



Greetings Greater Birmingham Chapter (MOAA)
Members and Friends,

The coronavirus pandemic cases and deaths in Alabama seem to be travelling on a downward trend thanks to most people complying with the mask and social distancing directives. Hopefully, the Labor Day holiday does not reverse this favorable trend. I want to thank you all for being leaders in fighting the coronavirus and doing what is right to protect yourselves and those around you.

We had a successful meeting via Zoom in September. Commissioner Kent Davis gave a highly informative talk on the Alabama State Department of Veterans Affairs. I would encourage you to watch the recorded copy on YouTube if you were unable to join us in September. It is a "non-listed" video and can only be accessed by clicking on the link <https://youtu.be/awlcBWS5OGI>. We will continue to have meetings using Zoom until we are able to meet again in person. Details of each meeting will be in the newsletters.

This year's National Veterans Day parade has been cancelled. The committee is looking at producing a virtual video to honor Veterans and is considering the feasibility of hosting the Veterans Awards dinner at a location where the pandemic restrictions applied by the State and CDC can be supported. The virtual video parade will highlight the active duty and veteran organizations in this area. We will inform you once the plans are firm.

The Alabama Veterans Memorial Foundation has also cancelled the Stepstone Dedication Ceremony previously scheduled for November 8. They are working to create a virtual ceremony to honor Stepstone honorees and their families.

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.

FIRST VP REPORT

So "Ground Hog Day" used to be one of my all-time favorite movies, but I have been feeling like Bill Murray for the past 5 months and it is no fun! Patricia's even threatening to get a dog (I am not very good company?), one of the things that we said we would never do when we got married nine years ago. Things have changed for certain though with the COVID, so I guess we will all need to learn how to adjust.

We have been adjusting with our MOAA meetings too and I hope that everyone enjoyed our first ever Zoom meeting in September; it is quite easy to use so please join us on the next one. We will do more Zooms (think the next one will be in November) and since I am the speaker chair, I plan on trying to have someone interesting to present to us at most future meetings. VA Department of Alabama Commissioner Kent Davis gave us an excellent talk in September, and it is still available via the YouTube link in the President's message above if you would like to watch. We will try to keep the talks short and interesting and on topics of interest to our group. I have some ideas and if any members have someone they would like to recommend, please let me know. Thanks, stay safe, be well and look forward to seeing everyone via Zoom or in person.

Don Lehman

First Vice President and Speaker Chair
don.lehman1@gmail.com

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)

The Wreaths Across America campaign has begun. Since our Veterans Day ceremonies will be curtailed this year, I would suggest that you buy a wreath(s) that will be placed on each grave at the Alabama National Cemetery in December to honor our Veterans. You can donate through the Support Committee website (www.scalnc.org) or use the form that is included in this newsletter. (See information and application on page 11).

MOAA National" Summer Storming 2020" was a huge success with many MOAA members contacting their Representatives on Military Health Care Issues. Thanks to all of you who participated. 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

Well, here it is October, and we are still in the grasp of the Covid-19 Pandemic; almost 139,000 cases of Covid-19 have been reported in the state of Alabama with over 2,200 deaths. What still touches me most through all of this is not all the sickness and the deaths, but the FEAR that still appears to be gripping everyone. Last month we finally began returning to our church for the traditional services ...socially distanced, of course. It was so good to gather for something that I will never take for granted again! I am not so sure that I like this "new normal," but we all have to do our part to stop the spread of this virus, especially since we are all "older adults!"

Our pastor's lesson for our first day back as a church family was about grief, and grieving. From Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:4: "Blessed are those who grieve, as they will be made glad." There has certainly been much to grieve about since this past March, hasn't there? So, who will be made glad, and how will that happen? As simple as this may sound, let me offer up some old advice, from the center verse of the Bible: Psalm 118:8: It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man." When we get back to our country's roots, and put God first in everything we do, then I honestly believe that we will soon be glad.

October usually brings us several fun days, among them Columbus Day, and Halloween, and for Alabama football, the Bama-UT game on the third Saturday of the month. This year, please be safe when and where you gather! I do not know how we will be doing Halloween this year; I suppose it will be some version of Trunk or Treat. Please do your best to give the kids something to be happy about. I just hope and pray that we will get through the entire month Covid-free.

Most of us know portions of Psalm 91, sometimes called the "Warrior's Prayer." I read the first four verses just about every day: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High **WILL** abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is he who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He **WILL** cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

Friends, please continue to pray for our community, state, and country. Have FAITH, not FEAR. Keep WASHING YOUR HANDS and keep Social Distancing. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. As Christ said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I WILL give you rest."

