

THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER

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President: LTC Cliff Davenport

President's Comments: Some of you may already be aware of the great news regarding elimination of the Widows Tax. Even so, I'm repeating it here for the sake of our auxiliary members, most of whom who are Surviving Spouses. Under previous law, survivors of deceased military members had to forfeit part or all of their purchased Survivor Benefit Plan annuity when awarded the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. The loss of any portion of the SBP annuity was known as the Widows Tax. The Fiscal 2020 National Defense Appropriations Act changed this provision, for the benefit of more than 65,000 military survivors, with a fix that will be phased in over a three-year span to completely do away with the Widows Tax. I would be remiss if I didn't point out that this victory was achieved thru a very long and hard-fought battle in which MOAA National led the charge, along with local chapter member "Take Action" e-mails that ensured MOAA's powerful voice was heard loud and clear in Congress. My thanks to our chapter members who did their part to end the unjust Widows Tax.

Another development relevant to surviving spouses is the establishment of a MOAA Virtual Chapter specifically for them. Our MOAA chapter has a large number of Surviving Spouses, and we'd collectively like to do more to support them. With all due respect, most of our wonderful and dignified chapter members could be viewed as "elderly folks." So, many of them find it challenging to keep even their own households in order and health on track. Thus, it was great to learn that a virtual chapter has been established for Surviving Spouses, a forum which certainly generates lots of mutual support. The group is open to any surviving spouse of an officer of any U.S. uniformed service across the country. The group conducts hour-long virtual meetings via telephone every quarter. Since the group meets virtually rather than in person, it makes it convenient for spouses to participate without leaving home. If you are interested in joining the Surviving Spouses Virtual Chapter, either yourself or some trustworthy person on your behalf can simply send an email to: mssvc02@gmail.com.

Lastly, here's the latest update on the pending "Bailey Case" bill in the State General Assembly. The coalition of government employees has decided that it will continue to pursue extension of the Bailey Case state tax-exempt status for all government and military employees. However, instead of full and immediate implementation of the tax exemption benefit, the new strategy calls for a phased-in implementation of newly awarded benefits. In addition, legal consultants have determined that it's indeed legal to frame this legislation to cover military retirees only; however, their conclusion is that doing so will greatly diminish chances of bill passage because fewer political constituents would be involved to advocate passage. That said, there actually is a separate initiative to cover military retirees only that is gaining considerable momentum. So, the whole matter of North Carolina granting tax exemption to military retirees and potentially also government retirees (as called for in the Bailey Case Extension) has become rather controversial. Currently the military community is seeking consensus on this issue; this will most definitely be achieved by the next NC MOAA Council of Chapters meeting. I'll keep everyone informed as the situation evolves.

Veterans MX Foundation: The guest speaker at our last General Membership dinner was Justin Ebelt; he's the driving force behind the non-profit Veteran MX Foundation. He transformed the organization from being a local program to what is now a nationwide organization. The foundation's mission is to empower veterans struggling with physical and mental scars of service (mainly combat) by providing an unexpected opportunity to succeed in new ways, specifically motocross motorcycle racing. The concept is that it "brings the body up to meet the mind," meaning that participants engage in intense activity that provides a markedly different healing process than the VA's traditional therapy. A big aspect is that the resulting community of war Veterans is mutually supportive and encouraging. Veteran's MX was featured in the movie *Bennett's War*. Justin gave our Chapter President a copy of the book *Bennett's War*, and our LTC "Davy" Davenport reciprocated by giving Justin an MOAA coffee mug and our chapter's \$200 donation to help support Veteran MX. Learn more about this amazing foundation at: Veteran MX Foundation on Facebook.



