

MOAA REPORTER

MOAA Greater Dallas & North Texas Chapter

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General Membership Meeting 12 September 2020

Benefits of Membership



Jim Carman, MOAA Vice President, Council/Chapter and Member Support, will be our guest speaker at our September meeting. MOAA's mission is best captured in its two bylines: "One Powerful Voice" and "Never Stop Serving". MOAA is the leading advocate for a strong national defense and matters affecting active, former and retired members of the Armed Forces. MOAA also offers a myriad of services to its members and to the military community at large. CAPT Carman is a 25-year veteran of the Navy. He joined MOAA in 2012 and, after serving in several positions, now leads MOAA's Councils, Chapters and Member services activities. Carman's presentation will focus on how membership not only benefits us as individuals but the entire military community. He will also provide an update on MOAA's legislative and other initiatives. **Due to the COVID-19 crisis we will not be meeting face-to-face. Instead, we will meet via a Zoom video conference call. Instructions for joining the meeting will be sent via separate email in late August.** Contact Dave Schafer, 214-577-4107, if you have any questions.

General Membership Meeting 6 June 2020

D-DAY June 6, 1944



COL JP Hogan USA (Retired) provided an exciting overview of the events leading up to and during the Allied invasion of Europe at Normandy on June 6, 1944 (D-DAY). COL Hogan provided fascinating background information about the deceptions, strategy, and bravery that led the Allies to successfully establish a beachhead on the shores of Normandy. This was our first virtual luncheon and it proved to be very successful. We had 35 members signed into Zoom with the total attendance estimated to be about 50 members and guests. Our September luncheon will again be virtual. Participating via computer, tablet or phone is convenient, safe and easy.

MOAA Foundation Grants



The MOAA Foundation has awarded two \$5,000 grants to the Chapter. The Community Outreach Grant provides \$5,000 for the Chapter to use to assist Veterans and their families for the following needs: Housing, Food Assistance, Employment, Health (including Behavioral Health), Family Support, Community Reintegration, Financial Assistance, Legal Assistance, and Transportation. The COVID-19 Grant provides \$5,000 for the Chapter to use to assist Veterans and their families in the following areas: PPE supplies, Health and safety supplies, including cleaning products, Housing expenses and repairs (including utilities, internet access, rent, etc.), Emergency, short-term financial support, Transportation assistance, Food and clothing services, and Resources or school supplies for military children. If you know of a military family in need of help, contact Chuck Kelley at 202-210-8336 or Dave Schafer at 214-577-4107.

Veterans Center of North Texas



The Veterans Center of North Texas (VCONT) is back open for business! VCONT is accepting walk-in appointments at their new location 900 E Park Blvd Suite 170 in Plano (same building, different suite). VCONT is ready to help qualified Veterans find financial assistance for rent, utilities, transportation and emergency shelter. They can also provide emergency food and clothing, and help Veterans who have lost their jobs during the pandemic find new employment. If you know of a Veteran family in crisis, have them contact VCONT immediately. They can be reached by phone at 214-600-2966 or email at veterans@vcont.org. For more information on how they can help, visit the VCONT website www.vcont.org.

Why Am I a Member of MOAA?

Personal Reflection by Dave Schafer

While putting together the article about our September luncheon, Benefits of Membership, I began to reflect on why am I a member of MOAA. I joined MOAA National in the mid-1990's a few years after I retired from the Air Force. I paid my Life Member dues, started receiving *The Officer Magazine* and that was it. I didn't take advantage of any member benefits or advocate in support of any MOAA legislative objectives; I simply read the magazine each month. Somewhere around 2005 I saw a notice for a meeting of the Greater Dallas Chapter and decided to attend to see what they were all about. I felt like an outsider at the meeting and didn't much like the program, but something about what they were doing intrigued me. I returned for the next meeting and slowly developed friendships with person who had similar life experiences and belief systems – I guess comraderie. Over time I became more active in chapter activities. I became active in the chapter's JROTC programs, advocacy for State Veterans' programs, and community outreach through the Veterans Center of North Texas. Reflecting on all of this, I haven't become active in MOAA because of the personal benefits it has offered me. Rather, I'm active because it has offered me the opportunity to work with other MOAA member to benefit fellow Veterans. That is why I am a National and Chapter MOAA member.

MOAA's Legislative Mission for 2020



While MOAA's #1 legislative objective for 2020 remains protecting military health care benefits, it has expanded the number of issues it is asking Congress to address. This article provides information about three of the objectives. For more information go to www.moaa.org and click on Advocacy.

Keep Military Pay and Benefits Strong

The 2020 pay raise approved for the military was 3.1%. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, said that he expects next year's military pay raise to be in the same range. Also, on 28 May the U.S. House of Representatives passed a 2.0% cost-of-living increase in Veterans' benefits in parity with the COLA approved by the Social Security Administration. The COLA increase applies to disability and dependent compensation, clothing allowances and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children. Last year, the increase for both veterans and Social Security recipients was 2.8%. The 2018 COLA increase was 1.6%.

Concurrent Receipt for All Retirees

Service members who retired with less than a 50% rating from the VA and those who did not reach the 20-year mark and were medically retired under Chapter 61 do not receive the compensation they deserve. The following, condensed from an article by Mark Belinsky, describes current legislation aimed to provide relief. Maj. Richard Star is a combat veteran who has never smoked a day in his life; he also has terminal lung cancer. As such, Star will medically retire early from the Army after a distinguished

career as a combat engineer that included critical route clearance and road construction missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Those who traveled on those IED-infested roads know that the route clearance engineers are absolute heroes who saved countless military and civilian lives. Unfortunately, following his early retirement, Star and his family will suffer a financial penalty for being forced out of the military and medically retiring him under Chapter 61 of Title 10 – Retirement or Separation for Physical Disability. The Maj. Richard Star Act, announced in a Capitol Hill press conference in March, provides total offset relief for those with combat injuries – ensuring they get their full service-earned retirement based on time in service and grade, as well as their disability compensation from the VA for service-connected injuries or illness. A companion bill is pending in the Senate. The Maj. Star Act is not the whole solution, but it is progress.

Enhance Suicide Prevention Programs and Access to Behavioral Health Care

More than 6,000 veterans die by suicide each year, taking their own lives at a rate one-and-a-half times that of other Americans. Female veterans are at an even higher risk, with a suicide rate of more than twice that of other Americans. From 2005 to 2016, the veteran suicide rate rose by an alarming 26 percent. The VA recently announced the President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide, also known as “PREVENTS.” The 10-point roadmap includes a major public health campaign on veteran suicide prevention. The roadmap will implement changes in how veteran suicide is researched as well, allowing providers to better understand the unique risk profile of every patient. The roadmap will also pursue partnerships that strengthen community-based, nonprofit, and faith-based interventions. This is part of the President’s efforts to reorganize the VA around the principle that our veterans deserve the best treatment available on Earth.

Some Free Time on Your Hands?

The Chapter is looking for volunteers to work with the Board of Directors and Committee Chairs on projects that are important to both MOAA and the Chapter. We have volunteer opportunities ranging from one-time events such as legislative visits to recurring support for committee activities. You can choose to support legislative, membership, JROTC, membership, personal affairs, or community outreach activities. If you would like to help, contact Dave Schafer or at moaschafer@att.net.