

President's Perspective

by Lee Lange



Budget Time

We are now into the legislative season in Washington. This month we will see President Trump's first budget submission to Congress. He has talked about rebuilding our military, and the budget request will tell us how much he really means it.

The February issue of MOAA's *Military Officer* magazine included tear-out letters to Congressional leaders. The letters talked about MOAA's top two issues: ending sequestration and fixing the SBP-DIC offset for surviving spouses. I hope everyone took the time to send their letters in; they make a difference.

Preparing to 'Storm'

This month MOAA is getting ready for the annual "Storming the Hill" visit to Capitol Hill. State council presidents and chapter presidents from states with no council are busy making appointments with their legislators for their April 4-5 visit to Washington.

Last Call for Dues

This month is the last call for members to renew their chapter memberships. Dues are \$20 for members and \$10 for surviving spouses. This year you also have the option to renew by credit card. See the simple instructions on Page 4. All processing charges are paid by MOAA and you will receive a near real-time receipt online. Renew now.

We need your membership and support. Together, we can make a difference.

Our Best Recruiters

Please think about inviting your friends who are MOAA members, or eligible for MOAA membership, to our next meeting. Anyone who has ever held a commission as an officer or warrant officer is eligible to join. Surviving spouses of officers are most welcome to join us. Our best recruiters have always been our members. If you bring a

guest, we will do our best to make them welcome.

Come to the Gala

This year's annual Patriotic Gala sponsored by the Arizona Hall of Fame Society is set for April 8 at the Doubletree Resort in Scottsdale. This promises to be another fine event with a number of our members involved in leadership positions or helping to put on the event.

The event recognizes patriotic individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to helping veterans in Arizona. Also to be recognized will be a legislator who has contributed to helping veterans, and several scholarships will be awarded to high school students. Tickets are \$65. You can register at www.avhof.org/gala.

Join Us for Golf

Our 2017 Scholarship Golf Tournament is fast approaching. It will be April 21 at the Starfire Golf Course. It's a great course and Pat Dale is organizing another great event. Don't miss it if

Continued on page 2...

Arizona Chapter Calendar

Board of Directors meets at 1030 hours the first Thursday of the month unless noted otherwise.

Location: National Guard Regional Training Institute, 5636 E. McDowell Rd. Show ID for entry. Members welcome.

Upcoming meetings:

- March 2
- April 6

Member Meetings/ Luncheons

are held on the third Saturday of the month, Social Hour at 1100, Luncheon at 1200, at McCormick Ranch Golf Club unless noted otherwise.

Upcoming meetings:

- March 18
- April 15

In this Issue

Page 2

- February Program
- Facebook Editor
- Taps

Page 3

- March Program

Page 4

- Membership Update
- Dues Reminder
- Golf Tournament

Page 5

- Personal Affairs
- State Legislation

Page 6

- National Legislation

Page 7

- Fundraising Goal
- Donations
- Scholarship Status
- Lunch/Program Information
- Meal/Donation Forms

Page 8

- Veterans Heritage Project Comments
- VHP Contact Information
- Chapter Leadership

President's Perspective...continued

you play golf, and come out for lunch if you don't play. Registration information is on Page 4. Sign up today. Consider being a hole sponsor.

A Special Guest This Mondy

Our March meeting features a speaker you do not want to miss. Pearl Harbor survivor Jack Holder will talk about his wartime experiences which took him from Pearl Harbor to Midway to Guadalcanal and to Europe, flying anti-submarine missions against the Germans. It's an amazing story.

Aiming for the Stars

I recently submitted our Levels of Excellence Award package to MOAA seeking our 14th 5-star award. MOAA will take several months to evaluate the packages and announce the winners. Thank you all for the many things you do to contribute to the chapter and to veterans and the community. When I put those things together in a narrative I believe we have a compelling story to tell. See you in March

Give Us a Like on Facebook

Attention Facebook users. We have re-generated our Facebook site. Janet Lange has agreed to take over as our editor. Thanks for stepping up, Janet.

You can contact Janet via email at facebook@azmoaa.org if you have any questions. You can reach our Facebook page by clicking on the Facebook picture link on our website www.azmoaa.org.

