



The High Desert Bugle



The Mojave Desert Chapter of



PO Box 785, Victorville, CA 92393

Volume 38, Issue 12

December 2025

PRESIDENT: LTC Michael W. Moticha, USAR (Ret.)

TREASURER: Maj. Ronald Matsuda, USAF (Ret.)

VICE-PRESIDENT: MAJ Meera Maheswaran, USAR (Ret.) **MEMBERSHIP:** Lt. Col. Thomas J. Brown, USAF (Ret.)

SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON: LTJG "Butch" Fahnestock, USN (Ret.) **SECRETARY:** Phyllis A. Skirvin, PhD

HISTORIAN: Maj. David J. Meyer, USAF (Ret.)

VETERAN BENEFITS: MAJ James R. Skirvin, USA (Ret.)

BOARD MEMBER: LTC Donald Amador, USA (Ret.)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mojave Desert Chapter of MOAA embraces *"Never Stop Serving"* our uniformed service retirees, veterans, those currently serving, their families and surviving spouses, through advocacy at the Federal and State levels on issues relating to the unique challenges of uniformed service. Additionally, we are committed to volunteer engagement with the needs of the communities, jointly and individually.

You are cordially invited

to participate in our membership **Christmas Dinner** on Wednesday, **17 December 2025** at the **Elks Lodge 1877**, 14041 Hesperia Road, Victorville CA 92395.

The back door of the Lodge will open at 1530 hours to allow everyone to be seated in the Main Hall by 1600 hours, when the entertainment will begin. Dinner will be served in the dining room at 1700 hours.

The meal will be prepared by the **Elks Lodge 1877** staff and includes a varied assortment of non-alcoholic beverages.

The cost is **\$25.00 per person**. Please make reservations by **Monday, 15 December** by contacting our President at michaelwmoticha@verizon.net or (760) 792-5004 (cell).

This time of year finds us all very busy with the many holiday festivities of the season. Our traditional Christmas Dinner is a prime opportunity to gather around and share in the blessings of delight-filled camaraderie.

So, please **MAKE** it a special effort to join us.

We look forward to sharing not only the fellowship but the reason for the season AND the upcoming New Year.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

LTC Michael W. Moticha



Continuing the effort to promote our Chapter providing 53 years of service in our High Desert



DECEMBER'S MEETING:

As the Holiday draws near, it is that time of the year that you, as an individual, a family member, a neighbor, part of a community, a state, or a nation, verbally express and physically demonstrate your personal feelings about Christmas. As we make every effort and go all out to show our Christmas Spirit—and that we are and are meant to be part of the celebration—our pocketbooks become part of the festivities in the process. Only you can justify why and how you accomplished this, but in my view, everyone is trying to out-do the next guy. Colorful lights, with Santa and Sleigh, go up on the house. Hours are spent cleaning and rearranging the home's interior. A tree with lights and other decorations are staged. Greeting cards are mailed. Special recipes are identified and food is purchased. Shopping is done for those perfect gifts. Donations are made. Everyone is dressed to the hilt.

Did I cover all of the activity or did I fail to mention something? I do not believe it is important. What is significant at this time of the year is that we, as beings, all come together, regardless of faith and give thanks to our Creator God for our lives on this planet. Expressing yourself materially and holding onto an economic ladder is not what I consider a Christmas Spirit. Only through our faith and our praise do we all meet on an equal plain.

One excellent way of displaying your gratitude for all that God has provided you is to donate to **Toys for Tots**. Purchase and bring your new, unwrapped toys to our 17 December **Christmas Dinner** (remember to make your reservations by Monday 15 December!). We will then take the toys to the Marine Base in Barstow to be included in the Toys for Tots Program.



Our entertainment will be the renowned **Tuba Force** from Victor Valley College, founded in 2012. Its name was derived from two of the original four members who had served in the United States Air Force.



Support Toys for Tots Program!

*Merry Christmas
to you and yours.*

VETERANS ACTIVITIES:

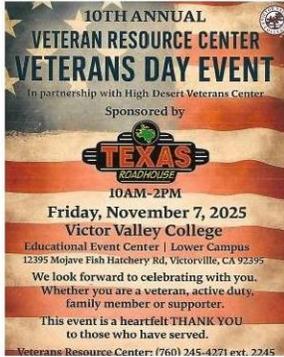
During the week surrounding 11 November, I spent most of the time in my uniform or a suit. I celebrated the meaning of Veterans Day with other Veterans and the local community. I expressed many 'Thank You,' returned many salutes, and met many Veterans from the High Desert. I did not attend all 11 of the possible planned events because I began to slow down after the first seven. I also had to participate in my brother's memorial service. Those activities that I did attend, representing the Military and our Chapter, were enjoyable and well worthwhile. I enjoyed the 31st Annual Kiwanis Tri-Community High Desert Veterans Dinner at Serrano High School on 5 November. Hundreds of Veterans and their guests sat down for a free BBQ meal. Even some of our Chapter members made the Trek to Phelan.



CW3 Bill Lundelius and Dolores Payne (rt) join in on the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(Continued)



The High Desert Marine Breakfast on 7 November had our hungry, new Chapter members and retired Marines in attendance.

The Victor Valley College Veteran Resource Center Veterans Day Event on 7 November had some of our members—all retired Marines—in attendance.

The Disabled American Veterans Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser on 8 November.

The Rotarians 2nd Annual Veterans Car Show on 8 November.

The Marine Corps 250th Anniversary Ball on 8 November.

The Parade of Pianos (POP) Fall Concert on 9 November.

The Victorville Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony on 11 November.

The Cpt Joseph McConnell Jr. USAF Park dedication in Apple Valley, on 11 November.



LTC Michael Moticha pays quiet homage to our veterans who had given their all during the Joseph McConnell Park Grand Opening.



LTC Michael Moticha with the Victor Valley Veterans Memorial during the Veterans Day Parade.



LTC Michael Moticha with Kaye Walraven, Director of Parade of Pianos.



Parade of Pianos Concert prove that music brings us together.

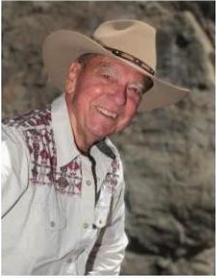
CHRISTMAS DINNER:

I hope to see everyone attend our Chapter's **Christmas Dinner** at the Elks Lodge 1877, 17 December, at 1600. There is no social hour planned, but you need to be there early, to take a seat prior to 1600, when the entertainment for the evening begins. Dinner will be served at 1700. In continuing with our plans from the Annual Business Meeting at the November luncheon, we will vote on the slate of officers for next year's Board of Directors. It is an important step in our High Desert Chapter's operation. Please do come to enjoy your old and new friends, delight-filled holiday entertainment, a great meal, and place your vote.



HUMAN KINDNESS:

In October's **BUGLE**, I spoke of human kindness and the fact that it still exists. Well, it has struck again. Starbucks offered a free cup of coffee to all Veterans on Veteran's Day. So, I took a break between the Parade and the McConnell Park Dedication and stopped by my Starbucks in Apple Valley. I got my coffee and sat down to relax. Being in my uniform, a number of people stopped to thank me for my service. I did a lot of 'ups and downs' from my chair. A young lady approached me and said, "Thank you for your Service. As I stood up and before I could acknowledge her words, she handed me a \$20 Starbucks gift card. Amazing!!!.



EDITOR'S REPORT

1st. Lt. Jack Barry

What Interests You?



Are you ready to launch into a new year just around the corner? It's been said that "Time flies when you're having fun!" For us in MOAA, it seems that this year has flown by due to all the fun and good deeds we have been fortunate enough to experience.

