



Greetings Greater Birmingham Chapter (MOAA) Members and Friends,

The coronavirus pandemic continues to linger and COVID-19 cases are on the rise in our area. I would encourage you all to continue to consider the coronavirus a serious health concern and do what is right to protect yourselves and those around you.

We will not meet in August. Our first concern is your health so we will keep this foremost in our minds as we plan when and where to meet in the future.

I participated in a virtual meeting of the Alabama Council of Chapters on July 14th. All Alabama Chapters have stopped monthly meetings and have cancelled or postponed annual fund-raising events, which will make a significant impact on local scholarship and other programs throughout the state. MOAA National has also postponed their annual membership meeting and LOE Award presentation, which was scheduled for October. MOAA National has announced a virtual membership meeting on October 19th. Details of the meeting will be on the MOAA website.

The Alabama Council is seeking a replacement for the Surviving Spouse Liaison position. This is an important position responsible to coordinate the Alabama actions concerning Surviving Spouses and coordinate with MOAA's Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC) which advocates for legislation affecting Surviving Spouses. Anne Hartline was the past Council Surviving Spouse Liaison and is currently the Chairperson of the MOAA Surviving SSAC. Recent articles in "Over The Mountain Journal" and the "Hoover Sun" detailed Anne's work with the SSAC. Contact Anne if you are interested in details of this position. If you are interested in this position, please contact me.

I was officially notified of our Chapters selection of the 5-star Communications Awards for both our Newsletter and Website. Congratulations and many thanks to Don Lehman (Website) and Linda DeMarco (Newsletter) for their hard work and contributions to our Chapter. We will have a formal presentation at our first meeting after the quarantine is lifted.

Continued page 3

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)

Treasurer Doug Markam, CPT, USN (Ret)

Past Pres. Mark Rubino, LT, USN

Director J.D. Crawford, Col, USA (Ret)

Director Mark Melanson, Col USA (Ret)

Director Vacant

Chaplain Mac Chandler, LTC, USA (Ret)

TOPS Liaison Vacant

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.

NO MEETING IN AUGUST

***Due to the coronavirus, the April newsletter was not published, and the May newsletter was abbreviated**

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



President's Message (continued)

Ginger Branson was recently selected as the Hoover Chamber of Commerce 2020 Freedom Award recipient. Ginger is the Commander of American Legion Post 911 and the past GBCMOAA Board Secretary for many years. She continues to be continually active in our Chapter. In fact, I cannot remember a Veterans event in Birmingham that I attend that Ginger was not present. She is truly dedicated to her work with and for veterans. Congratulations Ginger!

Please continue to support MOAA's legislative actions via letters, emails and phone calls. Remember our Chapter mission is to, "benefit the members of the uniformed services, their families and survivors and to advocate for a strong national defense, while providing needed support to the community and its members." Please stay active in your support.

Please continue to -- wash your hands often, maintain social distance, and wear a mask!

Respectfully,

Wes

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Greetings everyone. I hope that this note finds you still safe and Covid free!! I know that none of us could have guessed back in March that at this time of the year we would still be socially distancing, wearing surgical masks, and washing our hands every time we touch something. Heck, social distancing was not even a term that any of us even used back then. Neither was the acronym ANTIFA, nor the letters BLM. So much has changed in our country that all of us are wondering, if not out loud, at least to ourselves, what the heck is going on?

In my humble opinion, what is going on in our country now was written in the Bible by the Apostle Paul many, many years ago in his letter to the Ephesians. It is found in Chapter 6, verse 12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." We have seen many strange things happening during 2020, almost all have been aimed at the President of the United States, and the status quo. Right is called wrong, things that should never have happened, the media continues to focus on social issues that apparently cannot be solved by individuals.

So many of the issues that we see happening our country today can be solved if everyone would do just two things written in Matthew 22:37-40. These verses, spoken by Jesus, say "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

What we see now in our country is the result of our nation no longer being a Christian nation. For us to survive, we must ALL return to our Founders ideals, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. If we do not, we will soon become another failed socialist state. I ask you to pray for our state, our nation, and especially our President. May God continue to bless the United States of America.

Mac Chandler
LTC, IN, US Army (Ret)

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

MOAA Legislative Affairs Update Webinar – July 15, 2020

I had the opportunity to listen to the MOAA Legislative Update on Military and Veterans Benefits presented by LtCol Shane Ostrom, USAF (Ret) and CAPT Paul Frost, USN (Ret). The webinar lasted about an hour and focused on the status of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and MOAA legislative successes in 2020. Below is a brief outline of the information covered on the 2021 NDAA. Also, I want to bring to your attention to this information venue that MOAA offers for us all. After reviewing the upcoming Webinar's on the website they are mostly focused on military officers transitioning into a career after active duty. But, during our time of isolation and health restrictions MOAA may use this means to offer more information to keep members informed of ongoing legislative actions and needs.

