



Greetings Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA Members and Friends!

We will be Zooming again for our meeting on March 4th at 3:00 PM. We will have Niki Sepsas back; his cruise ships have been docked so we are fortunate to have him back to speak to us again. He has presented to MOAA before and is an excellent speaker! His topic, "**Hellenic Heartbeat in the Deep South: A History of the Greek Community in Birmingham, Alabama**", was chosen by our ladies committee, so please plan on tuning in; it should be very interesting.

We will plan to have our first live MOAA meeting in over a year at Veterans Park on Valleydale Road in May! We will use one of their outdoor pavilions, socially distanced and finally catch-up with one another in person. Most of us should be vaccinated by then but can still be outside and socially distanced. Date and time to be provided at a later time. For the summer monthly luncheon meetings (June/July/August), we will plan to meet at Lloyd's in their semi-private dining room. Order from the menu and pay for your own lunch; simple and easy. Hopefully by September, we will be back to Danberry for the new normal.

A 2021 Chapter calendar of events can be found herein, so please mark the dates and plan to attend where possible. Just an FYI, the calendar can also be found on our website.

If you haven't renewed your Chapter membership, please do so as soon as possible. Your membership is important to us and thank you for your support. In the meantime, stay well and be safe!

Respectfully,

Don

Volume 121 Issue 3 March 2021

Officers' Call

Greater Birmingham Chapter Military Officers Association of America

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Statement of Publication

Officer's Call is the newsletter of the Greater Birmingham Chapter—Military Officers Association of America. It is published once each month to inform the membership of issues and activities of interest to all.

GBC MOAA is a non-profit 501(c)19 entity in the state of Alabama organized to represent the membership and to support the activities of the Alabama Council and MOAA National.

MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are non-partisan.

Advertising contained in the newsletter is not endorsed by MOAA or its affiliate the Greater Birmingham Chapter, and does not represent any recommendation to the membership. Opinions expressed in articles contained herein are not necessarily those of the membership as a whole or the Chapter. Questions should be directed to newsletter@moaabirmingham.org.

MARCH SPEAKER

A pen and a passport have been the tools of the trade for Niki Sepsas for most of his life. He learned at an early age that he had a problem keeping the seat of his pants attached to the seat of a chair. Any chair. After college at West Point and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Niki served in the army before embarking on a thirty-year travel career that has taken him to more than 120 countries and each of the world's seven continents.

Niki began fueling his passion for adventure by signing on to work for companies operating offshore oil drilling rigs in the Arctic Ocean of Alaska, Southeast Asia, the North Sea, and the Middle East. Realizing that he was enjoying climbing the hills as much as he relished discovering what lay on the other side, Niki began working as a freelance tour guide and tour manager for travel groups visiting Europe, Africa, Central/ South America, Antarctica, Asia, and throughout North America. His myriad adventure programs now include Mount Kilimanjaro climbs, hot air balloon trips across the Serengeti, kayaking in Antarctica, paddling canoes through the Amazonian rainforest, hiking the Peruvian Andes to the lost city of Machu Picchu, and other excursions to the world's wild and scenic places.

As a freelance writer, Niki has documented this world of wonders that beckons to each of us. More than 1,000 of his travel adventures have been published in over fifty national, regional, and local magazines and newspapers. He is a contributing author to the Chicken Soup for the Soul series of books and has written more than two dozen coffee table books, several personal memoirs, a novel, and a history of Greek immigration to the United States and to his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama.

Niki is also a much sought after featured speaker aboard cruise ships and for presentations to schools, civic clubs, retirement communities, travel clubs, libraries, literary clubs, and other groups and organizations. His PowerPoint presentations transport his audiences to sites throughout the United States and on each of the world's continents. His sizzling images and focused commentary combine geography, politics, and the remarkable history and rich tapestry of cultures that make up our world.

Niki continues to make his home in Birmingham with his wife, Sherri, and their miniature Schnauzer, Calista. When not on assignment as a speaker onboard cruise ships where he spends about six to eight months each year plying the oceans of the world, Niki can be found enjoying his home, his family and friends, and the neighborhood where Calista walks him regularly.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Welcome to March in Alabama. This is always an exciting month. Not just because of St. Patrick's Day, but because of our unpredictable weather. I'd bet that March is one of James Spann's favorite months: one day it's sunny and warm, and the next we get four inches of snow. Or it might be windy and cold, and then a stretch of sunshine. What I like best about March is the NCAA MARCH MADNESS college basketball championship tournament. It is looking like it will be back this year, and some of the SEC teams are looking good for a run at Final Four.

The other thing that I like about March is that the gloom and gray of winter begins to give way to the green and growing of new life in the spring. This year I will appreciate the newness of spring even more, as we lost our 14-year-old Yorkie in February. The day was dreary and rainy, and so sad. Joan and I are heartbroken. So many of our friends called us, prayed for us, and supported us through this period of intense grief, that we began to see and understand that every one of us have these kinds of moments. What sustains us through grief? In our case, not just friends, not just the knowledge that spring is coming, but the knowledge that God will never leave us. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:4 [God] comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble.