February Speaker

Veterans Heritage Project Honors Vets, Inspires Youth

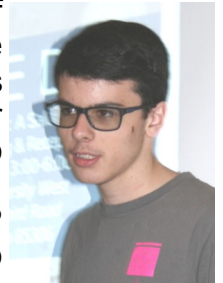
The Arizona Veterans Heritage Project began in 2003 when Barbara Hatch, VHP founder, brought World War II veterans to her class at Cactus Shadows High School to tell their stories.



Brittany Henritze

Since then the program has grown to 25 participating high schools, and 1,227 veterans have been interviewed by high school students, with their stories published in an annual book titled *Since You Asked*.

Brittany Henritze, VHP Executive Coordinator, described the program at our February luncheon, with the help of Harrison Kessel, one of the student authors and this year's book editor, and chapter member Jeanne Blaes, Col USA (Ret), who is featured in this year's edition.



Brittany explained that VHP helps students develop professional and academic skills. For veterans, it preserves their history and closes the gap between the civilian and veteran communities.

Harrison, a sophomore, has been involved since 8th grade. "It's been the most wonderful experience of my life," he said. "It's a way to say thank you for your service without just saying thank you."

Jeanne, who served in the Medical Service Corps, said it was an opportunity to tell what it was like to be a woman veteran.

"I never thought my story was worth telling," she said. "It didn't hit me until I saw what Harrison wrote. I can say I felt good about something I did. You see your story and you can say I guess I did okay."



Jeanne Blaes



Harrison's shirt reflects this year's theme: Salute to Women.

TAPS

We recently learned of the passing of two of our members

Chester "Chet" Baumer, LtCol USAF (Ret)
 December 11, 1932—February 17, 2017
 Veteran of World War II, Korea, Vietnam
 Arizona Chapter President, 1995-97

Martin H. Sours, CAPT USN (Ret)
 September 12, 1940--February 22, 2017

Our heartfelt condolences are extended to the families.



Special March Speaker
Saturday, March 18, 2017



1940



2016

“FEAR, ADRENALINE & EXCITEMENT”

Jack Holder

Jack Holder joined the US Navy on April 24, 1940, when he was 18-years-old and was transferred to Pearl Harbor in December 1940. He survived the attack there a year later and went on to experience quite a career in Naval Aviation during and after World War II. He participated in the Battle of Midway in 1942 and flew 48 missions over Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands for six months. Jack also flew patrol over the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay on the western coast of France. He flew 56 anti-submarine patrol missions over the English Channel.

Jack Holder, 94, is one of the few remaining Pearl Harbor military survivors. We are fortunate to have him speak to us. Please plan to attend this exciting presentation. Jack will have his book by the same title available for purchase after his presentation.

McCormick Ranch Golf Club - REGISTRATION must be received by 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 14. \$22 per person includes lunch and program. Make check payable to: AZ Chapter MOAA. Mail to: Charlie Bitner, 134 E. Northview Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85020. 602-943-0028 or Charles.bitner@gmail.com. Payment also can be made by credit card at the luncheon, but you must register by March 14.

A Word About Chapter Dues As the Deadline Nears

*By Dave Price
Membership Chairman*

Thanks to all those who have renewed their chapter membership this year. With about a month to go before folks are delinquent, we've had over 110 renewals so far with just over 30 outstanding (about 80% complete). We've also got 15 new members since last summer who don't owe dues in 2017.

Just as a reminder for everyone, chapter membership renewal is due by 31 March. Membership dues are \$20 for service members (active, former, retired) and \$10 for surviving spouses. Couples do *not* have to pay separate dues (i.e. \$30 or \$40) unless both were service members. And remember that annual chapter membership is separate from the annual dues required to maintain MOAA premium membership (if not a Life Member).

Last Call

**AS OF MARCH 1
ONLY 30 DAYS LEFT**

**Membership Renewal for 2017
is due by March 31
After that date, we must drop you from
our roster**

Dues for Regular Members are \$20.00
Dues for Auxiliary Members are \$10.00

Your membership is important to us. Please take the time to renew your membership and be a part of the Arizona Chapter of MOAA.

