



THE RETROSPECT



MAY 2018

TAMPA CHAPTER—A FIVE STAR CHAPTER OF MOAA NATIONAL

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 5

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ARMY BALL

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COL ZIERES
PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE COL CAROL ZIERES, USA RET

Accompanied by their families and ROTC Instructors, it was my pleasure to honor FIVE JROTC CADETS from five Hillsborough County High Schools at our annual JROTC awards luncheon on April 12th. The CADETS representing the finest JROTC programs from HILLSBOROUGH HS, ALONZO HS, KING HS, MIDDLETON HS, and STRAWBERRY CREST HS, were very impressive to all members in attendance. It is gratifying to meet these accomplished young folks and recognize their potential for future leadership in the Armed Forces by awarding them the MOAA ROTC Medal and Certificates of Achievement.

We welcomed into our chapter two new members this month; LTC GLENN NIELSEN, USAF (Ret) and CAPT SHAUNA KENYON, USAF (Ret), and three members of the Coalition were guests seated at the head table: BG HANS ILIS-ALM (Sweden), COL SADIAM AL DHULAIMI (Yemen), and COL DARRYL MILLS (Canada). It was also nice to have the ladies from the Military Officers Wives Club (MOWC) join us at this luncheon and to participate in an "eye-opening," interactive presentation by a very dynamic guest speaker, DR. MOEZ LIMAYAN, DEAN, USF MUMA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS. The topic was on CYBER SECURITY and what you can do to practice safe hygiene with your computing devices to protect yourself from the evil hackers who want nothing more than to steal your identify along with your financial information. Unfortunately, identify theft has become a lucrative business preying on the innocent and unsuspecting users of the internet. Through his entertaining style of teaching, DR. MOEZ quizzed the audience on some facts, figures and statistics that were quite startling such as: "One Trillion dollars are lost each year due to data breaches." Not surprising, he went on to say that HEALTHCARE is the Number One industry at risk for hacking. "The biggest danger of data breaches is the People, not the Technology," said MOEZ. Speaking of technology, last month I mentioned the Tampa Chapter is going digital and will no longer be printing and mailing the RETROSPECT newsletter, so JUNE is the last issue that you'll be receiving in your mailbox. I want to remind everyone that the current RETROSPECT Newsletter is ALWAYS available on our website: www.MOAA Tampa.org and future RETROSPECT newsletters will continue to be sent via e-mail if you've provided a current e-mail address to the Membership Chairman, BILL SCHNEIDER or to TOM SOUTH who maintains the membership roster. It is important that you notify TOM SOUTH immediately if you have changed your contact information, so we can continue to keep you informed on the activities at the chapter, state and national MOAA levels. For financial reasons, the board of directors voted to terminate the lease and purchase the Canon copy machine that we've been using to print the newsletter, subsequently to sell it.

Lastly, as a reminder, the FLORIDA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS annual convention is coming up soon (1-3 JUNE) at the Sanibel Harbor Marriott Resort and Spa. The room rate is a good deal at a world-class resort and tax free if you register online now at <http://www.moaafl.org/convention>. With a chapter of more than 400 members, we'd like the Tampa Chapter to be well-represented at this event!

**AS ALWAYS, "WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK – NEVER STOP SERVING –
—TAKING CARE OF OUR TROOPS IS A LIFETIME COMMITMENT"**



Upcoming Events

- 03 MAY BOARD MEETING
- 10 MAY LUNCHEON
- 17 MAY OPHH
- 07 JUNE BOARD
- 14 JUNE LUNCHEON
- 21 JUNE OPHH
- 05 JULY BOARD
- 12 JULY LUNCHEON
- 19 JULY OPHH

**PUBLICATION DEADLINE
FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS
15 MAY**

DATES IN MAY 2018

- 08—VE day commemorates the end of fighting in Europe during World War II.
- 13—Mothers' Day is always celebrated on the second Sunday in May.
- 16—Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. It is a period of prayer, fasting, charity-giving and self-accountability for Muslims in the United States.
- 17—National Day of Prayer calls on all people of different faiths in the United States to pray for the nation and its leaders. It is held on the first Thursday of May each year.
- 19—Armed Forces Day occurs annually on the third Saturday of May. It is a day to pay tribute to men and women who serve the United States' armed forces.
- 20—Pentecost is a Christian holy day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus Christ, according to the New Testament.
- 20—Jewish Americans observe Shavuot, which is the second of three major Jewish festivals that focus on historical and agricultural importance.
- 28—Memorial Day commemorates all men and women who have died in military service for the US.

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**POSSIBLE MAY SPEAKER: R STEVEN MURRAY**

R. Steven Murray is Communications Director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs in Tallahassee, Fla.

The retired Air Force lieutenant colonel provides oversight and direction of the department's comprehensive public affairs program of community outreach, media relations and employee communications impacting Florida's more than 1.6 million veterans, their family members and survivors. During his Air Force career, he served as Director of Public Affairs at Moody AFB, Georgia; Director of Public Affairs at Misawa Air Base, Japan; Director of Public Affairs with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Washington, D.C., Faculty Head of the Public Affairs Department at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Maryland; and Director of Public Affairs at Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service, Randolph AFB, Texas. Colonel Murray, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, retired from the Air Force as a career public affairs officer in 2006 and returned to his home state of Florida to serve in his current position.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree in broadcast journalism with honors from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Miss. and has a Master of Science degree in Administration from Central Michigan University.

