



Greetings Greater Birmingham Chapter (MOAA)
Members and Friends,

The temperature so far has been up and down as we move into fall and winter months and the holiday season. It has been cool enough however to give us some beautiful foliage.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic is still with us. Good news is it appears that a vaccine is on the horizon. Hopefully, the Federal Government can sensibly transition and devise a safe, efficient plan to get us all vaccinated! Please continue doing what is right to protect yourselves and those around you.

We will not have a Zoom meeting in December.

But we will conduct a "buddy check" of all members during the month. The Chapters annual Business Meeting will be conducted in January 2021 via Zoom. The Board will discuss our Chapters financial status, future Chapter and ladies' programs, and install our new officers. Please attend the meeting and let the board know where you would like the Chapter go in the future. We do have Board vacancies that need to be filled. Change in leadership is good and brings about new ideas and direction that improves organizations. Please consider becoming a Board member; your ideas for future growth and activities will make for a better, more robust Chapter.

Wreaths Across America campaign has begun. Placement of the Wreaths on each grave at the Alabama National Cemetery is tentatively scheduled for December 19th. Once plans are finalized, we will forward details of how to volunteer. You can buy a wreath(s) through the Support Committee website (www.scalnc.org).

The Tots-for-Tots campaign has also begun. You can donate at bessemer-al.toysfortots.org.

Cynthia and I wish you all a happy holiday season and the absolute best of everything for 2021.

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

Respectfully,
Wes

Volume 120 Issue 10* December 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)

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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.

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

*'Twas the night before Christmas,
he lived all alone,
in a one bedroom house made of
plaster and stone.*

*I had come down the chimney
with presents to give,
and to see just who
in this home did live.*

*I looked all about,
a strange sight I did see,
no tinsel, no presents,
not even a tree.*

*No stocking by mantle,
just boots filled with sand,
on the wall hung pictures
of far distant lands.*

*With medals and badges,
awards of all kinds,
a sober thought
came through my mind.*

*For this house was different,
it was dark and dreary;
I found the home of a soldier,
once I could see clearly.*

*The soldier lay sleeping,
silent, alone,
curled up on the floor
in this one bedroom home.*

*The face was so gentle,
the room in such disorder,
not how I pictured
a United States soldier.*

*Was this the hero
of whom I'd just read?
Curled up on a poncho,
the floor for a bed?*

*I realized the families
that I saw this night,
owed their lives to these soldiers
who were willing to fight.*

*Soon round the world,
the children would play,
and grownups would celebrate
a bright Christmas day.*

*They all enjoyed freedom
each month of the year,
because of the soldiers,
like the one lying here.*

*I couldn't help wonder
how many lay alone,
on a cold Christmas Eve
in a land far from home.*

*The very thought
brought a tear to my eye,
I dropped to my knees
and started to cry.*

*The soldier awakened
and I heard a rough voice,
"Santa don't cry,
this life is my choice;*

*I fight for freedom,
I don't ask for more,
my life is my god,
my country, my corps."*

*The soldier rolled over
and drifted to sleep,
I couldn't control it,
I continued to weep.*

*I kept watch for hours,
so silent and still
and we both shivered
from the cold night's chill.*

*Then the soldier rolled over,
with a voice soft and pure,
whispered, "carry on Santa,
its Christmas day, all is secure."*

*One look at my watch,
and I knew he was right.
"Merry Christmas my friend,
and to all a good night."*

- a Marine stationed in Okinawa, Japan

FIRST VP REPORT

Happy holidays to all and I hope that we can start meeting live again shortly into the new year. The Zoom meeting for January will be on the afternoon of 14th, so please consider joining us. We are getting better at the zooming and are trying to make the virtual meetings engaging, informative and sometimes entertaining.

