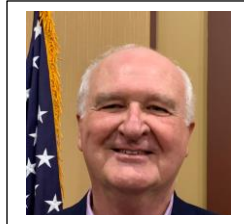




Memorial Day is coming up soon!



There will be many functions around the Memorial Day weekend, the best of which, is spending time with your family and welcoming a start to the summer. Our Chapter will once again, support the Alabama Memorial Park brick laying ceremony on Sunday May 21st. The ceremony begins at 1:30 and volunteers are needed from about noon to 3:00 PM. We will send out an email blast for this closer to the date.

Our April meeting was cancelled due to low numbers planning to attend and being during Holy week, just before Easter. In the future, we will pay closer attention to having meetings planned too close to a holiday and adjust well beforehand. Our scheduled April speaker, Jeff Newton from the Alabama Dept of Veterans Affairs fully understood and looks forward to speaking to us in the Fall.

The May meeting will be our annual spouse appreciation meeting, so please plan on attending. Lynn and Donna will have some nice surprises for the spouses and our spouse of the year will be honored. Niki Sepsas will also be our speaker and talk about Easter Island. He is a fantastic speaker, so do not miss it! Niki's bio and a short description of his talk is included in this newsletter.

We were just notified that the chapter once again, will receive Harris communication awards from National MOAA; a five-star award for our website and four star-for the newsletter. And a big congratulations to Linda Demarco for her hard work in making sure that this newsletter is timely and well written!

Take care, enjoy the finer weather that we are having, and I look forward to seeing everyone at the May meeting.
Respectfully,
Don & Patricia



Website

Volume 123 Issue 5

May 2023

Officers' Call

President Don Lehman, LTC, USMC (Ret)
1st VP Harold Coghlan, CW4 USA (Ret)
2nd VP Michael Walker, LTC, USA (Ret)
Secretary Margie Argo, LTC, USAR (Ret)
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Director Mark Melanson, Col USA (Ret)
Director Bob Barefield, Col USA (Ret)
Director Richard McKinley, CPT USAF (Ret)
Chaplain Dan Phifer, LTC, USA (Ret)
Legislative Affairs Vacant
Personal Affairs Anne Hartline
Surviving Spouse Liaison Lynn Phifer
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.

MAY MEETING/SPEAKER

May speaker: **Niki Sepsas**

Topic: **Rapa Nui: Easter Island and the "Mystery of the Moai"**

Niki is a world traveler, author, adventurer, excursion guide, speaker and finally, an Army veteran. He spends 6-8 months a year aboard cruise ships as a tour guide and speaker, where he has visited 120 countries and 7 continents. He has written over 1,000 articles, published in local as well as in national venues and has a novel to his name, "Song of the Gypsy". Also, two dozen coffee table books, personal memoirs, and a history book of Greek immigration to the US.

When not cruising the world, Niki is at home here in Birmingham with his wife Sherri and miniature schnauzer, Calista. We are extremely pleased to have Niki's time to speak to us and on such an interesting topic.

Niki's full bio and website are located here: <http://www.nikiwrites.com/biography.html>

Almost 1,000 monumental stone heads referred to locally as 'moai' stand silent sentinel over a tiny island in a remote corner of the Pacific Ocean that is "as far from anything as anything." This presentation chronicles the remarkable history of its few inhabitants and how their tiny island home has now been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Menu: Tossed salad, Lasagna, Garlic biscuit, Vanilla butter pound cake. Price TBD



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Mother's Day is a celebration honoring the mother of the family or individual, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. While some countries have a multi-century history of a day to celebrate mothers, the modern American version of the holiday began in the US in 1907 at the initiative of Anna Jarvis, who organized the first Mother's Day service of worship and celebration at a church in West VA. We remember with thanksgiving on May 14th the love our own mother shared with each of us.

Memorial Day is the day we remember and honor those who have served our country and lost their lives in that service. It is a National Holiday for mourning. It is observed on the last Monday of May. This year many volunteers will place American flags on the graves of military personnel in our national cemeteries on May 29. We have that opportunity at our local Montevallo National Cemetery to honor those who now rest from their labors for this nation.

Blessings,

Chaplain Dan Phifer,

US Army, (LTC-Retired)

RECRUITER'S CORNER

The GBC MOAA 2023 Recruiting Season Begins

Hoover Day Celebration (Saturday, April 29, 2023, from 11:00AM to 3:00PM)

Hoover Day is upon us. To travel there, enter 4800 Valleydale Road (or Jaguar Drive) into your GPS. Once you turn onto Jaguar Drive off Valleydale Road, you'll right away see the main Veterans Park entrance on your right. GBC MOAA representatives will be present near the main pavilion from 11:00AM until complete. **It is a great opportunity to invite GBC prospects who may be interested in joining.** The event helps serve our chapter's greater community public exposure initiative.

Eligible individuals who prefer to do so can join GBC electronically. If you know of anyone who qualifies to belong to our organization, the chapter's membership page is [GBC MOAA Website](#).

Michael A. Walker
LTC(Ret), USA
2VP/Membership GBC MOAA
zxywalk@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



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

MOAA Joins Other Veterans Groups to Review PACT Act Implementation

By: Allison Reilly

MOAA's work to secure long-overdue [toxic exposure reform legislation](#) on behalf of millions of veterans succeeded last year, but efforts to ensure the new benefits and screenings provided by the law are far from over.

The VA has been working hard to meet the high demand of claims ever since the Aug. 8 signing of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. In late March, the department hosted an offsite meeting in Atlanta with over 50 VA leaders, veteran service organizations (including MOAA), and congressional staff members on hand to discuss the implementation process, examine ongoing projects and future plans, and identify room for improvement going forward.