Draft 2021 NDAA status:

- The draft NDAA is out of the House Armed Services Committee (SASC) and has not been released from the House Armed Services Committee (HASC).
- Major themes are:
 - Modernization of advanced technology in operations,
 - Establishment of the Space Force,
 - Assessment of business reliance with China.
- Major provisions are:
 - 3% active duty pay increase,
 - Temporary stop to Medical staff cuts,
 - Waive pharmacy cost share during medical emergencies,
 - USCG pay continuation during periods of government shutdowns,
 - Commissaries and Military housing issues.
- What's not in play:
 - Concurrent receipt for disability rated veterans at less than 40% (Star Act). MOAA is continuing to work this issue.

There is detailed Information on most of these issues on the MOAA website, Advocacy tab.

Some recent updates to our website!

Check out our website for monthly updates at: <http://moaabirmingham.org/>. We have added recent photos to the Photo Gallery tab, new links to the Spouses/Surviving Spouses page (under the Chapter Info tab) and more useful links to the "Other Links" tab. And if you are wondering who that was sitting across the table from you at our last live meeting, try looking them up in the Photo Directory, which is under the Members Only tab. Yes, you need a log-in and password for that which is managed by our web developer. Just follow the directions for joining if you need a log-in. Any problems email me at don.lehman1@gmail.com and will get you squared away.

Don Lehman
MOAA website administrator

Chapter Membership Report

Chapter Membership Report

GBC welcomed 3 members since last month but 3 long-time members moved out of the area this year, and will be greatly missed. Chapter recruiting activities included sending invites to 26 new prospects in July. To help us continue to grow, referrals are becoming increasingly valuable. People may not be aware of MOAA, or may not be aware they are eligible to join MOAA until someone tells them.

For new member referrals, mail the form (appears on the next page) to the following chapter address:

Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA
P.O. Box 530153
Birmingham, Alabama 35253

Thank you to those who have shown continuous support. Remember to bookmark and check GBC's MOAA website: <http://moaabirmingham.org> to show prospective members and view the latest updates.

Fall Recruiting and Retention Drive

We live in interesting times and I can only ask that all GBC members commit to renew for 2021 as a show of support next month. Further details are to follow in September's chapter newsletter. When the open season for renewing goes into full swing, you can mail payment to the below physical address, or just renew online at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>

Dues Options

Until it changes, **1-Year dues are still \$20** (2 Years = \$35). The 3-Year chapter renewal option is the best bargain at \$50. First time prospects can join GBC MOAA online as well. Additionally, if you are an annual National MOAA Premium member, you can pay your annual national dues online. For National BASIC members, it is always a good time to consider upgrading to Premium or Life membership.

Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA Eligibility:

The ordinary GBC chapter area is Blount, Chilton, Coosa, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties. Warrants, Chief Warrants, or commissioned officers of the armed forces (Regular, Reserve, National Guard, Retired) as well as USCG, NOAA, and USPHS commissioned officers can join MOAA.

If you know of someone who is eligible to join, I am asking for your help in referring them. We do have members outside of the ordinary chapter area who like belonging to GBC MOAA. Please use the form on the next page to have interested applicants fill out.

Michael A. Walker
LTC(Ret), USA
Membership Chair
zxywalk@gmail.com
contact@MOAABirmingham.org

Desert Storm veteran Branson receives 2020 Hoover Freedom Award



The Hoover Area Chamber of Commerce and Hoover Veterans Committee honored retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Ginger Branson as the recipient of the 2020 Hoover Freedom Award on July 16.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Paul Pocopanni, chairman of the Hoover Veterans Committee, presented the award to Branson during a ceremony at the Pentagon Plaza at Aldridge Gardens. The award presentation was part of the chamber's July meeting, which was held virtually via a Facebook Live broadcast due to the resurgence of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Branson is a resident of Vestavia Hills but is commander of the Hoover-based Ryan Winslow American Legion Post 911. She joined the U.S. Army Reserve in 1973 and served for 28 years, including two years of active duty in 1990 and 1991. She spent nine years as a nurse (four as head nurse) for the 75th Field Hospital in Tuscaloosa, four years as a nurse with the 341st Medical Battalion in Dallas and five months as the charge nurse for the medical intensive care unit of the 251st Evacuation Hospital in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. She also was deployed on medical missions in Paraguay, Panama and El Salvador, usually in support of Special Forces.

Branson concluded her time with the Army Reserve as the head nurse of the intermediate care unit of the 75th Combat Support Hospital in Tuscaloosa from 1991 to 2001. She also has 44 years of experience as a civilian nurse, working in home health, diabetes education, emergency room medicine, teaching, surgery, orthopedic rehabilitation and psychiatric nursing before retiring in 2013.

