



The RETROSPECT

TAMPA CHAPTER — A FIVE STAR CHAPTER OF MOAA NATIONAL

AUGUST 2020

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 8

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

COL CHARLES DALCOURT USA RET

GREETINGS!



Members of the MOAA Tampa Chapter, it is both a pleasure and privilege to write you this month. I pray that this message finds all of our members in the very best conditions possible. I also hope that you and your families are navigating the disruptive days we are experiencing with a positive attitude, understanding heart, and critical eye.

As stated before, despite the changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am so thankful for our Chapter's efforts to remain connected. The deliberate labors of individuals within our ranks to reach out and lift up others on this team continues to be a hallmark of our organization. Thanks to all that selflessly send emails, make phone calls, and write letters to other members of the Chapter.

Again, please continue exercise prudence and take all precautions necessary to protect yourselves and those we influence; heed the warnings given about unfavorable practices; and stay

socially connected, yet physically distant as much as possible. We will overcome this pandemic in time.

Great News...

Over the past several months, we have discussed the need for additional volunteers. In the past few weeks, we received support for two of our key aspirational endeavors; the medical committee and the transition committee. We are so pleased that Dr. Sarla Saujani (COL, USAF Retired) volunteered to join and assist in establishing our Chapter's Medical Committee. Sarla's energy and expertise is welcomed. Also, Mrs. Janet Spadola has offered to assist us in developing a transition program that will meet the needs of our local constituents. Leveraging Janet's competence and capacity in this space will undoubtedly allow us to carve a relevant niche in this area.

Next, a public announcement of congratulations to Mrs. Renee Brunelle! Renee was selected to serve on the MOAA National Surviving Spouse Council. An honor and privilege to be selected, she will begin serving in this position in October 2020. We are very appreciative and proud of Renee's work in this area.

Finally, I am pleased to announce our Honored Member of the Month for August 2020 is CDR Richard "Dick" Helveston (USNR Retired). Please join our virtual luncheon on 13 August and help us thank Dick for his tremendous contributions to our Chapter. We also extend our sincere gratitude to Mrs.

Shirley Helveston for her exceptional support as well. Please be sure to read Dick's biographical sketch later in this newsletter.

Continuing to Fight...

While the COVID-19 pandemic remains a national level concern, I encourage you to stay focused on our mission and strive to stay the course in conducting the business we can. Our advocacy efforts are a seminal aspect of who we are as an organization...stay active. Reggie will highlight several initiatives in the legislative affairs section that require our attention. Our leaders in Washington and Tallahassee should know that we aren't distracted. Your continued, deliberate, and "on message" feedback via calls, letters, and emails to Congressional leaders will have a very profound impact. Please continue to help in every way you can - write or call our elected officials this week.

Wrapping up:

In closing, thank you for continuing to support and promote the initiatives MOAA is championing. I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve you and will continue to strive, in every way, to both advance our chapter's great legacy and propel the organization forward. Please endeavor to be safe in every way and remain connected with the Chapter through our newsletter and virtual luncheon. Thanks again for your understanding and support.

All the best!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DUE TO THE COVID-19 OUT-BREAK, MOAA TAMPA CHAPTER IS TAKING PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF THE DISEASE, AND HAS ELECTED TO CANCEL ALL EVENTS THROUGH JULY 2020. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL AGAIN SOON!

REMINDER:

PUBLICATION DEADLINE FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE IS 25 AUGUST 2020



LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN

BY LTC REGINALD WILLIAMS, USA RET

For more information, visit MOAA National's Legislative Action Center



This month's article focuses on the NDAA, where we are and the next steps, MOAA's efforts to raise concerns regarding military treatment facility restructuring, and the Veterans Administration funding for community care. As an organization, we need to continue to track and advocate for our service members, veterans, and our families.

NDAA Update: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and What's Next

The House passed its version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on July 21, 2020 by a strong bipartisan vote of 295-125. While this marks a significant step forward in the NDAA process, it's far from over.

Here's a look at what's happened so far, where things stand, and the status of some MOAA-supported NDAA provisions, including ways

you can reach out to your legislators to make your voice heard.

Where We've Been

The NDAA worked its way through the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (HASC and SASC, respectively). On June 10, the SASC voted 25-2 to advance its draft of the NDAA, pushing it to the Senate floor. The HASC followed suit and completed its committee mark-up for the NDAA just before midnight July 1.

Unlike last year, when the markup of the HASC version of the NDAA was divided down party lines, this year's version was passed by unanimous consent. This was in large part due to the bipartisan collaboration between Chairman Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and HASC ranking member Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas).

The House worked through 407

amendments before passing H.R. 6395, its version of the NDAA. More than 700 amendments went to the House Rules Committee. The SASC adopted 62 amendments during its markup of S. 4049.

Current State of Play

This is a critical juncture for the FY21 NDAA. The Senate is voting on July 23, 2020 to pass their version of the 2021 NDAA. The NDAA will advance to its respective conference committee, where the two chambers will negotiate behind closed doors.

The conference committees typically begin their work as soon as possible following passage once the chambers vote on their version of the bill, so the window of opportunity to influence what is reported to conference is narrowing.

(cont'd on P.2)

LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN cont'd:

Provisions to Note

This year, some provisions in the NDAA will benefit servicemembers, retirees, survivors, and their families, and some provisions will be detrimental. The provisions MOAA is advocating to make it through the NDAA process include:

Military Pay

A provision to increase military pay by 3% tied to the Employment Cost Index is included in both the House and Senate versions of the NDAA.

Military Health Care

Despite the success of MOAA's Virtual Storming the Hill, efforts to include a halt to military medical end strength cuts and the realignment of military treatment facilities (MTFs) in the NDAA remain at risk. While the House version has language supporting these provisions, the Senate version does not.

MOAA is pivoting its focus to the Senate to ensure the House provisions make it through conference. [Contact your senator today](#) to express your support for the House provisions.

Military Family Readiness

The Senate NDAA version includes provisions to consider family discounts at child development centers (CDCs) for families with two or more children at a center. The House version includes provisions to reassess fee assistance for families with consideration of cost fluctuations by location, as well as an assessment of the priority system and waitlist at CDCs.

Both the House and Senate also recommend substantial increases to the authorized amount of spending on military privatized housing support to better facilitate hiring of housing staff and to support needs for maintenance and repair work.

MOAA expects most of the child care and military housing provisions to make it through the NDAA process.

Commissary-Exchange Merger

The House version of the NDAA seeks an updated business case analysis for the Defense Resale Enterprise's proposal to consolidate the commissaries and exchanges after the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found significant problems in the proposed merger. Unfortunately, the Senate version stayed silent on this issue. MOAA is focusing its efforts on the Senate to ensure the House language is adopted in conference.

National Guard and Reserve Components

The Senate version includes language that would redesignate the DD-214 form as the Certificate of Military Service, making it a standard total-force record of military service for all members of the armed forces, including the reserve components.

The House version includes a section that would standardize payment of hazardous duty incentive pay for members of the Guard and Reserve, and the Senate version includes a mandate for hazardous duty pay at the rate of no less than \$150 a month. While the language is different for these hazardous duty pay sections, they do show a positive step that reflects Congress's understanding of the essential role the National Guard and Reserve components play.

