



May 2020 Chapter Newsletter

Presidents Message

Greetings Greater Birmingham Chapter (MOAA) Members and Friends,

My message during May usually addresses our Chapter preparation to support the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Alabama Veterans Memorial Park (AVMP), recognizing and honoring the ladies of our Chapter at the May meeting, and the results of the annual MOAA Storming of the Hill. But, as you know the coronavirus (COVID - 19) pandemic and the State and National "stay at home" directive has got us all in a wait and see mode on these activities and the normalization of our daily lives.

Your Board will publish an abbreviated newsletter this month, without all the bells and whistles, to keep you up-to-date on the Chapter. This is what I know now:

- **The May meeting is cancelled.** Danberry is projecting that they will still be in restricted operations in early May and will not be able to host our monthly meeting. Hopefully, we will be back to a somewhat normal state by the June meeting.
- The **Memorial Day Ceremony** at the AVMP has been rescheduled. It appears from their website that Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies will be combined and held on Sunday, November 17, 2020.

In Tom Ruffing's obituary he asked that friends donate to the MOAA Foundation in his memory. The MOAA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable subsidiary of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and offers grants to MOAA, its councils and its chapters in support of career development and community outreach programs and services. These programs and services benefit more than 50,000 currently serving uniformed service members and veterans of all ranks, their families and their survivors each year.

The Board has considered Tom's request and will make a Chapter donation of \$200 to the MOAA Foundation in his name. Members who would like to donate with the Chapter can send a check to our Treasurer, Doug Markham, at PO Box 530153, Birmingham, AL 35253. Please put **Ruffing - MOAA Foundation** on the memo line of your check. All member **donations received by May 15, 2020** will be forwarded with the Chapter donation to MOAA. If you prefer to make a personal donation they

can be made online at moaa.org or by mailing a check to: The MOAA Foundation, PO Box 1555, Merrifield, VA 22116-9917.

Cynthia and I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy. Remember to do your part in stopping the spread of the coronavirus by maintaining the recommended social distance, wearing a mask and gloves if you must go out, and stay at home as much as possible. If you know someone in the Chapter who may be infected or hospitalized please contact Anne Hartline, Personal Affairs, at 205-422-8885 or Mac Chandler, Chaplain at 205-790-5154. Anne will send the member a card from the Chapter wishing them a speedy recovery.

Respectfully,

Wes

Legislative Update (by Wes Cox, Legislative Affairs)

MOAA National cancelled the annual "Storming of the Hill" to ensure the safety of all participants. The two issues that were to be discussed are:

Control Copays to Protect the Military Health Care Benefit

Issue: Military Health System (MHS) reform has meant numerous out-of-pocket cost increases for beneficiaries and uncertainty about the future of the health care benefit. MOAA urges Congress to demonstrate good faith with military families by addressing two particularly egregious co-pay issues that have emerged during MHS reform by halting scheduled TRICARE pharmacy co-pay increases and to reduce co-pays for mental health visits and physical, speech, and occupational therapy.

Military Pay and Service-Earned Benefits: Key to Recruiting and Retaining a Ready and Capable All-Volunteer Force

Issue: Military pay and service-earned benefits are consistently seen as costing our government too much. Attempts to modify, redefine, and outright reduce pay and benefits are tactics to increase resourcing for readiness and other programs. This erosion makes recruiting all the more difficult relative to the pool of eligibles. For those who are currently serving, this erosion is fast becoming a game-changer, with healthcare, housing, and childcare the more visible and present dangers to the current way of life for our all-volunteer force. MOAA's position is that our troops deserve a 3% pay raise in FY2021, that currently serving members and their families are provided quality health care and keep the promise to retirees and their family to provide access to affordable, quality health care.

Please support MOAA's effort in these issues by calling, writing, or emailing your Congressional representatives.

Surviving Spouses (by Donna Martin, Surviving Spouse Liaison)

(Note: This is part one of two parts to be included in the MOAA GBC newsletter. Part 2 will be in the June Newsletter.)

TAPS ORGANIZATION

TAPS provides comfort, care and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one. Since 1994, TAPS has provided comfort and hope 24/7 through a national peer support network and connection to grief resources, all at no cost to surviving families and loved ones. TAPS provides a variety of programs to survivors nation and worldwide. TAPS is a national nonprofit 501(c) 3 Veterans Service Organization and is not part of, or endorsed by, the Department of Defense.

Following is some information about the various support and resources available to survivors through TAPS.

SURVIVOR CARE TEAM:

Survivor Care Team members are survivors just like you who have gone through extensive training in topics related to grief, loss, bereavement, and suicide prevention and more. As your Survivor Care Team advocate, I will reach out to you over time to provide grief support and ensure you are connected to a wide variety of TAPS programs and services, according to your needs. They may also connect you additionally with a volunteer Peer Mentor through the Peer Mentor Program.

