

THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER

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President's Comments: LTC "Davy" Davenport

March 29th is Vietnam Veterans Day. Although our soldiers won the tough battles in the Vietnam War, events in the political and public domains undermined the overall war effort. In the case of the latter, society was largely against the war, and that generated much illogical contempt for troops serving in Vietnam, including when they returned home expecting to be hailed as valiant warriors. Stemming from all that was a great deal of controversy over the military draft, which ultimately brought it to an end in 1973. Much of the controversy was over who was drafted into service and who was not: college deferments, questionable 4Fs, social status, etc. Actually, debates about the draft persist to this day. Males 18 to 25 years old still must register with the Selective Service System—legislation to include females failed to pass in 2022. If you ask young men if they've registered with the Selective Service, many would say no, even though they've unwittingly registered when they obtained a driver license or voted in an election. Here's a few other facts regarding the need for the draft: 70 percent of young men do not meet standards to enter the military, and only 15 percent of the "eligibles" have a propensity to join. Not surprisingly, most military leaders prefer the all-volunteer system rather than the draft. Consider training costs, relevant experience, leadership qualities, commitment to the mission, etc. MOAA has consistently supported the all-volunteer force; conversely, advocates of reinstating the draft argue that that the all-volunteer mode is unfair and unsustainable. That argument may gain traction as we become engaged in more and more confrontations and conflicts around the globe, most of which drag on for years. Note that in WWII, two-thirds of those in uniform were conscripts, but in the Vietnam War, two-thirds of those in uniform were voluntarily serving in the military. So, controversy notwithstanding, let's be sure salute all our Vietnam Veterans on March 29th, no matter whether those American Heroes—now highly respected—were serving as draftees or volunteers.

MOAA is no longer including those multiple, cumbersome Take Action postcards in their "Military Officer" magazine; remember, we had to affix several postage stamps to mail out those cards. MOAA is now suggesting more effective ways for us to advocate for passage of military related legislation. Obviously, the most effective is MOAA's Legislative Take Action system on their website (www.moaa.org). E-mails with fully prepared text are pre-staged for us to send—already individually addressed to our respective members of Congress! Also effective are our personal phone calls to the office of any given legislator. They're easily contacted by using the MOAA sponsored toll-free hotline to the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at: 866-272-6622. However, MOAA suggests that we ask for the Military Legislative Assistant (MLA) on the politician's staff, rather than the Senator or Representative. Speaking of phone calls, we're indeed encouraged to register on MOAA's Legislative Action Center website. Although, we certainly can launch those e-mails via MOAA's system without having registered. In any case, MOAA has provided us with smart tools and advice for effortlessly and expediently communicating with our respective legislators, perhaps even establishing meaningful relationships with the politicians and/or the staff members. No matter how you decide to play it, let's all get behind National MOAA leaders who are continually negotiating and lobbying on our behalf, "eyeball-to-eyeball," in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill. MOAA's spring campaign focuses on TRICARE for Life, the Richard Star Act, and 100% BAH.

Sooner or later, we all visit the Biltmore Mansion in Asheville; maybe even frequent visits, depending on how often we have houseguests from out of state. Obviously, Asheville has many other cultural and historical venues available, including the Western North Carolina Veterans Memorial—dedicated to Veterans of all wars. It’s located on the northeast corner of Pack Square Park in the heart of downtown, essentially at the intersection of Patton Avenue and Broadway Street. This massive granite and bronze memorial was dedicated in 2009. The central figure is a bronze statue of a woman (mother) seated on a granite bench with “letters to the homeland” on her lap. The sculptor was the renowned artist Jodi Hollnagel-Jurbran. On the east center interior of the memorial are the words: “Dedicated to those who gave us peace, liberty and freedom, and to the veterans who have preserved it.” The interior features six granite slabs, each bearing the seal for six individual branches of military service, including the Coast Guard and the Merchant Marines. So, in conjunction with your next visit to the Biltmore Mansion, consider visiting this stunning military memorial, and the many nearby dining opportunities! By the way, you may notice that a 75-foot obelisk has vanished from Pack Square; city leaders and the NC Supreme Court ruled to remove that Governor (Confederate Colonel) Zebulon Vance memorial.

Photo by J. Liburdi



Western North Carolina Veterans Memorial



***Medal of Honor Day
Day is March 25th***



Image Courtesy of Boeing



Navy “Orca XL” submarine drone during acceptance

The U.S. Navy has received the first of six “Orca XL” submarine drones. They’re Orca Extra Large Uncrewed Undersea Vehicle (Orca XLUUV). Over a decade of Boeing research went into bringing this submarine drone into existence. It’s long-range, uncrewed, and can operate independently of its host vehicle. The Orca underwent successful in-water and underwater testing for about a year before being turned over to the Navy. The Orca is huge, and its shape is somewhat similar to a classic torpedo, but that’s where the similarity ends. An Orca weighs 50 tons out of water, it’s 51 feet long, and 8.5 feet tall. Unofficial sources indicate that this uncrewed diesel-electric sub has a range of 6,500 nautical miles and can dive to 11,000 feet. The sub has a modular payload bay where different “packages” are swapped out for each type of mission. Those could include underwater mining, electronic warfare, Intelligence gathering, etc. This drone submarine is yet another indication of how all U.S. military branches are increasingly opting for uncrewed weapon platforms to replace crewed aircraft, land vehicles, surface ships, and underwater vessels.

