



President's Corner

By Tim Balunis, Sr.
CDR USCG (Retired)

The Military Officers Association of America is a great organization. It provides a variety of important services and functions. Consider our official **MISSION**: ***“The Military Officers’ Association of America (MOAA) is a non-profit 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 held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service or NOAA and their surviving spouses.”***

Our Mission is both clear and broad. Through MOAA, we are enabled to monitor our various “benefits” and provide input to our elected officials concerning same. As a volunteer organization, we are positioned to do good things for others. We have opportunities to come together to do these things and to enjoy excellent fellowship. However, MOAA does not make things “HAPPEN” without some involvement and effort of our members. MOAA as an organization represents our interests in many ways. MOAA provides us with an opportunity to continue to serve.

Chapter members may choose to observe and improve awareness of highly relevant issues. However, some of us seek and find more. We are always looking for more members to get involved and work together with other great people. Together, we can have fun together. In summary, MOAA will be for each of us whatever we make it. Come and join us in person. We are looking for more “doers” and

more interesting people. Don’t let this opportunity pass you by.

We are pleased to report that MOAA has recognized the Western New York Chapter with our second Four Star Level of Excellence Award. This designation is based on our activities and level of effort. With some additional help, the Five Star Award may be within reach.

COL Bob Pecoraro (USAF, Ret) achieved truly outstanding results with the recent Garden Party with the Royal Niagara Military Institute (RNMI). The event at the **Niagara Aerospace Museum** was memorable, informative and fun. Bob Pecoraro will also coordinate our annual **Veterans Day Dinner and Concert presented on Sunday, November 8th, by the American Legion Band of the Tonawandas (Post 264)**. Watch your email and our website for details. Our Programs Coordinator, Richard Mariani (USCG, Ret) has also finalized arrangements for our Annual Luncheon Meeting at **Salvatore’s Italian Gardens** on 5 December at noon.

The 2015 **New York State Council of Chapters Convention** was scheduled for the weekend of 16 October in the vicinity of Syracuse. More to follow on this.

We greatly appreciate you, our military family and thank you for your Service, sacrifice and devotion to our country. We thank JoAnne Lichwala for serving as our Newsletter Editor. Through her tremendous efforts and expertise, portions of my input have been rendered legible.

As always, check our chapter website (www.wnymoaa.org) for additional program information.

Remember that we are building our Team and **WE NEED YOU!**

God Bless America!

HELP WANTED - We are seeking Chapter members who would become more involved with the function and initiatives of the WNY Chapter. Please contact Tim Balunis (Balunis@roadrunner.com); 716 692-7907

Membership Report

By Richard Peters
COL US Army (Retired) and
Jerry Privitera
MAJ US Army (Retired)

This is the 41st year since the original 138 members organized The Retired Officers Association (TROA) of WNY in 1972. Our most recent new members have brought the total number of officers who have been or are still members of the chapter to 845.

Our active membership is currently 273 Regular, an increase of 14 from last year and 75 Auxiliary members.

Charter Members still on the roster are:

- CWO3 Harold F. CONTACT, USA
- CWO2 John G. MORAN, USA
- 1Lt James S. PIETRASZEK, USA,
Past-President

New Members following Annual Meeting

- COL Donald F. Kochersberger, ARMY
- LCDR Michael A. Bosler, NAVY
- CDR Denis A. Kitchen, NAVY
- CAPT Mark Nestle, NAVY
- LT Robert W. Van Wicklin, NAVY
- LtCol G. Richard Fraas, USAF
- Maj Kevin Johnson, USAF
- Maj Joseph L. Madejczyk, USAF
- Col Robert E. Pecoraro, USAF
- Col William Pfeil, USAF

Personal Affairs

By Richard A. Scalfani, CWO4 (Retired)
Personal Affairs Chairman

Taps:

COL George O. D'Amico, USA (Ret.) died March 27, 2015. He served in the Infantry while on active duty prior to retiring from the USAR after 35 years of military service. His awards included the Legion of Merit Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

Col D'Amico was owner and operator of *D'Amico's Bowling Displays*, which supplied bowling centers in the Northeast.

LCDR Thomas B. Mangus, USN (Ret.) died on April 15, 2015 at 99 years of age. He served 25 years in US Navy service which included time spent during World War II in submarine service.