We look forward to spring. We will be out in the yard sprucing up the beds; breathing the fresh air; watching seedlings sprout; enjoying the new life and understanding that our sweet Annie has crossed over the Rainbow Bridge into her new life. Through the trials of life, we must "... [Not] be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard [our] hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philipians 4: 6-7.

Mac Chandler LTC, IN, USA (Ret)



GBC MOAA key dates 2021

Date	Event
Jan 7	Chapter Annual Business Meeting
Feb 4	Chapter meeting/Zoom
Feb 10	Board Meeting
Mar 4	Chapter meeting/Zoom
Apr 1	Chapter meeting/Zoom
May 6	Chapter meeting/picnic Veteran's Park
May 12	Board Meeting
May TBD	AVMP Memorial Day Ceremony
Jun 3	Chapter meeting/Luncheon
Jul 1	Chapter meeting/Luncheon
Aug 5	Chapter meeting/Luncheon
Aug TBD	Ladies Luncheon
Aug 11	Board Meeting
Sep 2	Chapter meeting
Oct 7	Chapter meeting
Nov 4	Chapter meeting
Nov 10	Board Meeting
Nov TBD	Birmingham Veterans Day Parade and Awards Dinner
Nov TBD	AVMP Veterans Day Ceremony
Dec 2	Chapter meeting

Application for Membership/Renewal – Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA (Please print or type)

First Name MI Last Name Grade Rank Preferred Name Name of Spouse
 Branch of Service: Army Air Force Navy Marines Coast Guard Other: _____
 Status: Active Duty Retired National Guard Reserve Former Member Surviving Spouse

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Telephone #: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Email Address: _____
 National MOAA Membership Number: _____ National Membership Type: Basic Premium Life
 Signature: _____ Date: _____

Renewal or New Membership (membership runs by calendar year)
 Regular Membership or Surviving Spouse: \$20/year \$35/2 years **\$50/3 years**
 Supporting Membership (\$50) or Sustaining Membership (\$100)
 ROTC Affiliation (electronic communications only - no cost)



Mail this form to Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA, P.O. Box 530153, Birmingham, AL 35253



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

(visit Legislative Action at <http://www.moaa.org>)

VA Under New Leadership: How the New Secretary's Priorities Align With MOAA's By: Brenden McMahon

Denis McDonough's confirmation Feb. 8 as the new VA secretary received overwhelming bipartisan support – an 87-7 vote reflecting the collaborative and consultative relationship the administration and Congress want to foster between the executive and legislative branches.

McDonough made it clear during his Jan. 27 confirmation hearing that once he took his new post, he and the president will “fight like hell to give our veterans and their families the health care, respect, and dignity they deserve.”

The new secretary outlined several of his priorities, many of which are in line with MOAA's and those of other veterans' organizations. MOAA's ongoing efforts to improve the VA were included in a recent letter to President Joe Biden, and were outlined further in a recap of veteran health care priorities.

The challenges are extensive for the coming year, but it is comforting to know the priorities for the new secretary, Congress, and MOAA are in alignment; this has not always been the case. MOAA is optimistic 2021 will provide a unique opportunity to partner and strengthen relationships with the new administration, secretary, and congressional leaders as we work together to improve the health and well-being of veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Congress Pulls the Plug on TRICARE Dental Program Transition to FEDVIP By: Karen Ruedisueli

The FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) stops the planned transition of TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) beneficiaries to the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). MOAA supports this move and will continue working to ensure Congress and the Defense Health Agency (DHA) remain committed to addressing known problems with TDP networks.

MOAA and other advocacy groups took issues to Capitol Hill, and Congress responded by including language in the FY 2019 NDAA that would have made TDP beneficiaries eligible for FEDVIP effective Jan. 1, 2022. The FY 2021 NDAA reverses these plans. The TRICARE Dental Program will remain in place.

A similar move did take effect for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP): The FY 2017 NDAA sunset TRDP and made military retirees eligible for dental and vision coverage through FEDVIP as of Jan. 1, 2019. There are no changes to retiree dental and vision coverage – military retirees are still eligible for FEDVIP.

Unlike TRDP, which was fully funded by military retirees through plan premiums, TDP includes a premium contribution from DoD. For most TDP beneficiaries, DoD pays 60% of the plan premium while the servicemember contributes 40%. Complications related to DoD's premium contribution, among other issues, hampered efforts to transition TDP to FEDVIP.

MOAA supports this move by Congress to ensure all TDP beneficiaries have continued access to affordable dental coverage, and we are encouraged by recent steps the DHA has taken to address issues with TDP.

Dues renewal season is underway.

Final chapter renewal notices

Final notices were sent out recently. It is still not too late to renew for this year. Please renew as soon as you see this list. Those who have not responded are:

- Burt, Jonathan
- Camp, Billy
- Cragon, Mary
- Day, Janeth
- Dyar, Kyle
- Hicks, Earl
- Horsley, Robert
- Kozlik, Mike
- Lindley, Rickey
- Llivina, Elena
- Morgan, Rudolph
- Morse, Wayne
- Rowe, Dorsey
- Shelton, Sabon
- Smith, Chandler
- Stricklin, Chris
- Sullivan, Leland
- Vaughn, Larry
- Vazquez, Angel
- Wolff, Roula

If any of these listed names already paid their renewal dues, please disregard.

