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Pittsburgh - A Five Star Chapter
 Chartered on Veterans Day, 11 November 1965
 Our Mission: Never Stop Serving

15 March 2022

Chapter Updates from the President

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Folks -

There's a lot going on, in the world, with MOAA, and with our chapter.

If you attended my China series last year you know that we are in uncharted waters and not guided by a coherent grand strategy, nor have we been for *decades*. Ukraine adds a new wrinkle to a decade of uncertainty. Close readers of OSINT (Open Source INTelligence) see an increasing chance of this war sucking in western powers the longer it drags on. You will not find out what is going on by watching the teevee; you must read authoritative websites and publications. Reach out to me if you want to know what I read. I keep current but I can't predict the future.

If anyone says they know what's going to happen, ignore them. Only one guy knows, and he is in the Kremlin. Regardless, the varsity game is still China. The Chinese are trying to see how they can turn these

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events to their advantage. Don't forget to cheer for the home team; we are Americans.

In the world of MOAA they are new developments:

- A new chapter dues collection system (at no cost to us) that will enable you to pay your chapter dues online. MOAA takes no commission. Dues are the lifeblood of our chapter. The portal will be introduced in the next quarter.
- **A new legislative tool** to make it easier for you to contact your legislators and state your concern about the many issues affecting active, former, and retired service members and surviving spouses. With the April month of Advocacy in Action (AIA) approaching, I along with other members in this chapter and across the state will be visiting in person and virtually with our senators and representatives and advocating on behalf of our membership. I visited with Senator Casey's office two weeks ago, getting an early start on AIA.

And at Pittsburgh MOAA there is a *lot* of news. Last week I traveled to MOAA headquarters in Alexandria, VA and met with MOAA staff including Dana Atkins, the CEO and president of MOAA. **Please read all of this.** I will have more to say in April and in the coming weeks.

It quickly became clear that for Pittsburgh to continue as a viable chapter, a number of things must happen including:

- **We must incorporate.** A non-profit corporate structure provides advantages and a corporate shield for the membership and its officers.
- **We must bring our dues collection into compliance with MOAA standards.** Only 17 chapter members pay dues out of the 202 we currently have. That is unacceptable and we have been lax. Dues for many years have been \$10 (the cost of a drink at Chartiers); **MOAA sets minimum chapter dues at \$12** - a dollar a month and they'll even collect them for us without taking a fee. Dues keep the chapter afloat, allowing us to do things like honor ROTC/JROTC cadets & midshipmen, support veterans, service dogs, and the like. Things we are supposed to be doing.
- **We must adopt by-laws and standard operating procedures.**
- **We need to get into compliance with the current tax laws.** That does not mean that we will have to pay taxes. We are non-profit but there is a

structure for that. It does mean that there are things that we have to do to get into the good graces of the IRS. The Navy League and other organizations serving military affiliated groups already do that. So must we.

- **We must become insured** against common liabilities. **We are currently uninsured.** That's like going out into the rain and not having an umbrella. This is not 1965 anymore; we live in a litigious society. The chapter must carry liability insurance to protect the chapter, the membership, and its dedicated volunteers. Guest Dick Buckley's fall at the Christmas party should have been an eye-opener. MOAA makes it easy with special chapter insurance through Mercer. The premiums are small, measured as a few dollars per chapter member per year. And by becoming insured, we open the door to being able to apply for community service grants from MOAA that will help pay for the things we should be doing in the community for veterans, service members, and young ROTC/JROTC students. That's money we have passed up for many many years. Without insurance we are currently ineligible to apply for these grants. Insurance quotes are pending.
- **We are culling our membership roster.** We have brought in a number of new members of varying age, several of who have already stepped up to take roles helping the chapter to function. We claim a size of 202 current members but in truth we are a fraction of that size. Many people on our chapter roster have not been to a luncheon in years, have moved away, or otherwise have lost interest in what we do. We pay dues for them to the MOAA state council of chapters. Our insurance premiums will also go down if we are a smaller chapter. Why pay for members who aren't here?
- We are undertaking both community service efforts and social events **in addition** to our longstanding luncheon series. Younger people want to join an organization that does community outreach. MOAA expects that. Younger people, who will be sitting in these chairs when we are no longer able to do so, are necessary to continue this chapter as a vibrant organization. And we are growing because the new members see promise in what I propose. By adding a baseball game, a picnic, a Gateway Clipper intergenerational cruise, maybe a weekend bus road trip where you can take your children and grandchildren to the National Civil War Museum and the Army Heritage Center in the

Harrisburg/Carlisle area, possibly with time spent at Hershey Park. These are all ideas. We want to offer family-friendly activities for chapter members of all ages.

I can't do this all by myself. I need your help. We need your help. Some of our chapter officers have been stepping up for decades. We need to develop a group of previously-uninvolved volunteers and younger members to take over and lead or this chapter will fold, as others have in MOAA World. We all have to decide what's important in our lives.