God Bless. See you all when this is over.

Mac Chandler
LTC, IN, US Army (Ret)

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

This month I am sending information on the various assessments for and about veterans that are being conducted at the National, State, and local levels. When you receive a request to provide information, I would encourage you to respond. These different agencies and programs need all veterans help to focus on what is most important.

Veterans Affairs Veteran Suicide Prevention Program

A five-minute survey will help a multiagency effort to combat suicide among veterans, with results used to determine where resources should be deployed and how those in trouble can access the care they need.

Servicemembers, caregivers, veterans, military family members, VA employees, and others can take a five-minute survey, which is part of the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) program. Under an executive order signed in March 2019, PREVENTS aims to coordinate suicide-prevention efforts from the VA and other organizations, both within and outside of the government, to create an "aspirational, innovative, all-hands-on-deck approach to public health."

To do that, the PREVENTS office has worked with 15 agencies and more than 150 subject-matter experts as part of its "Roadmap" planning process. Officials have also reached out to military and veterans service organizations, including MOAA, to partner in these efforts and identify areas of need. This survey is located on the MOAA Website (moaa.org)

Alabama State Department of Veterans Affairs

In 2019, the Alabama Legislature passed a joint resolution, sponsored by State Rep. Neil Rafferty (D-Birmingham), creating the Alabama Task Force on Veterans Suicide. That new nine-member task force will investigate what is causing the elevated rate of suicide among Alabama's veterans and figure out how to prevent more vets from taking their own lives.

The suicide problem seems to affect Alabama more than other states. In 2017—the latest year for which data is available—124 Alabama veterans took their own lives, a rate of 33 per 100,000 people. The VA said that rate is higher than the national average for veterans (31) and higher than Alabama's population rate (22). Alabama's veteran suicide rate is also nine percent higher than other southern states.

The problem is probably worse than the numbers show because suicide is often under-reported. Coroners usually do not classify death as suicides if there is some doubt because of the stigma and loss of benefits to survivors.

Greater Birmingham Veterans Needs Assessment

Vettes4Vets and the University of Alabama have teamed to conduct and assessment for the needs of Veterans in the Greater Birmingham. As a veteran you are eligible and encouraged to participate in focus groups, surveys, and other activities to identify those needs. Information on this study can be found at:

<https://uamilitarysocialworkresearch.wordpress.com/> Help by completing this survey.

University of Alabama

The Office of Military Families and Veterans is an initiative of the School of Social and focuses on the military affiliated community. Recent projects have looked at student veterans and wellness, opioid use, and misuse within the Alabama veteran population, and needs assessments with a goal of learning more about the veterans within the local communities and what their needs are. The Office of Military Families and Veterans Director and Primary Investigator for the Birmingham Veterans Needs Assessment is Dr. David Albright.

Chapter Membership Report

Chapter Membership Report

The fall membership renewal drive is here. **The goal is 100% renewal of current members.**

We will send out reminders between now and the end of the year but to avoid that you can pay your 2021 membership dues right now with one of two primary means of renewal:

1. Snail Mail: You can mail payment directly to the following GBC MOAA physical address:

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

2. Electronic: Conveniently renew online at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>

Chapter Dues Options

Until it changes, GBC has three membership dues options:

1 Year dues are \$20

2 Year dues are \$35

3 Year chapter dues are \$50 and is the best renewal bargain

It is always a good time to consider upgrading your National MOAA membership level to Premium or Life.

Thank you to those who have shown continuous support.

For new member referrals, mail the form that appears on the next page.

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

Legislative Update continued:

Vettes4Vets

Vettes4Vets® is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that plans, organizes, and oversees various fund-raising events annually to help our Veterans. Proceeds are distributed to vetted individuals and/or other 501(c)(3) non-profit foundations in good standing, who help Veterans, current military personnel, and/or their family members in distress and need. Since its conception, Vettes4Vets® has raised over \$350,000 to help Veterans!

THE LARGER OUR NUMBERS, THE GREATER YOUR VOICE.

Why MOAA chapter membership matters.



MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM FOR MOAA AND Greater Birmingham Chapter - AL02

Name
Rank Branch of Service
☐ Active ☐ Retired ☐ Former ☐ Reserve ☐ National Guard ☐ Surviving Spouse
Spouse name
Address
City State ZIP
Date of birth Telephone
Email

(To ensure deliverability of MOAA communications, please provide a personal email address.)

Are you a member of MOAA? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

MOAA Member Number (if known)

Not a MOAA national member yet? Check here to receive a BASIC Membership at no cost to you.