Toxic Exposure and Access to VA Benefits

The Senate version includes an amendment, put forward by Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) which passed on July 22, 2020, which would add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list of veterans' diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange. Unfortunately, the House NDAA does not include a similar amendment.

While this will make the fight for this much-needed expansion of Agent Orange presumptives more challenging, MOAA is working to ensure the Senate amendment survives the NDAA conference process. You can help by writing a letter or making a phone call to your representative asking for their continued support of this change, which would benefit tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans.

Sexual Harassment and Assault

Both House and Senate NDAA versions include language to establish the "Safe to Report" program

across all the branches of the armed services. This and other sexual trauma-related provisions would encourage reporting by victims without fear of punishment for minor collateral misconduct, such as underage drinking.

What's Next?

As MOAA continues its advocacy, you, our members, and other stakeholders have an important role to play. MOAA's annual Summer Storm is set to begin in early August.

Our Virtual Storming the Hill was exceptionally impactful, and now it is imperative that we shift our focus to the Senate as the congressional summer break is set to begin.

Over the next two weeks, MOAA will be providing members with information about these NDAA topics, including ways you can help during the final stages of the NDAA process.

URGENT: Ask Senators Rubio and Scott to support our veterans by supporting the NDAA Amendment to Cover Additional Agent Orange Presumptives

I'd like to ask that we personally take action as requested in the MOAA Newsletter article: *Senate NDAA Amendment Would Cover Additional Agent Orange Presumptives*

In April a letter was sent by MOAA to POTUS requesting that illnesses which have been scientifically investigated and found to be directly related to Agent Orange exposure to be added to the VA's list of presumptive coverage for medical treatment.

Neither of Florida's US Senators are co-sponsors of S-3444 or of Senate Amendment S.A. 1972 to the NDAA which incorporates the provisions of S-3444.

Click on this link to send a message requesting their support on this amendment as the NDAA moves through the legislative process. [Ask Your Senators to Back This NDAA Amendment](#)

You may wish to edit this tagline into the MOAA suggested message:

"Providing medical coverage for these service-connected illnesses is only the very least we should do for those affected veterans."

We can only hope that our passion in advocating fairness for Vietnam era veterans, many of whom suffer the effects of serious illnesses, will move our Senators to co-sponsor and vote for this amendment.

Senate Passes NDAA Amendment to Cover Additional Agent Orange Presumptives²

The Senate passed an amendment to its version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Wednesday that would add three medical conditions to the [list of Agent Orange presumptives](#), a MOAA-supported move that would expand benefits to tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans.

The amendment, introduced by Sen. Tester (D-Mont.) would add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list. It passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 94-6.

The 32 military and veterans organizations in support of this amendment sent a letter last week to Senate and House leadership voicing the need to care for these veterans. These organizations were supported by MOAA's grassroots efforts, which included thousands of messages sent in support.

Attention now turns back to the House, where an identical amendment was proposed in a bipartisan fashion by Reps. Josh Harder (D-Calif.) and Pete Stauber (R-Minn.), along with 15 other cosponsors. That measure did not make it out of the House Rules Committee, as it did not meet certain technical criteria for a floor vote.

However, with the provision included in the Senate's version, the House Rules Committee requirements are no longer applicable, and there is another opportunity to include this provision in the final bill.

With the House version of the NDAA recently passed and the Senate's final vote imminent, the next step is for the chambers to work out differences between the versions in the NDAA conference. Your voice is critical in to ensuring this provision stays in the final version, call or write your lawmaker now!

Key House Committee Moves to Block MTF Restructuring, Medical Billet Cuts³

MOAA's efforts to raise concerns on Capitol Hill regarding military treatment facility (MTF) restructuring and medical billet cuts continue to pay off.

The [full House Appropriations Committee report for the FY 2021 House Defense Appropriations bill](#), released last week, denies DoD's request for funding to replace uniformed medical providers with civilians/contractors. It also restores funding to support MTFs that had been proposed for downsizing and incorporates additional reporting requirements and congressional oversight into the process.

The appropriations bill is separate from the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It funds DoD, including operations and maintenance, readiness activities, research and development, equipment modernization, and health and quality of life programs for military members and their families.

MTF Restructuring

The report from the full House Appropriations Committee expressed concerns about DoD's approach to MTF restructuring outlined in the February 2020 Section 703 report to Congress:

The Committee questions several of the assumptions made about the quality and accessibility of private sector care, the cost of changing the venue of care, and the relationship to other restructuring efforts, such as reducing the number of military medical billets.

The report also directs DoD to brief the congressional defense committees on the implementation plan to close or "descope" any MTFs including an update to the market analysis conducted, cost implications, timeline, impact on providers, and benefits or risks to the served population.

Medical Billet Cuts

The administration's FY 2020 budget request included a proposal to decrease medical billets for the services to allow an increase in the number of operational billets needed for lethality, a request that was repeated this year. The committee report expresses concern about the ramifications of these cuts and DoD's inadequate responses to questions about beneficiary and readiness impacts:

Reductions would have major ramifications throughout the military health system, yet leaders across the Department of Defense have been ill-prepared to articulate the consequences of these reductions.

Despite requests for additional information, the Committee still has not been provided with a detailed mitigation plan for beneficiary care or medical readiness. Serious questions remain about the quality and availability of care for beneficiaries, as well as the negative impact on readiness that may be caused by an unnecessary reduction of military medical providers.

MOAA's Next Steps with the FY 2021 NDAA

MOAA members were critical in building House support for halting MTF restructuring and medical billet cuts, resulting in two provisions in the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) mark of the NDAA: Modification to Limitation on the Realignment or Reduction of Military Medical Manning End Strength (Section 715) and Modifications to Implementation Plan for Restructure or Realignment of Military Medical Treatment Facilities (Section 716).

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) mark did not include similar provisions, so it is critical to build support for these sections of the House bill among Senate offices as the NDAA process moves forward.

We are conducting outreach to Armed Services Committee staff in both chambers, as well as to key member offices, to explain why these sections must be included in the final NDAA to protect military medical readiness and beneficiary access to care. We are also developing plans to activate MOAA's membership to build support for HASC provisions across all Senate offices, a critical step as the FY 2021 NDAA moves toward conference. You can reach out to your senator on the issue [using this link](#). (cont'd on p. 6)

THE TAMPA CHAPTER OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (MOAA)

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MOAA MISSION STATEMENT

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, or MOAA and their surviving spouses.

Tampa Chapter



Military Officers Association of America

TAMPA CHAPTER MISSION:

To maintain a strong national defense and to ensure our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors.

GENERAL CONTACT INFO:

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Notes from the Editor: Col Carol Zieres USA Ret



Retrospect highlights: This newsletter edition features the achievements of three MOAA Tampa Chapter members: Member of the Month - CDR (Chaplain) Richard Helveston, USN (Ret); a recap of a special presentation of the Florida House of Representatives Tribute honoring WWII Veteran and former WWII POW, CW04 Francis O'Connell, USA (Ret); and I am proud to announce that our Surviving Spouse Liaison and Personal Affairs Officer, Ms. Renee Brunelle, has been selected by MOAA National to serve on the National Surviving Spouse Committee. She will be dual-hatted in both the chapter and service at the National level beginning in October.