<http://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/FDVA-Biography-Murray-2012.pdf>



CAPT DVORNIK
EDITOR

THE RETROSPECT

— 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. The views expressed in individually signed articles do not necessarily reflect Chapter policy.

OUR EDITORIAL POLICY—MOAA National, the Florida Council and the Tampa Chapter are nonpartisan organizations. Our membership is open to all active duty, retired, former and reserve officers. Our luncheon meetings are held at 1130 hours every second Thursday of each month at the Surf's Edge Club on MacDill AFB. Our Military Officers Wives Club (MOWC) meets at the same time and place and is open to all officer wives whose husbands are Tampa Chapter members or are widows of a military officer. NEW MEMBERS will only have their names and photo published.

ON THE WEB: Tampa Chapter (<http://moaatampa.org/>) FL COUNCIL (www.moaafl.org/) National (www.moaa.org/)

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.



LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

by LTC Chris Hart, USA (Ret.)

As *The Retrospect* is being delivered to you, MOAA leaders of chapters from across our country, state councils and the national headquarters have been 'Storming the Hill' in DC, in meetings with Members of Congress on the major issues affecting us. With this in mind, I am focusing this article on the Department of Veterans Affairs, its leadership and its potential future, **The following is a plagiarized summary from newspaper editorials a MOAA article, and from conversations with colleagues on the front line of events.** I believe the future of the VA is worth our serious investigation, open debate and action.

The firing of Veterans Affairs Secretary, David Shulkin, might seem like just another in the recent spate of executive branch departures. But for his efforts to reform a vast bureaucracy and to better serve America's 20 million veterans, Shulkin will be sorely missed. He might have himself to blame for a host of alleged ethical violations, although Shulkin contends he has been falsely accused by Washington partisans and veterans' groups opposed to his reform efforts. What's clear is that many of those efforts have been sensible and courageous. The next VA leader—Rear Admiral Ronny Jackson, the White House physician, has been tabbed — should push ahead on the same track.

Shulkin supported a plan approved by Congress to privatize VA services, but was wary of moving too abruptly or drastically. So the department focused on cities where VA hospitals are overcrowded and in rural areas where they are hard to reach. His efforts enabled many veterans to get care more quickly and set up a controlled study to inform a broader push. Unfortunately, his pragmatism conflicted with a blind faith in privatization held by rivals in Donald Trump's administration.

This was not the only initiative Jackson, if confirmed, would do well to continue. Shulkin carried on with earlier reforms to the department's disability payment system, which has trapped many veterans in dependency, discouraging them from rejoining the workforce. He stepped up measures to improve employee accountability, and to prevent deserving veterans from being denied urgent care. He reinvigorated the VA's stalled effort to bring its record-keeping into the digital age and make its online system compatible with that of the Defense Department; he also proceeded carefully with the effort to shift care for homeless veterans — some 40,000 people — to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which might be better suited to the task.

The VA still needs to do a better job of vetting veterans who apply for care and disability payments. Consider that more than one-third of living veterans who served since the Sept. 11 attacks have sought some form of remuneration, compared with just 21 percent of those who served during the Vietnam War. It's one reason the department's budget has ballooned to \$200 billion. This responsibility now falls to Jackson.

After several veterans reform issues were dropped from the massive \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending package signed into law in March, it appears progress on any veterans legislation has stalled until a new VA secretary is confirmed. That could have a major impact on several important issues, most notably including the VA's role in private sector health care.

It's been four years since a scandal at the Phoenix VA Medical Center shed a light on the wait-times veterans faced when seeking care at the VA. Since then, Congress has spent billions of dollars allowing veterans to seek private sector care in the community, at the federal government's expense, while it works on reducing patient wait times at its facilities.

The issue of VA privatization came back into focus when Dr.

David Shulkin left his position as VA secretary, and President Donald Trump announced a new nominee, Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson, USN, the president's personal physician, to take the position.

The shake-up has stirred new questions about privatization and what all these changes mean to veterans and their families. The agency issued a press release April 5 firmly stating, "There is no effort underway to privatize VA and to suggest otherwise is completely false and a red herring designed to distract and avoid honest debate on the real issues surrounding veterans' health care."

But amid the public fallout between Shulkin and the administration, some people aren't so sure. In interviews, Shulkin said political appointees sought to remove him from his role in order to dismantle the VA's health system and push veterans into private sector care.

In the interim, Trump moved Robert Wilkie, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, to serve as acting secretary of the VA until Jackson's confirmation.

Without much of a public record on the issue, many lawmakers are unsure of what to make of Adm. Jackson's nomination. Senate lawmakers are reluctant to move quickly on Jackson's confirmation until he provides answers to those important questions.

Without permanent leadership in place, it's difficult to tell what direction the nation's second-largest federal department will take. And without steady leadership, veterans could pay the price.



OPERATION HELPING HAND UPDATE

by LTC Jim Griffin USA Ret, Chairman

THE OPERATION HELPING HAND DINNER FOR MAY WILL BE HELD ON 17 MAY AT 6:00 PM AT THE JAMES A HALEY VA HOSPITAL IN THE SCI DINING FACILITY (HERO'S CAFÉ). At 4:00 pm there will be a dedication of the new BOB SILAH VIRTUAL REALITY ROOM on the second floor of the SCI WING. You are all welcome to attend this state of the art facility sponsored by OPERATION HELPING HAND.

I hope you will join us at both events and bring a friend and continue to support us with your time and donations for our active duty wounded and injured and their families who will be honored. Please come and plan to meet these WARRIORS and their families. You will be a better person—I guarantee it!

