



Greetings Members and Friends,



As we move into 2020 its always good to reflect on the past year and, as is tradition, set "resolutions" that will make us healthier, a better person, or not to repeat bad decisions we made in the past.

At our January Business Meeting the Board presented our Chapter accomplishments from 2019 and how we would like to grow as a Chapter in 2020. We also installed our new elected Officers. The Officers installed for 2020 were:

President – Wes Cox
1st VP – Don Lehman
2nd VP – Michael Walker
Secretary – Robert Williams

Thanks to Mac Chandler and Ginger Branson for their many years of service to the Chapter. Mac will continue to serve as the Chapter Chaplain. We still have vacant positions and are actively soliciting volunteers to fill those vacancies.

Don Lehman and Linda DeMarco are busy putting together our submission for the MOAA Col. Marvin J. Harris Communication Awards. We were awarded the 5-star award for our Newsletter and the 4-star award for our Website in 2019. We're working for 5-star in both categories for 2020!

Our speaker for February's program is U.S. Representative Bradley Byrne or a representative from his campaign office. As you know Rep. Byrne is an avid supporter for our military and veterans and is running for the U.S. Senate Seat in 2020.

As we move into 2020, I ask that all members "resolve" to attend Chapter meetings regularly and participate in Chapter activities. Thank you.

Our next Meeting is February 6th; social hour begins at 6:00pm. Hope to see you all there!

Respectfully,

Wes

Volume 121 Issue 2 February 2020

Officers' Call

Greater Birmingham Chapter Military Officers Association of America

President Wes Cox, Col, USA (Ret)
1st VP Don Lehman, LTC, USMC (Ret)
2nd VP Michael Walker, LTC, USA (Ret)
Secretary Robert Williams, Maj, USA (Ret)
Past Pres. Mark Rubino, LT, USN
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Director Vacant
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Legislative Affairs Wes Cox, Col, USA (Ret)
Personal Affairs Anne Hartline
Surviving Spouse Liaison Donna Martin
Newsletter Linda DeMarco, LTC, USA (Ret)

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.

Thursday, February 6, 2020 Social 6:00 pm, Dinner at 6:30 pm

- **Cost:** \$26.00 per person
- Payment for meal is due at the door (checks are preferred).
- **Location:** Danberry at Inverness, 235 Inverness Center Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242.
- **Reservations:** Contact CAPT Doug Markham, 205-420-2631 or dgmarkham3143@gmail.com **by** Noon on Monday February 3, 2020 to make your reservation. Note: Your reservation is not complete until you have received a confirmation call or email.
- **Menu:** CHICKEN MARSALA WITH GARLIC, ONIONS, AND MUSHROOMS, OVER BUTTERED FETTUCCINE NOODLES SERVED WITH FRESH GREEN BEANS. GREEK SALAD FRESH SPRING MIX WITH BLACK OLIVES, ROASTED PEPPERS, PEPPERCINI, RED ONIONS, CHERRY TOMATOES, FETA CHEESE. DESSERT CARROT CAKE WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING.

Driving Instructions - Danberry at Inverness, 235 Inverness Center Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242

- **Traveling from I-65** (South or North): Take the I-459 interchange toward Atlanta. Proceed north on I-459 and take Exit 19 onto Highway 280 toward Childersburg. Travel approx. 2.2 miles on Highway 280 and turn right onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on right). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.
- **Traveling South on I-459:** Take Exit 19 onto Highway 280 toward Childersburg. Travel approx. 2.2 miles on Highway 280 and turn right onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on right). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.
- **Traveling West on Highway 280:** Turn left onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on the left). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.

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)

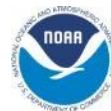
☐ Regular Membership or ☐ Surviving Spouse: ☐ \$20/year ☐ \$35/2 years ☐ **\$50/3 years**

☐ Supporting Membership (\$50) or ☐ Sustaining Membership (\$100)

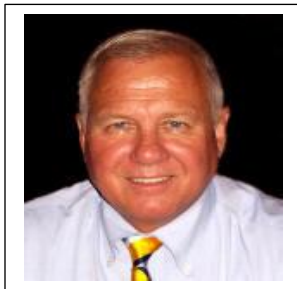
☐ ROTC Affiliation (electronic communications only – no cost)



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



Program speaker: Colonel John Reitzell, USA (Ret)



Colonel Reitzell is a USA veteran and is a member of U.S. Representative Bradley Byrnes' leadership coalition. He will speak on his behalf of Rep. Byrne at our program on February 6th. As you know Rep. Byrne represents Alabama's 1st Congressional District and is running for the U.S. Senate in 2020. You can find more information on Rep. Byrnes at www.byrne.house.gov or his Senate campaign at www.bradleybyrnes.com.

After a 28 year Army career, Colonel John Reitzell moved to Huntsville, AL where he worked until retirement at Dynetics Inc, a Soldier centric Company that specializes in R&D and engineering for the guys at the pointy end of the spear. Col. Reitzell served in the 82d Airborne, the 4th Infantry, the 2d Infantry, the 2d Armored Divisions, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and commanded the famed 1st Battalion 509th Parachute Infantry and is in that unit's Hall of Fame.

