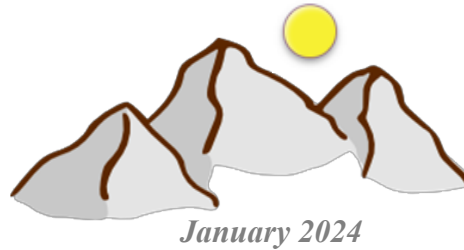


THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER

117 Wildwood Loop, Statesville, NC 28625-8903 / E-mail: moaanc11@outlook.com / Phone: 828-495-1259

President's Comments: LTC "Davy" Davenport

Our chapter's Board of Directors recently met at Lake Hickory Country Club. At the meeting, we set the schedule of events for the year, made end of year charitable donations from the Benevolent Fund, and we established our chapter's somewhat generalized goals for the coming year. Inspired by our chapter's recent series of annual MOAA 5-Star awards, the board set the following as our top three goals for 2024: Our first priority is increasing our membership numbers. Our second priority is supporting military related charities and community events in our chapter's six county domain. Third is rallying chapter members to actively support all the pending state and federal legislation that has a positive influence on military capabilities and quality of life, with heaviest emphasis on the latter.

Truth is, we need to push hardest on military pay, benefits and quality of life legislation because we're all essentially caught in the midst of budget battles on Capitol Hill and a rise in overall cost-of-living expenses. It's too easy for legislators and the Department of Defense to inadvertently or intentionally redirect desperately needed "troop support" funding and use it to acquire advanced weapon systems. In other words, sustaining and/or improving the quality-of-life features of military life tends to take a back seat to enhanced combat capabilities; that tradeoff shortchanges health care benefits, barracks programs, family housing, etc. Obviously, DoD leaders themselves will continue to negotiate hard with Congress to equip our nation's warriors for operations on land, at sea, in the air, in space, and in cyberspace. However, it's largely up to MOAA and the other military groups and organizations to lobby for passage of legislation that protects and expands the military's earned pay and benefits. The Service Chiefs didn't create this situation, it's the political side of the coin that's engaging in budget battles and catering to vocal constituents who have never served in the military and have negligible interface with the military community. Thus, MOAA's "One Powerful Voice" is critical, and that voice is based on the collective energy of MOAA's lobbying on Capitol Hill, our individual messages to politicians via MOAA's Legislative Action Center, and our telephonic or face-to-face contacts with legislators and their staffs.

I'm confident that there'll be some increase in chapter membership this year and that we'll also provide substantial support to our military community here. However, our third goal will be the most significant challenge for us. There are ongoing cries to balance the budget, bring down the national debt, and to fund a plethora of social programs. Then, there are two ongoing wars that are diminishing our nation's "treasure." That's all compounded by the looming Chinese giant that's posturing to dominate at least the Pacific region; even just maintaining parity in military capabilities comes at a great cost to our nation. All that said, there's one specific scenario that keeps coming to mind. That is, a vision of U.S. military service members currently fighting in Syria and the Red Sea—clearly in harm's way! As they fight on, they're wondering about the wellbeing of their families back in the CONUS if a government shutdown were to occur, with nothing in place to protect active duty pay and allowances! We'll again arrive at the proverbial fiscal cliff on February 2nd. So, I'm not going to be shy about personally prompting legislators to pass the Pay Our Troops Act and/or the Pay Our Military Act, plus several other important bills that are bogged down in Congress, the stalled "Major Richard Star Act" being one of them!

Our MOAA chapter held its annual Charity Christmas Dinner at Lake Hickory Country Club on November 30th. The event started with a social hour where members enjoyed beverages and banter in the club's lounge. The Chapter President then welcomed officers and guests to the Elijah Brown dining room and called out for posting of the colors. That was perfectly executed by Major Daniel Rhyne's cadet Color Guard from the Air Force JROTC Unit at Lincolnton High School. Attendees then recited the Pledge of Allegiance, and our Chaplain, Reverend (CW3) Herron, gave the invocation. A series of ceremonial toasts were made, and then Colonel Joe Cansler presided over the Missing Man Table ceremony. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed a robust dinner, accompanied by Glenn Fox's brilliant rendition of popular holiday and oldies instrumentals. Air Force JROTC cadets were seated with chapter member at all tables. After dinner, MOAA North Carolina Council of Chapter's Colonel Jim Brumit made the formal presentation of MOAA's 5-Star Level of Excellence Award to our chapter. Then, much to everyone's surprise and delight, Colonel Brumit also presented a much coveted and highly deserved MOAA Leadership Award to LTC "Davy" Davenport. Davy's wife Michelle pinned the award medal to his uniform. Finally, the Charity Raffle was won by Frances Liburdi, the prize being a very large and elaborately "carved" Jim Shore Santa Clause figurine. The evening concluded with couples dancing to Glenn Fox music and the exchanging of holiday wishes. Several photos from this wonderful Christmas Holidays event are posted on our chapter website: www.moaacvc.org

