President’s Message

LTC Marc Oliveri, USAR (Ret)

Wishing all our MOAA family members a happy and healthy New Year. Much has happened since our last communication. Most recently, we had our leadership forum in Orlando, where many of our chapters attended this informative annual forum.

MOAA national participated, giving support in the form of lectures and personal involvement.

Lt Gen Dana Atkin, MOAA national President and CEO, was our guest speaker at the Friday night dinner and leadership award presentation. Lt Gen Ed Hanlon, the new incoming committee chairman for council and chapters was also present. In addition, COL Terri Coles, Senior Director of Council and Chapters, Col. Dan Merry, Vice President Gov. Relations and LTC Clarence Counts, Deputy Director of Council and Chapters were also in attendance providing us with the latest from MOAA national. A special thanks to Joyce Harte, MOAA Aux, for an excellent presentation to our membership.

Some of you may recall that we have been pushing ahead with storming Tallahassee. I am pleased to announce that we will be “Storming Tallahassee” on March 21st. One of the issues we will be discussing will be veteran homelessness. If you would like to be part of this effort, please email Cal Posner at calposner@aol.com. Hotel accommodations have been arranged and reservation cutoff date for these reservations is February 19th. Cal’s presentation of Storming the Dome will be posted on the council website.

In addition to storming the Dome in Tallahassee in March, I will be joining the other council presidents throughout the MOAA association in “Storming the Hill” in Washington D.C. Some of the issues to be advocated for will be:

**Concurrent Receipt**

**Purpose:** To phase out the deduction of VA disability compensation from service-earned retired pay for all disabled retired service members.

**Eliminate Sequestration**

I will have a full report for your review upon my return.
I want to welcome two new members to our council staff. Welcome aboard Major General Mike Snodgrass. Mike will be taking on the responsibilities of Public Affairs. He will be promoting the Florida Council of Chapters.

Welcome too Maj. Kirk Faryniasz. Kirk will be taking on the responsibilities of Convention Coordinator, replacing retiring COL Troy Scott, on all future conventions. My very best to Troy and some special thanks for all his hard work and dedication to the council.

Any chapter wishing to host any future conventions please contact Kirk at kfaryniasz@hotmail.com.

In keeping with the MOAA motto of “Never Stop Serving” the Florida Council is looking for such a person who would like to continue serving in the capacity as area vice president for the West Central Area replacing Skip Hartnett. Skip will be retiring from this position and is currently looking for a replacement. I wish Skip all the best.

Thank you, Skip, for your Mud Marine humor and your council during your tenure as area vice president. Look forward to our next get together. If interested in serving as area VP for the West Central Area give me a call or drop me a line at ltcolmarc@gmail.com.

Marc
Chaplain’s Message
Chaplain (Col) Charles Caudill, USAF, (Ret) Religious Activities

Friendship

Recently I saw an ad featuring a chubby, young boy with joy on his face hugging a dog. The boy says “I’ve never had a friend before.” That haunted me since friendships have often kept me going when life situations have tried to take me under.

Last week I lost my best male friend who was like my older brother. He had been very physically limited for years having complications with his heart, losing his eyesight and mobility, but his mind never wavered. For the last ten years he sat in “his” chair, never giving up, spending hours with me sharing dreams and solving the problems of the world.

I just returned home from having his funeral. He was already in a coma when I arrived at his beside. When I held his hand and started talking to him he squeezed my hand, barely opened his eyes and tried to give me a smile. Then he slipped back into unconsciousness. That night he died.

He is now only in my heart and mind and shall always be with me. Kahlil Gibran writing about “Friendship” in “The Prophet” said it best:

“And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.”

I call on too many people in their golden years who tell me they are alone since losing their mates. We must seek out our friends, who may also need someone to show them we care. Webster gives us this definition of a friend: “a person whom one knows well and is fond of; intimate associate; close acquaintance.”

I always ask every couple that I marry if they are each other’s best friend. They usually reply that they love each other. But that doesn’t mean they understand what it means to be a friend. A friend is one who stands by you when you don’t agree, brings you sunlight in the rain, weeps with you when you cry and can’t wait to give you a hug just to say “I love you”. There has always been too much emphasis over finances and physical needs. I told
my students in “Marriage and the Family” that it should take a year after meeting a person before you know enough about them to marry.

