

May/June 2017



Baldwin County Chapter **FORCE RECON**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sometimes what is right is not always the case.

A case in point, I looked forward for a chance to fly in a vintage B-17 "Flying Fortress" aircraft. I fancy myself as a pilot, and was sure that I would never get an opportunity to fulfill my dream.

Then, the Commemorative Air Force announced it was going to allow passengers to ride on their B-17 "Texas Raiders" airplane. You can imagine my excitement. My wife booked a seat and I was ready to go.

As we lined up to board the aircraft, an elderly, highly decorated WWII veteran, Edward Francis Gold, age 91, was anxiously awaiting the opportunity to fill an empty slot. His daughter had been trying for eight days to reserve a place for her father and was denied each day. On the last day of the tour, he was still hopeful someone wouldn't show up and a space would be available. That was not the case. He was extremely disappointed.

As I was preparing to board the plane, I couldn't stand to see him miss his chance to fulfill **HIS** dream. So, I volunteered to give up my seat for this fellow 32 year Navy Veteran.

I had a right to my paid seat, but it wasn't right to ignore the wishes of a veteran who served not only in WWII, but Korea and Vietnam. It is our duty to honor those who give their service to our country.

I'll have a chance to fly again. I doubt he will ever get this opportunity again.

V/R

Larry Rathbun, CAPT, USN (Ret), President
Never Stop Serving



THE B-17, "TEXAS RAIDERS," VISITED MOBILE AT BROOKLEY FIELD

An authentically restored B-17 Flying Fortress was in the Port City April 24 - 27. The aircraft named "Texas Raiders" is part of a collection of the Commemorative Air Force, a group of volunteers who restore the aircraft and spread the word about its unique history.

The aircraft landed at Mobile's Brookley Aeroplex, freshly painted in the colors of the WWII Air Force "Mighty Eighth" and displaying fresh new nose art.

The refurbished B-17 launched her 2017 touring season with her visit to Mobile. Tours and flights were available to the public for various fees. All proceeds went to support the Commemorative Air Force and their mission.

HISTORY OF THE B-17

On July 28, 1935, a four-engine plane took off from Boeing Field in south Seattle on its first flight. Rolling out of the Boeing hangar, it was simply known as the Model 299. Seattle Times reporter Richard Smith dubbed the new plane, with its many machine-gun mounts, the "Flying Fortress," a name that Boeing quickly adopted and trademarked. The U.S. Army Air Corps designated the plane as the B-17.

The ensuing seventy years have seen the big bomber proudly serve her country in the military, in civilian aviation, and now as a flying museum for the Commemorative Air Force.

During WWII almost 13 thousand B-17's were built. There are only eleven still flying today.

recruitment

Dear Fellow Members:

There are 13 chapters within the State of Alabama and already we are ranked approximately 6th in size. However, many challenges face our military family today (Active, Retired, Guard, Reserve, Prior Service and Surviving Spouses) such as disproportional TRICARE fee hikes and the need to eliminate the offset to the SBP (Survivor Benefit Plan) - DIC (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation).

Therefore, we need more voices.

During the remainder of 2017, your Officers and Directors encourage each of you to recruit at least one new member (PLUS ONE) to join BC-MOAA. A fact sheet, located on the next page, provides highlights of MOAA and BC-MOAA. Also, in this newsletter is a copy of our simple application for you to utilize with your "recruit".

You all certainly live up to MOAA'S mission to NEVER STOP SERVING. Thank you for your continued support.

Jerry W. Morrison, Vice President - Membership

WHO AND WHAT IS MOAA? (MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA)

- MOAA has been in existence for over 86 years
- MOAA is the largest association of officers with over 390,000 members
- MOAA has over 400 chapters nationwide
- MOAA is the co-chair of the 33-member Military Coalition
- Even though MOAA is an association of officers, the primary focus of MOAA National is the advocacy on Capital Hill for "all" uniformed service members in all components and their families

• NOTEWORTHY LEGISLATIVE GAINS ARE:

- * Fought for TRICARE for LIFE
- * Eliminated "Widow's Tax" for Survivor Benefit Plan by Social Security
- * Repealed CPI-1% COLA cut for military retirees entering service after 1-1-16
- * Retained dual military couple housing allowance eligibility
- * Fought for and won Post 9/11 GI Bill

• LEGISLATIVE GOALS

- * Remove the sequester
- * End disabled/survivor financial offsets and penalties
- * Ensure TRICARE reform sustains access to top quality care
- * Prevent disproportional TRICARE fee hikes and inordinate program changes
- * Guard against erosion of earned compensation and benefits

Your local Baldwin County Chapter of MOAA provides the grass roots platform to help protect the rights and interests of active, retired, reserve and guard component personnel of the uniform services plus their families and survivors.

