board of Directors meeting. A tentative program TBD by **Mr. Roland Lazenby**, a former writer for the Roanoke Times and a VMI graduate and former football player. He has also published several books on sports legends, including Jerry West and Michael Jordan.

## **MOAA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 119TH CONGRESS**

**MOAA's Legislative Priorities.** As the legislative slate resets for the second session of the 119th Congress, MOAA member engagement will become even more vital to achieving our advocacy objectives. Learn more about our top MOAA legislative priorities and how you can support MOAA's work to pass key legislation, below. Note: This is not an all-encompassing list of MOAA's legislative efforts. For more, visit our **Legislative Action Center**.

- **Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168)**
- **Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act (H.R. 6231 | S. 3265)**
- **Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act (H.R. 1732)**
- **Military CARE Act (H.R. 6796)**
- **Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (H.R. 2148 | S. 879)**

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## **VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS/JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL 2026 INITIATIVES** **(Adopted at the September and December 2025 JLC meetings)**

- **JLC Initiative 2026-01 Secure the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-02 Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-03 Veteran Suicide Death Information Access**
- **JLC 2026-04 Veteran Textbook Support Grant**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-05 Exempt Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) from Limits on Use of Proceeds from Charitable Gaming**
- **JLC Initiative 2026-06 Inclusion of USPHS and NOAA in Income Tax Subtraction**

A summary of the approved 2026 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 MEMBERSHIP**  
as of **31 MARCH 2026**

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Regular Members   | 73 |
| Surviving Spouses | 1  |
| Total Members     | 74 |

Talk to a fellow officer about joining the Southwest Virginia

**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](http://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



**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 June 2026.



- Featured in This Issuer*
- Presidents Corner
  - Reflections on the American Revolution, 250 Years On.
  - Welcome Captain Martin Robertson, USN (Ret).
  - Do You Know Your Service Birthday?
  - Dental and Vision Benefits for Surviving Spouses
  - Collection of American Patriotic Documents, Oaths and Symbols.
  - John Hancock: First President of Congress Post-Independence.

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



**NEVER STOP SERVING!**