We realize that many of our members choose only to financially support the effective work our MOAA National and High Desert Chapter do for the benefit of veterans and communities. That is indeed a viable asset to our MOAA organization. Everyone is encouraged to participate in ways of their own choosing. But know, too, by not participating in our monthly luncheon meetings, you are missing out on warm-hearted, concerned camaraderie and great program presentations of interest. That begs the question: What interest you? Are we presenting programs with issues you care about? Interested in learning more about? Here are programs in the works:

JANUARY

"Celebrities Who Served in the Military"/Jack Barry (Confirmed)

FEBRUARY

"Living a Life of Significance"/Dan Tate, founder Don Ferrarese Foundation (Confirmed)

MARCH

"Women in the Military/War"/Jack Barry (Back Up Program)

APRIL

"Victorville Veterans Memorial Statue"/Terry Caldwell (Pursuing)

Terry is a very successful local attorney and was a Council Member deeply involved in the establishing and making of the Veterans Memorial in Victorville, which today is facing a relocation to the City Hall area as the City of Victorville wants to install a "round-about" where the Memorial is located (a very controversial issue).

"Air Force One"/Jack Barry (Back Up Program)

MAY

"The United States Constitution: What We Are Fighting for"/Jack Barry (Confirmed)

JUNE

"The Medal of Honor"/Byron Ward (Confirmed)

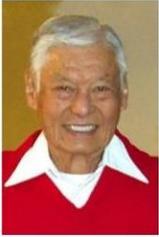
Should you have a recommendation for any program, please let us know so we can pursue.

We look forward to enjoying your presence on 17 December at our traditional Christmas Dinner.



The **BUGLE** is published monthly by TMDC of MOAA, which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and is available to our membership in both email and postal mode. MOAA and its affiliates are non-partisan and non-profit.

Love and enjoy life! It has an expiration date this side of Heaven.



TREASURER'S REPORT

Maj. Ronald Matsuda



*Your Support is Like Gold to Us: Priceless!
Please Renew Your Membership Today!*

We began the month of November with \$8,477.44 in our chapter accounts. We had revenues of \$1,093.00 and expenses of \$1,047.44, resulting in an ending November balance of \$8,523.31.

The Youth Scholarship Fund has \$5,871.81 while the Barstow Veterans Home, the Apple Valley Legacy Museum, and the Flight Museum have \$100.00 each and the Parade of Pianos has \$125.00.

Remember that your dues go exclusively for our chapter's administrative costs. Please note that our administrative costs are comparatively low—our dues being \$35 a year, and \$10 for surviving spouses and active-duty personnel. You help us live our motto of **“Never Stop Serving.”**



Our dues for 2026 are due by December 31, 2025.

When sending dues payments or contributions, please send your check to:

TMDC-MOAA, PO Box 785, Victorville CA 92393-0785.

Make checks payable to TMDC-MOAA. If you don't use the *Renewal of Membership Form*—for changes, et al--please use the memo line on your check to designate “Dues,” “Youth Awards,” or any of the other charities that we support.

One of the five worthy projects we support is *Parade of Pianos*. See article about their very successful concert held on 9 November.

PROJECTS:

- Apple Valley Legacy Museum
- Barstow Veterans Home
- Flight Test Museum
- Parade of Pianos
- Youth Awards



Good friends make bad days a little more bearable.

Thank You!

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS REPORT

MAJ Meera Maheswaran



President Trump's Reinstatement Executive Order



NOTE: Although this Executive Order was signed in January, the stated deadline for action by those affected is 1 April 2026.

On **January 27, 2025**, President Donald J. Trump signed a sweeping **Executive Order (EO 14184)** aimed at correcting one of the most controversial policies of recent military history: the involuntary separation of service members for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine. This order not only reopens the door for thousands of former service members to **rejoin the Armed Forces**, but also provides a legal pathway to **recover full back pay and benefits** lost during separation. For those impacted, this order may represent the first step toward long-overdue justice.

WHAT THE EXECUTIVE ORDER DOES:

The order directs the **Department of Defense (DoD)** and the **Department of Homeland Security** (which oversees the Coast Guard) to take **all legally permitted steps** to:

- **Reinstate** service members separated solely due to their refusal to comply with the vaccine mandate
- **Restore rank and status** to the level held prior to discharge.
- **Provide full back pay**, allowances, bonuses, and benefits that would have accrued had the separation not occurred.
- **Correct military records** and discharge characterization Implementation Timeline.

The DoD was ordered to create and publish a **comprehensive reinstatement and compensation policy** by **March 27, 2025**. As of July, they have met the deadline with outreach efforts that have included:

- Formal letters and emails to eligible individuals.
- Instructions for **opting in** to reinstatement and pay claim procedures.
- Establishment of administrative review boards to process applications.
- A reinstatement deadline currently set for **April 1st, 2026**.
- Legal Support & Ongoing Class Actions.



If you were negatively affected by the Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate, you may benefit from participating in **federal class action lawsuits** already in progress. Review the case that is relevant to you:

[Bassen v. United States \(Title 10 Active Duty/Reserves\)](#)

[Botello v. United States \(Title 32 National Guard\)](#)

[Harkins v. United States \(Coast Guard\)](#)

FINAL THOUGHTS:

President Trump's executive order is a pivotal development for service members discharged under the COVID-19 vaccine policy. But it is **not automatic**—you must take action to ensure your rights are protected, your service record is corrected, and your compensation is fully restored. If you or a loved one were impacted, now is the time to consider joining the legal efforts underway. Justice delayed doesn't have to be justice denied

SOURCES

Executive Order (EO 14184)

White House Fact Sheet (Jan 27, 2025) – Outlined Trump's executive order to reinstate COVID-vaccine-related discharges with full back pay and benefits ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov))

White House Presidential Order (Jan 27, 2025) – Full text of EO mandating DoD/DHS actions within 60 days ([businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com))

Military.com (Jan 28 & Apr Aug 8, 2025) – Coverage of the EO's scope, unanswered questions, and Pentagon policy rollout

Military.com (Jun 30, 2025) – Data on interested service members, reinstatement deadlines, and policy caveats ([military.com](https://www.military.com))

Federal News Network (Jul 2025) – Stats on around 141 interested individuals with only 13 completed reinstatements ([federalnewsnetwork.com](https://www.federalnewsnetwork.com))

DOD News (Apr 9, 2025) – Pentagon's public outreach campaign details including letters, website updates, and internal guidance ([defense.gov](https://www.defense.gov))

AP News (Apr 7, 2025) – Army's confirmation of only 3 active-duty reenlistments, zero reservists ([apnews.com](https://www.apnews.com))

Take Action today to learn if you or a loved is eligible!

VETERANS' BENEFITS REPORT

MAJ Jim Skirvin



Donate Your Vehicle and Benefit Disabled Veterans

Bring Change to These Heroes

Your car donation helps benefit disabled veterans throughout the United States. The proceeds from your donation help fund programs that provide services offered to veterans in need of assistance and support. Since 2000, Car Donation Foundation's vehicle donation programs have made contributions of more than \$183 million to worthy charities that now include charities serving our disabled veterans. Your donation to CDF's Vehicles for Veterans campaign will allow CDF to continue to provide contributions to those important charities.



Donate your vehicle and benefit disabled veterans

What Our Donors Are Saying:

"Your website was really easy, and the details offered on the page such as explaining about the tax deduction, no costs, et., was very useful."

~ Amy Meadows, Toyota Donor, California ~

"The process was very easy. A well-informed form and pick-up of the vehicle is a great option."

~ Steve Smith, Private First Class, California ~

What You Should Know:

Our donation program is a 501c(3) vehicle donation program benefitting disabled veterans. Our car donation program offers a simple alternative to selling or trading in your unwanted vehicle. In return for your donation, you receive the maximum possible tax deduction. Best of all, your donation helps organizations to provide assistance to disabled veterans and their families. Knowing that your car donation helps to provide transition services, help for homeless veterans, advocacy, employment assistance and more is something you can be proud of.