His assignments began at platoon leader level and increased in responsibility through Brigade Command. He commanded 2 Infantry Battalions of over 700 Soldiers and a Brigade of over 2,500. In combat Col. Reitzell served as a commander in Light Infantry, Parachute Infantry, and Ranger Infantry. After a tour at the United States Air Force Academy as "the Army guy" where he was the Officer In Charge of the United States Air Force Parachute Team, The Wings Of Blue, Col. Reitzell spent a year in Korea as the operations officer of the "Frontline Brigade" on the DMZ. What followed were multiple years in "black" Special Ops at Ft. Bragg, where he deployed on 36 "real world" operations in support of the US Counter Terrorism mission. Operations such as the invasion of Grenada, the response to the hijacking of TWA 847 and the seizing of the cruise ship Achille Lauro by terrorists are examples of these missions.

Tom Clancy chronicles Col. Reitzell's participation in the Achille Lauro response in the "Chase" Chapter of his book "Shadow Warriors," and New York Times best-selling author W.E.B. Griffin has dedicated his new series of novels on the rising threat of terrorism to John. Col. Reitzell retired in 1997 as the Chief of Staff of the United States Army Infantry School at Ft. Benning, and was inducted into the Madison County, AL Hall of Heroes in 2003. John speaks professionally for the Young America's Foundation and has addressed college students on campuses across the country. He sits on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the National Defense Industrial Association and the Huntsville-Redstone Chapter of The Association of the United States Army.

Col. Reitzell retired with 3 Legions of merit, 4 Bronze Stars with "V" device for valor, the Purple Heart, The Combat Infantryman's Badge, Master Parachutist Badge with over 500 jumps, the Ranger Tab, and numerous other decorations from multiple services and countries. John's wife Glenda is a Gubernatorial appointee to the U.S. Space and Rocket Commission and they have two grown children.

Benefits at Risk as Congress Advances Military Health System Reform Measures

(By Karen Ruedisueli, MOAA's Director of Government Relations, Health Affairs)

Although we were happy MOAA's advocacy efforts paid off with a fiscal 2020 NDAA halting military medical billet cuts, our fight to ensure Military Health System (MHS) Reform improves the military health care benefit is far from over. Despite concerns from advocacy groups, the recently enacted NDAA indicates Congress is not backing down on its vision for MHS Reform.

The legislation's joint explanatory statement includes the following message to the Department of Defense:

Over the past four years, Congress has enacted several provisions designed to guide the Department of Defense in implementing a major reform of the military health system to make it more effective, efficient, and less costly. ... The conferees expect the Secretary of Defense to fully implement the law and to accomplish these critically important reforms expeditiously.

What Is the Purpose Behind Congress' MHS Reform?

For decades, various committees, commissions and federal government entities have issued reports highlighting a need to re-evaluate or restructure the MHS. Most recently, the *2015 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) Report* highlighted numerous MHS shortfalls in both its readiness and beneficiary care missions. The MHS has also been the focus of negative media coverage including a *2014 15 New York Times* series on patient safety concerns and a recent *US News and World Report* investigation.

After the MCRMC report was released, leaders of both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees promised a major reform and oversight effort of the MHS. With the FY17 NDAA, Congress directed a restructuring of the MHS designed to address a variety of problems with both medical readiness and the provision of beneficiary care, including:

- Sub-optimal MTF case load for maintaining uniformed medical provider currency in skills needed for combat casualty care
- Low surgical volumes leading to patient safety issues and concerns about uniformed surgeon skill degradation
- Patient dissatisfaction with access and quality of care/patient experience within MTFs
- A lack of focus on value and patient outcomes in the TRICARE purchased care network

Although numerous lawmakers have stated MHS Reform is not intended as a cost-cutting exercise, Congress has stated their objectives include greater efficiencies and lower total management cost of the MHS.

What Are the Key Elements of MHS Reform?

It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of Congressionally directed change currently underway within the MHS. The FY17 NDAA alone includes 131 pages of MHS Reform provisions. It is helpful to think about MHS reform in terms of three main lines of effort:

TRICARE Reform: The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has already rebranded TRICARE

Standard/Extra to TRICARE Select; established an Annual Open Enrollment period with Qualifying Life Events; created beneficiary groups based on sponsor date of entry into military service; converted TRICARE Standard/Extra percent cost shares to TRICARE Select fixed dollar copays; and significantly increased TRICARE Prime copays. With the next generation of T-5 contracts, DHA is considering a complete reconfiguration of TRICARE contracts to provide greater beneficiary choice and value-based care.

Transition: DHA assumed administration and management responsibilities from the Army, Navy, and Air Force for all U.S. military hospitals and clinics on Oct. 1. Goals include patient facing standardization across the direct care system (i.e., military hospitals and clinics); improved health outcomes, access to care, and patient experience; and lower total management cost.