August 4th marks the 230th anniversary of the United States Coast Guard and included this month is a "History 101" information paper on the mission and important contributions of the USCG, authored by one of our senior flag officers, RADM Bill Merlin, USCG (Ret). Another informative article supplied by Chapter member, Major Dolores Incremona, USAF (Ret) is intended to educate our readership on the inner workings of the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) and perhaps even interest chapter members to consider donating their time, talent or treasure to the Tampa VTC.

We continue to reach out to our membership and Friends of MOAA for articles each month. I think this is an important time for all of us to become better acquainted with one another; by way of these articles, interviews and profiles, even though we are unable to physically meet in person at a member luncheon or at an Operation Helping Hand (OpHH) dinner. To that end, I chose to conduct a special interview with Vietnam Veteran and Purple Heart recipient, SGT Gerard Abbett, a long-time volunteer of OpHH and supporter

of MOAA. August 7th is National Purple Heart Day and Gerard was kind to share his story with me; a short vignette from his year-long tour in Vietnam, and also the important work he has accomplished in facilitating Hillsborough County's recognition as a Purple Heart County. If you are a combat veteran and have a story to share, it's not too late to send your information to our editorial team. We'd be delighted to hear from you and arrange for an interview by telephone, if not in person. And finally, we've added a "Coalition Corner." Chairman of the CENTCOM Coalition, BGEN Henrik Larsen, gives a brief account regarding some of the projects that the Coalition members have been working on in recent months and we'll soon be adding other Senior National Representative photos featuring, "Windows of the World" in future editions of the Retrospect newsletter.

Please continue to stay safe and NEVER STOP SERVING!

Carol Zieres, COL, USA (Ret)

Editor

THE RETROSPECT is published monthly by the Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers' Association of America (MOAA), P.O. Box 6383, MacDill Air Force Base, FL 33608-0383. The Tampa Chapter is a 501-C-19 tax exempt veterans organization not associated with the Department of Defense and is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America

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OUR EDITORIAL POLICY:

MOAA National, the Florida Council of Chapters, and the Tampa Chapter are nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter membership is open to all Military officers (Commissioned and Warrant), including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, former officers, and spouses/surviving spouses of military officers. Our luncheon meetings are held at 1130 hours every second Thursday of each month at the Surf's Edge Club on MacDill AFB.

ON THE WEB:

Tampa Chapter <http://moaatampa.org>

Communications directed to specific board members may be made by accessing their contact Information listed under "ABOUT MOAA TAMPA CHAPTER" and "LEADERSHIP."

A password protected MEMBER DIRECTORY is posted on the website under the "MEMBERSHIP" category

FL COUNCIL: www.moaafl.org

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OPERATION HELPING HAND: www.operationhelpinghandtampa.com

TAKE ACTION: <http://www.moaa.org/Content/Take-Action/Top-Issues/Top-Issues.aspx>.

As a member of MOAA, you are entitled to exclusive member benefits and discounts. Find out more about our member-only services and offers or explore the topics that most interest you.

UPDATE OPERATION HELPING HAND



LTC JIM GRIFFIN
Chairman, OPHH

"As long as we are needed, Operation Helping Hand will be there..."



It cannot be stressed enough how important it is going to be for us to continue to do our part to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing and face coverings have been shown to reduce the chances of you infecting others, especially vulnerable members of our community. I encourage everyone to think of the health of those around you and follow the common-sense advice of medical professionals to help slow the spread of COVID-19 so that can once again return to meeting and dinners. Someone once said that we do not quit being a volunteer because we grow old, we grow old because we quit being a volunteer.

We have some great news on some significant donations to OPERATION HELPING HAND. The BRAN-DON RUNNERS ASSN. finally were

able to hold their fundraiser and have a fantastic donation to us in the mail. The HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, who have been a fantastic sponsor of our monthly dinners, did not quit raising money once the dinners were cancelled, but continued through JUNE to raise money for us. I was invited to pick up the check presented by SHERIFF CHAD CHRONISTER on JULY 23D. A tremendous thank you goes out to CAPT DAVID ARTHUR and all of the men and women of the department who have made all this possible.

All of the OPERATION HELPING HAND vital programs of service to our wounded and injured and their families have continued without any interruption. We once again will sponsor the FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP that meets weekly that

joins the families that have endured the tragic injuries of a member with families that are just beginning to adjust to the many situations which will have to be overcome by patients and families so that a successful outcome may be possible.

OPERATION HELPING HAND will need your continued support to allow us to continue our vital program of service to our wounded and injured and their families. This support can be through donations by checks or by using our website (OPERATIONHELPINGHANDTAMPA.COM).

Please stay safe, healthy and resilient.

OUR TREMENDOUS GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS MAKE ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE!

HOW TO JOIN THE TAMPA CHAPTER

Come to a luncheon (2nd Thursdays) at 1115 at the Surf's Edge Club on MacDill Air Force Base and ask for Membership Chairman COL William A Schneider USA RET OR [download our brochure](#) and mail the application accordingly with payment.

You can email Col Schneider at TampaMOAA.Membership@gmail.com

Our Tampa Chapter Membership Application is found on our website, or in this edition of The Retrospect on [Page 7](#).

NOTE: to be eligible for membership in the Tampa Chapter, one must be a member of MOAA National or join National at the same time the Chapter is joined.



Have you "liked" our Facebook page? Visit us on Facebook at [@TampaMOAA](#) where you can scroll through our photo albums, like and share our posts, and stay up to date on Tampa Chapter news and events.



A US Navy Blue Angels flyover at the end of an Independence Day celebration in front of the Lincoln Memorial, July 4, 2019, in Washington, D.C.

source: www.businessinsider.com



Cadets in face masks pose for a picture after their graduation ceremony at the US Air Force Academy, at Air Force Academy, Colorado.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

CHAPLAIN (COL) BERNARD H LIEVING JR USA RET

The chaplain article I wrote for the August 2016 Retrospect included these words: "The events of the past weeks and the response to them have shown that racism is still alive and thriving in these United States...Our politicians use inflammatory rhetoric and careless accusations which tend to divide rather than unify." It seems as the old saying, "some things never change," is true. In the article I then challenged each and all of us to make a difference by not participating in such dysfunction but rather to "temper our words and open our hearts and live in relationship with one another as God's children regardless of race, ethnicity, language or religion."



The challenge before us at this time as a people of these United States of America is to live out our lives with the desire to make a difference. Pray that God answers our prayers offered in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, the late 12th and early 13th century Roman Catholic priest and founder of the Franciscan Orders.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen."

Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter Meeting Information

Information shared by Ms. Renee Brunelle
Tampa Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison



•If you would like to receive the MOAA Weekly Newsletter please email jimc@moaa.org to be added to the distribution list.