Pocopanni said Branson has been a tireless advocate for veterans, long-term supporter of patriotic ideals and role model for the community. In addition to being commander of the Ryan Winslow American Legion Post 911, Branson also is commander for the American Legion's 21st District, which covers Jefferson County. She represents the American Legion on the Veterans Administration Volunteer Services Committee and has served as secretary of the greater Birmingham chapter of the Military Officers Association of America. Branson also is a local director of the Wreaths Across America program, leading volunteer efforts to place more than 700 wreaths on veterans' graves at Jefferson Memorial Gardens on John Hawkins Parkway in December. She also is on the support committee for the Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo. "She is a multi-tasker, to state the obvious," Pocopanni said. "She doesn't slow down. She's a whirlwind. She's always on the go, a take-charge person. ... Her volunteer work knows no limits."

Branson wrote a book detailing her military career titled "Bend My Dog Tags and Send Me Home," which is available on Amazon. In 2015, Branson was named the Military Officers Association of America Veteran of the Year, and in 2016, she received the Outstanding Veteran Volunteer Award from the Alabama Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the DAR Distinguished Citizen Medal from the group's Old Chisolm Trail chapter in Dallas. In 2019, she was awarded the Positive Maturity Volunteer Spirit Award, and she is scheduled to be inducted into the Alabama Senior Citizen Hall of Fame. "Her professionalism both as a nurse and Army officer and steadfast desire to help our veterans are unmatched," Pocopanni said.

Branson said receiving the Hoover Freedom Award is quite an honor because she knows some of the previous recipients and considers them to be among her heroes.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, she has spent four months home alone and discovered that there are many lonely people right now. Every afternoon, she tries to call one or two World War II, Korean War or Vietnam War veterans and do a "buddy check" to see how they are doing and simply listen to them. Because of their age and/or health complications, many of them are exponentially more likely to die of COVID-19 if they get infected with it, she said. "They can't go anywhere, not even to church, which is for a lot of them their lifeline," Branson said. "For many, solitude has brought about loneliness, and loneliness for months on end is agony and can lead to hopelessness and despair." Branson encouraged chamber members and others to look over their contact lists and make some calls. "Please do your part to help turn someone's lonely day into a brighter one." (Reprinted from the Hoover Sun)



Armed Forces Spouse Club WILL NOT MEET UNTIL SEPTEMBER

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!!!

By Cindy Bondi,

Surviving Spouse Advisory Council member

When I think back to before my husband's passing, I remember how out of touch I felt about our financial situation. He paid the bills; handled the banking, investments, and insurance policies; and collected tax information. It is not that I could not have taken over the finances after his cancer diagnosis, but it was one of the last functions that he was able to carry out, even in his weakening condition. I could not take that control away.

What I did begin to do behind the scenes was make lists. My first concern was his passwords, not only for his computer but also for all the banking and service websites. He managed to keep a record for me, along with updated changes, on a thumb drive.

Second, the bills were a concern. I requested that even though he was paying them online, I would prefer to get a hard copy in the mail for all bills and end-of-year tax statements. That way, I would be assured not to miss a bill payment, and I would be better prepared for the next tax season should I need to take over.

Third, some bills were being paid directly on our credit cards. This was not as much of a concern to me because most charges have phone number to call if anything questionable appears on a statement.

I gave him a few tasks to work on, for which he was happy to comply. He made calls to, for example, the Gas and Light Co., to inform them that he wanted my name to be put on the accounts along with his.

Credit cards we had been using were issued in both of our names, but I was only an authorized user, rather than a joint account holder. This caused an automatic closing out of the credit card after notification of my husband's death. This chaos could have been avoided had I been a joint account holder.

DD-214 Forms are requested after a death, and so getting it ahead of time and storing it in an accessible location is helpful. A safety deposit box is not accessible during the weekend and so is not the best location to store.

One of the first lists I made during this time contained the names and phone numbers of a handful of people in my life who could spread the word for me to other friends and relatives.

My lists could go on and on, but I want to stress that no matter how prepared we are to lose a spouse, it is always an unavoidable process to get through all the paperwork.

GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Bobby Horsley | 4 |
| Steve Coleman | 7 |
| Sam Sparks | 12 |
| Jack Natter | 14 |
| Lawrence Brassell | 16 |
| Lynn Hendricks | 17 |
| David Burford | 18 |
| Terri Stricklin | 19 |
| Rose Marie Ritz | 20 |
| Laurie Berenotto | 25 |
| Ginger Branson | 26 |
| Sam Killian | 28 |
| Tony Berenotto | 29 |

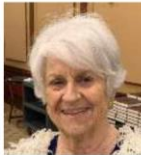
MOAA on-line photo directory

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 have 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)



Click on these to
access website
and/or Facebook



Website



Find us on:
facebook®

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.



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HOMEWOOD

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

205-879-3401 RidoutsValleyChapel.com

Donald Lehman

LtCol USMCR (retired)



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



No meeting in July