Transformation: MHS Reform also includes a reconfiguration of the direct care system with a greater focus on readiness and maintaining medical provider currency. Transformation hasn't officially started but will eventually include MTF right-sizing and realignment; conversion of some uniformed medical billets to civilian positions; change in the mix of care provided at MTFs; consolidation of specialty care/establishment of Centers of Excellence; increase in civilian training agreements for combat casualty care skills; expanded eligibility for MTF care for veterans and civilians with the right medical cases.

Our top priority is to ensure beneficiary out-of-pocket costs and access to high quality care are protected. We also stand by to ask the tough questions about how MHS reforms will impact medical readiness and the uniformed provider pipeline.

We are concerned DoD has so far approached MHS Reform as a cost-cutting exercise, without the focus on readiness and beneficiary care improvements Congress intended. Our 2020 health care advocacy efforts will be laser focused on ensuring MHS Reform improves care for beneficiaries while maintaining the value of the military health benefit.

VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Rate Increase for 2020

The basic monthly tax-free DIC benefit will increase from \$1,319.04 in 2019 to \$1,340.14 for 2020, with additional amounts also seeing the 1.6% increase.

If the surviving spouse also gets a Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payment from the deceased veteran's military service, they may see their SBP payment decrease by the amount of the DIC benefit thanks to federal offset rules. However, there is partial reimbursement of this offset, known as the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA).

The Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA)

The SSIA will be paid to surviving spouses who have their SBP payments decreased by the amount of their DIC payments.

The SBP and SSIA are taxable income, while the DIC is not. The SSIA amount for 2020 is \$323. Like DIC, it increases each year based on the annual cost-of-living adjustment.

JANUARY 2020 PICTURES

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS



L TO R: Wally Womack, Past President administering the oath, Mike, Michael Walker, Robert Williams. Don Lehman and Wes Cox

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Well, we made it into 2020. February is a fun month: we have some federal holidays, but most importantly, we celebrate Valentines Day. That being said, I would like to include some verses from the Bible that I find appropriate for this month. It is from 1 Corinthians, verse 13:

¹If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Love one another today, this week, this month, this year.

Mac Chandler
LTC , IN
US Army (Ret)



Armed Forces Spouse Club
February 13, 2020
11:30 am
The Club
Hostess: Jerri Barnhill

For reservations
Contact
Jane Galik
ladyg8r74@gmail.com
205-664-8163

The purpose of this organization is to foster friendship among the spouses of active, retired alive and deceased military personnel of the Armed Forces. In lieu of having many speakers this year, we have chosen locations for comradery-won't you please join us!!!

Surviving Spouse Corner

Widow's Tax Repeal

By this time probably everyone is aware that the Widow's Tax was repealed. Of interest is when will it be effective: The phased-in approach to repeal is really a three-year rollout with a delayed start. No changes will be made to the benefit in calendar year 2020, but the offset will be reduced partially over 2021 and 2022, with full elimination starting on Jan. 1, 2023.

Save the date:

Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Ladies Luncheon
Comfortable Options for Lifelong Living



♥ Happy Valentines Day ♥

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM
CHAPTER INFORMATION**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Herbert Osborne	1
Betsy Frazer	5
Kent Jackson	8
Al Wood	8
Larry Michalove	14
Victor Bey	15
Woody Cox	16
Carol Beall	18
Donna Wall	24

Greater Birmingham MOAA Coins

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.

Personalized MOAA Nametags

MOAA nametags with white lettering on white, approximately the size of a business card with magnetic backs are available for \$8.50 each through J.D. Crawford. Mail your name, rank and branch of service (or other information as applicable, i.e. surviving spouse, etc.) along with \$8.50 for each nametag ordered to James D. Crawford, 3076 Brookhill Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242.

Make checks payable to James D. Crawford.

Recruiter's Corner

Chapter dues renewals:

Please note that Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA dues align to the calendar year. A few members still need to pay 2020 Chapter dues. We have made this as easy as possible, and it now takes only seconds. Someone wanting to renew or even join GBCMOAA for the first time can now pay Chapter dues online at:

<https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>.

It is now fast, easy and secure. Thank you to all members who have shown continued support.

Chapter membership numbers and online directory:

Our chapter membership is now over 181 and projecting 200 members by the end of the year.

The GBCMOAA Chapter website will be a "members only" tab that will require a secure login to access. It is another benefit of belonging. We are working on activating this tab soon and we are also working to publish an online member directory with photos.

Website and social media

The GBCMOAA website is at <http://moaabirmingham.org> Take a look and feel free to send feedback. [Be sure to check it often to see updated calendar events, newsletters, photographs from recent meetings as well as other GBCMOAA activity photographs.](#)

[For Facebook users, search for "MOAA Birmingham" to find us, or go straight to it at: https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/Greater-Birmingham-MOAA-Chapter-161367134657315/](#)

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Consulting Petroleum Geologist

AAPG CPG #4560

Lifetime memberships:

MOAABirmingham.org

AlabamaMarine.org

VVA.org - DAV.org

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



Still serving veterans – Once a Marine always a Marine



Our upcoming dinner meetings will be 06 February 2020 and 05 March 2020