This month's sponsor will be THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS. They have contributed not only a great deal of money, but a tremendous amount of their time in support of OPERATION HELPING HAND. Special thanks to CENTURY BUICK and OUR OWN TAMPA CHAPTER for sponsoring the April Dinner. It was a fantastic evening.

As always, a special thanks to our tireless volunteers which enables us to consistently provide 96.5% of all of the monies donated to go to our wounded and injured and their families. The strong support of our local business community and their commitment to sponsor our dinner events, golf tournament, and provide generous donations throughout the year, along with the individual support we receive from numerous donors every month by way of checks, or on our website:

—OPERATIONHELPINGHANDTAMPA.COM—
insuring that the support for our mission will not be interrupted for as long as our assistance is required.

**OUR TREMENDOUS GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS
MAKE ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE!**

TAMPA CHAPTER'S BULLETIN BOARD



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CAPT SHAUNA KENYON, USAF (Ret)



LTC GLENN NIELSEN, USAF (Ret)

—Submitted by Col William Schneider, Membership
Chairman

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

LT COL THOMAS ALLEN USAF RET

3301 Bayshore Blvd., Unit 1104, Tampa, FL 33629-8844

LT COL JOANNE TAUBER, 13714 Chestersall Dr.,

Tampa, FL 33624-2501

—submitted by CW3 Bill Farrow, Sick Call Chairman

TAPS

LT COL MERLE G HARPER USAF RET died on 10
April 2018

—submitted by MAJ Dick Tinsley, Personal Affairs Chairman

MOAA'S VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR IS OPEN TO ALL WHO HAVE SERVED OR CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE U.S. MILITARY, AND THEIR SPOUSES!

Do you want to meet employers, but have limited time? Looking to connect with employment opportunities focused on high-performing individuals? Are you willing to relocate to another area for the best fit job? MOAA has found that Virtual Career Fairs are very effective in connecting talented military and veterans with great companies who value your skills. And, because of the ease of connecting and low cost (time and money), virtual career fairs are proving effective and on the rise. To increase your chances of connecting with a great company take these important steps:

1. Be sure to upload a photo, current resume and your LinkedIn URL.
2. Research the companies prior and identify "best fit companies" for whom you'd like to work.
3. Keep conversations flowing with short text chats to "create the connection."
4. Follow-up with companies of greatest interest.

<http://www.moaa.org/Content/Events/Career-Fairs/Detail/6-20-2018-Virtual-Career-Fair.aspx>



The Tampa Chapter's spotlights
are focused on
**Dr. LTC Frank Douglas
ANDREWS, USA RET**



Doug was born in Tampa and attended public schools graduating from Chamberlain High School in Tampa. He has a BA in Business Administration, MA in Human Resources Development, and a Doctorate in Business Administration. He is also a graduate of the US Army Command & General Staff College. During his working career he and his wife, Valerie, owned a chain of school supply stores. After 20 years in the school supply business, a company asked to buy the stores. The offer was accepted; Doug was then offered a position as a manufacturer's representative for a firm based in Dallas. He began as southeast region representative calling on military exchanges in the southeast United States as well as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the US Virgin Islands. His last position with the company was Director of Government Sales.

Doug also had a parallel career in the US Army. He enlisted in 1968 and served 31 years in the Florida Army National Guard and 9 years in the US Army Reserve. Doug served in several branches to include Infantry, Field Artillery and Air Defense with commands through battalion level. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2008 with 40 years of service. Doug is an active member of the MacDill MOAA chapter.

Doug joined The Rotary Club of New Tampa in 1996 and served as Rotary District 6890 Governor in 2007-2008. He also served as Rotary District 6890 Foundation Chair from 2010 to 2016 where he oversaw projects around the world ranging from a few thousand dollars to over one million dollars. He is an active member of The Rotary Club of Lutz, which he and Valerie chartered in 2015. Doug serves on many Rotary and community non-profit boards. Doug and Valerie met in Tampa in 1967 and were married in London, England in 1968. They have one daughter and 6 grandchildren. Their hobbies are photography and travel. They enjoy spending time with their 2 dogs. Doug and Valerie have been active members of Idlewild Baptist Church since 1991. Doug serves as a deacon; Valerie volunteers with children's Sunday school. They have visited 60 countries and have participated in church mission trips to Guatemala, Bolivia and the Amazon.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Chaplain (COL) Bernard H Lieving, Jr., USA Ret

The backyard pruned and fed rose bushes are blooming abundantly and the kitchen/family room are alive with their aromas. Of the ten hanging backyard orchids, one already has bloomed, two more are in full color, the buds on two others are waiting to burst open.

The blooming milkweeds are enticing Monarch butterflies for egg laying and the nectar is calling others to enjoy the taste. The front yard lilies are showing their white beauty.

Spring is here in Central Florida even if our families and friends up north are still dealing with winter storms including a foot or more snow.

It is when the rose or orchid or milkweed buds receive the warmth of the sun and nourishment from the soil that they burst open and the beauty of the colors within is revealed.

So it is with us humans too. In order for the unique beauty God has placed within each of us to be revealed we must receive the warmth of human love of parents, friends, and family. Otherwise, like a flower damaged by a late frost it will not open and reveal the beauty within. If humans do not receive the warmth and encouragement of human love, we tend to remain closed in on ourselves.