A true friend is the person who will love you if you are stupid, if you slip and fall on your face, if you do the wrong thing, or if you make mistakes. They will be there to love you and help you under any circumstance.

The first friend you should have is yourself. Be a person with a character that comes from God. I suggest you read this scripture often: *Psalms 51:10-12* “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not the holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

At every wedding I perform, I read the following scripture which exemplifies who we should be in all areas of our life including friendship:

*Philippians 4:8-9* “Finally, brethren, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.”

Let your friends know how much they mean to you today!

**LtGen (R) Lawrence Snowden: 2016 Person of the Year**


Dennis Baker, Commander U.S. Navy (ret.)

"Restless Hearts - What if Fallen Heroes Could Go Home"

www.restlessheartswarriors.com
Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee (SSAC)
Joyce Harte, Member, MOAA Board of Directors
Print & Digital Media Committee

It was good to meet so many of you at Florida’s Winter Conference in Orlando the last week of January. I hope a large number of you will sign up for the “Convention at Sea” the last week of April. The last time we did this, a large number of surviving spouses came, and we had a good time getting together and networking as well as having “fun in the sun.” I understand there are a few cabins left but hurry.

The Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee (SSAC) has made a number of changes to foster better communications. Among these is changing the length of term to four years with the option of extending for two more years. This will provide more continuity and improve productivity. The terms will now start in October to allow new SSAC members to participate with new MOAA board members orientation sessions, giving them insight into how MOAA works. SSAC will add two new "virtual" members in order to improve communications. These two virtual members will not attend board meetings which will allow qualified spouses who do not care to travel because of work, small children, aging parents, or whatever to participate. SSAC will work on the guidelines and applications for both regular and virtual members at the April meeting in D.C. These changes will allow SSAC to be stronger and engage more frequently with other spouses.

We want surviving spouses to apply for both of these positions. We need strong leaders for Florida which has the second highest number of spouses in the country, approximately 31,000. Unfortunately, 94% of these are over 65 which makes communication more difficult.

One of the two major goals for MOAA’S "Storming the Hill" in April is the elimination of the SBP/DIC offset, more commonly known as the "widows' tax." General Atkins, MOAA’S president, has an excellent two-minute video on MOAA’S YouTube Channel. In an easy to understand format, he shows that the average widow loses about $15,000 per year because almost all of her SBP annuity is deducted because of her DIC granted by the VA due to her husband’s death from military related causes. I urge you to watch it.

Keep actively engaging in surviving spouse’s issues such as the unfair SBP/DIC offset. Use our Face Book page: https://www.facebook.com/groups. Search for "Surviving Spouses of MOAA." It’s a closed group that you must ask to join. There’s a world of information there from previous postings, and it also lets you pose a question and someone will get back to you. Use MOAA’s toll free line to the Congressional Switchboard, 1-866-272-6622, and ask to be connected to your senator and/or representative. Make sure to fill out and send in the postcard alerts such as the two in February’s Military Officers’ Magazine” and the ALERTS in the E-mail publication, MOAA Legislative Update. Make your voice count across the many communication outlets available to us. Never stop serving.
Legislative Affairs
Lt Col Bob Bienvenue, USAF (Ret), Legislative Chairman, rbienven@sprynet.com

MOAA Legislative Update:
http://www.moaa.org/takeaction/?tab=Legislative-Action-Center#Legislative-Action-Center

And Now the Campaign Begins Anew

Those of us who attended the FCOC Leadership Forum and SE Regional Symposium the end of January heard a powerful message from MOAA President Lt Gen Dana Adkins, USAF ret., regarding our advocacy mission on behalf of the nation’s servicemembers, their families, retirees and surviving spouses. A message we have heard before but one that is becoming more necessary and more urgent in today’s ideologically divided atmosphere on Capitol Hill.