**IF YOU KNOW OF OTHER PROSPECT MEMBERS
- RECRUIT THEM NOW!**



NEVER STOP SERVING



**Baldwin County Chapter MOAA
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

NEW MEMBERSHIP _____ RENEWAL _____

ANNUAL DUES \$15 (payable to BC-MOAA,
P. O. BOX 1277 • FAIRHOPE, AL 36533)

LAST NAME _____

FIRST _____ M. _____

RANK _____ BRANCH _____

SPOUSE NAME _____

CONTACT PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

I AM _____ I AM NOT _____ A MEMBER
OF NATIONAL MOAA.

NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS NOT
PREVIOUSLY MOAA MEMBERS RECEIVE
THE FIRST YEAR OF THE NATIONAL MOAA
MEMBERSHIP FREE.

NAT'L MOAA MEMBER # _____
LEVEL _____

SIGNATURE _____

MAY GUEST SPEAKER



**DONALD JAY MULKERNE, JR. , PhD
STRESS OF RE-ENTRY**

On Thursday, May 18th, 2017 at 11:30 am, at the VFW on Nichols Avenue, Donald Jay Murkerne will talk about **“The Challenges of Returning to Civilian Life After Serving in the Military”**.

ALL of us (Especially Today’s Veterans) have had Experiences or been in Circumstances that can cause over-whelming Emotional Problems: Nightmares, Feelings of Impending Doom, Intense Nervousness and Depression which can leave us feeling out of control. Counseling is a good first step for healing to begin.

This talk will address the unique challenges facing our veterans completing their military service, both combat and non-combat veterans alike. Included will be risk factors for suicide and the suicide epidemic, navigating the VA health system and mental health care, employment in the civilian world, family stressors, and substance abuse/ dependence issues.

A Q&A session will follow.

SACMOAA/BCMOAA
JUNE JOINT MEETING



Pictured: Lieut. W. C. McDonald, Maj. C. L. Chennault and Lieut. J. H. Williamson

On Thursday, June 15th at the Venue., 105 South Section Street, Fairhope, Alabama. William McDonald III will speak on his book *The Shadow Tiger*. Social will begin at 6:00. Cost is \$30 per person.

The Shadow Tiger captures the unique first-hand account of Alabama native William McDonald, Jr. McDonald's flying career begins in 1928 at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery and continued as a U.S. Army cadet and wingman in General Claire Chennault's famed aerobatic flying group *Three Men on a Flying Trapeze*.

Much of the book focuses on McDonald's time in China where he worked hand in hand with Chennault to lay the foundation for what would become the Flying Tigers.

He served as a combat pilot, trained the Chinese Air Force, and made hundreds of life saving flights through the Himalayas. Through McDonald's own letters and photographs, readers will experience first-hand adventures including the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, a harrowing landing in the middle of the Yangtze River, and countless flights ferrying world-famous passengers and high-value cargo for the China National Aviation Corporation.

The basis of the book is more than 30,000 pages, letters, and photos McDonald shared with friends and family during his 11 years as a pilot in China and the USA.

The 30,000 pages, weighing over 160 pounds have been requested by the Smithsonian Museum for their archives and will be officially presented to them on May 15th. The Smithsonian only makes 75 such requests each year, adding to the significance of the book. To date over 1,000 books have been sold.

The First American Volunteer Group (AVG) of the Chinese Air Force in 1941-1942, nicknamed the Flying Tigers, was composed of pilots from the United States Army Air Corps (USAAC), Navy (USN), and Marine Corps (USMC), recruited under presidential authority and commanded by Claire Lee Chennault.

The shark-faced nose art of the Flying Tigers remains among the most recognizable image of any individual combat aircraft or combat unit of World War II.

The group consisted of three fighter squadrons of around 30 aircraft each. It trained in Burma before the American entry into World War II with the mission of defending China against Japanese forces. The group of volunteers were officially members of the Chinese Air Force. The group first saw combat on 20 December 1941, 12 days after Pearl Harbor (local time). It demonstrated innovative tactical victories when the news in the U.S. was filled with little more than stories of defeat at the hands of the Japanese forces. It achieved such notable success during the lowest period of the war for both the U.S. and the Allied Forces as to give hope to America that it might eventually defeat the Japanese.

JULY GUEST SPEAKER



**MAJOR ANDREW C. KOLB, USMC,
3RD FORCE RECON COMPANY**

MY THOUGHTS ON USMC GROUND AND AMPHIBIOUS RECONNAISSANCE (PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE)

On Thursday, July 20th, at the VFW, 11:30 am Major Kolb will speak on the actions of the Ground and Amphibious Reconnaissance, known as Force Recon.