Although we have been hard at work, we haven't been able to meet our ambitious timeline of having April, 2022 as our primary business meeting to vote on the path forward. We need to start up the electronic dues program; it may be in place before the April luncheon. We need to do that so we know who is eligible to vote. We need to circulate the proposed bylaws for your consideration prior to a vote of dues paying members. We need to take a vote on incorporating and so on. **If you want a say in how the chapter operates it is only reasonable that you pay your dues first.**

MOAA PA Council of Chapters - Legislative Report – February 2022

Read about

"Disabled Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption Legislation"

"Professional Licensing Reform for Veterans, Service Members & Spouses",

"Establishing the Veterans' Outreach and Support Network",

"Guaranteeing In-State Tuition for Reassigned Military Families"

and much more.

[Click here to see the entire report](#)

VA will propose certain rare cancers be added to presumed service-connected list

The Department of Veterans Affairs will propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter.

[Visit this webpage for details](#)

[Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#) (hat tip to Carmen DiGiacomo)

Pittsburgh VA Mandating COVID Vaccine for All Staff

There is an issue brought to our attention that the VA Hospital in Pittsburgh, not Philadelphia and not Washington higher-ups. The local VA sent a memo to their employees that if you are not fully vaccinated against COVID you are subject to dismissal. This could affect upward of 25% of VA hospital staff, and negatively affect the care the VA is able to give to local veterans.

Regardless of your view of the vaccine, the way Pittsburgh VA has chosen to go about solving the problem seems only to create other issues. I encourage you to contact your congressman and Senators Casey & Toomey to request their help on getting the VA in Pittsburgh to find another way to solve the vaccination problem that will not adversely impact patient treatment.

New Facebook Page

Check out our *new private chapter Facebook page*, set up by Brett Jordan; next step is a chapter webpage to replace the enhanced presence one on the MOAA website.

[MOAA Facebook](#)

If you take the Parkway home from MOAA ...

The Roslyn Farms ramp to the Parkway, headed inbound, is closed. [LINK](#)

Federal Legislation

A better look at bills addressed at the federal level such as:

"Military Pay Raise at 4.6% per the Employment Cost Index (ECI)"

"The Richard Star Act - addressing disabled veterans retiring before 20 years"

"The Stop Copay Overpay Act" - bill would reduce mental health copays that were more than doubled through military health system reforms

[Click here to read about these legislative efforts](#)

Advocating and lobbying for legislation that helps currently serving members, veterans, retirees and surviving spouses is MOAA's primary mission. MOAA's Take Action Center is your portal to finding out about Key Advocacy Issues, engaging with lawmakers, learning about MOAA-supported legislation, and finding your elected officials. Check it out at [MOAA Legislative Action Center](#)

Chapter Member in the Spotlight - Ed Blank

Born in Shadyside, moved to Mt Lebanon, Ed Blank served as a 1st lieutenant in the Army Signal Corps in

Vietnam. After separation, he worked as the TV/Radio editor at the Pittsburgh Press for 27 months. Then his opportunity of a lifetime happened and he became the movie/theater critic for the Press for 25 years until it ceased publishing. He moved to the Tribune Review for another 17 years as their movie/theater critic. In retirement, Ed serves as our Chaplain, and he volunteers with numerous local charitable and military-affiliated groups. Veterans Breakfast Club, Vietnam Veterans Inc., Vietnam Veterans of America, DAV, American Legion, VFW, Italian American War Veterans, and a few more.



Veterans Breakfast Club

The VBC is still operating even in the midst of the current Delta/Omicron COVID epidemic. You can find a list of their events [here](#)

Menu for the Sunday 10 April Luncheon

Princess Soup

Chartiers Salad

Grilled Salmon with fresh cream dill sauce over pappardelle pasta *or*
Pepper Steak over pappardelle pasta

Asparagus spears

Lemon tart with Chantilly Cream

Coffee/tea/iced tea

The price for our lunches has gone up, **The price for April is \$30/plate; we will still lose a small amount per plate.** The inclusive price also pays for non-alcoholic beverages (iced tea, coffee, tea), valet parking, mandatory staff tip, and the bartender flat fee. Alcohol extra, cash only. Pat knows how to stretch a buck.

Reservation Form

MOAA Luncheon 10 April 2022 from 1300 - 1600 (1 PM to 4 PM) ; bar opens at 1300 (1 PM) and luncheon as served at 1400 (2 PM) at the Chartiers Country Club, followed by remarks from the Speaker and adjournment by ~1600 (4 PM).

NAME: _____ RANK: _____

SPOUSE/GUESTS: _____

PRICE: \$ 30 per person

ENCLOSED: \$ _____ FOR _____ MEALS

Meat _____ Fish _____

Please make checks payable to MOAA Pittsburgh Chapter and return to:

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2022 Planned Meetings

10 April - 05 June - 14 August - 09 October - 11 December 2022

Other activities, social, and public service events to be announced later