Make your check out to **AZ Chapter MOAA**

Send to: Charlie Bitner, Treasurer
134 E. Northview Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85020

Or to **renew by credit card**, go to our chapter website, azmoaa.org, choose the Membership tab on the menu bar, then choose Renew Your Chapter Membership on the drop-down menu and follow the instructions.

Register Now: Arizona Chapter Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Tourney

Join fellow golfers for a morning of fun and fundraising at Starfire Golf Club, 11500 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, on Friday, April 21. If you don't play, join us for lunch. All proceeds support chapter scholarships for ASU ROTC students. More details at azmoaa.org under the Our Programs tab.

GOLFER REGISTRATION, SPONSOR AND LUNCH RESERVATION FORMS

Name: _____

Phone No: _____

Email Address: _____

(Please Print)

USGA Index: _____ Or Estimated Handicap: _____

I would like to be partnered with: (names and official USGA Index if they have one.)

Check for \$ _____ included for _____ players (\$79 each).

HOLE SPONSORSHIP (\$25 OR MORE) AND/OR LUNCH RESERVATION (\$15)

Name: _____

Phone No: _____

E-mail Address: _____

(Please Print)

Check for \$ _____ (Hole) \$ _____ (Lunch)

Make all checks to: **AZ Chapter MOAA**

Send to: Pat Dale

12633 E. Kalil Dr.

Scottsdale, AZ 85259

E-mail: patrickdale1@cox.net

Phone: 480-661-5204



Personal Affairs

By Lee Lange
Personal Affairs Officer

Exchange Online Shopping Opens to Veterans

The following is an extract from an article by military columnist Tom Philpott. After two years of study, the Department of Defense has announced that effective November 11, 2017, a new online shopping benefit will allow 16 million honorably discharged veterans to shop online for discounted military exchange products.

Months of preparation are needed to make e-shopping portals more robust and to allow the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) time to create software for verifying veterans' status using Department of Veterans Affairs records. The online benefit does not extend to veterans' dependents. With DMDC verifying shopper identifies electronically, the department will not have to produce special identification cards.

Two Reasons for Change

Thomas C. Shull, chief executive officer of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, led the effort to expand online exchange shopping to all honorably-discharged veterans with access to computers. There were two reasons for the change. One was to reward veterans' service with exchange product savings that, on average, will be close to 20 percent versus commercial department store prices when military exemptions from state and local sales tax are considered. The second reason was to increase exchange revenues to help offset troubling declines due to the drawdown of active duty forces, base closures and the end of military tobacco discounts.

Exchange System Impacts

The four exchange services will maintain independent websites and separate online portals for the selection of goods they offer. The Veterans Online Shopping Benefit is expected to at least double exchanges' online presence, which will help attract better terms from vendors, more competitive merchandise assortments and improved efficiencies. Exchanges project \$18 million to \$72 million in new annual earnings when the online operation is fully matured. Half of the added earnings typically would be distributed as higher

dividends to MWR programs, which have come under increasing budget pressure as the services divert funds to more immediate readiness needs.

Current exchange patrons won't see more store traffic, and discounts for exchange shopping on base are expected to remain higher than savings online. These factors helped to persuade major military associations to back the initiative. Military exchanges acknowledge that they are losing sales to popular online sites such as Amazon, particularly as military patrons grow increasingly comfortable with using smart phones and tablets to shop.

More information will be published over the next few months as implementation details are worked out by DoD.

State Legislation Activity

Two bills of considerable interest to veterans and retirees are currently working in the state legislature. SB 1443 is moving along nicely. SB 1444 is having a tougher time because of loss of revenue to state if the bill passes.

SB 1443: Veterans' Donations Fund; Tax Credit would extend authority for the Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF) from 2018 to 2025 and cap the MFRF at its current level by moving the associated \$1 million per year tax credit to the Veteran Donations Fund (VDF) which, by statute, is to be used "for the benefit of the veterans (of all eras) within this state as grants". The fund is administered by the Arizona Department of Veterans Services. **Primary Sponsors:** Sen. Gail Griffin, R-Dist. 14; Rep. Richard Andrade, D-Dist. 29, et al.