Josh Jacobs, VA's senior advisor for policy performing the delegable duties of the under secretary for benefits emphasized the ongoing need for transparency and accountability from VA during the event. Days later, VA Secretary [Denis McDonough spoke](#) on the need to increase veterans' trust of the department. Over 450,000 veterans have filed claims since the PACT Act was signed into law last August, which is only about 10% of those who may be eligible.

Of the nearly half a million claims filed in the past eight months, over 150,000 have already been completely processed. As the number of claims continues to grow, the VA has conducted massive hiring events across the country, with a plan to hire over 8,000 new employees by the end of 2023. VA officials also emphasized efforts to increase training for employees facing changes to their workflow processes brought on by the bill, which introduced 20 new [toxic exposure presumptive conditions](#).

[RELATED: [MOAA.org/PACTResources](https://www.moaa.org/PACTResources)]

The law also significantly increases the number of exams conducted by the VA. Over 2.1 million toxic exposure screenings have taken place since mid-August of last year. The increased examinations and new processes mean that, on average, claims are taking longer to complete. The VA is committed to ensuring that all claims made by veterans are examined thoroughly and in a timely manner.

All veterans deserve world-class health care and their earned benefits, and the VA wants to ensure the needs of all veteran populations are being met. To see whether you may be eligible to file a PACT Act-related claim, contact the VA for more information:

- Online: [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT)
- On the app: [VA: Health and Benefits](#)
- On the phone: (800) 698-2411

(Copied from MOAA website)

MILITARY SPOUSE'S CORNER



Hello everyone. Happy May!

May is a happy month. It is the month we celebrate our surviving spouses. It is Ladies' Recognition Month. This means we will have a special time for our May 4th meeting. All ladies and surviving spouses will be recognized with a small token of appreciation for all your sacrifices during your time as a military spouse. We appreciate you and thank you. At the Ladies' Committee meeting in January, we voted for our Outstanding Spouse of the Year. We are delighted to have selected Linda DeMarco. She will be recognized on May 4th. We are honored to know Linda and thank you for her contributions to MOAA, especially the Greater Birmingham Area (GBA). We would not be reading this extremely well-developed newsletter without Linda.

The Ladies' Committee also selected our topic for the May 4th meeting. We will be awed with the presentation of world-famous speaker Nikki Sepsas. He has multiple fabulous topics, which made it difficult to pick one, but we finally did. The May topic is entitled, "Rapu Nui: Easter Island and the Mystery of the Moai". I am so excited for our annual Spouse Appreciation May meeting. I am also excited to see you there.

Sincerely,
Lynn M. Phifer,
Surviving Spouse Liaison



GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Jim Musgrove	3
Peter Poerschke	6
Kris Crawford	9
Paul Gonthier	17
Trish Coghlan	18
Dick Ritz	22
Susan Hamel	28
Tom Fickling	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)



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.

ID CARDS

DoD: No Further Extensions Planned for Expired ID Cards!

Many of us have had our ID cards automatically extended due to the COVID. However, that indefinite extension is now ending on January 31, 2022. If your ID card has an expiration date that is past or expires this month, you will need to renew it ASAP. There are several locations that you can do that here in the Birmingham area, just google "military ID card renewal near me" and a bunch of them will come up. Some may require an appointment and be sure that you have the needed documentation when you go; they can tell you what you need when you call.
Don Lehman

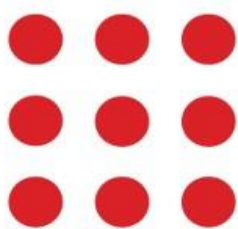
MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Eligibility: Honorably serving, former, or retired Warrants, Chief Warrants, or commissioned officers of the armed forces (Regular, Reserve, National Guard) as well as current, former, or retired USCG, NOAA, and USPHS commissioned officers are eligible to join MOAA. If you know of anyone who may qualify to belong to the chapter, have them contact us or better yet, invite them to an upcoming dinner meeting.

Dues: Until it changes, 1-Year dues are still only \$20 (2 Years = \$35). The 3-Year chapter renewal option is the best bargain at \$50.

Complete application in newsletter or complete at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>

VETERAN'S CRISIS LINE



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

MOAA LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

**How to register with MOAA's
Legislative Action Center:**



Four ways to get there:

Direct link: [MOAA.quorum.us](https://moaa.quorum.us)

Text "MOAA" to 1-855-547-6921

Go to: MOAA.org > Advocacy > Legislative Action Center

Or scan the QR code to the right with your phone:

Then follow the instructions on how to register.
Each of your devices, i.e., phone, laptop, iPad, must be registered separately. It's a great way to keep up with all MOAA's advocacy issues, plus links to all your congressional representatives.

Link to MOAA's new Legislative Action Center and FAQ's:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2022-news-articles/advocacy/meet-moaas-new-legislative-action-center/>



YOU HONORED US WITH YOUR SERVICE.

Now let us honor you.

WE ARE PROUD TO SERVE VETERANS more than any other provider. In fact, we're part of the Dignity Memorial® network, the largest network of funeral homes and cemeteries in North America.

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

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Jerry Ingram
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jingram@pgatss.com | pgatss.com



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PGA TOUR SUPERSTORE

Tony Marino
Tournament & Events Marketing Manager

C: 205-296-2271
amarino@pgatss.com

145 1st Avenue West, Alabaster, Alabama



Hours

Thursday 4–10PM

Friday 4–11PM

Saturday 3–11PM

Sunday Closed

Monday Closed

Tuesday 4–10PM

Wednesday 4–10PM

Veteran Owned and Operated



May 4 meeting will begin with social at 6 pm and meal 6:30 p.m.