- You have **NO** costs
- Free pick-up, running or not
- We take care of all the additional paperwork
- We issue you with an IRS tax receipt for your records
- We'll pick-up your donation when its most convenient
- We take cars, boats, RVs, campers and ATVs

CALL TODAY to donate: 888-585-5353



Supporting the Car Donation Foundation is a worthy cause!

SURVIVING SPOUSES REPORT

Butch Fahnstock, LTJG, CHC, USNR



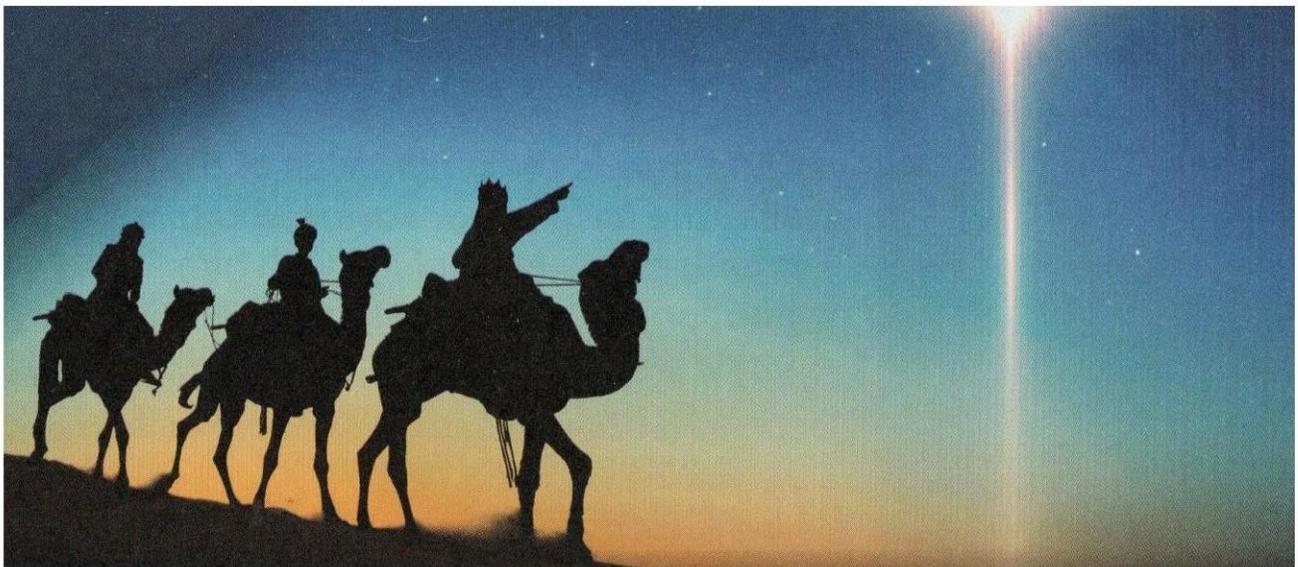
Special Reminders for Our Surviving Spouses for the Upcoming Holiday Season



You're probably aware of the need and importance for all of us to remain connected to our friends, relatives and acquaintances. Many of us will occasionally text, leave a quick phone message, or send a card to those we love and cherish. Here are a few other ideas that we can include into our communication habits.

- 1) **Stay involved** with others by going out to eat, going to MOAA meetings, going to senior centers, or going to church. It's very important to socialize, especially with people you trust. Our family members are not always available.
- 2) **Lend a hand** to others around you by cooking a meal, going to the store to pick up items for those who can't drive, or driving a friend to the doctor's office. This is particularly important! I have observed individuals being stranded for hours because of insurance issues involving pick up services.
- 3) **On a personal note, take care** of yourself! Let others know about your own needs. People are not mind readers! You'd be surprised at other's willingness to assist you in times of medical needs, loneliness, or sadness. This is very essential during the peak of the holiday season.
- 4) **As part of your own personal communication with social media, PLEASE** be careful! Don't let people scam you with false accusations, threats, false advertisements, or promises that are too good to be true. It's so easy for individuals without a face to take advantage of our trusting natures. Always remain calm, and make appropriate decisions based on true facts, and keep good records as well as a paper trail. If you suspect a scam, make your own phone calls to the actual companies involved.

Wishing all of you a pleasant, healthy and happy holiday season! Looking forward to seeing you as we celebrate this joyful time of the year!



HISTORY REPORT

Maj. David A. Meyer



The Iconic "Long Walk"

Courtesy of Rene Ray de la Cruz, Victorville Daily Press



Some 125 members of the 11th ACR from Fort Irwin will make the traditional 38-mile "Long Walk" from the Harvey House to the Barstow Veterans Home on Saturday 6 December 2025.

At the Veterans home, veterans and soldiers will enjoy a meal, share conversations, and watch presentations, organizers said. Traditionally, the walk has included ceremonial riders and regiment command teams leading the formation and marching in cadence to the Veterans home.

Residents, students, and downtown shoppers have been seen gathering street-side to cheer the soldiers while dozens of observers parked their vehicles to take photos and video.



The march concludes with Santa Claus greeting the "Long Walk" soldiers at the Harvey House and lunch for both soldiers and veterans.

The first "Regimental Long Walk" was held in 1997 to commemorate the opening of the Barstow Veterans Home. The event sanctioned active-duty service members from the National Training Center and Fort Irwin to give local veterans a widely-deserving, heartfelt public appreciation.

Since then, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment has continued the rigorous march as a token of appreciation to veterans for the sacrifices they have made for our country.

The next 29th Annual Walk is 6 December 2025.



The troops cross the First Avenue Bridge during their march from the Harvey House at the train station to the Barstow Veterans Home.



The event features word from military leaders.



We invite you to support the Barstow Veterans Home.



CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Phyllis Skirvin, PhD

"The Origins of 'Taps'"



The origins of "Taps," the distinctive bugle melody played at U.S. military funerals and memorials and as a lights-out signal to soldiers at night, date back to the American Civil War.

"During the Peninsular Campaign in 1862, a soldier of Tidball's Battery A of the 2nd Artillery was buried at a time when the battery occupied an advanced position concealed in the woods. It was unsafe to fire the customary three volleys over the grave, on account of the proximity of the enemy, and it occurred to Captain Tidball that the sounding of 'Taps' would be the most appropriate ceremony that could be substituted."

Dissatisfied with the standard bugle call employed by the Army to indicate to troops it was time to go to sleep, and thinking the call should sound more melodious, Butterfield reworked an existing bugle call used to signal the end of the day. After he had his brigade bugler, Private Oliver Wilcox Norton, to play it for the men. Buglers from other units became interested in the 24-note tune and it quickly spread throughout the Army, and even caught on with the Confederates.

As for the name "Taps," the most likely explanation is that it comes from the fact that prior to Butterfield's bugle call, the lights-out call was followed by three drum beats, dubbed the "Drum Taps," as well as "The Taps" and then simply "Taps." When Butterfield's call replaced the drum beats, soldiers referred to it as "Taps," although this was an unofficial moniker, according to "Taps" historian and bugle expert Jari Villanueva. He notes that Butterfield's bugle call was officially known as "Extinguish Lights" in American military manuals until 1891. Since that time, "Taps" also has been a formally recognized part of U.S. military funerals.

Today at Berkeley Plantation, the historic estate located at Harrison's Landing, there's a monument commemorating the origins of "Taps" at the site. Berkeley Plantation also happens to be the birthplace of Benjamin Harrison V, a signer of the "Declaration of Independence," and William Henry Harrison, the nation's ninth president.

"TAPS"—IS IT A SONG?

Many believe "Taps" is a song, but officially it's not. "Taps" is a bugle call which is a signal, not a song so there are no "official" "Taps" lyrics as well. The signal was also known as the "Drum Taps," "The Taps," or in soldiers' slang: "Taps."