Major Actions: 31 Jan, First Read and assigned to Senate Finance, Appropriations and Rules Committees; 15 Feb, Given a "Do Pass" recommendation in Finance Committee 4-2-1; 21 Feb, Given a "Do Pass" recommendation in Appropriations Committee 9-0-1.

SB 1444: Income Tax Subtraction; Military Retirement would incrementally reduce Arizona income tax on military retirement pay beginning in tax year 2019 and fully deducting military retirement pay in 2022. **Primary Sponsors:** Sen. Gail Griffin, R-Dist. 14; Rep. Richard Andrade, D-Dist. 29, et al.

Major Actions: 31 Jan, First Read and assigned to Senate Finance, Appropriations and Rules Committees; 15 Feb, Given a "Do Pass" recommendation in Finance Committee 4-3.



Legislative Update

by Lee Lange
Legislation Chairman

Budget Challenges Ahead

With the new Administration now in place and a new Congress in session on Capitol Hill there is plenty of speculation on what the Trump administration's 2018 budget proposal will look like. The Administration has announced plans to release a proposed budget outline sometime in mid-March for FY 2018. Meanwhile, there is still no approved budget for FY 2017.

The President has stated he is committed to boost spending for the Defense Department, but by how much is not known. Increases in Defense could well mean cuts to domestic programs, likely triggering a budget fight in Congress.

Several key pieces of legislation and critical dates directly affect future budget and spending decisions. The government is currently operating under a continuing resolution that runs out April 28. A decision on raising the debt limit will have to be decided by Congress at around the same time, and the threat of the return in 2018 of the mandatory budget cuts under sequestration looms large.

Congress has several options going forward.

- Vote to repeal sequestration, lifting budget caps and return to regular order in terms of budget and fiscal considerations;
- Come up with another budget deal and find a way to raise the caps; or
- Leave the caps mandated by sequestration in place.

Congress should first find a way to fund the government for the rest of the year, and then take on the FY 2018 budget and sequestration. What Congress will actually do is not clear.

New VA Secretary Takes Charge

Dr. David Shulkin was sworn in February 14 as the ninth secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs after receiving unanimous approval from the Senate. Secretary Shulkin was the former undersecretary of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

The new secretary has a tough road ahead of

him, balancing the often competing priorities of Congress, the White House, his own agency, and the veterans he is committed to serving.

His first major action will be to work with lawmakers to extend the Choice Act, legislation allowing qualified veterans to receive care in the private sector. Under current law, the program is set to expire this August. Extending the Veterans Choice Program (VCP) would also give the VA time to put in place a new program to meet the rising demand for veterans' health care brought about since the VCP was established in 2014.

The Choice Act was Congress' answer to the reports of secret wait lists in the Phoenix VA Health Care system in Arizona. Though initially plagued with problems, over time the VA and Congress implemented laws and adjusted policies to make it easier for veterans to access care through the VCP. Today, more than one million veterans have been able to access care thanks to the Choice Act.

MOAA will provide more details on the new program once the contract has been announced.

Commissary Savings Revised

For years, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) told Congress and store patrons that commissary shoppers saved an average of 30 percent on brand-name groceries over prices in commercial stores and supermarkets.

DeCA officials now concede the 30-percent savings figure didn't include price comparisons at Walmart Supercenters or consider the popularity of private-label goods that outside grocers find so profitable.