•Due to very generous philanthropic donations to MOAA there is Emergency Grant funding to assist the membership that may not be able to get any financial support otherwise.

•Government Affairs shared that the Military Coalition Survivor Committee is reviewing three items.

- 1). To lower the age to be remarried without penalty from 57 years old to 55 years old.
- 2). Increase DIC up to 55%
- 3). Change the disability timeframe to 10 years.

•There is a Closed Facebook Group that they are trying to build membership engagement -- MOAA Surviving Spouses and Friends. The goal is to share information with family members and to include non-members of MOAA (Enlisted as well).

•I provided a brief overview of VA Aid and Attendance for Assisted Living and tips to begin to downsize their home.

•Tips on being prepared if something happen to your loved one. Included knowing what passwords are, making sure equal access to utilities and banking. There is a difference on credit card access concerning "joint account" versus "authorized user account". Also, don't keep the only copy of important papers in the Safety Deposit Box since upon death access can be denied and/or non-business hours.

•Discussion on updating Advance Directives and if living alone how to visibly let EMS know where to find your documents. Also, information on COVID concerns when hospitalized increasing the need for Health Care Surrogate and Living Will.

•There is a separate Virtual Group for Nurses. Planning on starting one for Public Health professionals in the future.

N95 Masks

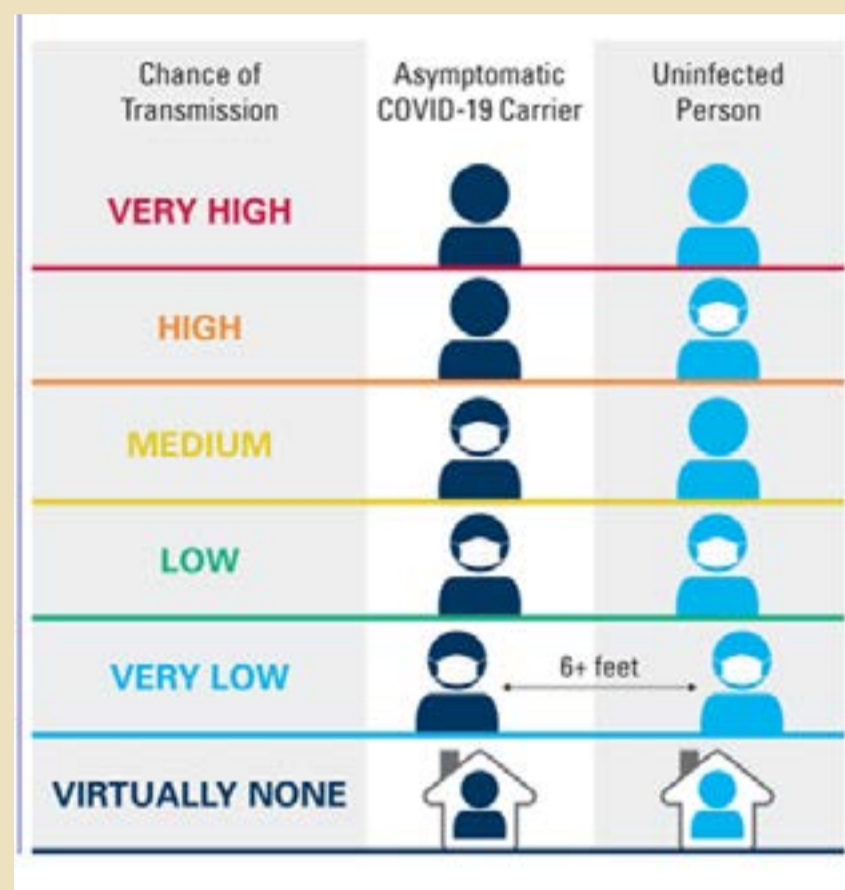
Information shared by Ms. Renee Brunelle
Tampa Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison

It seems like every day we turn on the news and hear a new opinion on masks and their best use. Since my personal company works with Older Adults daily, I wanted to share some details that I have been made aware of.

So let's talk about N95 Masks---the "95" stands for filtering 95% of the small and large particulates in the air. The paper & fabric masks have help with only the larger particulates.

Another factor is how you are wearing the masks. The one side should have a small metal strip that is used to help seal the top closer to your nose. The goal is to have the masks closest to your skin to have a lower chance of air coming in through the sides. Another tip for eye glass wearers. I don't like both my glasses and my masks pulling on my ears. There are plastic small straps (Amazon has them) that allow the masks straps to be behind your head and are adjustable.

Here is some additional information on best use of masks and your general safety: [Click here](#) for more information.



LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN cont'd from p. 2

VA Gets Boost in Emergency Funding for Community Care in 2021

In an unusual maneuver July 9, the House Appropriations Committee approved by a vote of 30-20 its fiscal year 2021 funding package for DoD military personnel and construction projects and VA health care and benefits programs, designating \$12.5 billion in emergency funding to avoid budget cap restrictions imposed in last year's budget agreement to ensure adequate resources for veterans health care in the community.

The VA and lawmakers have been wrestling with the rapidly growing costs of veterans' health care in recent years. These increases are due in part to the passage of the VA MISSION Act in 2018 to address the long waiting lists for veterans seeking care in VA at the time. The FY 2021 funding boost in large part is to provide more funding for VA community care, which was expanded in the act.

"We have finally achieved consensus with the Senate that the cost of VA health care is growing exponentially and cannot remain within the budget caps," said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. "For that reason, the \$12.5 billion within the total is designated as emergency funding to adequately fund VA health care."

The \$104.8 billion discretionary funding in the

House bill for VA is \$12.3 billion above this year's spending levels but is \$35 million below the president's budget request. \$90 billion of the discretionary funding is for VA health care — in line with the president's request but \$9.8 billion above FY 2020 authorization.

Some of the VA provisions include:

- \$10.3 billion for mental health care and \$313 million for suicide prevention outreach.
- \$661 million in gender-specific care for women.
- \$1.9 billion for VA homeless assistance programs.
- \$504 million for opioid abuse prevention programs.
- \$300 million for rural health initiatives.
- Increase funding in medical and prosthetic research, implementation of VA's electronic health record system, and VA construction projects.
- \$3.2 billion for VA Benefits Administration operations to include processing of disability claims and appeals backlogs — \$62 million more than FY 2020.
- \$94.2 billion for advance FY 2022 funding for VA medical programs, and \$145.3 billion in advance mandatory funding for VA benefit programs to ensure continuity in veterans' health care and benefits in the event of continuing resolution or disruption to the funding.

House Appropriations Committee Chair Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) stated, "This bill makes unprecedented investments in our veterans through our VA medical system to ensure that every veteran has access to the top-notch health care they deserve."

MOAA is grateful for House appropriators making VA's budget a top priority again this year and for lawmakers' understanding of how important this funding is for our veterans. It is especially critical during this time as the country continues waging war against COVID-19.

The bill will now go to the full House for a vote.