Jason Ebelt briefs on Veteran MX Foundation

Women Airforce Service Pilots: On August 5, 1943, the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) organization was established by melding two fledgling women's flying organizations that formed in late 1942. The primary goal was to free up male pilots for combat missions. WASP recruits had to be between 21 and 35 years old, at least 5 feet and 2 inches tall, in good health, in possession of a pilot's license, and have 500 hours of flight time. About 25,000 women applied to join the WASP; just over a thousand were accepted and completed the training. Flying over 60 million miles; the WASP delivered 12,652 aircraft of 78 different types. They also towed targets for live anti-aircraft artillery practice, simulated strafing missions, and transported cargo. Thirty-eight WASP members lost their lives and one disappeared while on a ferry mission. The WASP organization was disbanded on December 20th, 1944. The visionary 5-Star General Hap Arnold advocated for WASP pilots to come on Active Duty in the Army Air Force, but Congress and the media fought him and prevented the women from becoming Active Duty pilots. Decades later, federal law was enacted that made past WASP service to be counted as having been Active Duty military service. The women pilots all received Honorable Discharge certificates, along with the World War II Victory Medal. On July 1, 2009, the WASP pilots were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.



WASP pilot wings and Congressional Gold Medal

**Write out year 2020 on checks, etc.
Abbreviating opens you to fraud!**

Foothills Veterans Stand Down on April 3rd: As in past years, our MOAA chapter will again be a Gold Sponsor of this event. Besides that, event organizers are seeking individual volunteers to help out. Visit their website: www.foothillsstanddown.com. Then, click on words “2020 Stand Down” that are on the upper right corner. You’ll see a button for the volunteer form on that page. E-mail the form in by Friday, March 6th. The event is from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Tarlton Complex at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory.

ID Check: Now that we’re into the New Year, it might be smart to check the expiration date on our military ID cards, including Dependent IDs for family members. If the card doesn’t have “indefinite expiration” it’s easy for the expiration date to sneak up on us and, thus, bring about an urgent situation. Some of the ID processing centers have long wait times. For example, the Air National Guard in Charlotte now has an appointment wait time of over two months! Plus, it’s one ID card per appointment; if ID cards are needed for other family members, each will need their own appointment. Keep in mind that your military ID is one of a very few documents that will be accepted by airport security officials for air travel beginning October 1st. The DoD *RAPIDS Appointment Scheduler* website can be accessed via the “Useful Links” page of our chapter website.

Blue Water Navy Update: The VA began deciding claims for the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 on January 1st of this year. The Act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The Act specifically affects Blue Water Navy Veterans who served no more than 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as Veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These Veterans can now apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching the term “Agent Orange” on www.va.gov.

Walmart Teams Up With VA: The VA and Walmart recently cut the ribbon in Asheboro, North Carolina, for a new VA-led Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS) services pilot location. This public-private affiliation provides convenient health care to Veterans in their communities, especially in rural areas. Walmart has donated equipment and space at five sites as part of a pilot initiative allowing Veterans to meet with a VA provider in a private room via video technology. VA telehealth clinical services vary by location and may include: primary care, nutrition, mental health and social work. This new option makes VA care easier to access and eliminates long travel times to appointments. Last fiscal year, there were 1.3 million video telehealth encounters with more than 490,000 Veterans. Similar pilot sites are in Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa.

War for the Empire Event: The newly reconstructed Fort Dobbs in Statesville will host its event of the year on April 4th and 5th. This event is *War for the Empire*, and it will involve soldiers, American Indians, and civilian reenactors portraying daily life and wartime events from the French & Indian War that took place in our area. The event will feature trades demonstrations, vendors, period musical performances, and historic weapons firing. This is a great opportunity to tour the massive fort that was meticulously and accurately rebuilt on the original site. Event times are 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, and 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$4, and children under the age of five get in free. Fort Dobbs is near where I-40 and I-77 intersect; from I-40, take either US 21 North (exit 151) or NC 115 North (exit 150). More info at website: www.fortdobbs.org

68 Whisky is Bad Medicine: The first few episodes of the new TV series *68 Whisky* were terribly wrong on many levels and clearly indicated that more of the same follows. *68 Whisky* depicts a fictitious group of Army Medics in Afghanistan as sex-crazed, drug-trafficking felons. That’s the main theme, with only occasional scenes of courage and heroism laced in just to give the disgraceful show some larger context. *68 Whisky* is the polar opposite of the 70’s TV series *M*A*S*H* that featured dedicated medical professionals frequently engaged in pranks and tomfoolery, albeit there was some anti-war sentiment laced in between the lines. Conversely, *68 Whiskey* puts the Army in a bad light and plants seeds of doubt in the minds of the public. Airing this show on TV is disrespectful to all Army Medics (and Navy Corpsmen!) who routinely risk their own lives in the heat of battle to provide immediate, life-saving care to wounded warriors. (This item is Editor’s opinion)