USO Birthday February 4th



LTC Davenport receives special award

*2024 Active Duty Pay Raise 5.2%
Military Retiree COLA raise 3.2%*

Project Liberty Ship Photo



SS John W. Brown sailing the Great Lakes in 2000

Liberty Ships were the workhorses afloat during WWII. Initially, President Roosevelt dubbed them "Ugly Ducklings," but he soon saw their great utility as they transported material and troops to overseas battlefields. Early in the war, 225 ships were converted to troop transports, but after the Allied Victory in North Africa, those ships were used to transport enemy POWs to the U.S. The average build time of a liberty ship was 39 days; however, one was built in just 4 days and 15 hours. They were built in 18 shipyards on America's coasts. Rosey the Riveter built the ships as fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers went "over there" to fight the war. However, they welded rather than riveted hull seams of these ships. 2,400 ships were still seaworthy at the end of the war. The surplus ships were mostly bought up by Greek and Italian shipping magnates who built their empires on the backs of the Liberty Ships. Only four remain today: three are floating museums and one is headquarters for a seafood company. Also, wooden hatch covers salvaged from the old Liberty Ships proudly live on as coffee tables, featuring a nautical/military theme.

Retraction: In the last edition of this newsletter, it was erroneously stated that the Marine Corps is the oldest branch of military service. This generated considerable ire on the part of chapter members who are soldiers. That's because the U.S. Army is the oldest branch of military service, established on June 14, 1775. The U.S. Marine Corps was established months later, on November 10, 1775. The newsletter editor apologizes for the egregious error, and asks the soldiers planning to lay siege to his office to please return their weapons to the armory.

Show Me the Money: According to a recent *Army Echoes* newsletter article, military retired pay is not impacted by the recurring delays in passing the National Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately, active duty pay is indeed impacted by government shut-downs. Retirees are protected because the Military Retirement Fund (MRF) is not part of the defense budget. Payments by the MRF and Treasury to retirees are considered mandatory, and the MRF itself is safely invested in U.S. Treasury securities—much like U.S. Savings Bonds.

Special VA Outreach Effort: The VA is initiating action to encourage three million Veterans to come into a VA medical center or clinic to receive a brief screening for possible exposure to environment hazards. After having already screened 4.8 million Veterans, the VA is now focusing on three million Veterans who are enrolled at the VA but don't actually receive their medical care in a VA facility. This special screening initiative was prompted by the PACT Act which requires the VA to screen all patients enrolled in VA health care for toxic exposures.

NC Veterans Help Locator: In its continuing effort to make North Carolina the State of Choice for Veterans, the www.NC4Vets.org website features a NC Veterans Services Map. Just click on your county, select which of eight service categories you need, input a search radius, and then click submit to instantly see contact info and a map for Veterans Service Offices and other entities responsible to provide the service. Website: www.nc4vets.org

Search for the Missing Man: We often toast our fallen comrades and missing military personnel during military ceremonies. Largely behind the scenes, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency continually performs its arduous mission to "Provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation." The agency's zealous searchers engage in meticulous investigation and hard work on-site to recover and identify the remains of missing servicemembers. They have located and returned the remains of 141 service members this year. Search sites are scattered throughout the world and cover conflicts from WWII to the War in Afghanistan. Repatriation of remains is a formal and dignified military event, often involving dignitaries from the returning servicemember's state. There are still about 81,000 MIA's, believed to be located in 45 nations!

Extra Help for Injured Veterans: The "Elizabeth Dole Home and Community-Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act" (HR 542) recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. This bill addresses home care and caregiver programs provided by the VA. Essentially, it boosts reimbursement for the cost of providing noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home care. Currently, the reimbursement limit is 65 percent of the cost; however, this legislation would allow 100 percent reimbursement, or even more if the higher cost is in the best interest of Veterans with special conditions (such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, spinal cord injury, etc.)

New State Veterans Home: The NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs recently opened the newly-constructed State Veterans Home in Kernersville. At full capacity, the more than 100 thousand square foot facility will provide 120 private rooms and baths, 24-hour nursing, physical and aquatic therapy, occupational and speech therapy, medication management, dietetic programming, nourishment care, activity programming, and more. Now there are five State Veterans homes: Fayetteville, Salisbury, Black Mountain, Kinston and Kernersville. However, the Fayetteville home is about to be demolished and a new \$27 million home will be built in that area. For info on Kernersville residency, e-mail: KitTena.Ferguson@PruittHealth.com or call: 336-782-8369.