The official military "Taps" is played by a single bugle or trumpet at dusk, during flag ceremonies and at military funerals by the United States Armed Forces. The duration is usually around 59 seconds but can vary at times.

There is a popular myth about the origin and history of "Taps." However, the true story is that in July 1862, after the Seven Days battles at Harrison's Landing (near Richmond), Virginia, the wounded Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, V Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, General Daniel Butterfield reworked, with his bugler Oliver Wilcox Norton, another bugle call, "Scott Tattoo," to create "Taps." He thought that the regular call for "Lights Out" was too formal.

Military "Taps" was adopted throughout the Army of the Potomac and finally confirmed by orders. It wasn't soon after that other Union units began using Taps. It became so popular that even a few Confederate units began using it as well. After the war, "Taps" became an official bugle call. Even though it's a bugle signal, many started putting words to "Taps:?" (Note: there are no "official" words to "Taps" but the most popular "Taps" lyrics are below.)

*Day is done, gone the sun,
From the hills, from the lake, from the skies.
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.
Go to sleep, peaceful sleep, may the soldier
or sailor, God keep. On the land or the deep, Safe in sleep.
Love, good night, must thou go,
when the day, and the night need thee so?
All is well. Speedeth all to their rest.
Fades the light;*

*And afar Goeth day,
And the stars Shineth bright,
Fare thee well;
Day has gone, night is on.
Thanks and praise, for our days,
'Neath the sun, 'Neath the stars, 'Neath the sky.
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.*

It behooves us to remember those who have served and those who are still serving and the many sacrifices they and their families have been and are making. **God bless America!**

SOURCE: [Taps: The Military Taps Song and the Words to Taps](#)

Published: April 15, 2016 (Last Updated: January 31, 2025)



MOAA LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

Rick Bui, President Apple Valley Rotary Club

A Volunteer Example

Apple Valley Local Rick Bui is a self-described "busy body." He says his passion for volunteering began at age 15 when he started work at the University of California Irvine (UCI) Medical Center in Orange County. After his father's death, he became more aware of what his Vietnamese family had endured during the Vietnam War years and gained a profound respect and appreciation for the American servicemen and women who fought alongside the South Vietnamese to save his family and many others.



Rick Bui receives the traditional MOAA cup from LTC Michael Moticha.



Welcome to the Joshua Palms Oasis!

During the past ten years Rick has helped with numerous Veterans events, including the Vietnam War Memorials events in Grand Terrace, Chino, Colton, and Montebello. He has assisted at the American Legions in Chino and Colton, made trips to Camp Pendleton to deliver food and toys for the holidays, and supported the American Warrior Initiative efforts to provide service dogs to Veterans. In addition, due to his career in finance, he has been able to help many Veterans receive their well-deserved benefits and to become homeowners.

Rick is the current President of the Apple Valley Rotary Club. His main Pillar of Service/ Community Outreach is to support local Veterans. The club hosts a yearly free breakfast event, and is planning a Veterans Benefit Car Show and BBQ to take place at the Singh Center for the Arts the Saturday before Veterans Day. Rick's most ambitious project, that commenced last May, is the creation of an outdoor sanctuary for Veterans to gather at the Joshua Palms VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Post 2924 on Hesperia Road right across from the train tracks, where the original National Trails Highway runs right through the property. With help from about twenty volunteers—including kids from Scouts America—a dirt area with folding chairs has been transformed into a charming outdoor oasis, with seating around the firepit, and an interesting perimeter fence constructed of wooden pallets. Rick credits Lee Galvan from Xpress Junk Hauling and his assistant Matthew Renteria with most of the heavy lifting and dirty work. In their spare time, they have leveled the area with a tractor, picked up supplies, and set the fence posts among other jobs. Thanks to donated materials, labor, and monetary contributions, the project was finished by Veterans Day.



A sanctuary for veterans to gather.



Joshua Palms Oasis Monument



Lee Galvan and Matthew Renteria did all the dirty work.

MOAA LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

Continued

Rick introduced his new-found buddy 21-year Air Force Veteran Sr. Master Sergeant Joe Jackson, and shared their unique bond:

Rick was born in 1976 in South Viet Nam in the midst of the war years. While just a tiny infant, he and his family escaped on a fishing boat, heading for they knew not where. Along the way, commercial ships spotted them and provided food and fuel. They were eventually picked up by a US military ship and transferred to the Red Cross, who got them to U-Tapao, Thailand, where Joe was stationed. They like to joke that Joe may have been the man that lifted baby Rick off the boat to safety. After one year in a refugee camp, the Bui family was processed and brought to the United States.



Rick Bui and his "long lost friend" Senior Master Sergeant Joe Jackson, who may well have been the one who rescued "baby" Rick and brought him to safety.



*Map of U-Tapao
THAILAND*

In conclusion, Rick remarks, "I love and appreciate our Veterans, and will always lend a helping hand to any of them." Rick would love to invite you to support our local Veterans as well as the Rotary Club, whose motto is "Service Above Self." He can be reached at 714) 305-2400.



*U-Tapao Air Base
CREDIT: Getty Images, Theirry Falise*

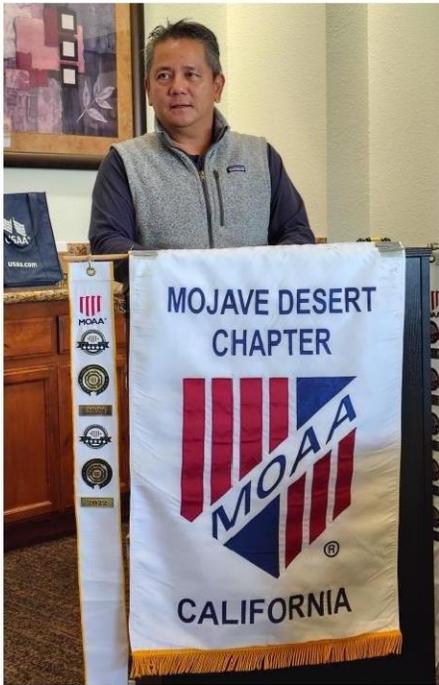
Article (modified) courtesy of Marcy Taylor,
Founder of the Apple Valley Legacy Museum

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

U-Tapao Royal Navy Airfield was established in the 1960s as a military airfield for the Royal Thai Navy. It became a crucial base for the United States Air Force (USAF) during the Vietnam War, serving as a forward operating base for B-52 Stratofortress bombers and KC-135 Stratotankers. The airfield was constructed to support military operations in Southeast Asia, with its runway becoming operational on July 6, 1966.

The airfield was strategically important due to its proximity to Vietnam, allowing the USAF to conduct bombing missions without the long flight times associated with bases further away. By 1972, U-Tapao was home to numerous B-52 aircraft, playing a vital role in the air operations of the USAF.

MOAA LUNCHEON GALLERY



Guest speaker Rick Bui shares his experience of being rescued by our soldiers in Vietnam and his buddy Joe Jackson.



Rick Bui receives the traditional MOAA cup from LTC Michael Moticha.



MAJ Meera Maheswaran, Niroopan Thayaparan, cousin, London, Dr. Vettivelu, Maheswaran, dad, Sivakumary Thayaparan, aunt, enjoy a mini-family reunion.



Joe Jackson, 21-year Air Force veteran who perhaps saved baby Rick from a fishing boat.



Lt. Col. Jerome Johnson, LCDR Mike Seixas, and Maj. Dave Meyer compare war stories.



Surviving spouses Roseanne Smith, Dolores Payne, and Margaret McConnell kibitz before our meeting.

MOAA LUNCHEON GALLERY



LTC Michael Moticha announces our annual business meeting.



New member CWO3 Denton Crotchett chats with CWO4 Bill Lundelius.

Let us bring joy into the world!



Delightful opportunity drawing items to win!



250th Marine Ball attendees LCDR Mike and Diana Seixas.



Winner Jerome Johnson



Great fellowship is priceless! Come join us.