And, for only \$4 a month, you can upgrade to **PREMIUM** membership, giving you immediate access to a full spectrum of career and financial resources, exclusive publications, college scholarships for dependents, and countless discounts on products and travel. **Visit moaa.org/join to learn more.**

How did you hear about MOAA Chapter involvement?

Are you a member of any other MOAA Chapter(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which one(s)?

To complete enrollment:

- **Fill in this form** on your computer, save it, and email it to [add chapter contact information] as an attachment. Do not include credit card information. We will contact you to finalize payment if required; or
- **Print it out**, fill it in by hand, and mail it with a check made out to [add chapter payment info]; or
- **Go to** [insert chapter webpage]

You will be opted in to receive e-communications from MOAA and your local chapter. You will be able to opt out of any further e-communications at any time. MOAA will not sell or share personal information.

Chapter membership and dues information:

First year - FREE

One year - \$20

Two years - \$35

Three years - \$50



Armed Forces Spouse Club
Previously the Armed Forces Spouse Club will be deactivated

Surviving Spouse Corner: Navigating the First Year After Loss

By: Barbara Smith, Surviving Spouse Advisory Council

You have become a surviving spouse. Intense agony comes with grief. People grieve in different ways. There is no right or wrong way, you just need to find your way. Grief is private and personal. It is OK to cry. It is OK not to cry. It is OK to laugh.

The first year after losing your spouse will be extremely difficult. You will have birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays without your loved one. Lifetime events become very painful. There will be days when you feel heartbroken.

Reach out to family, friends, whoever brings you comfort, and do not be afraid to share your thoughts and fears with them. Love from those around you and that are close to you can be very healing. Don't be afraid to seek counseling if you need to or see your doctor.

This is also a good time to pursue a hobby, volunteer, travel, read, write, take an exercise class or dance lessons, sign up for a cooking class, or become more active in your church, etcetera. You don't get over the loss of your loved one; you learn to live with it. Nothing you do in the future will change your love for the person who died.

My hope for you is that you will find the strength to get through this. I hope you find a little happiness in each day and that remembering your spouse brings a smile to your face.



GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Preston Huddleston	1
Sue Ruffing	1
Vicki Edwards	2
Carolyn Robinson	3
Bill Satterfield	9
Emma Vaiton	13
Robert Williams	13
Margie Argo	16
Barbara Stone	21
Janice Houck	22
Danny Sample	26
Reuben Melton	27
Angel Vazquez	27
Dorsey Ingram	31
Christy Spruiell	31

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.

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.

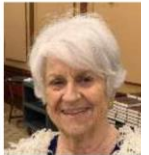
MOAA on-line photo directory

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 gave 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®

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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government-issued marker, presidential certificate and much more. We are also able to offer a FREE Veterans Planning Guide that includes worksheets and valuable information.

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We invite you to call us for more information.



RIDOUT'S VALLEY CHAPEL

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:

MOABirmingham.org

AlabamaMarine.org

VVA.org - DAV.org

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

Still serving veterans – Once a Marine always a Marine



Twelfth Annual Wreaths Across America – 19 December 2020 *Alabama National Cemetery* *Montevallo, Alabama*



Remember - Honor - Teach

Updated 11 Aug 2020

The Blue Star Salute Foundation, Inc. (BSSF) needs sponsors for our 12th Annual Wreaths Across America project -- a nationwide fundraising endeavor to provide a live Maine Balsam Wreath for each Veteran's grave each Christmas season. Wreaths sponsored by this BSSF endeavor are for Veteran's graves in the **Alabama National Cemetery (ALNC)**, located on HWY 119 in Montevallo. The 2020 Remembrance Ceremony will be held at 11AM on December 19, 2020. The cost to sponsor a wreath is \$15.00. In 2020, we will need approximately 7,500-8,000 wreaths for our Cemetery. All wreath sponsors as well as family members of those buried within ALNC are invited and strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the wreath-laying ceremony.

To sponsor wreaths for the ALNC, please complete this form and return it, along with your payment, to BSSF, PO Box 661, Chelsea AL 35043. **Your checks or money orders must be made payable to BSSF**, for: Wreaths Across America. For names to be included on the BSSF "In Honor/In Memory" display for 2020, forms must be received no later than November 30, 2020. Wreath sponsorships are accepted throughout the year. Each sponsorship is tax deductible. For sponsorships of \$250 or more, a donation acknowledgment will be sent to the email address indicated below. For more information, please visit our website www.bluestarsalute.org.

Wreaths Across America Sponsorship Form

Please print clearly

Name of Individual/Organizational Sponsor: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Sponsorship Amount: _____

In Honor of (living): _____

In Memory of (deceased): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



Zoom meeting November