Think about your parents, spouses, children, friends, and neighbors. Scripture tells us that we are to love others as we are loved by God. Guess what? When we do love them by our WORDS and ACTIONS, we give the warmth and the nourishment for them to come to full bloom. Think for a moment...who in your life might need your extra word or deed today in order to come to their fullest beauty?

LUNCHEON PHOTOS
—submitted by CW2 Thomas South RET



JROTC graduates (honored for their high achievements, (standing with President, COL CAROL ZIERES USA RET

“Accompanied by their families and ROTC Instructors, it was my pleasure to honor FIVE JROTC CADETS from five Hillsborough County High Schools at our annual JROTC awards luncheon on April 12th. The CADETS representing the finest JROTC programs from HILLSBOROUGH HS, ALONZO HS, KING HS, MIDDLETON HS, AND STRAWBERRY CREST HS.” —COL ZIERES

Alonzo HS—Cadet Cameron Taylor- elected as Battalion 1SG of the Year

Hillsborough HS—Cadet Reyna Hernandez, Battalion Executive Officer

King HS—Cadet Justice Goff -participated in Field Meet Competitions, Naval Service TC

Middleton High School—Cadet Cameron Ramsey-Engineering Technology Magnet Program

Strawberry High School—Cadet First Sergeant Eric Ingersoll-Goal: Active Duty USA Officer



COLOR GUARD

The Color Guard for the Tampa Chapter's luncheon on 12 May was graciously provided by Wesley Chapel High School, 30651 Wells Rd, Wesley Chapel, FL 33544





MAY BIRTHDAYS

COL WILLIAM A SCHNEIDER USA RET	1
CAPT ARTHUR WHITING USCG RET	1
FORMER ARMY MAJ CHARLES KOLKER	3
MAJ JAN B LAUX III USA RET	4
COL MATTHEW RUEDI USA AD	4
CAPT KENNETH WRIGHT USN AD	5
LTC KAY SCHWARTZ USAF RET	6
FORMER LCDR CHARLIE TOUCHTON USN	7
CAPT PAUL A MORRISON USN RET	9
LTC CHRIS HART USA RET	10
LTC RUTH VANDYKE USA RET	10
LCDR LESLIE O'HARA USN AD	11
LTC STEPHEN WARNER USA RET	12
CAPT MARGARET MOORE USAF RET	13
LTC LLOYD SHARPER USA RET	14
LCDR SHANNON GRANT USPHS AD	15
CW2 THOMAS SOUTH USA RET	16
COL WILLIAM GEARAN USA RET	18
CAPT HARRY CUMBER USMC RET	20
COL NEIL LARIMER USMC RET	20
CDR TIMOTHY GALLAGHER NOAA AD	21
CW3 BILL J FARROW USA RET	23
LTG BILL LENNOX USA RET	23
CAPT WILLIAM WHALEY USCG RET	24
COL JOHN PARCELEWICZ USAF RET	26
LT DIEGO ESGUERRA USN	28
LT COL RICHARD GRINNELL USAF RET	28
CAPT STEVEN A SWIFT USNR	28
CAPT NADA MISHRIK USAF RET	29

FOUR-LEGGED THERAPIST BRIGHTENS PATIENTS' DAY

By Ed Drohan, Public Affairs Specialist at James A. Haley VA Hospital



Hercules and his handler, Robert Lynch, pay a visit to Polytrauma patient Gabe Gonzalez and his mother, Miriam

Much of Gabe Gonzalez's day at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital Polytrauma Clinic is spent working with therapists helping him regain some of the skills and abilities he lost after suffering a major traumatic brain injury in Iraq. But there's one therapist in particular that puts a smile on his face every time he visits. It just so happens that this therapist is a four-legged one.

Hercules, a 19-month old black Labrador retriever, is the facility's new therapy dog. He and his handler, JAHVH Veterans Experience Officer Robert Lynch, have been visiting patients in both the outpa-

tient and inpatient clinics for nearly a month now, but Gabe's room has become a daily stop on their rounds of the hospital.

Robert said he was looking for opportunities to engage with polytrauma patients to acclimate Hercules and see how he reacted to the patients when he walked by and saw Gabe's mother, Miriam Gonzalez, standing in the room.

"She smiled and was just glowing when she saw Hercules. She invited us in and we started building a relationship," Robert said. "Right off the bat when we came into the room, I saw Gabe's expression on his face and he just started smiling and he was giggling a little bit. I could see his eyes light up and his mom's eyes light up as well."

Gabe, an Air Force pilot before his injury, is wheelchair-bound and only recently started saying a few words. He has been a resident of the polytrauma unit since September 2017 after being transferred from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. His mother said he has a chocolate Labrador retriever at home, and that's probably why he enjoys visits from Hercules.

"He was really amazed and smiling, and then he said, 'Good boy,' because he remembered his dog," Miriam said of Gabe's first encounter with Hercules. "He really wants his dog but it can't be. That's why every day he's looking forward to Hercules to come, and he makes us laugh."

Hercules was trained by Southeastern Guide Dogs, an organization that provides guide, therapy and emotional support dogs to those who need them at no cost. His training took almost a year, Robert said, but it was his demeanor that eventually determined that he would be a therapy dog.

"He is lovable, he is well behaved, he hasn't barked yet since I've had him and it's been four weeks," Robert said. "He's not distracted by other dogs or children, and he gets along with everyone."

Hercules lives with Robert and his wife, Brenda, as his personal emotional support dog but has been accepted through the hospital Therapy Dog Program as Haley's official full-time therapy dog as well. Robert and Hercules started by visiting outpatient clinics and interacting with Veterans waiting for appointments before heading to the inpatient areas at the Polytrauma and Rehabilitation, Spinal Cord Injury and Community Living centers.