We urge the House and the Senate to move quickly in passing the VA appropriations bill and the 11 other government spending bills so funding for VA and all federal agencies will be in place when the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

Take action now! [MOAA Take Action Center](#)

Sources:

- 1) www.moaa.org, article by Brenden McMahon, July 22, 2020
- 2) www.moaa.org, article by Cory Titus, July 23, 2020
- 3) www.moaa.org, article by Karen Ruedisueli, July 21, 2020
- 4) www.moaa.org, article by Rene Campos, July 14, 2020

TAPS

This month, we remember those Tampa chapter members who recently left us:

Former chapter member, LtCol John Hallgren, USAF (Ret)



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DUES: \$25.00

HELP US MAINTAIN A CURRENT MEMBERSHIP ROSTER BY PROVIDING YOUR MOST UPDATED INFORMATION:

RANK, NAME, SERVICE: _____

DOB: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: CELL/HOME: _____

SPOUSE/SIGNIFICANT OTHER: _____

Tampa Chapter Annual Dues: \$25.00

(There is no dues requirement for active duty personnel or surviving spouse)

MOAA National Annual Dues:

\$48.00 You can join National MOAA at their website: moaa.org

MOAA National Lifetime Dues:

Based on age. Range: \$851-\$0 (Free for Age 100+)

You can bring this completed form to any event or you can mail it with the \$25.00 check made out to:

“MOAA Tampa Chapter”

**to: Bill Schneider
15888 Sanctuary Dr.
Tampa, FL 33647**

Email: TampaMOAA.Membership@gmail.com

**NOTE: MOAA NATIONAL DUES MUST BE PAID SEPARATELY
(<http://www.moaa.org>)**

MOAA TAMPA CHAPTER MEMBERS ATTEND BOBBY A'S 4TH OF JULY BARBEQUE - A FUND RAISER FOR OPERATION HELPING HAND



TAMPA MOAA CHAPTER AND AVAST SUPPORT CWO4 O'CONNELL'S TRIBUTE JULY 8, 2020

Francis Xavier O'Connell — a former prisoner of war and decorated military veteran — had been scheduled for a special moment during the most recent session of the Florida Legislatures.

State Rep. James Grant, from House District 64, sponsored a tribute for O'Connell's "exemplary military service and his unwavering dedication to the United States of America."

The tribute was scheduled to be delivered in the gallery of the House of Representatives in Tallahassee, according to O'Connell's niece, Carolyn Matthews.

But, that's just one of the things that hasn't happened in recent months because of COVID-19. Instead, a ceremony was arranged at Angels Senior Living at the Lodges of Idlewild, in Lutz, Matthews said, via email.

Because senior care facilities remain in lockdown, members of two veterans groups stepped forward to help create a dignified event to honor O'Connell.

Retired U.S. Army Col. Reginal Williams, of the Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), said the invocation. Retired Army Col. Charles Dalcourt, president of the chapter, presented the tribute to O'Connell, who retired as a U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4. The group also provided a photographer for the occasion.

Because of social distancing requirements, O'Connell had to stay inside the center. He was able to see what was happening, though, through the Lodges' glass front doors. Other residents also were able to attend the ceremony.

In part, it says that O'Connell began his service with basic and advanced military training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, before a deployment to Casablanca, Morocco, where O'Connell joined the 45th Infantry Division of the United States Army and trained for battle alongside the first appointed United States Special Forces.

In 1943 and 1944, he took part in three hard-fought but ultimately victorious amphibious assault landings in Italy.

During his fourth amphibious assault landing in southern France, O'Connell fought with his unit inland, where, in September of 1944, the unit was surrounded by Panzer tanks and German infantry. They were taken prisoner, and sent by trucks and trains to Germany, experiencing frequent strafing by United States aircraft along the way, the tribute says.

"He and his fellow captives were subject to extreme temperatures, near starvations, and brutal forced labor at a work camp in Vilshofen,

Germany, until Allied forces took control of the area, and upon being freed, his unit made the journey on foot to Bremerhaven, over 520 miles away," an excerpt from the tribute says.



O'Connell went on to earn his bachelor's degree in business administration from Brown University.

After that, he re-enlisted in the U.S. Army, in 1949, and served in an Intelligence Division at numerous duty stations in the United States, and

in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Ecuador and Brazil.

He retired from the Army in 1984, and continued to serve in the United States Army Reserves until 1989.

During his 42 years of service, O'Connell received the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He also was inducted into the French Foreign Legion of Honor by the French government.

In an interview with The Laker/Lutz News, conducted in August, 2017, O'Connell shared some of his war-time memories.

He recalled there were times during World War II when he wasn't sure he'd live to see another sunrise. He talked about being a prisoner of war and recalled being so thin at one point, he only weighed 80 pounds. He credited his mother's prayers for keeping him alive during dangerous times on the battlefield and through his captivity as a prisoner of war.

Despite being captured, O'Connell said he was one of lucky ones. He survived; two-thirds of a his regimen, made up of 1,800 soldiers, were killed. He also shared the joy he felt when he was finally reunited with his mother.

"You won't believe how happy it was," O'Connell said. "She almost fell over, when I put my arms around her."

Published July 22, 2020 by [The Laker Lutz News](#)
Submitted by Sara Marks

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE?

WWW.MOAAATAMPA.ORG

The MOAA Tampa website is a comprehensive and valuable tool that you can use to make the most of your MOAA Membership. Some of the things you can find on our website include:

Events Calendar: We have a new "Events" page where you will find an updated calendar, displaying our upcoming MOAA events, as well as events happening with Operation Helping Hand. Click on our [Events Page](#) to check it out!

Photo Gallery of Events: This is our photo gallery, where you will see all of the photos during our luncheons, special meetings, conventions and more! If you've had your picture taken at our events, you can likely find it by scrolling through our [Photo Gallery!](#)

Newsletters: Here you will find the latest volume of The Retrospect, our award winning Tampa Chapter Newsletter. You can also access archived versions of The Retrospect for reference and research. In addition, you can find archived versions of the Military Spouse Newsletter, which has been merged into The Retrospect starting in August 2019. Visit [The Retrospect](#) page to read on!

Member Directory: You can access an electronic version of our Member Directory on our website. The list is password protected for safety of our private information, but MOAA Tampa Chapter Members can be provided the password to access. You can also download an Excel version of the list once permitted into the page. Check out the [Member Directory](#) now!

WWW.MOAAATAMPA.ORG



Alaska Army Helicopter Airlifts Out 1940s-Era Bus Chris McCandless Died In

submitted by: Carol Zieres



Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment execute an extraction mission of the iconic "Magic Bus" via a CH-47 Chinook helicopter over Healy, Alaska, June 18, 2020. (National Guard)

PALMER, Alaska -- Almost 30 years after hiker Christopher McCandless died in an abandoned 1940s-era bus in the Alaska wilderness, that bus has been airlifted away from its resting place just outside Denali National Park by the Alaska Army National Guard.

The so-called "Magic Bus" had become a dangerous tourist destination deep in Alaska's interior, about 19 miles down the Stampede Trail. McCandless' story became particularly famous after it was told in the book "Into the Wild" and a movie by the same name.

The state has conducted at least 15 search operations related to the bus since 2009, according to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Local officials near the bus report rescuing dozens more, and at least two tourists have died there, including Veranika Nikanava, a newlywed from Belarus who was swept away by the same river that prevented McCandless from exiting the area.