Winners Mike & Diana Seixas



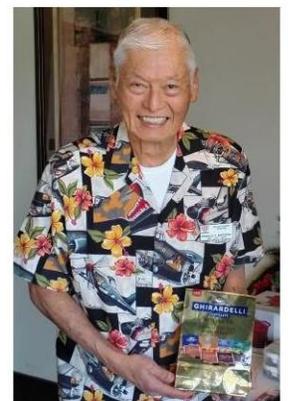
Winner Byron Ward



Delicious chicken!



A yummy dessert...again!



Winner Ron Matsuda

COMMUNITY PROJECTS APPLE VALLEY LEGACY MUSEUM



"Keeping the Rich History of Our High Desert Alive!"

Courtesy of Frank Johnson, Author



Marcy Taylor,
Founder



Located in the Bob Hope Cottage #153
At the historic Apple Valley Inn
20601 Happy Trails Highway
Apple Valley CA 92307

I remember standing on the dusty main drag of Apple Valley one sweltering summer afternoon, squinting at the shimmering heat rising off the pavement. My family had just moved here, and frankly, I felt a bit adrift. There wasn't much that screamed "history" to me, just wide-open spaces and the endless hum of the desert. I mean, sure, it was beautiful in its own stark way, but I craved that tangible connection, that sense of place you get from knowing the stories etched into the very ground beneath your feet. It's a feeling a lot of folks experience when they land in a new spot, that yearning to understand the tapestry of lives lived before them. And let me tell you, for anyone feeling that same itch, the **Apple Valley Legacy Museum** is the answer. It's more than just a building full of old stuff; it's the beating heart of our community's past, a vibrant testament to the true grit and spirit that shaped this slice of the High Desert. This museum meticulously preserves and celebrates the unique

heritage of Apple Valley, bringing to life the pioneers, the dreamers, the everyday folks, and the transformative events that have defined this remarkable region, making sure their stories aren't just whispers on the wind but clear, resonating voices for generations to come.

The **Apple Valley Legacy Museum**, founded 10 years ago by Marcy Taylor, isn't just a place to store artifacts; it's an active storyteller, a vibrant educator, and an indispensable community anchor dedicated to weaving together the rich, often untold, narratives of the High Desert. From the ancient indigenous peoples who first graced this land to the pioneering homesteaders, the Route 66 era, and the rapid post-war development, the museum meticulously curates and presents the full spectrum of our collective journey. It aims to foster a deep appreciation for the unique cultural, environmental, and social tapestry of Apple Valley, ensuring that every generation understands the roots from which our community has grown and continues to flourish. It's where the whispers of the past truly come alive, offering an authentic glimpse into the struggles, triumphs, and daily lives that shaped this corner of California. It was about creating a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that the younger generations could connect with the true grit and ingenuity of those who came before them, and that long-time residents could see their own family histories reflected and celebrated.

The museum's mission, deeply rooted in this foundational vision, encompasses several critical pillars:

Preservation: To meticulously collect, conserve, and safeguard artifacts, documents, photographs, and oral histories that illuminate the heritage of Apple Valley and the surrounding High Desert region. This isn't just about sticking stuff in a display case; it's about the painstaking work of climate control, archival storage, and ethical handling.

Education: To offer engaging and accessible educational programs for all ages, from school-aged children to lifelong learners, fostering an understanding and appreciation for local history, culture, and the natural environment. Think hands-on workshops, compelling lectures, and interactive exhibits.

Community Engagement: To serve as a vibrant community hub, encouraging participation, dialogue, and a sense of shared identity among residents. This means hosting events, supporting local research, and truly being a welcoming space for everyone.

Interpretation: To present historical information in compelling and accurate ways, utilizing modern interpretive techniques to bring stories to life and make them relevant to contemporary audiences. It's about making history feel alive, not just a dusty old textbook.

These pillars aren't just abstract ideas; they guide every decision, every exhibit, and every program that the museum undertakes. It's what transforms a collection of old things into a living, breathing testament to our shared legacy. For anyone who's ever wondered about the layers beneath the surface of our desert town, the **Apple Valley Legacy Museum** is where those layers are carefully, lovingly, and expertly peeled back. They paint a comprehensive picture of life in the High Desert.

One of the great joys of life is discovering our fascinating local history.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FLIGHT TEST MUSEUM/EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE



Flight Museum is currently under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2027.

INVEST IN OUR FUTURE



The Air Force Flight Test Museum is in the midst of its most exciting transformation since 1992, when the Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) erected the current facility at the center of Rosamond and Lancaster Boulevards on Edwards Air Force Base.

An aggressive fund-raising campaign continues to move and expand the Flight Test Museum to outside the Base's West Gate. The new Museum will still be located on Air force property but outside the Base's security fence making it assessable to the general public.

At its completion, the \$7.75 million-dollar project will improve the experience for Museum guests and provide a world-class venue for an aerospace-related Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education program.

The 75,000 square-foot facility must be funded completely by private contributions. It will include enough indoor exhibit area to house the majority of the Flight Test Museum's collection of historic aircraft and its many thousands of artifacts. Other indoor areas will include a classroom for aerospace-related STEM education programs., gift shop, museum offices, and artifact restoration area. The new facility will also be large enough to host special functions and events.

The Foundation confirmed its support for the project and the initiation of efforts to secure necessary funding. "The location of the new Museum will provide unencumbered access for aviation aficionados and greater opportunities for use by educational organizations in Southern California," former FTMF Chairwoman Lisa Gray said. "Our future STEM programs will be designed to engage youths in aerospace-related learning opportunities."

"We look forward to the community supporting what will be the largest single fund-raising project for the Museum," Rex Moen, Capital Campaign Chairman said. "We are confident people will make an investment to preserve flight test history and inspire future generations."

ORDER AN ENGRAVED BRICK TODAY!

For a donation of \$100 USD, your name--or that of someone you wish to honor or remember--will be engraved on a brick lining Century Circle. This display area overlooks the future home of the new Air Force Flight Test Museum. Your engraved brick will affirm for posterity your *Esprit de Corps* with the pilots and engineers who risk their lives developing the capabilities needed to protect our freedom. And your gift will help the Museum preserve flight test history and heritage and forever attest to the honor, courage, and commitment that embodies the motto of Edwards Air force Base: "*Ad Inexplorata*"—Latin for "*Toward the Unexplored*."

You may purchase as many bricks as you like. For each \$100 USD gift, you will receive a special certificate of completion recognizing your contribution and confirming the inscription(s) you have submitted as they will appear on the engraved brick(s). You will also receive a one-year enrollment as a "*Friend of the Flight Test Museum*," normally \$50 USD annually. Space for bricks is limited, so order today.

MUSEUM MISSION STATEMENT

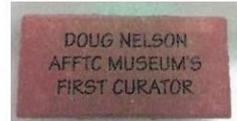
The Air Force Flight Test Museum (AFFTM) is an Air Force Field Museum operating within the guidelines of the United States Air Force (USAF) Heritage Program. Its Mission is to collect, interpret, preserve, and display the material history of Edwards Air Force Base, its antecedents, and the history of flight testing at Edwards Air Force Base.

FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) is to raise funds to support the development of the Air Force Flight Test Museum at Edwards Air Force Base, California and the Museum's Blackbird Airpark Annex at USAF Plant 42 in nearby Palmdale. The Foundation's fund-raising efforts focus primarily on Museum improvements, new construction, exhibits, aircraft acquisition and restoration, and educational programs.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FLIGHT TEST MUSEUM/EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE**

**Flight Test Museum Foundation
Brick Order Form**



EXAMPLE

	S	M	I	T	H		F	A	M	I	L	Y		

BRICK: UP TO 3 LINES (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

T	R	I	S	H		M	C	C	O	N	N	E	L	L
	J	O	E		M	C	C	O	N	N	E	L	L	
I	S	T		J	E	T	-	J	E	T		A	C	E

DETAILS FOR THE INSCRIBED BRICK

Become a viable part of the Edwards Air Force Base history with an inscribed brick on the Flight Test Heritage Walk, located at Century Circle, West Gate. It's a great way to honor or memorialize that special someone and to also help the Flight Test Museum Foundation raise the necessary funds to support expansion of the Air force Flight Test Museum. Yes, you can help us with our stated Mission to ***"Preserve Flight Test History to Inspire Future Generations"*** through a world-class aerospace-related Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program.