Expanded Access to VA Health Care: VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Elnahal announced: "Beginning March 5, we're making millions of veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. We want to bring *all* of these veterans to VA for the care they've earned and deserve." The expansion allows all veterans who deployed to combat zones in support of the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan wars to enroll in VA health care. Apply for care/benefits at website VA.gov/PACT or phone 1-800-MYVA411.

Benevolent Fund: our chapter's Board of Directors approved awarding money to the MOAA American Patriot Scholarship Program, Purple Heart Homes, Welcome Home Veterans Center, & Veterans Motocross Foundation.

Foothills Veterans Stand Down: The next "Stand Down" will be held on April 12, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Catawba Valley Community College indoor Tarlton Complex. It's located at 2550 US Hwy 70 - SE Hickory, NC. Veterans are provided: medical services, dental care, tax assist, employment counseling, eye care, haircuts, shoes, and community resources. As in the past, our chapter will be a major sponsor of this event, and event volunteer opportunities will be announced. More info at website: www.foothillsveteranshelpingveterans.com

Renew ID On-line: DoD has expanded its on-line ID renewal capability for active ID cards (not for first-time issue ID cards). The program includes retirees and family members. First step is to create a self-service account at www.dmdc.osd.mil and to ensure that sponsor and cardholder both have their e-mail addresses in the DEERS system. A photo must be on file in the system that's no more than 12 years old. Applicant must reside in the U.S. and have a U.S. mailing address. After the ID card is produced, there's a shipment tracking feature and receipt confirmation procedure. Existing "Indefinite" ID cards are still valid, but the DoD expects everyone to have the new type ID card by 2026. You can upgrade to the new ID on-line at any time; however, existing ID cards must be renewed within 90 days of having lapsed.

MOAA JROTC Awards: Our chapter's JROTC Coordinator, Marine Lt Col G. Jane Harmon, has procured medals and certificates to be awarded to the most outstanding cadet in each of the 19 JROTC units we support. Our chapter President signed all the certificates and Jane has distributed the certificates and medals. Several of our officers are presenting award medals to JROTC cadets at local high school award ceremonies. Consider doing the same if a JROTC Senior Instructor in your area happens to offer you the same wonderful opportunity!

Charlotte Veterans Career Fair: There's going to be a huge Veterans job fair in Charlotte on Thursday, April 11th. It will be held in the Bojangles Complex at 2700 East Independence Blvd, in Charlotte. It will be in the East CLT Room; it's the new connector building to the right of the Coliseum—look for "Recruit Military" signs. Free parking in front of the building. Get details and register now at website: <https://my.recruitmilitary.com>. Click on the "View All Job Fairs" button, then click the "April" button and you'll see Charlotte Veterans Career Fair listed.

Helping Veterans Heal: "No Barriers USA" provides programs for Veterans with visible and invisible disabilities. No Barriers Warriors enhances the lives of Veterans with disabilities through the its three-month program. It includes interactive online courses with extraordinary multi-day, in-person, outdoor experiences. Those include backcountry expeditions that lead Veterans into the wilderness as they embark on 12- to 15-mile physically demanding backpacking trips. The 2024 program season features four Basecamp trips at various locations and five backcountry trips: one of them taking place June 5-9 in Asheville. Applications for its 2024 program opened on January 9th. Complete info and applications are at the No Barriers USA website. Or, contact No Barriers staff at warriors@nobarriersusa.org or 970-484-3633, ext. 305.

Salute Your Brats: Military Brats Day falls on April 30th. "Military Brat" is a term of endearment, believed to have originated with the British Army, when children of military serving abroad were termed: "British Regiment Attached Traveler." Later, the "Military Brat" abbreviation applied to kids of all British military, no matter where the parent was assigned. U.S. Military Brats are a special breed—often considered to be a subculture. There's even a lifelong, world-wide community of Military Brats. You can learn more about them and link to related organizations at website: www.bratswithoutborders.org Be sure to "salute" your Military Brats on April 30th!

- NEWS FROM THE FIVE MILITARY BRANCHES -

ARMY: Master Gunners at the “Maneuver Center of Excellence” are utilizing an Augmented Reality Maintainer-Operator Relay System to train students to provide live remote assists to the range, including in live-fire scenarios.

NAVY: The MK-18 Unmanned Underwater Vehicle collects high-def side-scan sonar data for clearing minefields and for surveying coastal areas and ports. The MK-18 allows sailors to remotely collect data—out of harm’s way!

MARINES: First lieutenants, no longer have selection boards review their files for promotion; now they simply undergo “desk-top” records screening to ensure they’re fully qualified, and then the officer is promoted to captain.

AIR FORCE: To become more war-ready, USAF is now overhauling its: organizational structure, operational concepts, training methods, readiness posture, R&D & acquisition strategies; plus, adding Warrant Officer ranks!

SPACE FORCE: USSF is formalizing Combat Squadrons as Units of Action; finishing activation of its Space Force Service Components, and training and exercising Space Force units to operate in a contested environment.

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.

2024 Calendar: *General Membership Meetings/Dinners:* 28 Mar, **16 May, 19 Sep**, 5 Dec

Board Meetings: 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 March 28th, (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 Mr. Darin Graves, Charlotte Veterans Service Officer, giving a highly informative presentation on the status of the Veterans Administration and Veterans benefits.

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 March 25th, 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!

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

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

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

ALERT: Fake tax return scammer e-mails have started popping up!