I have been nominated to serve as the new president and have decided to accept the position if approved by the chapter members in attendance at the January Zoom meeting. The hard work and devotion to duty that Wes has shown over the past three years has been exceptional! I can only hope to do as well. He has done a great job in keeping and making the Birmingham Chapter even better, especially in the trying times this year with the COVID pandemic. We couldn't talk him into being "president for life", so I look forward to working with our wonderful board of directors and all of the membership in 2021 and 2022!

Don Lehman
First Vice President and President elect
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



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Isaiah 9: 6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Luke 2: 8-19 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to ALL people. For there is born to you this day, in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Have a very Merry Christmas everyone. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. God Bless.

Mac Chandler

LTC, IN, US Army (Ret)

History of Christmas in the Military

Christmas has long been celebrated in the military, even in times of war. Perhaps the most famous celebration of Christmas in the military is the Christmas Truce of 1914. Starting on Christmas Eve, troops on both the British and German sides began singing Christmas Carols to one another. The sounds of guns and cannons faded along the Western Front in Belgium and were replaced by holiday celebrations, albeit cautious ones, in the trenches. The Germans initiated this temporary "truce" and began with the singing of carols and placement of Christmas trees along the trenches. On Christmas morning, German soldiers emerged unarmed, calling out "Merry Christmas" to the Allied British soldiers in the trenches across no-man's-land.

This gesture of goodwill between enemies came a mere five months after the outbreak of war in Europe and is perhaps the last example of the concept of chivalry between enemies in warfare. This notion of goodwill between enemies was never again repeated, as future similar attempts were promptly squashed with threats of discipline from squad leaders. Even a world war could not destroy the Christmas spirit.

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

I included the below article in the November newsletter and will leave it in this newsletter because, frankly, nothing has changed. Hopefully, consensus can be gained and the NDAA passed before December 11th. You can help by contacting the Alabama members of the House and Senate.

What Does the Continuing Resolution Mean, and What Happens Next (Brenden McMahon, MOAA Staff)

As of Oct. 1, Congress has again missed its deadline to pass necessary appropriation bills to fund the federal government for the new fiscal year. Instead, a continuing resolution (CR) will provide stopgap funding for government activities through Dec. 11. The House had no problem passing the measure with a 359-57 vote on Sept. 22; the Senate followed suit the evening of Sept. 30 with an 84-10 vote. The president then signed the CR into law.

So what does this CR, H.R. 8337, do?

It will fund programs and activities at FY 2020 levels, and it will extend several authorities and programs, including:

- Medicare Part B premium adjustments, and other Medicare and Medicaid-related authorities and programs.
- Authorities related to veterans' benefits.
- Nutrition programs for children, to include some eligibility waivers and modifications related to school and childcare closures.
- Authorities related to immigration.

MOAA appreciates elected officials securing short-term funding to avoid a costly government shutdown, but we urge Congress to get back to regular order and ensure predictable and timely funding of our government activities – and stop the habitual use of CRs in lieu of a full federal budget.

Those in uniform and their families count on their government to support them as they serve. They need Congress to push forward on passing a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), backed up by full appropriations, so they can do their job without delays.

Medicare Part B Rates Will Rise in 2021

(by Kevin Lilley, MOAA Staff)

Your Medicare Part B bill will go up about 2.7% in 2021, with the rate of increase varying slightly depending on your income level.

Most Part B users will pay \$148.50 a month next year, up from \$144.60 in 2020. This is the standard premium, paid by those whose tax returns in 2019 were \$88,000 or less for an individual tax return (or married but filing a separate return) or \$176,000 for a joint return. Last year's base figures were \$87,000 individual/\$174,000 joint return.

Those who earned more pay an adjusted rate for Part B coverage by adding an Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) to the standard premium. The breakdown of those rates, per Medicare.gov is (Note: as with the standard premium levels, these income levels have risen slightly since 2020):

- Those with income from \$88,001 to \$111,000 on an individual return or from \$176,001 to \$222,000 on a joint return will pay **\$207.90 per month**, up from \$202.40 in this bracket in 2020.
- Those with income from \$111,001 to \$138,000 on an individual return or from \$222,001 to \$276,000 on a joint return will pay **\$297.00 per month**, up from \$289.20 in this bracket in 2020.