"Nobody comes to the hospital because they want to. They don't come here to get away from their problems, they come here to face their problems," Robert said. "He really makes life a little bit better. He has unconditional love. You can't help, when you see that tail wagging and that smile on his face, just to have a moment of just feeling good. He makes you feel good."

And it's not just the patients and visitors who have appreciated a visit from Hercules. "The staff have a bounce in their step when they see him," Robert said. "I think that sets the tone for their day as well, which will hopefully help them provide even better customer service."

Robert, a Marine Corp Veteran and VA patient himself, said his goal is to have up to 10 certified handlers for Hercules and have a weekly visit schedule coordinated for areas throughout the hospital. For now, though, Gabe will stay on the daily schedule.

"We kind of became very close," Robert said. (Hercules) actually knows where Gabe's room is now. When we get to that hallway, he goes right to the room. He really has a way of making people feel good."

https://www.tampa.va.gov/TAMPA/features/Therapy_Dog.asp



FCOC CONVENTION

Submitted by President Zieres



"The Lee Coast Chapter is hosting the 2018 FCOC Convention at the Sanibel Harbor Marriott Resort and Spa June 1 to June 3, 2018

The room rate is \$139

per night to include free parking, no resort fee and no taxes if you register through FCOC. The same rate applies 3 days prior & 3 days after the convention. A special event is being planned for the first day, a cruise of Sanibel Harbor aboard the 70-foot yacht, "Sanibel Princess." A buffet dinner and cash bar will be offered aboard and attendance will be limited to convention attendees."

Get additional information & make your reservations at: <http://www.moaafl.org/Convention/>

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WOUNDED TROOPS SHARE STORIES, STRENGTH

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Doug Roles, 28th Infantry Division



Retired Army Spc. Justin Lane, center, speaks to 28th Infantry Division soldiers at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, April 3, 2018. Lane was one of eight wounded soldiers participating in an Operation Proper Exit trip.

Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Role

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait— Eight wounded service members returned to Afghanistan April 3 as part of the 24th iteration of Operation Proper Exit to bring a message of hope and resiliency to soldiers deployed here. The event facilitated frank discussions about the best outcomes for some of the worst injuries soldiers face.

The panel discussion addressed post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide prevention, Department of Veterans Affairs services and rehabilitation. It also allowed the audience to discover how to interact with brothers in arms who have lost limbs, been shot multiple times or struggled through anxiety and depression after returning home from combat. An initiative of the Troops First Foundation, OPE seeks wounded service members who are thriving in recovery and are capable of returning to theater so that they may leave on their own terms.

“It’s a distinct honor and privilege to be able to host you today,” said Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Radulski, the 28th Infantry Division deputy commander for operations, as he welcomed the group to a gymnasium on post. “You’re on a journey of discovery and closure and we’re proud to be a part of that process. I hope you find the healing you seek.”

The Pennsylvania Army National Guard’s 28th Infantry Division’s headquarters battalion hosted the first stop of the group’s weeklong tour through the Middle East and Afghanistan. Eight soldiers from the battalion were paired with wounded troops to serve as sponsors during their stay. “I believe in what they’re doing here. I believe it’s helpful,” said Army Staff Sgt. Mark Milanovich, a sponsor from the 28th Infantry Division’s Headquarters Support Company. “It shows a lot of courage for these guys to do this. It’s an honor to be one of the sponsors. There’s so much you can learn from these guys.”

Another sponsor, Army Staff Sgt. Russell Blankenship with the company’s chaplain section, said he worried that meeting his assigned soldier would be awkward. But that proved not to be the case. “These wounded warriors have big personalities. They make fun of themselves a lot. They’re pretty open about their injuries,” Blankenship said. “I thought being a sponsor would be a good opportunity to help soldiers, as part of our unit ministry team. And I thought it would be a good experience to see what

they’ve gone through and maybe make me be better able to help soldiers later.”

OPE participants have the opportunity to return to the medical facility where they were treated, if not the actual site of their combat injury. The meet-and-greet events at various forward operating bases give currently deployed soldiers an opportunity to honor them and hear their stories. For most participants, it’s a final opportunity to put on the uniform, though some wounded soldiers are able to remain in the service through programs such as the Army’s Continuation on Active Duty program. “When I lost my arm in 2008, I thought my career was over; I actually reenlisted and stayed active duty for five more years,” said Medal of Honor recipient retired Army Master Sgt. Leroy Petry. He was shot through the thighs and had his right arm severed below the elbow in Afghanistan in 2008 when an enemy grenade exploded in his hand as he attempted to throw it away. He now works as a military liaison for the Troops First Foundation and travels with OPE groups.

Many of this group saw action at the height of fighting in Afghanistan. Army Sgt. Jonathan Harmon is among them. On June 7, 2012, a pressure plate-activated improvised explosive device mangled his lower body, causing a double above-the-knee amputation. Standing near the entrance of the gym with other soldiers before the start of the event, his injuries are not obvious. Then he taps on his leg and the sound is metallic.