CW4 Thaddeus J. Skura, USA (Ret.) passed on June 8, 2015. His military career spanned over 40 years. He held the rank of Captain in the NY National Guard and the rank of CW4 in the USAR. He taught at the high school level in the Niagara Falls school system for 22 years and later worked for the IRS.

Well Wishes:

BG Anthony Caruana recently underwent surgery which was successful. He is currently recovering at home. We all wish him a speedy return to full health.

COL Richard Peters also had a recent medical procedure that corrected a recurring problem. His wife, Delores is at home recovering from a recent hip dislocation that was corrected.

Items of Interest:

MOAA National has recently approved an educational grant of \$5,000 a year over the next

four years to the daughter of a recently deceased Chapter member to aid in her college schooling.

This is an example of your Chapter dues being used for the benefit of members and their families.

TRICARE Mail Order Prescriptions Now a Requirement for Many

A new TRICARE policy begins on October 1, 2015 that will affect how many TRICARE members receive certain prescription drug refills. Non-active duty TRICARE members will be required to receive refills of select name-brand maintenance medications from a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or through the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery; otherwise they will be required to pay full cost at a retail pharmacy.

This change is part of the FY15 Defense Bill and is designed to save the military and TRICARE beneficiaries millions of dollars in the coming years. This does not apply to current active duty members, members living overseas, or members who reside in a nursing home. However, it does apply to dependents of active duty members living in the US and it applies to retirees and their dependents. Waivers are available on a case by case basis.

This Change Applies to Maintenance Medication Refills Only

This change does not apply to the initial prescription order, nor does it apply to medications used to treat acute illnesses. This change is only intended for refills of maintenance medications.

Maintenance medications are used to control chronic illnesses such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and similar chronic conditions. Medications prescribed for acute conditions, such as antibiotics, pain killers, etc. are unaffected by this program.

Cost Savings for Mail Order Prescriptions

This change will likely cause a little inconvenience while going through the learning curve, but there is a silver lining. Prescriptions filled at Military Treatment Facilities don't have any associated costs, and the co-pay through the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery is significantly less expensive than purchasing prescriptions through a retail pharmacy. Here is a chart from the Express Scripts website showing the cost of prescriptions delivered through the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery compared to those purchased at a retail pharmacy.

Your Home Delivery Copayments
Save with a 90-day supply of your medication from TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery.

Type of Drug	Retail Network Copayment*	Home Delivery Copayment	Your Savings
Formulary Generic	\$24	\$0	\$24
Formulary Brand	\$60	\$16	\$44
Nonformulary	\$141	\$46	\$95

Active Duty is \$0 copayment. Chart does not include non-network retail pharmacies.
*Retail Network Copayment is for three months of medication.

How to Change Your Prescriptions to Mail Order

There will also be a small grace period to move all your prescriptions over to home delivery before TRICARE will charge members full price for fulfilling their maintenance prescriptions at a retail pharmacy.

Move your prescriptions to TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery

- **Phone:** Call 877.363.1296 and have your prescription bottle handy. A patient care advocate will work with your doctor to transfer your maintenance medications to Home Delivery.

New Federal Veterans ID Card Coming Soon

Congress recently passed the **Veterans Identification Card Act**, a new bill that would create a government issued Veterans ID card, something that many veterans have been requesting for years. The bill was unanimously

passed by both the House and the Senate. President Obama signed the bill into law on July 20, 2015.

A Solution Many Veterans Have Been Seeking
Currently, the **military only issues ID cards** for current service members, retirees, and certain veterans with a 100% disability rating. The only option many veterans have to prove their service is a **VA ID card used for health care** (if eligible), or a **state-issued drivers license with a Veterans Designation** (but not all states currently offer this).

Many veterans who were not eligible for the above ID cards had a difficult time proving their military service, and often carried a **DD Form 214**, which contains personal information that should be kept secure (such as the veteran's SSN, birthday, etc.). **Best practices for avoiding identity theft** recommend leaving your SSN and other personally identifying information in a locked and secure place to avoid potential loss.

When Will We See the ID Cards?

This bill was only recently signed into law, so we are still waiting for the official word on when the VA will begin issuing ID cards. This should happen as soon as the process and details have been finalized and the VA gets the details and process in place. The bill authorizes the VA to begin as soon as two months from now, but it may take longer. The VA is also authorized to charge individuals for the cost of the card (the price has not been set as of the publication date).