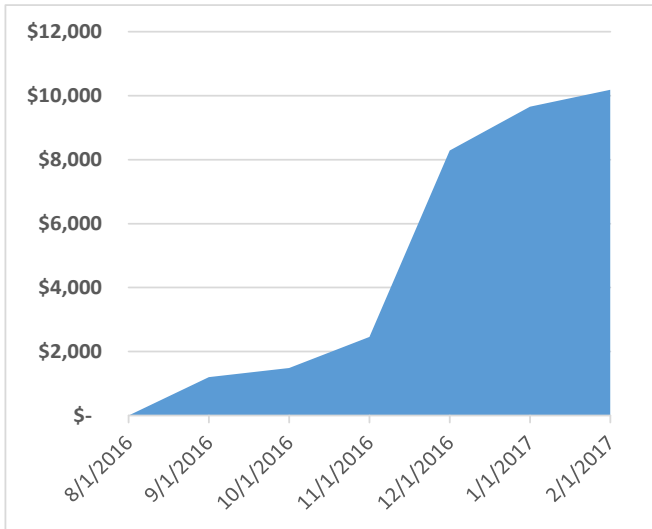
DeCA has now released a new set of "baseline" estimates of commissary savings that reflect these factors and more. Global savings across all 238 commissaries are calculated now at 23.7 percent and savings stateside at 20.2 percent.

DeCA also is publishing average savings by seven U.S. commissary regions. The 20 commissaries in the Rocky Mountain region, which runs south from the Canadian border through Arizona and New Mexico, had the lowest savings, 17.6 percent compared to prices

Continued on Page 7...

Scholarship Fundraising Campaign

Goal: \$10,000 YTD: \$10,385



...Legislative Report, cont.

off base.

Some advocates for military families fear that the mere perception of lower savings could put commissaries at greater risk. DoD and some members of Congress have been trying to cut DeCA's \$1.3 billion budget for years and may see an opening in the latest savings figures. But the greater concern is how patrons will react to the results. If the perception is that the commissary no longer provides significant savings, they may well shop elsewhere and critics will have more ammunition in cutting the commissary benefit.

Take Action

To find out what the top issues are now for legislative action and how you can help, go to www.moaa.org/takeaction and click on Legislative Action Center for the latest alerts you can send to your legislators via email or snail mail.

March Luncheon

WHEN: March 18, 2017
11:00 a.m., Meet & Greet Social Hour
11:45, Lunch

WHERE: McCormick Ranch Golf Club
Scottsdale

COST: \$22 Per Person

DRESS: Business Casual

MENU: Beef stir fry with shaved vegetables, ginger stick rice, salad and strawberry cheese cake..

PROGRAM: Jack Holder, Pearl Harbor survivor who participated in major battles throughout the war, will describe his experiences.

Donations to Scholarship Fund

John and Sharon Ady \$100
From Chapter in Memory of Chet Baumer
and Martin Sours \$100

Scholarship Award Process Underway

Scholarship applications have been received, and the selection committee is in the final stages of determining the outstanding ASU midshipmen and cadets. Award ceremony will be during our April luncheon meeting.

CHAPTER FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION

If you would like to make a donation to one or more of the AZ Chapter Funds, include your check identified with the appropriate fund and mail to: **Charlie Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85020, 602-943-0028, charles.bitner@gmail.com.**

General Fund: \$ _____

Scholarship Fund: \$ _____ [a 501(c)(3) charitable fund]

Name of Donor : _____ Identify me as a donor in the next newsletter. YES___ NO___

MEAL/RESERVATION FORM

Please reserve ___ meals for (name): _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ (\$22.00/person) for the March 2017 luncheon

Make check payable to: **AZ Chapter MOAA** or pay by credit card at the luncheon

Send check to: **Charlie Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85020, 602-943-0028, charles.bitner@gmail.com.**

**Member reservations or call-ins WILL NOT be accepted after March 14.
Cancellations after March 14 will be charged and not refunded.**

Final Thoughts on the Veterans Heritage Project

By Dave Price

The folks I've met who have been involved in any way with VHP, including many of our chapter members, have been profoundly moved by the experience and the finished product as reflected in the annual *Since You Asked* volumes. The program has had an equally positive impact on the students in the program. As impressive as our guest, Harrison Kessel, was, he really is typical of the quality of the students in the program and the impact it has had on how they carry themselves (remember he is only in the 10th grade!). The VHP website has more information about the history of the program and its goals and accomplishments to date: veteransheritage.org

For More information on VHP, Contact:

Brittany Henritze
Executive Coordinator
1-877-VHP-PROJ (847-7765)
brittany@veteransheritage.org
Veterans Heritage Project
P.O. Box 22058
Phoenix, AZ 85028

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