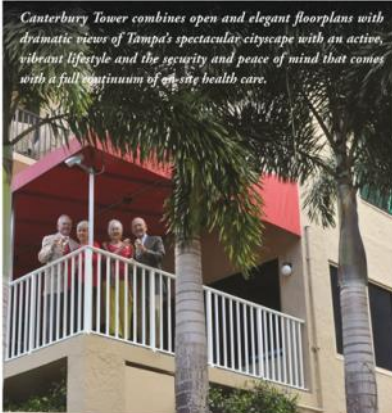
Like many wounded troops, his injuries don’t keep him from pursuing physical activities. He is a powerlifter who has a goal of pursuing a degree in nutrition, as well as building a house and having children. “I’m really humbled and appreciative of you coming out and supporting us and Operation Proper Exit,” Harmon told the audience. He also has a goal to get promoted. After a lengthy rehab, he took an assignment as a liaison at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. “Don’t let your injury define you,” Harmon said. “I reached a point during my medical board where I realized I wasn’t ready to not put on the uniform every day.”

‘I Shouldn’t Be Here Right Now’

Wounded Warriors share common experiences, such as coma, multiple surgeries and years of physical therapy. They’ve had to move through some dark places to learn to accept the support of caregivers. Retired Army Spc. Justin Lane is one of those who had a long road ahead of him. An IED explosion in Afghanistan July 2

(Continued on page 8, see Return to Afghanistan)


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(Return to Afghanistan)

-3, 2011, caused a double leg amputation. When he came out of a coma his future included 28 surgeries. He and several others credited their faith for getting them to where they are now. The warriors also said part of their recovery process was to find a purpose, be it furthering their education or finding employment in a field they love.

"I got prosthetics and I learned to walk again," says Lane, whose identity now includes being the only double amputee who is the lead singer of a band. "Every day is a blessing from God. I shouldn't be here right now."

Some of the wounded soldiers are quick to show people their prosthetics, which feature the latest electronics and design technology. But some of this group's participants have wounds that don't show.

Retired Army Staff Sgt. Jaymes Poling deployed three times to Afghanistan and was engaged in multiple firefights. His story is that he always wanted to be a soldier and to see action.

"I always wanted to fight," he says, but processing the carnage and the death of friends -- on the battlefield and back home -- hardened him and made him suicidal.

"That toughness turned me into being callous to the people around me," Poling said.

He said the key for him was to find a process through PTSD. Today he writes about veteran issues and is co-founder of a nonprofit that generates dialogue between civilian and veteran communities.

Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) William Danchanko also participated in the OPE program because of PTSD. In his years as a caregiver in Afghanistan at a Role Three Multinational Medical Unit, -- a trauma center -- he treated soldiers, enemy combatants and civilians, including children. He says he struggled to come to terms with what he saw. He encouraged soldiers to lean on each other for support and to not be afraid to seek help.

"Everybody's been dealt a hand. Everyone is fighting a battle. Some of it is more public ... some fight it internally," Danchanko said. "The things you are doing matter. Support each other."

One of the most common questions asked of the soldiers is if people treat them differently because of their experiences. Petry and others on the panel said they welcome opportunities to educate people.

"We don't want anyone to feel sorry for us," Harmon said. "I lost my legs doing exactly what I always wanted to do my whole life, and that was being an airborne infantryman."

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1486715/wounded-troops-share-stories-strength/source/GovDelivery/>



Marine Corps Sgt. John Verhage III, a native of South Brunswick, N.J., is a surveillance sensor operator with Task Force Southwest in Afghanistan.

Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Sean J. Berry

MARINE LEADS SURVEILLANCE SENSOR OPERATIONS

By Marine Corps Sgt. Sean J. Berry, Resolute Support Headquarters

LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan, April 10, 2018 — "I'd rather take lessons from the past than learn lessons the hard way," said Marine Corps Sgt. John Verhage III, who hails from South Brunswick, New Jersey, and is a surveillance sensor operator with Task Force Southwest here.

"It's better to use something like ground sensors now, rather than something happening and wishing we would have employed measures like this beforehand," Verhage said.

Verhage leads the ground sensor operations in Helmand province, which helps employ remote sensors as general surveillance and early warning systems to aid the Afghan National Defense and security forces.

The constant management of the remote sensors systems helps Afghan forces maintain a high level of awareness during combat operations.

"We're all working together here; we're protecting ourselves and the [Afghan National Police] at the same time with these sensors," said Verhage, who has logged numerous security patrols -- both mounted and dismounted -- to help boost the Afghan's defense capabilities through sensor emplacement.

"If I do my job, the police feel safer, which in turn makes us all feel safer,"

he said. "Every life matters out here, and I'm just doing my part."

The ability to detect enemy activity through remote surveillance is nothing new. The Marines' sensor control and management platoons employed unmanned remote sensor systems since 1967 during the Vietnam War.

The ground sensor platoon Marines of today operate in the same way, by using the sensor systems to provide real-time warnings on enemy personnel and vehicle movement to warn Marines and their counterparts for any threat they may face.

"There's a lot of planning that goes into this; we have to think of where it would be most effective, especially since the Afghans help us gather intel when it comes to areas of operation like this," Verhage said. Afghanistan's difficult terrain, he said, sometimes makes it challenging to find appropriate places to emplace sensors.

He added, "Sometimes, you just have to understand that there's never really a perfect place to emplace these sensors; we just do the best we can to provide coverage."

Verhage is one of the approximately 300 Marines with the task force deployed to Afghanistan to help in the train, advise and assist mission that supports the effectiveness of Afghan partners.