MOAA's Policy on Social Issues: These days, we're all living in a divisive social climate. Many military officers have grown up in a culture that's quite different than in the past; thus, many are accepting attitudes and views that were not mainstream when many of us were in uniform. If MOAA is going to connect with the newest generation of uniformed officers, it needs to be clear that those with strong views on racial and social justice imperatives are just as welcome as those who adhere to more traditional expressions of patriotism and officership.

- NEWS FROM THE FIVE MILITARY BRANCHES -

ARMY: Army is testing integration of robots and other technology into dangerous combat scenarios; this includes robot vehicles with tethered drones, drones dropping robotic ground vehicles, and robot “dogs” with cameras.

NAVY: SECNAV announced the new DDG 51 guided-missile destroyer will be named after the amazing WWII hero and destroyer captain Ernest E. Evans, the first Native American in the Navy to earn the Medal of Honor.

MARINES: The new MK22 Advanced Sniper Rifle will soon be issued. The barrel is changeable to several calibers, and it has a 10-round detachable magazine, a sound and flash suppressor, and the optics are 7x35!

AIR FORCE: The stealth B-21 Raider began flight testing this past November and will become operational in 2030. The B-21 bomber is invisible to radar; targets it hits won’t be aware of its presence. About \$750M each!

SPACE FORCE: the X-37B “Falcon Heavy” Space Plane was recently sent into low-earth orbit on a secret mission for an undetermined amount of time. The uncrewed orbital space craft can carry payloads of 58,860 lb!

Benevolent Fund: Our designated charities are: MOAA American Patriot Scholarship Program (**MOAA-APS**), Purple Heart Homes (**PHH**) and Welcome Home Veterans (**WHV**). Donate by sending a charity-specific (any or all three) annotated check to Treasurer: CDR Dave Olson, 485 26th Ave NE (Unit A), Hickory, NC 28601.

2023 Calendar: General Membership Meetings/Dinners: 25 Jan, 28 Mar, 23 May, 26 Sep, 5 Dec

Board Meetings: 22 Feb, 25 Apr, 27 Jun, 22 Aug, 24 Oct, 12 Dec

———— CHAPTER PRINCIPALS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF ————

Chapter President: LTC “Davy” Davenport
1st Vice President: *Vacant!*
2nd Vice President: LTC James Cole
Treasurer: Commander Dave Olson
Secretary: Major Dennis McClish
Chaplain: Reverend (CW3) Robert Herron
Programs Chairman: *Vacant!*
Director: Colonel (Dr.) Don Gemeinhardt

Director: Colonel Joe Cansler
Director: *Vacant!*
Legislative Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Dana Tucker
Surviving Spouses Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Tucker
Membership Chair: *Vacant!*
JROTC Coordinator: Lt Col G. Jane Harmon
Personal Affairs & TOPS: *Vacant!*
Newsletter/Website: Colonel John Liburdi

Join National MOAA and this Chapter: MOAA is the country’s leading organization protecting the rights of military servicemembers and their families. Those who belong to MOAA not only lend their voices to a greater cause, but they also gain access to extensive benefits tailored to the needs and lifestyles of military officers. MOAA members proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, MOAA has made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving! 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, Space Force, Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The MOAA Catawba Valley Chapter covers six counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Iredell and Lincoln. Our chapter is active in the community through its Benevolent Fund (explained above) and JROTC support. The chapter also engages in ad hoc charitable support and activity, with emphasis on homeless Veterans. Please note that National MOAA and its affiliated chapters are nonpartisan, without any political party affiliation, bias, or designation. ***A one-page chapter membership mail-in application form is available via the “Join Chapter” button on our chapter website homepage at: www.moaacvc.org***. Also, you can learn more about MOAA National and join at either Basic, Premium or Life level by visiting their website: www.moaa.org/content/join-moaa/why-join-moaa

FYI: Receive this newsletter via e-mail by requesting to: moaacvcnews@hotmail.com

Directly access the MOAA “Legislative Action Center” at: www.moaa.quorum.us

NMOAA CATAWBA VALLEY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING/DINNER

This is my reservation for MOAA CVC's General Membership meeting/dinner on January 25th, (a Thursday) at Lake Hickory Country Club. Attire is jacket & tie. Cocktails/social time begins at 6:00 p.m. and dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. The Guest Speaker will be announced at a later date.

Name of attendee(s): _____ & _____ & _____

Indicate number of entrée selections: Cordon Bleu _____ Baked Salmon _____ Veggi Platter _____

Please send this slip and check (**\$35.00 per attendee**) to arrive no later than January 22nd, a Monday, to:

Commander Dave Olson, 485 26th Ave NE (Unit A), Hickory, NC 28601

Tell prospective members about our website: www.moaacvc.org

New members joining chapter now do not pay 2024 annual dues!

Surviving Spouse virtual chapter join e-mail: mssvc02@gmail.com

Ideas for Guest Speakers always welcome—no sales pitches please!

DoD ID Card Office Online at: <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/>