Buy a brick with up to three (3) lines of copy for installation on the Flight Test Museum Heritage Walk surrounding Century Circle. This is a prime location for our many visitors (typically 1,000 per month) to see your tribute.

These 4" x 8" bricks are of the highest quality and engraved to last a lifetime. After installation, a certificate of completion and membership card will be provided.

DONATION OF \$100 PER BRICK

Donations are tax deductible under the FTMF's 501c3 status as a non-profit organization. Please contact the FTMF at 661-258-1658, or email: giftshop@flighttesmuseum.org

YOUR \$100 DONATION INCLUDES:

- An inscribed brick
- A special certificate of completion recognizing your contribution
- A one-year enrollment as a ***"Friend of the Flight Test Museum,"*** normally \$50 annually.

PURCHASER'S NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

CELL PHONE: () _____ **HOME PHONE:** () _____

EMAIL: _____

PURCHASE OPTIONS:

To pay by credit card, please contact the Museum at: (661) 258-1658. We accept Mastercard, Visa, Discover, and American Express.

To pay by check, please make payable to Flight Test Museum Foundation and mail with this form to:
Flight Test Museum Foundation
Postal Box 57, Edwards CA 93523

To purchase online, please go to: www.afftcmuseum.org

The Flight Test Museum Foundation Is a private organization.
It is not a part of the Department of War or any of its components and it has no government status.

CONTACT: [Info@ Flight Test Museum.org](mailto:Info@FlightTestMuseum.org)



COMMUNITY PROJECT Parade of Pianos

“Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes.”

~ Psalm 150:4 ~

Parade of Pianos *“Praise Him with Stringed Instruments and Flutes”*

Parade of Pianos presents.....

2025 Fall Concert!
Church of the Valley (the Sanctuary)
14933 Wakita Blvd, Apple Valley
November 9 at 3 pm

Free Admission—Raffle prizes—Snacks




Checks payable to:
High Desert Community Foundation or Streams in the Desert Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 2028, Apple Valley CA 92307 * OFFICE: (760) 242-9877 * FAX: (760) 242-9833
Specify “Parade of Pianos” in the memo section of your check.
Email: hdcf@vorticon.net

The High Desert Community Foundation is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization by the Internal Revenue Service. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

According to Kaye Walraven, Director, the 9 November concert drew 110+ people! This is a good number for them. The delight-filled attendees enjoyed the magnificent voices of two skilled vocalists and the inspiring music of a quartet and several pianists. It proved to be a wonderful evening and everyone enjoyed it. Our concerts remain **FREE!** We offer opportunity drawings with items for people to have a chance to win. All proceeds from the drawings and donations go to

Parade of Pianos to help students with their music lessons, provide temporary employment and help find working music instruments homes. to students who can't afford them. They also accept working instruments and sheet music as well as direct donations. All funds find deserving students who are in need.

Parade of Pianos is a scholarship program started in 2004 by Paul Starks. Paul loves jazz music and lived in Brooklyn NY for a short period as well as Los Angeles CA. He had a huge collection of jazz at one time. His favorite jazz artist was Miles Davis. But when he moved into Sterling Inn two years ago, he had to sell/dispose of it all.



Paul had a passion for classical music and to keep it alive in the High Desert. He loved seeing kids excel in music and gave them that opportunity through **Parade of Pianos** by performing at the two fundraising concerts each year. Any POP student who performed with Parade of Pianos has the opportunity to obtain music lesson subsidies, temporary employment and college scholarships.

They are always looking for music students who want to join **Parade of Pianos!** One of their goals is to take POP into schools to educate kids on who they are and let them know of the opportunities that music provides.

We have a few businesses who donate towards POP but most of our donations comes from our fundraiser concerts twice a year, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Kaye Walraven, Director, Parade of Pianos 🎵 kayemichele63@yahoo.com



110 plus devotees of music attended the concert on 9 November.

“Christmas is coming and people all over the world seek peace. In the worst cruel world of WW II, on Christmas there was a seize fire. When it’s possible to stop fighting at Christmas time, why is not possible to stop fighting forever?” ~ André Reiu

***Music brings people together to enjoy
and hopefully to learn.***

Opened in May 1996, the Veterans Home of California–Barstow is the second-oldest Veterans Home in California. The Home is a licensed 220-bed care facility and a proud staple in the stunning Mojave Desert region of Southern California.

We provide:

- A home-like feeling with comfortable rooms and common areas.
- Meals in a community dining area.
- Activities that engage the mind and body.
- Transportation for outings and appointments.
- Healthcare with the Jerry L. Pettis VA Medical Center and the Barstow Community Hospital.
- Barstow keeps a five-star rating by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. The high-quality care we provide for our residents comes in two levels:
- Skilled Nursing
- Domiciliary (Independent) Care



Our campus provides indoor and outdoor spaces to enjoy a delight-filled life.

The Home will provide assisted living, a third level of care at the soon-to-be-established Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (currently undergoing the licensing process).

BARSTOW AND ITS ATTRACTIONS:

Barstow—known as “The Hub of the West”—is rich with railroad and military history. It is a dynamic city full of diverse recreational and cultural activities and sites for our residents and their families to visit. The town was first named “Fishpond” during a silver-mining rush in 1880, and then “Waterman Junction.” It was renamed in 1886 to honor William Barstow Strong, then president of the Santa Fe Railway. Mining declined, but Barstow endured as a railroad town. Today almost all freight traffic to and from Southern California runs through the junction. You can experience the past and present collide at local railroad museums and exhibits like the Historic Harvey House.

Barstow is at the intersection of several major freeways and state highways—I-15, I-40, and Highways 58 and 247. Explore National Parks like the Mojave National Preserve, Rainbow Basin, Owl Canyon, and Joshua Tree. Or you can discover NASA’s Goldstone Pioneer Deep Space Communications Center or the Historic Harvey House NASA display.

OUR CAMPUS:

Our campus is full of indoor and outdoor spaces for our residents to enjoy each other’s company, relax, and refresh their mental and physical health. Among these are the:

- Eagle Falls fountain, home to turtles and koi fish.
- Dining hall that serves tasty and healthy meals.
- Honor Garden and other garden alcoves where residents can indulge their green thumbs.
- Large, open common spaces allowing room for daytime fun in a comfortable atmosphere.
- Library with a vast catalog, including books, magazines, and books on tape.
- Barstow Community Involvement
- Barstow has a unique connection with the local military and civilian communities. Each year, soldiers from Fort Irwin’s 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment march 38 miles to visit and hear our residents’ stories. With help from the Home, Barstow College is training the next generation of nursing staff.
- Residents also enjoy other forms of entertainment, including:
- Barbecues.
- Classic car shows.
- Food trucks.
- Musical performances.



“The Long Walk” of 38 miles.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is Part 1 of a three part series recognizing this amazing Cal Vet facility.