"I'm just trying to make a positive impact for the unit while I'm here," Verhage said.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1489347/face-of-defense-marine-leads-surveillance-sensor-operations/source/GovDelivery/>

"A civics lesson within an art exhibit, POWER TO THE PEOPLE contains ten pieces by Tampa Bay area veterans who were each assigned one article of the Bill of Rights to inspire an original work of art. What you will see here are deeply personal artistic meditations on the first ten amendments to the Constitution by men and women who served in the armed forces to protect these rights. Produced in conjunction with James A. Haley Veterans Affairs Hospital and the National Endowment for the Arts' Creative Forces initiative, POWER TO THE PEOPLE is presented as part of Straz Salutes, our program offering opportunities for veterans and their families to connect with the arts."

"The Power to the People: The Bill of Rights" Veteran Art Exhibit that will be on display at the Straz Center on May 19th (Armed Forces Day). This is a veterans art project between the James A. Haley VA Hospital and the Straz Center and three of our own Tampa Chapter members were selected among the ten artists to paint one of the 10 Bill of Rights: **Bob Sawallesh was assigned Amendment #2, Stuart Dwork - Amendment #4 and Carol Zieres - Amendment #7.** A reception and unveiling ceremony will take place down on the riverwalk behind the Straz Center from 10 am till noon on May 19th. I'm inviting any Tampa chapter member who wishes to attend.

—COL CAROL ZIERES USA RET President, Tampa Chapter of MOAA.

Military balls are considered formal white tie events. That means your service member will be wearing his or her dressiest uniform. Female military spouses and dates should wear formal dresses either floor length or no shorter than just below the knee. Anything knee length or above is considered a cocktail dress or semi-formal and is, traditionally, not considered appropriate for a formal ball event.



MUD CRAWL

Army Ranger Spc. Jesus Delgado performs a low-crawl during the 2018 Best Ranger Competition at Fort Benning, GA., April 13, 2018. Delgado is assigned to the 10th Mountain Division.

Army photo by Sgt. Leron G. Richards



The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Bremerton returns to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, following a six-month Western Pacific deployment, April 6, 2018.

Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Daniel Hinton
<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1487990/navys-oldest-commissioned-submarine-visits-pearl-harbor-for-final-time/source/GovDelivery/>

Dear Tampa MOAA Member:

After a meeting at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, I made another video of the very dangerous intersection which has been highlighted in print, radio and TV.

I urge you to take a look at the video. Track the two pedestrians and the person in a motorized wheelchair.

To view the new video, go to YouTube and search < Sawallesh > or click on https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=sawallesh.

If you have not signed the petition, just Google search < Go Petition @ Remove the Danger >.

It is a free petition and you may sign anonymously. To look at the number of views scroll down on the web site home page.

If you have already signed, please forward to your friends, church groups, civic and veterans groups. Nearly 700 signers.



Thank you,
Bob Sawallesh

FACE OF DEFENSE: AIRMAN FINDS HOPE, PURPOSE DURING DEPLOYMENT

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Teresa J. Cleveland, 633rd Air Base Wing

JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, VA— Experiences during a 2014 deployment to Bosnia and Herzogovena for the media operations noncommissioned officer in charge of the 633rd Air Base Wing's public affairs office here led her to establish what now is a thriving nonprofit organization.

When Air Force Tech. Sgt. Katie Ward received her orders to deploy to Sarajevo, Ward said she had to look it up on a map. Although this would be her first deployment, her husband, Walker Ward, had served an eight-month tour in Iraq in 2010, so she was familiar with the logistics, she said. "He had a lot of different missions while he was there, and of course being security forces, there was a lot more risk involved than some other jobs," Ward said of her husband's deployment. "As newlyweds, I sometimes worried something was going to happen to him, and I if was going to be a widow."

Ward's husband, now a civilian, said he was worried about enduring another separation from his wife. "She's a strong person, but I knew she was going to struggle with being away from me and the dogs and her family," he said. "She wasn't in a combat zone, but she was still in another country on a military installation and couldn't be here with the ones who love her most." He knew his wife would be focused on the mission, but would need to find her sense of home, he said, so it was no surprise to him when she began feeding a street dog outside the installation. "Most of the street dogs in Bosnia are very leery of people, so I knew this dog was different," she said. "She walked up to me, rolled over on her back, tucked in her feet, wagged her tail and just looked at me for affection."

The couple had daily conversations about the dog, and Ward told her husband she was to get the dog, now named Tanzia, to the United States and find her a good home. "I pretty much knew she was going to be ours, because once Katie gets attached, there's no separating them," Walker Ward said. "It says something about the kind of person she is to bring back a dog from halfway around the world and bring her into our family."

During her deployment, Ward befriended local people who rescued street dogs. She created a Facebook page and an online fundraiser to help the rescuers purchase food and pay for veterinary treatment for the rescued animals. Partnering with a nonprofit organization through Facebook, she helped send nine street dogs to new homes in the U.S., all while still serving on her deployment. Once she returned home, Ward said, she struggled to return to life as usual, unable to forget the homeless dogs living on the streets of Sarajevo. "When I was on the plane leaving Sarajevo, I had such mixed emotions—I was excited to return home, but I couldn't get these dogs out of my mind," she said. "For the first few weeks I was home, I had dreams every night of being in Bosnia with them, and I would still just look for dogs on the street any time I drove anywhere, because that's what I was used to seeing for the past six months."