III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) is a formation of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force of the United States Marine Corps. It is forward-deployed and able to deploy rapidly conducting operations across the spectrum from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) to amphibious assault and high-intensity combat.

It maintains a forward presence in Japan and Asia to support the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (1960) and other alliance relationships of the United States. III MEF also conducts combined operations and training throughout the region in support of the National Security Strategy for Theater Security Cooperation.

The Marines and sailors of III MEF engage in more than 65 combined, bilateral and multi-lateral training exercises annually throughout the Asia-Pacific region, in countries including treaty allies Japan, Thailand, South Korea, The Philippines, and Australia. These exercises build partner capacity, develop and maintain strong regional alliances and military-to-military contacts.

AUGUST GUEST SPEAKER



U.S. REP. BRADLEY BYRNE, ALABAMA MILITARY LEGISLATION FROM THE HILL

Byrne has accepted our invitation to speak to BC-MOAA. Date, Time and location to be determined by his schedule. We will notify you when decided.

U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne said Monday, May 1st, that he will not seek the U.S. Senate seat later this summer.

His announcement came on the same day that U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, the senior House member of Alabama's seven representatives, also said he wasn't running.

In a statement, Byrne said he will focus on important priorities for his coastal Alabama district that includes protecting the Littoral Combat Ship program produced out of Mobile's Austal USA facility, and securing funding for the \$850 million Interstate 10 Bridge project from downtown Mobile to Baldwin County.

"The people of Alabama will have the opportunity to pick their next Senator, and I encourage everyone to stay engaged as the election moves forward," Byrne said in a news release.

Byrne joins five other of his Alabama House colleagues to announce their intentions on not running for the Senate seat. They include Aderholt, Rep. Gary Palmer, Martha Roby, Mike Rogers and Terri Sewell. Rep. Mo Brooks has not announced his intentions for the race.

Republicans who have declared their candidacies include U.S. Sen. Luther Strange, who was appointed to the Senate in February by former Gov. Robert Bentley. Also running is Roy Moore, former chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, state Rep. Ed Henry and Christian Coalition of Alabama President Randy Brinson.



HOW MANY TESTS/EVALUATIONS HAVE YOU ENDURED?

Throughout our military experience there was always another test to measure progress in attaining readiness. Physical tests. Mental tests. Psychological tests. Measurement of our technical knowledge, and our ability to operate our equipment to its design maximums.

Now's not the time to stop. We still have to exercise our bodies and our minds to stay healthy and alert.

But, what about our spiritual readiness? We will be called to that final reckoning some day. We don't know when. We just know each day brings us one day closer to it. Spiritual training is a similar process.

We have to continuously learn more about God. About our relationship with Him. What does He demand of me? What should I be studying? How does that change my life? What disciplines should I be practicing to keep all my desires and inclinations in check?

Failures in our past can all be forgiven if we repent and move forward in the right direction.

In the military, nothing counts but winning the battle. In life nothing counts but passing the final judgment. The two requirements are simple if not always easy. That's why we have to practice them.

Love God with all your being, and love your neighbor as yourself. Failure in those two commands at the individual level brings eternal damnation. At the earthly level, failure in these two areas is at the root of all wars, oppression and crimes.

Do we need any more motivation?



KEY THINK TANKS WEIGH IN ON PERSONNEL REFORM

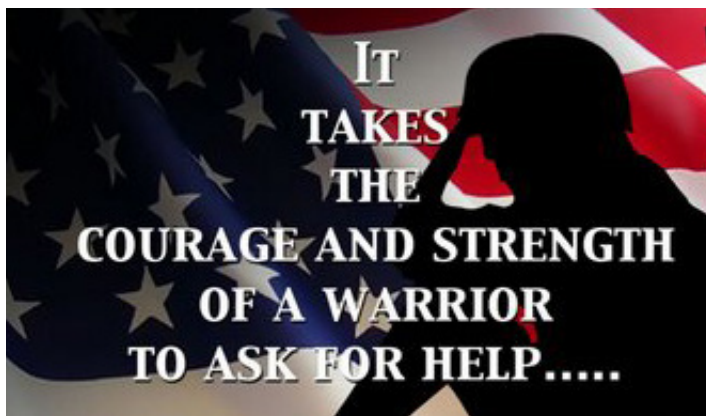
Two key national security think tanks in Washington, D.C., are starting a conversation with Congress regarding reforming and modernizing military personnel and compensation systems in DoD.

The main players are the Task Force on Defense Personnel at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) and the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). These two organizations have teamed up to produce reports and, in the case of the BPC, have testified recently before the Senate Armed Services Committee and its Subcommittee on Personnel (SASC-P) regarding their push for major defense personnel reforms.

In testimony before the SASC-P, the cochairs of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Defense Personnel stressed key areas of reform from its March report, *Building a F.A.S.T. Force: A Flexible Personnel System for a Modern Military*.