The number one MOAA Legislative Goal for 2017 is to repeal the sequester which has adversely affected compensation and benefits for all the constituents identified above ever since its inception in 2011. Under the drastically reduced spending limits of sequester, the DOD and Congress has relied on cuts to pay raises, increases in Tricare fees, set-backs in housing allowance formulas, cuts to Commissary funding and other measures in an attempt to reduce the impacts on readiness of our military forces. In retrospect we can say that none of those actions achieved its objectives.

Our service chiefs have all testified before Congress that sequester is the greatest threat to sustaining our military capabilities—this threat is particularly detrimental for the weapons system that has never failed our country—the servicemembers and their families who sacrifice the most for of our freedoms. And in testimony to the HASC as recently as February 7th, the service Deputy Chief-of-Staffs all concurred that a robust supplemental to the FY 2017 defense budget and repeal of the Budget Control Act and its spending caps are essential to getting the services back on track.

Although the President’s FY 2018 Budget request is not expected to hit the desks of Congress until May, our FCOC President Marc Oliveri, LTC USA ret., will be leading three teams of MOAA Directors and Staff on visits to all 29 of Florida’s congressional delegation on April 5th at the annual Storming the Hill to advance MOAA’s Legislative goals, with a sharp focus on repealing the sequester.

Take the following actions to pave the way for those visits to make them more impactful and begin the year-long advocacy mission that is a fundamental responsibility of all MOAA members:

1. To start it off you are urged to send a letter to your Representative to accomplish the following objectives:
   - welcome and introduce those 10 freshman congresspersons in the Florida delegation to your chapter
   - reinforce the grass roots level activism they can expect from MOAA members in their Districts
   - identify the number one legislative Goal and its importance to our “constituents”
   - give advance notice of the meeting the FCOC president will be requesting in April during “Storming the Hill”.


You can find a draft letter to use (which you can edit as appropriate) at this link ….. LETTER (To download the letter, click on the link at the top at the page.)

You can find the local District Office addresses of your congressperson at this link …..REPS

2. In the February Military Officer Magazine, you will find 4 or 8 “tear-out” letters addressed to the Republican and Democratic leaders of both the Senate and House urging them to “avert continuation of Sequestration” and to continue “phasing out the unfair SBP/DIC offset” commonly known as the widow’s tax. The letters can be used by both our members and their spouses. Add a hand-written note to emphasize how important these actions are to providing adequate compensation and to maintaining readiness and training for the currently serving military and to the benefits provided for the welfare of their spouses that were paid for through premiums and the long-term service of now deceased service members.

We ask that you engage all members of your chapter to join in this effort.
FCOC January Leadership Workshop in Orlando

MOAA National staff speaks to the attendees.

Lt Gen Dana Atkins, USAF, Ret.  President & CEO

Col Dan Merry, USAF, Ret.  VP Government Relations

COL Terri Coles, USA, Ret.  Program Director, Council and Chapters

Additional pictures can be found on the FCOC web site: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/moaapr/sets/72157678028416801/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/moaapr/sets/72157678028416801/)

Saturday Night Event at Capone’s…..

Lt Gen Atkins and wife, Laura

(L) Lake & Sumter Chapter President, Paul Hauser & Sharon.  (R) FCOC President Marc Oliveri and Jenine

(L-R FCOC Web Master, John Snyder and Donna, unidentified couple, Janice Charles Caudill, FCOC Chaplain, Bonnie and Lt Gen Ed Hanlon Chair MOAA Council & Chapters.

From MOAA National:  L-R, Dan Merry, Terri Coles, Clarence Counts
Kingdom of the Sun Installs Officers & Remembers
Arlo Janssen, President, Chapter President, KOS/MOAA

January: The Kingdom of the Sun (KOS) Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) held our "Installation Luncheon" meeting at the Ocala Elks Club at 12:30 PM on Thursday, January 5, 2017. The luncheon meeting featured the installation of the KOS Officers for the next year by Lt Col Wayne Brown, USAF/Ret, the FCOC Mid Central Area Vice President.

February: The theme of the February 2, 2017, KOS luncheon was "Things Remembered." The members were asked to bring a memento to the luncheon and to share it with those present. Betty Hayes was the program hostess for this event. A number of very special keepsakes were presented by our KOS members.