**COMMUNITY PROJECTS
BARSTOW VETERANS HOME**



Residents' Needs/Wish List 2025/26

***ACCEPTABLE DONATED ITEMS
MUST BE NEW UNOPENED & SEALED***

WE CAN ACCEPT:

- Water bottles and non-alcoholic beverages
- Happy hour snacks: chips or crackers, snacks individually wrapped granola bars, jerky sticks
- Kindle fire or other digital newspaper readers for news subscriptions
- Sun hats
- Handheld LED Magnifiers (for reading)
- **Gift Cards:** Amazon, Walmart, VISA, McDonalds, In-n-Out, Starbucks, Panda Express, Domino's Pizza
- Gardening Club supplies: Gloves, small tools
- New Clothing: Sweat Pants, shirts, pants, pajamas, pull-on shorts (ALL SIZES!)
- PoliGrip Denture Crème (Pink)
- New Clothing: Men's shirts and T-shirts (button-up)
- Men's Hanes Underwear (L, XL, 1X, 2X)
- Axe or Dove body wash
- Hair Shampoo: Pantene, Herbal Essence, Selsun Blue
- Men's Deodorant (non-aerosol)
- Hand Lotions (non-allergenic): CeraVe Moisturizing Crème, Cetaphil, Lubriderm
- Shaving Crème
- Toothpaste (large)
- Electric razors
- "Reacher/Grabber" tools
- Laundry soap, fabric softener and fabric dryer sheets
- Sleep Sound Machines (Amazon)
- Hosted Social Events

We are not in need of any blankets, socks or bar soaps at this time.

WE CANNOT ACCEPT:

- Furniture: Due to storage constraints, we must limit furniture donations.
- Used Clothing Due to storage and pandemic constraints, we cannot accept used clothing.
- Medical Supplies: This includes but is not limited to canes, scooters, walkers, hospital beds, etc.

Thank you for your continued support!

CONTACT: Laura Moraco, Public Information Officer/Donations Coordinator 760-252-6222
or at Laura.Moraco@calvet.ca.gov

Let's bring joy to their world!

COMMUNITY PROJECT
Youths



*Our Youths of Today Are
Our Country's Future!*



*"We cannot always build the future for our youth,
but we can build our youth for the future."*

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Great Speeches*



Our MOAA Chapter offers scholarships annually to deserving students.



Excelsior High Desert Young Marines participated in force.

Our High Desert MOAA Chapter has the distinguished honor and privilege to interact with and support our communities' youths through several key organizations, like the: Excelsior High Desert Young Marines, the California Cadet Corp, the Air Force Junior ROTC, Army, and Space Force JROTC, and the Parade of Planes. It behooves each of us to make the time and contribute our resources to investing into our youths of today to ensure a brighter future for our Country tomorrow.



These students are worthy of our investments!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT
 Greatest Generation Education Foundation



*A Most Successful
 Fundraiser!*



Honoring Families in Their Time
 of Grief and Final Farewell



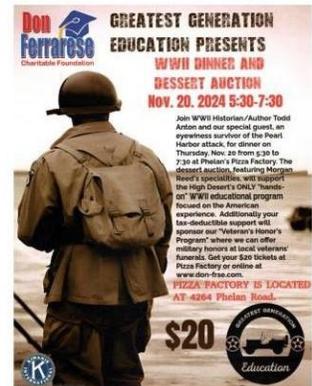
GGE founder, Todd Anton, encouraged a packed, sold-out group at The Pizza Factory to be generous with their bids on the desserts.

Don Tate, founder of the Don Ferrarese Foundation, hosted on 22 November one delightful, successful fundraiser for the Greatest Generation Education Foundation. GGE is an experiential presentation of artifacts and experiential learning for attendees to learn about the sacrifice, unity, and social changes brought about during WW II. All will remember, **“Freedom is not free!”** Some \$4,000-plus were raised through auctioneer Joe Affleck’s charismatic talent of touching the heartstrings of attendees bidding on delicious desserts. Amazing!!! 92-year-old Gaylen Pastella intrigued us with her experience as a nine-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor. Funds raised for GGE support an educational and community service program for schools, business leadership, and organizations like MOAA to honor the service and sacrifice of our veterans.



Students from Todd's 8th grade class served efficiently.

*Making
 Difference
 in the Lives
 of Others*



MAJ Mark Hotchkiss, the High Desert Marines Commander and wife Judy (lt) with Miriam Munoz (rt), representing Senator Suzette Valladares, and Pat Hagler (front) from the High Desert Marines.



Authentic WW II memorabilia intrigued the onlookers and history buffs.



92-year-old passionately shared her experience as a 12-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor.

“Freedom is not free!”





COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Happy Anniversary, Marines!

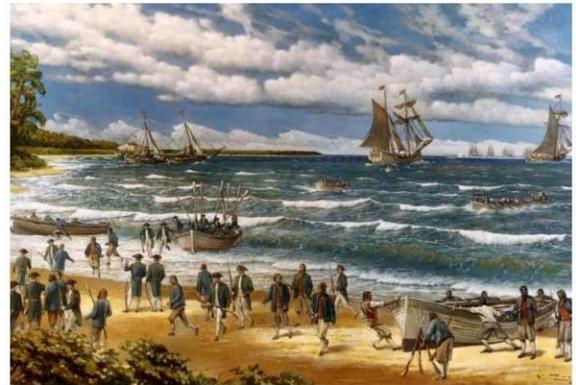


This year, the United States Marine Corps celebrated the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its founding. On November 10, 1775, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, John Adams drafted a resolution creating what was then called the Continental Marines, which went on to become known as the U.S. Marine Corps. Since that time, U.S. Marines have fought to defend the United States and American values around the world.

When the Revolutionary War officially ended in 1783, the Corps was disbanded, until it was reformed in 1798 by then-President John Adams. However, beginning in the early 1900s, Marines began celebrating the original birthday in 1775, a tradition that continues to this day.

The two hundred and fiftieth birthday means the Marine Corps is actually older than the United States itself. Today, even though the Marine Corps is formally part of the Department of the Navy, the Marines are considered a distinct branch of service. Presently, some thirty-eight thousand Marines serve abroad in a variety of capacities, from embassy security guards to advisers in foreign military operations.

Including active duty and reserves, there are currently some two hundred thousand Marines serving in a wide variety of roles and missions worldwide. In the past few years, while other branches of service have struggled and even missed recruiting goals, the Marine Corps consistently achieved or exceeded all its recruiting standards.



Battle of Nassau in the American Revolution

In World War II, U.S. Marines played a crucial role in defeating Japanese forces throughout the Pacific region. Because much of the warfare against Japan was littoral in nature—meaning it was fought by sea and land, frequently on islands with lots of coastline--the amphibious assault capabilities of the U.S. Marine Corps proved decisive.



Flag raising on Iwo Jima

Today, the Marine Corps has the reputation of being the toughest of the armed forces in terms of training difficulty and requirements. Every Marine is required to complete the crucible, a multi-day nonstop field exercise that requires recruits to complete a grueling forty plus mile hike while carrying a full load of equipment in all weather conditions with little to no sleep or food. Only after completing the crucible do recruits earn their anchor and globe, making them officially Marines.

The Marine Corps is a world-class fighting force known globally for its toughness and combat capabilities. For two hundred and fifty years, Marines have answered America’s call whenever and wherever they were needed. Today’s Marines continue the tradition of excellence as defenders of the United States.



MAJ Meera Maheswaran with her escort Benjamin Pham.



MAJ Meera Maheswaran and Pat Hagler.



LCDR Mike and Diana Seixas

Kudos to the High Desert Marines for a spectacular Ball!



DECEMBER'S SPECIAL DAYS

1 December

Civil Air Patrol Birthday



In the 1930s, the director of the Office of Civilian Defense, Gill Robb Wilson, had an idea to create an auxiliary that would use America's civilian aircraft as part of homeland defense. It would take some time to realize that idea. It wasn't until 1941 that the official orders were published authorizing Civil Air Patrol for 90 days to see how the experiment would play out. The agency served as the official volunteer civilian auxiliary of the Air Force. Formed during World War II, the Civil Air Patrol consists of cadets, ages 12 to 20 years old, and senior members who are 18 and older. All members wear uniforms as part of their Civil Air Patrol duties, but the agency is not a branch of military service.