A dozen Alaska Army National Guard soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, extracted the bus Thursday as

part of a training mission dubbed Operation Yutan, a reference to the bus' previous owner, Yutan Construction. The Guard unit cut holes in the roof and floor to secure chain kits to the frame, then moved it out by sling load



Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment execute an extraction mission of the iconic "Magic Bus" via a CH-47 Chinook helicopter over Healy, Alaska, June 18, 2020. (National Guard)

with a CH-47 Chinook. The crew also "ensured the safekeeping and safe transportation of a suitcase that holds sentimental value to the McCandless family," a news release said.

"This was a tremendous training opportunity for our heavy lift unit and a great way to lend a helping hand to our partners in the DNR and Alaskans everywhere," Maj. Zachary Miller, who worked as the operation's primary pilot, said in the release. "The department initially reached out to us with the goal of reducing the number of search-and-rescue cases that resulted from folks trying to reach the bus who may not necessarily be fully prepared for the trip."

McCandless, 24, hitchhiked his way to Alaska, spent the summer in the bus in 1992 and died of starvation after 114 days, when the swollen Teklanika River blocked his return to Healy, the nearest town.

The replica bus used in the 2007 film adaption of "Into the Wild," a 1996 book about McCandless by John Krakauer, sits at the 49th State Brewery and restaurant in Healy.

"Conducting this sling load was definitely non-standard," Miller said in the release. "We took our enlisted Soldiers with the most experience and expertise in this area to develop the best and safest solution."

State officials have not yet said what will become of the bus, which was originally owned by the city of Fairbanks before Yutan converted it to a camper bus and then abandoned it on the trail following a construction project in the 1960s. Officials said they are discussing plans to display it in a safe location.

"After studying the issue closely, weighing many factors and considering a variety of alternatives, we decided it was best to remove the bus from its location on the Stampede Trail," Corri A. Feige, DNR commissioner, said in the release. "We're fortunate the Alaska Army National Guard could do the job as a training mission to practice airlifting vehicles, at no cost to the public or additional cost to the state."

Source: Military.com Daily Brief

BULLETIN BOARD

CARING FOR OUR "SHUT-IN" MEMBERS

Our Chapter wants to become aware of members who are hospitalized, homebound, in care facilities or just plain sick and has provided a way for you to inform us. Please contact CDR Geoff Harrington USNR Ret at (813) 926-7988 so that he may call or send cards to let them know they are missed. Alternatively, you may send an e-mail to:

TampaMOAA.Secretary@gmail.com

CDR Geoff Harrington USNR, Ret, Sick Call Chairman

AUGUST 2020 DATES OF IMPORTANCE

04 - Birthday of the United States Coast Guard (1790)

07 - National Purple Heart Day

11 - U.S. combat troops leave South Vietnam (1972)

14 - V-J Day: the Japanese government cabled to the U.S. their surrender. WWII ends (1945).

15 - U.S. Naval Academy is established at Ft. Severn, Annapolis (1845)

22 - The founding of the International Red Cross in Geneva (1864)

28 - The Rev Dr. Martin Luther King made his, "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC (1963)

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: CDR (CHAPLAIN) RICHARD R. HELVESTON, USN (RET)

Richard Randolph HELVESTON, a native of Tampa, Florida, attended Seminole Elementary School in grades 1-4 grades; grades 5-9 in Dade City, FL; grade 10; Hillsborough HS and graduated from Pasco High School in Dade City, Florida, Stetson University in DeLand, Florida, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Pepperdine University Orange, California.

Prior to his denominational endorsement to the military chaplaincy, he pastored Fellowship Baptist Church in Mendenhall, MS and Whitehurst Road Baptist Church in Plant City, FL. He joined the Navy Chaplain Corps as a Reserve in 1966 and, after graduation from Chaplains' School in Newport, RI (where he was the honor graduate), he was assigned to Destroyer Squadron THREE, home ported in Long Beach, California.

When DESRON THREE and DESRON NINE (home ported in Yokosuka, Japan), exchanged home ports, he was assigned additional duty as the Officer-in-Charge of the Dependents Assistance Team. Subsequent orders sent him to the Naval Regional Medical Center, Oakland, California; PHIBRON TWO, Little Creek, Virginia; USS LEAHY (DLG-16); MAG-32, MCAS, Beaufort, SC; and MAG-31, Cherry Pt, SC. He requested and was granted RAD but remained a Selected Reserve, assigned successively to the Chief of Chaplains' Office, WASHDC; the Armed



Forces Reserve Center, Greensboro, NC; and finally, the Executive Officer of the Reserve Chaplain Unit, Little Creek, VA. He requested retirement orders in 1986.

He accepted an appointment in the Virginia United Methodist Conference where he had six appointments across the Conference under Bishops Goodson, Blackburn, Stockton, and Pennel. Those appointments were to the Linden Charge (5 small churches), Providence UMC in Patrick Springs, Ebenezer UMC in Suffolk, St. Mark's UMC in Manassas and Tabernacle UMC in Poquoson. He retired from the Virginia Annual Conference in 1999 after 22 years of service.

He is married to the former Shirley Colby of East Pembroke, New York. His family: David (Julia) is retired from the US Army Chorus where he was a member for 20 years and currently works for the Department of Interior. His twin, Dan (Lisette), is a computer consultant, working at the Senate and NRC, and daughter, Ruth, telecommutes from her home in Lakeland. They have six Grandchildren and four Great Grandchildren.

Dick and Shirley moved to Lakeland, Florida in March of 2004 and joined MOAA Tampa Chapter in June of 2004 where he has served as past Chaplain and Publisher of The Retrospect.

WHAT IS THE VETERAN'S TREATMENT COURT?

By Dolores Incremona, Major, USAF (Ret)

Most of you know me as the person who sets up the POW/MIA table at our luncheons. I would like to talk about a topic near and dear to me: The Veterans Treatment Court, or VTC. As a mentor of this court, it is my privilege to support veterans involved in criminal cases. The Veterans Treatment Court is a collaborative effort of the administrative office of courts, the State's attorney's office, the Public Defender's office, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the volunteer Veteran Mentor program.

The VTC integrates alcohol, drug treatment and mental health services with judicial case processing. Veterans and active duty are quickly identified and promptly placed in the VTC. The volunteer veteran mentors closely monitor the veterans' progress, and through coaching they ensure that VTC program goals are achieved.

The VTC benefits include alternative sentencing options, access to a comprehensive treatment plan, a team of support and case management to help increase chances of success. The Veterans Treatment Court uses a collaborative approach to treatment and rehabilitation for our veterans and active duty.

October 2013 the VTC officially started with 6 veterans, charged with misdemeanor offenses. We had one mentor. By 2019, the VTC hit a high water mark of 225 veterans and active duty service members on the docket. The volunteer mentor program currently maintains around 50 active serving mentors.