(Continued on next page)

RECRUITER'S CORNER

It is time to renew your member dues. There are 2 methods. **The goal is 100%-chapter renewal.**

1. **Snail Mail Method:** 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 Method:** Conveniently renew online at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>

Chapter Dues Options

Until it changes, GBC has 3 membership dues options:

1 Year dues \$20

2 Year dues \$35

3 Year chapter dues \$50

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

For new member referrals or persons showing interest, email me or mail the form that appears on the next page to our PO Box address above.

Michael A. Walker
LTC(Ret), USA
2VP/GBCMOAA Membership Chair
zxywalk@gmail.com
contact@MOAABirmingham.org

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (continued)

- Those with income from \$138,001 to \$165,000 on an individual return or from \$276,001 to \$330,000 on a joint return will pay **\$386.10 per month**, up from \$376.00 in this bracket in 2020.
- Those with income from \$165,001 to \$500,000 on an individual return, or \$88,001 to \$412,000 when married but filing a separate tax return, or from \$330,001 to \$750,000 on a joint return will pay **\$475.20 per month**, up from \$462.70 in this bracket in 2020.
- Those with income above \$500,000 on an individual return, or above \$412,000 when married but filing a separate tax return, or above \$750,000 on a joint return will pay **\$504.90 per month**, up from \$491.60 in this bracket in 2020.

As a note: The COLA for 2021 increased Social Security and Military Retirement Pay by 1.3%.



Armed Forces Spouse Club

Previously the Armed Forces Spouse Club has been deactivated

HOW SURVIVING SPOUSES BENEFIT FROM MOAA MEMBERSHIP

By Dr. Vivianne Cisneros Wersel, Surviving Spouse Advisory Council member

MOAA's mission is to improve the lives of those who serve and their families. As a MOAA member, surviving spouses have opportunities to connect with kindred surviving spouses in addition to receive information about benefits and programs that might be new to them.

Understandably, when someone becomes a surviving spouse, there is a certain knowledge gap to navigate. Surviving spouses of MOAA work to help close that gap.

It's also important to note many survivors might not be aware they are eligible to join MOAA even if their military spouses were not MOAA members.

Depending on your membership level, surviving spouses will have a consistent line of communication as well as support regarding their eligibility for various MOAA benefits, such as discounts, advocacy, scholarships, and membership to their virtual chapter. Communication options include telephone, emails, literature, social media, and webinars.

[Read more about the benefits of membership on MOAA.org.](https://www.moaa.org)

A great example of the support MOAA provides is the [MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter](#) and the [Surviving Spouses and Friends Facebook group](#), which unites military survivors from different war eras. Through these avenues, a surviving MOAA spouse has ample opportunity to relate to like members with similar like members with similar backgrounds. Local chapters also can provide a spouse with a tangible sense of community and connection.



GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Maureen Piatt 1
Wade Humphries 9
Esther Merriam 9
Kathleen Ladner 14
Gigi McGraw 16
Sandy McEwen 18
Greg Vitalis 20
Stella Gamble 21
Joy Toffel 21
GM Stripling 21
Marge Jeffries 24
Al Lassiter 25
Ida Pack 26
Marilyn Bassett 27
Ann Langley 27
Chandler Smith 28
Mark Rubino 28
Mamie Flynn 31
Joan Bailey 31
Lin Musgrove 31

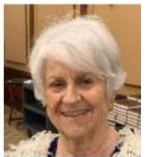
MOAA on-line photo directory

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®

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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As a member of the Dignity Memorial network, we know more about obtaining everything that is owed to you, including monetary burial benefits, a

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.

Regardless of whether you choose to be buried in a national or private cemetery, we can help you receive everything you have earned.

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:

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



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: _____



NO ZOOM MEETING IN DECEMBER