The "reformers" are looking to change the current system in the areas of military pay and compensation, promotion, and education, as well as other important areas of support for the modern military force, such as child care.

One BPC Task Force cochair, former Sen. Jim Talent (R-Mo.), who served on the Senate Armed Services Committee, stated, "This system does work for certain core functions, and that's why it has lasted so long." But Talent also stressed, "You have to be careful in any changes you make so that you don't do harm to the system in areas where it is working well."



SURVIVING SPOUSE CORNER



LONG-TERM CARE BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVING SPOUSES

Long-term care costs can add up quickly. For veterans and the surviving spouses of veterans who need in-home care or are in a nursing home, help may be available.

The Veterans Administration (VA) has an underused pension benefit called Aid and Attendance that provides money to those who need assistance performing everyday tasks. Even veterans whose income is above the legal limit for a VA pension may qualify for the Aid and Attendance benefit if they have large medical expenses for which they do not receive reimbursement.

Aid and Attendance is a pension benefit, which means it is available to veterans who served at least 90 days, with at least one day during wartime.

The veteran does not have to have service-related disabilities to qualify. Veterans or surviving spouses are eligible if they require the aid of another person to perform an everyday action, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, or going to the bathroom.

This includes individuals who are bedridden, blind, or residing in a nursing home.

To qualify the veteran or spouse must have less than \$80,000 in assets, excluding the home and vehicle. In addition, the veteran's income must be less than the Maximum Annual Pension Rate (MAPR).

Before breaking for recess, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing to address issues surfacing from three separate investigations, conducted in the last year, on the VA Crisis Line (VCL).

Established in 2007, the VCL was the VA's response to the high rate of veteran suicide - a rate 21 percent higher than the adult civilian population. The VCL is one of several elements of a larger outreach strategy to help veterans in crisis and reduce suicides.

Since its inception, the VCL has responded to nearly 2.8 million calls and dispatched 74,000 emergency services to veterans in crisis. This demand is only expected to continue rising even as the VA struggles to keep up with call volume; it has been working fervently to adapt to the changing needs of veterans seeking assistance.

However, with growth, so too comes challenges. Investigations from the VA Inspector General (IG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted serious management and organizational problems in every aspect of the VCL operations.

"Perhaps most troubling, the IG also found that VA had failed to implement a single action plan to address the recommendations made in the IG's initial report [February 2016], even though VA had agreed with all the recommendations and committed to implementing corrective actions by no later than last September," stated committee chairman, Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.). "I understand that the recommendations that GAO made last summer [August 2016] are also all still open."

Last month, the IG once again reported additional deficiencies, including those from the two earlier investigations. This brings the total to 23, all of which remain outstanding.



THE GREAT WAR

To commemorate the World War I centennial next year, the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission has several projects in the works to “teach Americans about the country’s most forgotten war.”

The 100th anniversary of the end of World War I will take place in 2018, and the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission is hard at work promoting an eclectic array of educational and commemorative projects in advance of the historic event, reports Chris Isleib, the commission’s director of public affairs.

The commission’s most important project will be establishing the National World War I Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. But many more projects are in the works, including partnerships with A&E Network and History, the American Legion, and other entities to develop programs intended to educate more than 10 million U.S. middle school and high school students.

THE LAST RAIDER

Seventy-five years ago in April, 16 Mitchell B-25 bombers launched from the deck of *USS HORNET* (CV-8) on a mission to bomb Japanese targets in retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, four months earlier. The mission later became known as the *Doolittle Raid*.

Only one of the 80 U.S. servicemembers who took part in the raid is alive today. Richard E. Cole, now 101 and a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, who, as a young lieutenant, served as Lt. Col. James Harold “Jimmy” Doolittle’s copilot.

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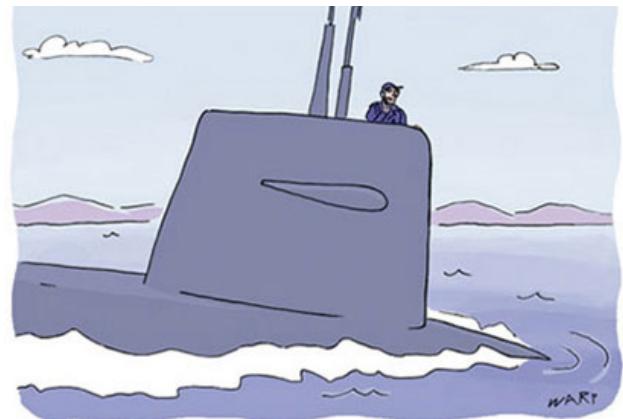
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“Hey, it’s been great talking to you,
 Mom, but I really have to go.”