Success Experienced

Our Veterans Treatment Court averages between 85% -92% success rate (graduate and no return.) We experience a single digit recidivism rate. At an average cost (Hillsborough County) of \$20K/annum to house an inmate, and our current docket of up to 100, we are saving \$2M in county taxes by keeping our veterans out of jail and in treatment. In most cases,

once they graduate and charges are dismissed, the veterans can apply for expungement.

The VTC needs your help

How can people help? Donations, no matter the amount, are always welcome. The program's Director, Colonel DJ Reyes (U.S. Army, retired) is constantly seeking volunteers to serve as mentors; this is an immediate need. There are also opportunities to assist as members of the program's staff. A few areas available for you to assist include database management, training, and creating community service opportunities for our veterans.

Leading the charge

Judge Michael Scionti is a circuit court judge for the 13th Judicial Circuit and has presided over the VTC since January 2017. He built upon the program's successes established by previous VTC Judges Richard Weis (LTC, USAR, retired) and Gregory Holder (Colonel, USAFR, retired), and he continues to successfully showcase Tampa VTC as a national model and program. Judge Scionti is also a LTC in the USA Reserve. LTC Scionti commands the 139th Legal Operations Detachment and has served multiple tours as a military magistrate and rule of law advisor in both Iraq and Afghanistan. His military honors include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, The Army Commendation Medal, and the Presidential Unit Citation. Judge Scionti's current term ends soon and we at the VTC are very hopeful that his bid for reelection this year will be successful.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the VTC and to share the phenomenal impact the program has had in both the lives of the veterans enrolled and the greater Tampa community. We have several members of the MOAA Tampa Chapter involved as mentors and hope this short orientation will inspire you to inquire. If interested, please contact me directly or Colonel Reyes at _djreyes1957@gmail.com.

Interview with SGT Gerard F. Abbett

by COL Carol Zieres USA RET

National Purple Heart Day. Purple Heart Day is observed on August 7 each year and is a time for Americans to pause and to remember and honor the brave men and women who were either wounded on the battlefield or paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. This edition of the Retrospect features Purple Heart recipient, SGT Gerard F. Abbett from Tampa, Florida who volunteered to go to Vietnam right out of high school, and served as M-60 gunner and RTO in an infantry company during his one year tour from August 1967 until August 1968.

I first met Gerard at an Operation Helping Hand (OpHH) dinner at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in 2013 and learned that he's been a volunteer for MOAA Tampa Chapter's signature charity since 2008. As staff members on the OpHH committee, both he and his wife, Lori, are long-time supporters of our Chapter and are totally dedicated to helping combat injured heroes through their volunteer work in Veterans relief organizations. Gerard also serves on the Veterans Council for the Veterans Memorial Park and Museum in Hillsborough County and is the Commander of the American Legion U.S.S. Tampa Post 5. What piqued my interest and prompted me to prepare this story was when I learned that Gerard is also Chairman of the Purple Heart Memorial for the Hillsborough County Veterans Memorial Park on US301. I have personally visited this somber memorial honoring numerous Purple Heart recipients from Hillsborough County that is situated in a beautiful park setting; as well as visited the other Veterans' memorials, including the museum and Resource Center that



SPC GERARD F. ABBETT pictured with his Assistant Gunner, SPC Hernandez, Republic of Vietnam: This photo was carried in Gerard's Mother's Bible for many years

opened to the public in 2017. I asked Gerard if he would share with MOAA his story as a combat Veteran and Purple Heart recipient to which he graciously accepted my offer. Here's an account of two perilous days (27 and 28 October 1967) where he was engaged in an ambush that led to his wounding and subsequent receiving of the Purple Heart Medal:

B Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry (199th Separate Light Infantry Brigade)

"On a Company sweep in the Gia Dinh Province when monsoon season was winding down, my squad in the first platoon was directed to drop off into the wood line to our east as we headed south. We were told to hold up there until darkness set in, then move to the Dong Nai River's edge for the evening. It was a relief to begin with to get out of the direct rain and try to dry out a bit. As evening fell, the squad moved into position with the rain still pretty heavy and the wind swirling all around. Thoughts of November and the beginning of the dry season danced in my head as I set up my M-60 for the night with a good 180 degree sight of the river - I then greased and covered my weapon. My first watch was quiet and the rain was steadily falling.



I was awakened abruptly and quietly because on the rear side of our perimeter some movement was detected in a small tree line about 75 yards down river. I went to grab my M-60, but was suddenly stopped by my Squad Sergeant, as they (the Viet Cong) appeared to be crossing the river at the narrow point to our east. There was a question on how many were seen and he wanted to check if any other GI's were in the area. By then, they were out of sight and the window of success had closed. This was the gravest mistake the Sgt. had made. He had just come over from Germany and was an E-5 with 19 years of service. I guess his punishment became our squad's on that evening. It took a while for everyone to settle in as we were so hyper-vigilant at that time. At some point I fell asleep and was awakened by the sound of an RPG hitting right near us! On the riverside, PFC Green was up with the starlight scope; the explosion was directly in front of him and he was splattered with shrapnel in his stomach and chest. He yelled and screamed that he was blind as the flash had filled the screen of the scope he was holding. Luckily, the flash blindness was only temporary. I rolled to my left as the second round hit and I felt the burn in my elbow, arm, knee, and back as the shrapnel entered my body. Carbine rounds started to come in from the west across the river where Green had been facing.

When Green and I returned to the Company, the guys gave me what was left of the uninflated air mattress that I slept on that evening - it looked like Swiss cheese. Luckily for me, the rounds hit in the order they did because someone else would be writing this recollection, not me! I swept the area with a couple of large bursts when the Sgt. Yells out, "Stop, they will get our position!" I yelled back, they already have it with two of us already wounded and opened up again. 'Frenchie' Moyer, the Grenadier 'M-79 Man' to my rear shouted, "I'm checking out the rear so they don't hit us from this side too" (which happened lots of times). We got some sporadic fire that the guys answered with return fire when all of a sudden someone to the rear starts yelling, "Stop or I'll shoot" and opens up on Moyer hitting him in the chest and head with about eight rounds. I'll never forget he let out this horrific howl that lasted about three minutes before he expired - nothing could be done to save him. Not much else came our way from across the river until the Medevac was near. The Sergeant had PFC Green and me directing the chopper in after we moved Moyer over to evacuate him. (I had guessed the Sgt. figured we were expendable since we were already wounded). When the medevac touched down, Green and I handed over Moyer to the crew and they placed him on a gurney, then we boarded the chopper too and away we lifted off.

As the chopper banked and got some height and distance from the ambush area, the lights came on and the medics started medically treating Green and myself. Another medic placed the few remains of Frenchie Moyer in to a body bag. The top light then went out and just some dimmer lights came on for the duration of the flight. I was no longer feeling any pain, only numbness (kind of like what's come over me now as I type this almost fifty-three years later).....

His poor family, I felt such an emptiness, just as a friend. That image has never left me.

After some rehab, I returned to the Company to find out that PFC Bowdern, who had accidentally shot Moyer, just wandered off on that morning of October 28th. He was found dazed and confused about two clicks away. The Sgt. was gone - I don't know what happened to him.... Green and I gave each other a big bear hug, no words to be said, just glad to see each other and that we were both okay. On 4 November 1967, I received my first Purple Heart. The Brigade Commander pinned the medal on both PFC Green's and my chest.