Ad sponsors for 2021

We have advertisement sponsors in our monthly newsletter that go a long way in helping to defer chapter operating expenses. If you or a business owner that you know would be interested in supporting our chapter newsletter with an ad, please send their contact information to the below address and an add sponsor packet will be mailed to them. Thank you very much for your support.

Greater Birmingham Chapter
Military Officers Association of America
P.O. Box 530153
Birmingham, AL 35253





The 4 Facets of Grief

By [Renée Brunelle](#), *Surviving Spouse Advisory Council member*, and [Ruth E. Field](#), *MSW, LCSW*

Often one's grief journey has many variations or facets. After a loss, there are so many things that need to be completed and people demanding your attention that it's easy to forget about taking care of yourself. However, when the final tasks honoring our loved ones are completed, we need to focus on healing ourselves.

Ruth E. Field's book [The 4 Facets of Grief](#), helps put into words some of the tough experiences you encounter during the grieving process. The framework is flexible; there is no specific order to the facets, so you can read about and work with whatever interests you and seems relevant.

Here are some highlights from the book:

- **Facet 1: Accepting (the Unacceptable)**
— Having to recognize what has happened and is true. This does not mean approving, liking, endorsing, or embracing the situation. Accepting can help you find some clarity in the haze of the decision-making process under the circumstances. [MOAA publications](#) are a great place to find helpful information.
- 5. **Facet 2: Adapting to a New Reality**
— Modifying your previous life and transitioning to something new. This adjustment can be very challenging especially when resisting the inevitable change that is happening.

- Of course, nothing will be exactly the same when a loved one passes, but often aspects can remain. Figuring out what needs to change and what doesn't is part of adapting.
- **Facet 3: Meaning Making** — Creating an opportunity for personal growth and lifestyle changes. Examples include focusing more on religious or spiritual education, increasing family interaction, or even philanthropic causes. Remember you are still here and finding new activities to bring some positive energy to your life can be fulfilling.
- **Facet 4: Replenishing** — It is common to become depleted by people, events, and even your own emotions during grief. Being a bit selfish (in a healthy sense) by taking care of yourself first is key. Identifying what activities you find fulfilling can assist in the healing process. Even thinking about a new or old pursuit could revitalize you.

Each of the facets joins together to create a new beginning.

1. **Accepting** brings you face to face with reality.
2. **Adapting** to new circumstances inspires fresh ideas.
3. **Meaning making** ponders the significance and implications of the loss.
4. **Replenishing** ensures continued healthy self-care.

Each person's journey is unique like a precious gemstone. When you use new skills like those in Field's framework, you become like a jeweler cutting a rough stone and polishing it into a beautifully faceted one. Then you can let the light in again.

Remember, try not to resist asking for help. Your MOAA surviving spouse liaison can be of assistance. Local resources are available to explore by simply asking your funeral director for a list. All are happy to provide additional support.

Ruth E. Field, MSW, LCSW, can be reached at ruthfield@griefhelper.com for more information on her book and tips on the grief process.

GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Harold Wehby	8
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MOAA on-line photo directory

Below is a sample of our chapter on-line photo directory, available via a private link to our members only on our website. It can be found at: <http://moaabirmingham.org/#>. You will need to request a log-in/join if you gave not already in order to access the "Members Only" page. If you and or your spouse do not have and would like to have your photo(s) in the directory, please send a selfie or photo to Donna Martin at: donnamaemartin@aol.com.



Killian, III, Sam P.
4545 Magnolia Drive
Birmingham, AL 35242
Email: spkiii@bellsouth.net
Spouse: Martha T. Killian
marthak36@gmail.com

USN Ret CDR Life
205-408-7721 (h)
205-903-6638 (c)
BD: 8/28
BD: 11/10



Lehman, Donald D. (Don)
1204 Greystone Parc Drive
Birmingham, AL 35242
Email: don.lehman1@gmail.com
Spouse: Patricia A. Lehman
islandmomma1@gmail.com

USMC Ret LTCOL Life
404-441-3882 (c)
BD: 7/10
BD: 11/20
404-725-7152 (c)



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The new Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA Challenge Coins are now available to order for only \$10 per coin! This coin will make a wonderful gift and must-have for any challenge coin collection. You can also order coins by contacting: LTC (ret) Don Lehman at don.lehman1@gmail.com. Display cases are available for \$1 each, and orders to be mailed should add \$1 per coin.



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Lt. Col. (Ret) Mac Chandler, Family Service Counselor

205-879-3401 RidoutsValleyChapel.com

Donald Lehman

LtCol USMCR (retired)



Consulting Petroleum Geologist

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Cell: (404) 441-3882
don.lehman1@gmail.com



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Wednesday 4–10PM

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ZOOM MEETING IN MARCH