Her Facebook page and online fundraisers received so much positive feedback that friends and nonprofit organizations encouraged Ward to create a nonprofit organization of her own to purchase food, pay veterinary bills and coordinate travel to new homes for rescued Bosnian dogs. "I was just overwhelmed by the amount of support from friends and family, and just people in general who wanted to find homes for all of these street dogs," she said. "Within seven months, we had about 800 followers and raised more than \$10,000, so we thought the best way to progress even further was to create a nonprofit organization." In February, Ward's nonprofit organization celebrated its second anniversary as an official charity. Her efforts have led to the rescue and rehoming of over 200 dogs to the U.S. "I've been told that's not a conventional thing to do when you come back from a deployment, but I just can't imagine how I could've come home from that and not done anything, as if it hadn't affected me in any way," she said. Walker Ward said he believes his wife left for Bosnia with her public affairs mission and came back not only as a different person, but also with a newly discovered personal mission: rescuing dogs. "A lot of people bring back what they learned from their experience with them when they come home--they don't just forget it and go back to business as usual," he said. "But people who take it a step further to create something that helps the country they were in are probably few and far between."



Air Force Tech. Sgt. Katie Ward, 633rd Air Base Wing public affairs media operations noncommissioned officer in charge, pets a stray dog while deployed to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ward returned daily to provide food and affection to the

Way.' We started this whole new crazy life together, all because I drove down that road. If I didn't know any better, I'd say this path was meant to be."

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1487849/face-of-defense-airman-finds-hope-purpose-during-deployment/source/GovDelivery/>

ARMY PARACHUTE RIGGERS STRIVE FOR SAFE LANDINGS

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Gary A. Witte, 642nd Regional Support Group



Army Sgt. Sean M. Bryant of Macon, GA., shows Army Pvt. Joshua I. Brackin of Dothan, Ala., where the parachute static lines need to be checked for defects at Fort Valley, GA. Both soldiers are parachute riggers with the 421st Quartermaster Company.

Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gary A. Witte

FORT VALLEY, GA—For soldiers in the 421st Quartermaster Company, “attention to detail” is less a catch phrase than a life-saving mission statement. Parachute riggers with the 421st, based at the Army Reserve Center here, pack hundreds of chutes every month for use by reserve and active-duty troops across the southern United States. And, there isn’t just one kind of parachute. There are more than a dozen types, each with a specific method for packing to ensure they open correctly. Army 1st Sgt. Richard A. Davis of Musella, the senior noncommissioned officer for the unit, said one mistake by a parachute rigger can lead to a fatality or injury.

“A lot of things can go wrong,” Davis said. “Everything we do to pack a parachute has to be done by steps. Everything has to be precise.”

Military jumps typically involve the use of a thick cord—called a static line—to pull the chutes open. If the static line is routed wrong, the parachute won’t open. If the static line is faulty and the problem isn’t discovered, it can shred and the parachute also won’t open. If the risers which connect the jumper to the chute are flipped, its canopy might only partially open—sending the soldier speeding toward the ground. Army Master Sgt. Brian W. Steverson of Bonifay, the operations NCO, said only qualified riggers are allowed to put chutes together, and they have to remain proficient at their jobs. “It’s really important to stay current, because every parachute is a life-support system,” Steverson said.

Cargo loads can be even more complicated. Because of the weights involved—up to about 2,000 pounds—the chute has to be adjusted to deploy a certain way, otherwise the shock of its opening can tear it. This would send the heavy payload raining down across the landscape. “Hopefully, no one is below it,” if that happens, Steverson said.

To become a qualified parachute rigger, soldiers must go through airborne orientation, then airborne school, then rigger school, he said. As part of graduating rigger school, which itself is an 11-week course, the soldiers pack their own chutes and then jump with them. “When they come to us, they already have six or seven jumps,” Steverson said. Battle assemblies for the company feature all the usual requirements for an Army Reserve

unit, including physical training tests, equipment accountability and classes. But then, there is the steady drumbeat of safety checks, packing chutes and preparations for the next unit jump.

Parachute riggers have to maintain their status by jumping every three months—at a minimum. If they don’t maintain their jump status, they aren’t allowed to pack or inspect parachutes, Steverson said. A handful of riggers remain at the unit on active duty to continue the packing process throughout the week and also travel with the chutes when shipped to locations in California, Texas, Florida, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. These parachutes allow members in those airborne units to maintain their own jump status.

Typically, several hundred parachutes get packed each month. Properly packing a single parachute can potentially take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, depending on how experienced the rigger is. There are 13 rigger checks of each chute—including inspections prior to its assembly, before it is packed, while it is packed, after it is packed and a jumpmaster inspection at the airfield—before they are authorized to be used in a jump.

Army Sgt. David C. Frady is one of the full-time parachute riggers. He’s been doing it for eight years and enjoys the complexity because of the variety of payloads and parachutes they have to manage. There’s a lot of information to absorb all the time, since both the equipment and missions change. But it can get repetitive. And they always stay busy, he said. “You pack 15 a day and you do it every single day until you meet mission requirements,” Frady said. “It just becomes the norm.”

The parachute rigger’s name goes in each chute they pack, along with the names of its inspectors. Once the parachutes are delivered, a rigger from the unit stays to monitor and record the jumps.

Davis, who became first sergeant for the unit in 2014, said he witnessed the resupply of American troops in Afghanistan by air and it reinforced the importance of their work to him.

“We are enablers,” he said. “Our job enables soldiers to resupply and continue the fight.”

Accidents remain rare, Davis said. He added that the parachute riggers with the 421st Quartermaster Company take their mission personally and have pride in their work.

“It’s still a high-risk thing in which we’re involved, but we do everything we can to keep it safe,” he said.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1489459/army-parachute-riggers-strive-for-safe-landings/source/GovDelivery/>



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