Dedication of the newly installed Purple Heart Memorial on 13 February 2016 - Veterans Memorial Park and Admiral Le Roy Collins Museum (3602 Hwy 301N Tampa, FL 33619) Veterans Memorial Park Museum Committee Purple Heart Chairman, Gerard Abbett, stands with Major General Darsie D. Rogers, then SOCCENT & Combined Inter-agency Task Force-Syria, with his wife, Kim Rogers Photo credit: Gerard Abbett For more information on the Hillsborough County Veterans Memorial Park, please visit their website: <http://veteransparkhc.org>



(cont'd next page)

Interview with SGT Gerard F. Abbett (Cont'd)



Photo: Purple Heart Day Presentation, Hillsborough County, FL. The Purple Heart County Flag and Proclamation declared Hillsborough County as a Purple Heart County on August 2, 2012

(Cont'd from page 13) November, December, and January (pre-Tet Offensive) brought us out of the Delta for the most part, except the Saigon and Long Binh/Binh Hoa Area where the Brigade Headquarters was located. We had a new Captain Company Commander in November and after one very eventful day, I took over the radio of a wounded friend and called in a successful artillery attack which took out a large group of VC at the same time I was fending them off with my M-60 along with the rest of the squad. When we returned to the Company base camp, Captain Romine sent Hatch to get me and informed me that I was now his Company RTO and eventually became Commo Chief – he said he liked my calmness and quick thinking under a volatile situation.

The Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRPs) were getting lots of movement and the infantry companies were dropped in to those areas to hopefully hunt them out – with lots of contact; food, and weapons caches were found. There wasn't much 'let up' through May 1968 with TET, the Easter, and May Offensives. I managed to stay unscathed until July 1968 when a bullet grazed my head again taking me back to the 24th Evacuation Hospital (Semi-mobile) in Tan Son Nhut near Saigon, where when my head wound was stitched up and some tests were run, I was in a hospital bed on the

ward. I was in and out of consciousness and surprised to find a Brigade officer had quietly laid a Purple Heart on my pillow. No "pomp and circumstance" of a ceremony, just transported back to my Company HQ at Long Binh and put on light duty through the remainder of my tour. In September 1968, I arrived in Ft. Ord, California where I served as Commo Chief for F Company, 41st Infantry Mechanized through my ETS in March of 1969, when I out-processed and transferred to the Inactive Reserve."



History of the Purple Heart

The first Purple Heart was created by Gen. George Washington in 1782 to recognize meritorious service in combat. But it quickly fell in to disuse. Revived in 1932, the medal was changed into recognition of combat injuries and deaths. Its forerunner was the Badge of Military Merit, which took the form of a heart made of purple cloth. The Purple Heart is the oldest military award still given to U.S. military members. Source: Wikipedia.org

COALITION CORNER

Dear Tampa MOAA Chapter members.



Just a brief message from the International Coalition members here at MacDill AFB to let you all know that we are still around and very capable of performing our duties and responsibilities as national senior representatives to US CENTCOM and US SOCOM. The Coalition still counts some 50 nations. When including family members we are about 250 living in the Tampa Bay area.

As liaison elements we are very dependent on communicating with our US colleagues, receiving updates, briefings, conveying messages from our capitols, and simply engaging with all members of the Coalition.

As you will understand US CENTCOM and US SOCOM are both adhering to a mission essential manning approach. However, all coalition members have access to MacDill AFB and our offices in the Coalition Village III building.

The latter is of course deemed necessary for us to access classified systems.

Virtual briefings and meetings have now become the "new normal" and actually work just fine.

To my knowledge no one from the international part of the Coalition, to include our families, have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We keep our fingers crossed that it will remain that way. Obviously, we are closely tracking the COVID situation in our respective home nations, but indeed also how it relates to the Hillsborough County area - our current home.

We all hope that we will be able to return to some kind of "situation normal" in the near future, which would allow us to interact more with the surrounding community and thereby re-engage with MOAA and Operation Helping Hands. Looking forward to seeing you all again - and hopefully relatively soon. Stay safe.

On behalf of the Coalition,
BGEN Henrik Larsen
Danish Senior National Representative to US CENTCOM
Chairman of the Coalition

230TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U. S. COAST GUARD

by RADM William F. Merlin, USCG (Ret)

On 4 August 1790, the U. S. Guard (USCG) was founded by the U. S. Congress, at the urging of the Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. The USCG, known initially as the Revenue-Marine, is a military, multi-mission service, with maritime law enforcement jurisdiction in both domestic and international waters along with a maritime search and rescue mission. The modern Coast Guard was formed in 1915 with a merger of the U. S. Life-Saving Service, and in 1939 the U. S. Light-house Service was added, and in 1942 the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation was merged into the USCG, adding federal regulatory respon-



sibilities for marine safety. Created under the Department of Treasury, the USCG now serves under the Department of Homeland Security, and personnel strength has recovered to 56,000 active duty, civilians, and reservists.

The USCG has responsibilities for national defense readiness, and has participated in every major U. S. conflict from 1790 through today, serving under the Dept. of the Navy in WWI and II. USCG forces provided vital cargo escort/ anti-submarine services during the Battle of the Atlantic in WWII. Service during the Vietnam War required deployment of patrol boats as well as offshore cutters for coastal defense and control. CG Reservists are regularly activated to augment active duty forces. Today, USCG cutters are serving as part of the Navy in the Persian Gulf.



Off-shore Patrol Cutter

The USCG is unique among the Armed Services in having a volunteer civilian force, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, to assist the USCG in carrying out its mission for recreational boating safety. Over 31,000 Auxiliarists conduct boating safety training and education classes, vessel inspection services, and marine event search and rescue operations.

MOAA TAMPA CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2020: CHANGE IN LUNCHEON LOCATION AND SPEAKER/TOPIC SUGGESTIONS

Dear MOAA Tampa Chapter Member,
In order to bring you the best value and even greater social ex-perience during the MOAA Tampa Chapter Luncheons, the Board of Directors is considering changing the meeting location for the Chapter’s monthly luncheons.

Some of the reasons for changing the location are to:

- eliminate the need for vetting base access to members and guests to get on base
- improve the quality of the food and beverage service for the cost involved
- enhance the audiovisual support
- provide greater flexibility to accommodate the growing needs of our Chapter



We are interested in knowing how the general membership feels about meeting off base. Please take a moment to complete your response below:

If you are in favor of moving the location, please recommend off-post venue(s) for the Board to consider. Provide the name of dining establishment, contact person and phone number or email (if known):

We are interested in your suggestions for specific topics or guest speakers that the Tampa Chapter Pro-grams Officer consider for the calendar year 2020. Provide a BRIEF description of topic, contact person’s name and phone number/email address:

Your Name and Contact information:

Send your completed form/information to:
Dick Siegman at dicknick2@msn.com
or bring to the next Chapter Luncheon.

THANK YOU for your input.
MOAA Tampa Chapter Board

“NEVER STOP SERVING”