- NEWS FROM THE BLUE FORCE TRACKER -

ARMY: The first ever Battalion Commander Assessment Program was recently conducted. 800 LTC and major candidates to command underwent a 5-day series of written, verbal, psychological and physical assessments.

NAVY: Naval Research Lab developed manufacturing techniques for ultra-thin, bendable solar panels that will be used as transportable solar blankets and also on unmanned vehicles, plus other powering and charging needs.

MARINES: A \$10 million-dollar contract was just let to produce polymer ammunition for the M-2 “Fifty-Cal” machine gun. The M-2 fires 600 rounds per minute; the new ammo weighs 30 percent less than brass ammo!

AIR FORCE: Hill AFB in Utah has begun using robots to strip paint from A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft during refurbishment; the new robots strip an A-10 in just 9-10 hours, as opposed to a 3-day job by a three-man team.

2020 Calendar: *Board Meetings:* 23 Apr, 25 Jun, 22 Oct, 17 Dec.

General Membership: 26 March, 28 May, 24 Sep, 3 Dec.

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. The winner of the last charity raffle was Colonel Don Gemeinhardt; he donated his winnings to our Benevolent Fund! By the way, we received wonderful letters of appreciation from organizations we donated to in 2019.

Treasury: Our chapter has sufficient operating and reserve funds to cover anticipated 2020 operating expenses.

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

Chapter President: LTC Cliff Davenport
1st Vice President: *Vacant*
2nd Vice President: LTC James Cole
Treasurer: Commander Dave Olson
Secretary: Major Dennis McClish
Chaplain: Reverend (WO3) Robert Herron
Programs Chairman: *Vacant!*
1st Past President & Director: Colonel Gemeinhardt

Director: Colonel (Dr.) Don Gemeinhardt
Director: Captain Allen Stewart
Director: Colonel Joe Cansler
Legislative Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Dana Tucker
Membership Chair: *Vacant!*
JROTC Coordinator: Lt Col G. Jane Harmon
Personal Affairs & TOPS: Lt Col Ted Hayes
Newsletter/Website: Colonel John Liburdi

About This MOAA Chapter: The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is 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, including their families and survivors. MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are nonpartisan, without any political party affiliation, bias, or designation. 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. A one-page membership application form is posted on the “Join Chapter” button on our chapter website homepage; the mailing address for the application is shown right on the form itself. **Please join our chapter!** Our chapter website is at: **www.moaacvc.org**

*Just a few have yet to pay Chapter dues!
Stay in good standing; send your \$25 to:*

**Major Dennis McClish
MOAA CVC Secretary
117 Wildwood Loop
Statesville, NC 28625-8903**

Your Chapter website: **www.moaacvc.org**

MOAA Take Action: **<http://takeaction.moaacvc.org>**

RESERVATION FOR MOAA CATAWBA VALLEY MEETING & DINNER

This is my reservation for MOAA CVC's General Membership meeting and dinner on March 26, (a Thursday) at Lake Hickory Country Club. 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 your check **(\$25.00 per attendee)** to arrive no later than March 23, a Monday, to:



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

U.S. SPACE FORCE SEAL



Per a U.S. Space Force Spokesperson, "The creation of the U.S. Space Force seal pays tribute to the newest Armed Service that organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to the joint force..."

The official also said, "The delta symbol, the central design element in the seal, was first used as early as 1942 by the U.S. Army Air Forces; and was used in early Air Force space organization emblems dating back to 1961." "Since then, the delta symbol has been a prominent feature in military space community emblems." The words "Department of the Air Force" appears on the seal because Space Force falls under the Air Force, similar to the Marine Corps being under the Navy.