Card for ID Use & Proof of Service Only

The new ID cards will only be valid for proving military service. The new cards cannot be used for benefits through the VA, or to access military installations or receive other military or veterans benefits. However, those who are currently eligible for benefits through the military or VA will continue to have them through their current methods.

Legislative Liaison Report

By Dennis A. Beagle
LTC USAR (Retired)

Early August saw intense activity in visiting our federal elected officials' staff. On Monday, August 3, accompanied by CWO 4 Richard Scalfani (Ret), we visited the offices of Congressman Brian Higgins and Senator Chuck Schumer. On Tuesday, retired Colonels Dick Peters and Bob Pecoraro and I saw staff of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in the morning, and then with Bob Pecoraro and retired Major Jerry Privitera, we touched bases with staff at Congressman Chris Collins office.

MOAA in Washington asked us to discuss three bills pending in Congress. One issue we have been fighting for years is **Concurrent Receipt** of full retired pay as well as service connected disability pay for those suffering from continued effects of injuries sustained while on duty. Last year we saw Congress restore payment for both retired and 100% disabled former service persons, but not for those with lesser disability. Both Senators Schumer and Gillibrand have already become co-sponsors in the Senate and for this, we thanked them. We asked that Congressmen Higgins and Collins co-sponsor this legislative initiative in the House.

A similar issue is the elimination of the **Widow's Tax** which makes survivors forfeit all or part of their spouse's Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) when eligible if they are receiving Dependency and Indemnification from the VA because military service caused a member's death. In other words, they can't concurrently receive both payments. SBP is a service member's purchased annuity. The VA indemnification is awarded when a service member is killed while serving in the military. Only Senator Schumer is currently a co-sponsor.

More difficult to address is the potential for **cuts in military pay and benefits** in the different Defense Appropriation bills now in a conference committee. MOAA prefers the House version which essentially is a status quo on these issues, while the Senate supports cuts in pay and benefits. We asked that the officials whose staff we visited exercise whatever influence they may have in the conference committee, but this is problematic, as none of our people are on the committee.

I have been active for about eight or nine years now as legislative liaison lobbying our congressional officials. It is difficult in the summer to mesh my schedule with those of the elected officials with offices locally as well as those MOAA members who have volunteered to accompany me. I have relied almost exclusively on our chapter board members for this support, as I prefer to have three or more of us go to the legislative offices. This year was difficult, as those who stepped forward earlier in the year were on vacation. I am hopeful that when this report is released to our chapter newsletter and website, other members might step forward to assist. I provide guidance to help newcomers as well as supply fact sheets with talking points to make visits easy. Even the mere presence of additional chapter members during these visits provides a measure of gravitas. I can be reached at 626-4971 and encourage chapter members to call and explore visiting congressional offices next year.

Annual Holiday Lunch

By Dick Mariani
CWO3 USCG (Retired)

Mark your calendar for the 2015 Holiday Lunch and Annual Meeting, Saturday, December 5, at Salvatore's Italian Gardens. A cash bar and appetizers begin at noon and sit-down lunch at 1300.

The menu has a Filet priced at **\$45**, Prime Rib at **\$40**, Salmon at **\$32** and Chicken entrees at **\$30**.

Check the enclosed reservation flyer for additional details.

Also, please bring paperback books and 2016 calendars to our Annual Meeting for the VA Hospital.

Veterans' Administration "Tailgate Party"

By Stanley Lichwala
CDR US Navy (Retired)

Our annual Western New York Chapter "Tailgate Party" for the patients at the Buffalo VA Hospital is scheduled for Sunday, December 13th, at 1:00 p.m. The Bills will be playing the Philadelphia Eagles.

Please plan on baking some homemade cookies for the patients who are looking forward to pizza, pop and cookies during the game. Chapter members and spouses are welcome and should plan on arriving at Freedom Hall on the third floor between 12:30 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Last year's "Tailgate Party" was canceled due to the postponement of the Bills' game due to the snowstorm. Previous "Tailgate Parties" have been very successful and greatly appreciated by the patients. If you can attend, please call me, CDR Stan Lichwala, at (716) 639-7225.

Your support of our hospitalized veterans is greatly appreciated.

Editor's Note

By JoAnne Lichwala

I look forward to seeing you sometime during the busy holiday season at one of our events. I wish everyone a Happy Halloween, a Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Holiday Season.