(above left) Fred Sass with his H-34 Helicopter

(above right) Peggy Sayat with her father's (WW II Navy) Cattlehorn Ash Tray

(right) Betty Hayes, our Program Hostess, with her family cross.
CAPT Tim Holme, USN (Ret) presents a certificate of appreciation to Susan Gill, the Citrus County Supervisor of Elections, for her presentation to the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Citrus County Chapter’s January luncheon meeting.

MOAA Citrus County Chapter members and spouses listen to the Citrus County Supervisor of Elections, Susan Gill, about the county’s November 2016 election results.

Submitting Articles and Pictures for *The Communiqué*

Articles can be attached to an email. Microsoft Word works best. You can also type your information into the body of an email where it can be copied and pasted into the newsletter. PDF files can also be used.

Pictures should have a .jpg extension. If you are sending pictures from your chapter, please include the chapter name and the names of those in the picture. A few words on what the event is about will help interest the readers.

If you have questions about your submission, contact

Marty Brown
wb2vyk@gmail.com
336-601-1318
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 13, 2017

VA’s Rule Establishes a Presumption of Service Connection for Diseases Associated with Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune

VA to provide disability benefits for related diseases

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published regulations to establish presumptions for the service connection of eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The presumption of service connection applies to active duty, reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions:

• adult leukemia
• aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
• bladder cancer
• kidney cancer
• liver cancer
• multiple myeloma
• non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
• Parkinson’s disease

“We have a responsibility to take care of those who have served our Nation and have been exposed to harm as a result of that service,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “Establishing a presumption for service at Camp Lejeune will make it easier for those Veterans to receive the care and benefits they earned.”

Environmental health experts in VA’s Technical Workgroup conducted comprehensive reviews of scientific evidence, which included analysis and research done by the Department of Health and Human Service’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Environmental Protection Agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the National Toxicology Program, and the National Academies of Science.

Veterans with 30 or more cumulative days of active duty service, at Camp Lejeune during the contamination period are already eligible for certain medical benefits, following passage of the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.

In the early 1980s, volatile organic compounds, trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent, as well as benzene and vinyl chloride, were discovered in two on-base water supply systems at Camp Lejeune. The contaminated wells supplying the water systems were shut down in February 1985.

The area included in this presumption is all of Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River, including satellite camps and housing areas.

The rule will be effective either 60 days after publication in the Federal Register, or following conclusion of the 60-day Congressional Review, whichever is later.
Veterans’ Update

R. Steven Murray, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
Communications Director
Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs

Fighting for Veterans Future in Florida

Governor Rick Scott’s Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $102 million in total funding to support active military, veterans and their families. The budget recommendation was announced Jan. 31.

Supporting Military and their Families – The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $24 million for Florida’s military presence and families, which funds the state’s support of military research and development. This includes the following:

- $2 million for the Florida Defense Support Task Force;
- $3.2 million for the Defense Infrastructure Program;
- $3 million for military base protection, including additional security measures for National Guard armories;
- $6 million for National Guard armories;
- $3.4 million for armory maintenance;
- $750,000 to support Florida National Guardsmen seeking higher education degrees; and
- $5.8 million to support scholarships for children and spouses of deceased or disabled veterans.

Connecting Veterans with the Benefits They Deserve

The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $768,000 to add 10 additional Veterans’ Claims Examiners at the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Veterans’ Claims Examiners are counselors who are responsible for connecting Florida veterans with the federal Veterans Affairs benefits they are entitled to after so bravely serving the United States. Last year, Florida’s 74 Veterans’ Claims Examiners secured $269 million in total federal compensation for Florida veterans and their families.

Expanding Crisis Support Services for Veterans Statewide

The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget builds on Florida’s success as the most military and veteran friendly state in the nation by providing more than $350,000 to expand the Crisis Center Support Line for Veterans beyond the Tampa region. This new, statewide dedicated telephone line (1-844-MYFLVET) will help veterans in need who are facing delays at the federal level by connecting them with local call centers where they can receive referrals to community health services and other community resources. This includes employment, financial, legal, transportation, housing, and other assistance. More than 4,300 veterans in all 67 Florida counties will benefit - an almost fivefold increase over the program’s current capacity. Governor Scott also recommended this funding in his 2016-17 Florida First budget.