PEER MENTOR PROGRAM:

At TAPS, we have a compassionate community of survivors who have experienced loss and have received training as a Peer Mentor. Our Peer Mentor Program connects you with one of these adult survivors who can provide genuine understanding and be a gentle, supportive companion on your grief journey. If you are interested in being matched with a Peer Mentor, please discuss this with your Survivor Care Team advocate by calling the Helpline at 800-959-8277 or visit the Peer Mentor Program page to submit a Peer Mentor Request. We will be glad to talk to you about the program and help you get connected with a peer when you are ready.

24/7 NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR HELPLINE:

Day or night, care and information are just a phone call away. Answered live 24/7/365, our peer professionals extend help and hope. If you would like to connect with us by phone or need extra support, we are here for you. Please call us at 800-959-TAPS (8277).

CASEWORK ASSISTANCE:

If you have unexpected needs, questions, or concerns regarding benefits, reports, or information you have received, our Casework Staff can help you find answers and support you through the process. TAPS can connect you with the best resources and, when necessary, make calls on your behalf, so you can find the answers you seek. You can request Casework assistance by emailing casework@taps.org, calling our 24/7 Helpline at 800-959-8277 or asking the Survivor Care Team advocate who is reaching out to you to submit a request on your behalf.

To learn more about the TAPS Organization reference their website TAPS.org.

Recruiter's Corner (by Michael Walker, 2VP/Membership)

Chapter Membership Report

The Greater Birmingham Chapter of MOAA current membership count is 167, and retention is 92% of the 2019 membership. We need new members to replace the 8% that we have lost, and it will take a team effort to achieve that given our current operating environment. The first best thing everyone can do at this moment is to go ahead and commit to preserve chapter membership by renewing at the end of this year. As part of that, a safety net of new member joins over the next few months is necessary not knowing the extent or duration of restrictions. If you know of someone – anyone – that would be ideal to join our chapter, please contact them and direct them to the following signup portal at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx> or, just have them call/email me.

Thank you to those 92% who have shown their continued support.

GBC MOAA Chapter Area and Eligibility Definitions:

The ordinary chapter area consists of Blount, Chilton, Coosa, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties. However, **anyone anywhere** can join our chapter anytime, *so long as they meet MOAA chapter eligibility requirements*. To be clear, all Warrant, Chief Warrant or commissioned officers of the armed forces (Regular, Reserve, National Guard, Retired) as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, and USPHS commissioned officers can join GBC MOAA. If you know of someone in any of these eligibility categories, I am asking for your help in contacting them to go ahead and join our chapter despite existing circumstances. We have members outside of the ordinary chapter area who like belonging to GBC MOAA.

Chaplain's Corner (Mac Chandler, Chaplain)

As I write this we are in the middle of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and 4100 cases of Covid-19 have been reported in the state of Alabama. What touches me most through all of this is not all the sickness and the deaths, but the pure downright FEAR that appears to be gripping everyone. Our pastor, in being pro-active, several weeks ago cancelled all church activities until further notice. I miss my church

friends, yet I recognize the seriousness of this virus. All of us must do our part to stop the spread of this virus, especially since we are all “older adults!”

I also want to share some wisdom: Romans 8:28. We know that God works ALL THINGS together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose. Also, I would like to end with this, from Psalm 91:1-4: Living in the Most High’s shelter, camping in the Almighty’s shade, I say to the Lord, “You are my refuge, my stronghold! You are my God-the one I trust!” God will save you from the hunter’s trap, and from deadly sickness. God will protect you with his pinions; you’ll find refuge under his wings. His faithfulness is a protective shield.

We as individuals, as a community, as citizens of the state of Alabama, and as citizens of the United States of America need to be in prayer, and use common sense. Pray for New York. Pray for your neighbors. Pray for your family. Pray for the medical folks who are dealing with this non-stop. Pray for the first responders.

Pray for our community, state, and country. Have FAITH, not FEAR. And most importantly, WASH YOUR HANDS and keep Social Distancing. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. God Bless. See you all when this is over.

April and May Birthdays

Happy Birthday to all those listed below. Enjoy your special day! Maybe Doug will let everyone draw for the Birthday Prize at our next meeting ☺

April

Peter Hendricks 4/3
Warren Todd 4/9
Wayne Morse 4/18
Frank Smith 4/19
Ed Clark 4/20
BJ Niedermeier 4/22
Mike Kozlik 4/23
Terry Richmond 4/24
Billy Joe Camp 4/27
Chuck Bailey 4/28

May

Lois Faires 5/3
Jim Musgrove 5/3
Peter Poerschke 5/6
Virgie Hughes 5/12
Anne Nelson 5/12
Bruce Williams 5/16
Anna Mayo 5/22
Dick Ritz 5/22
Larry Houck 5/24
Susan Hamel 5/28
Tom Fickling 5/29