Building Homes for Heroes

The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $1 million for Building Homes for Heroes to build and modify homes for veterans who were severely injured while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Building Homes for Heroes supports neighborhood economic advancement and positively impacts construction growth within 32 communities across Florida. Last year, Building Homes for Heroes built or modified 19 project homes which had a projected value exceeding $4 million.

The Florida Defense Support Task Force

The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $2 million for the Florida Defense Support Task Force. The task force is charged with representing the state’s military interests and for strengthening state support for military families and veterans with an emphasis on education, healthcare, employment and family programs.
Veterans Treatment Courts
Governor Scott recognizes that Veterans Treatment Courts provide a valuable service in diverting veterans with mental health and substance abuse treatment needs from the criminal justice system. Governor Scott has supported the expansion of these courts throughout the state. The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget reflects the Governor’s support of Veterans Treatment Courts and recommends $1.4 million to continue funding these courts throughout Florida.

Jobs for Florida’s Veterans
Governor Scott is focused on ensuring Florida remains the most military-friendly state in the nation and that veterans in Florida have every opportunity to succeed by getting a great job upon returning home. That is why the Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $2.5 million to support veterans looking to obtain employment, start their own businesses and make Florida their home. This funding includes:

- $1 million to assist Florida businesses in training and hiring veterans;
- $500,000 to support universities offering veteran entrepreneur training to create or sustain veteran-owned businesses; and
- $1 million so that Florida is for Veterans Inc. (Veterans Florida) can market Florida worldwide as the most veteran friendly state in the nation.

Supporting Florida’s Veterans in Their Communities
The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget recommends $3.4 million to continue supporting the daily operations of Florida’s six state-run veterans’ nursing homes and one assisted living facility. These facilities provide essential services and care to veterans throughout Florida.

The Fighting for Florida’s Future budget also recommends $20 million for the construction of the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie using the original traditional nursing home model.

2017 Edition of the Florida Veterans’ Benefits Guide
The 2017 edition of the Florida Veterans’ Benefits Guide is now available. An interactive version is available on the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org. In addition, 100,000 copies of the 28-page, full color guide have been printed, courtesy of the Florida Veterans Foundation. To request copies, please call (850) 487-1533. Send bulk copy requests to murrayr@fdva.state.fl.us.

Please note: Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from state officials regarding state business are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your e-mail communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.
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The MOAA Florida Council of Chapters (FCOC) is comprised of 44 Chapters with nearly 8,000 members and their families. FCOC is one of MOAA’s largest Councils. MOAA has a membership of over 380,000 members in all 50 States.

The FCOC’s primary communication vehicles are our bi-monthly publication, *The COUNCIL COMMUNIQUE* and our Website [www.MOAAFL.org](http://www.MOAAFL.org) Ads run for one year.

The *COMMUNIQUE* is distributed electronically to all our chapters, MOAA Headquarters in Virginia, and our influential contacts across the state of Florida.

The *COMMUNIQUE* provides a unique forum for businesses to reach a select segment of the population. The membership is patriotic and professional. We encourage your business to reach out to our members by advertising in *The COUNCIL COMMUNIQUE*.

In appreciation of Businesses that also support the FCOC Annual Convention with Ads in the Convention Souvenir Program Book within the last year the FCOC offers a discount for the same size Ad shown on the following Order Form.

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The Council Communiqué is the newsletter of the Florida Council of Chapters (FCOC), Military Officers Association of America, and is published bimonthly: February, April, June, August, October, and December. MOAA, its Councils and Chapters are non-partisan organizations. The Communiqué is intended for wide distribution within the FCOC including Chapter Leaders and all Chapter Members in Florida.

A current issue of The Council Communiqué can be found at the Florida Council of Chapters Web Site: http://www.moaafl.org/. Opinions expressed by writers are their own, and may not express the positions of FCOC or the MOAA.

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