3 December

Giving Tuesday



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

Military Benefits is proud to have partnered with Pay Away the Layaway to support military families by paying off their layaway balances at the Exchanges and retail stores. Pay Away the Layaway is a national 501(c)3 non-profit all volunteer organization which means most of the money goes directly to military families. Giving Tuesday refers to the Tuesday after Thanksgiving in the U.S. It is a movement designed for families, businesses and the community to celebrate generosity and to give back.

7 December

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day



Just before 8am on the morning of 7 December 1941, hundreds of Japanese fighter planes carried out a devastating attack on the Pearl Harbor American Naval base in Honolulu, Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. The Japanese aircrews managed to achieve complete surprise and for two hours, Japanese fighter, bomber and torpedo planes carried out a shocking assault on the naval base. Pearl Harbor survivors, associations and the military community typically commemorate the day with memorial services, wreath laying ceremonies and the retelling of the days' events. Many schools and museums have activities to educate students and the public on the historical importance of Pearl Harbor.

13 December

National Guard Birthday



The birthday of the National Guard may surprise you. The National Guard official site lists the official date as 13 December 1636. That is no misprint. The date the Massachusetts colonial legislature authorized a consolidation of the colony's militias into three regiments was indeed on 13 December 1636. This date is used as part of a War Department tradition of using the date on the legislation officially recognizing an active or reserve component's existence. Later, the Militia Act of 8 May 1792 authorized military units formed before the Act to retain "customary privileges." Over 100 years later, the Militia Act of 1903 plus the National Defense Act of 1916 with other laws, the original Militia Act has been perpetuated.



DECEMBER'S SPECIAL DAYS

13 December

Wreaths Across America



National Wreaths Across America Day is an event in December dedicated to remembering the sacrifices veterans have made in wars since the American Revolution. The WAA mission includes raising awareness of the sacrifices veterans make for the country and encouraging more people to remember. A veterans' wreath is a symbol of **HONOR, RESPECT, and VICTORY**. Each of the 10 balsam bouquets that comprises a veteran's wreath, symbolizes 10 special qualities: 1. Their **BELIEF** in a greater good; 2. Their **LOVE** for each other; 3. Their **STRENGTH**, work ethic, & character; 4. Their **HONESTY** & integrity; 5. Their **HUMILITY**, selflessness & modesty; 6. Their **AMBITIONS** & aspirations; 7. Their **OPTIMISM** for America; 8. Their **CONCERN** for the future; 9. Their **PRIDE** in their duties; 10. Their **HOPE & DREAMS** that didn't always come true,

14-22 December

Hanukkah Begins



Hanukkah^[d] (/ˈhæɪnəkə/, /ˈhɑːnəkə/; חַנּוּכָּה *Hānukkā*) is a Rabbinic Jewish festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and subsequent rededication of the Second Temple at the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire in the second century BCE. Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, which may occur at any time from 28 November to 27 December in the Gregorian calendar. The festival is observed by lighting the candles of a candelabrum with nine branches, commonly called a menorah or hanukkiyah. One branch is placed above or below the others and its candle is used to light the other eight candles. This unique candle is called the *shammash* (שַׁמָּשׁ, "attendant"). Each night, one additional candle is lit by the *shammash* until all eight candles are lit together on the

25 December

Christmas



The Holiday season can be particularly difficult for military personnel and their families who are separated by deployment or simply struggling financially. The stress and hardship of deployment can create an incredibly lonesome holiday setting for both personnel abroad and their families holding the fort at home. In addition, many families who are blessed and able to spend the holiday together can experience hardships with the added financial burden that Christmas brings to many each year. Christmas has deep roots in our nation's sense of tradition and celebration. When combined with military efforts, there is a strong presence of strength, unity, and cheer that permeates all American families, unifying both military and non-military families with an awareness of the spirit of giving and hope.

31 December

New Year's Eve



There are many ways military members celebrate New Year's Day and Eve depending on where in the world they are stationed. There are a few common factors people start thinking about in the weeks before the official end of the old year and the start of the new. One way some military families choose to celebrate New Year's Eve and New Year's Day has a lot to do with connecting with loved ones who are deployed elsewhere. Ringing in the New Year by phone, video conference, chat, or other digital platforms helps to put people together across multiple time zones.

*Please don't "HAVE" a nice year ahead.
Take responsibility and **MAKE** it a GREAT year ahead!!!*

MEDAL OF HONOR TRIBUTE

CPT Byron Ward

REAR ADMIRAL EUGENE B. FLUCKEY



As I stated in my article about decorations elsewhere in this newsletter, I'm still planning to cover the top twelve most highly decorated U.S. servicemembers next year, but I'm compelled to jump the gun and cover "Lucky" #13 this month, because Eugene Fluckey is one of my favorite heroes, and there are many who share my opinion that this superior naval officer was the greatest submariner ever.

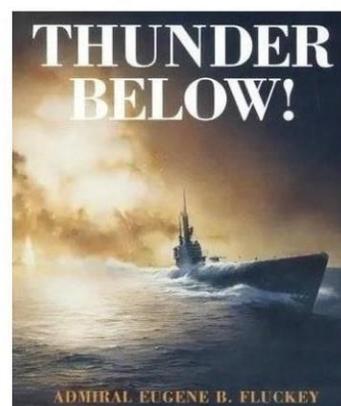
Fluckey graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1935 and had three years' experience in submarines before the Pearl Harbor attack, but he was a latecomer to the Pacific theater, finally gaining command of a submarine in January 1944. Theodore Roscoe, in his definitive book, *United States Submarine Operations in World War II* (1949), described the moment in glowing terms: "In the Pacific a new constellation was on the war's horizon— a stellar phenomenon of the first magnitude, composed of a star of a submarine named *Barb*, an ace crew of submariners, and a skipper named Fluckey."

The new commander lived up to these words in the first three war patrols at the helm of the *Barb*, dodging air attacks and dozens of depth charges while compiling an enviable record sinking Japanese warships and merchant vessels. So as not to worry his wife Marjorie, Fluckey sent letters to her inferring that his job kept him safe at Pearl Harbor, going so far as to write up to twenty letters at the start of a war patrol, to be mailed at appropriate intervals by a friend in Honolulu. By the time Marjorie learned that Fluckey had been presented with his third Navy Cross, she was very suspicious.

The *Barb's* fourth outing to enemy waters under "Lucky" Fluckey's command has been described as "the greatest of war patrols." On a sleepless night in January 1945, Fluckey maneuvered the *Barb* into a busy, well-protected harbor on the China coast, torpedoed many merchant ships, then avoided several determined patrol boats during a long, hair-raising withdrawal to the open sea. For this, the *Barb* received a Presidential Unit Citation and Fluckey was selected as a Medal of Honor awardee.

Then this hero did something else remarkable. After traveling to Washington to receive the country's highest military award, and despite a policy that discouraged Medal of Honor recipients from returning to combat, Fluckey took the *Barb* on a fifth patrol, a voyage that was in more than one way more remarkable than his previous one. First, he succeeded in destroying fifteen enemy vessels by torpedoes and the *Barb's* 5" deck gun. Then, for the first time in history, rockets were fired from a submarine, a project conceived and implemented by Fluckey. Finally, in what was the first and only ground incursion by the U.S. military onto the Japanese home islands in WWII, Fluckey deployed a team of volunteer sailors that successfully blew up a train.

Although he was decorated with the Medal of Honor, four Navy Crosses, the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, and two Legions of Merit, Admiral Eugene Fluckey stated in his 1992 memoir, *Thunder Below*, that it is the *absence* of a decoration that he is most proud of, the fact that, under his command, no member of his crew ever received the Purple Heart.



This national hero passed away in 2007 and is buried in the United States Naval Academy Cemetery, Annapolis.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Captain Joseph McConnell, Jr. Park & Veterans Memorial Dedications



Honoring All Who Have Served

Town of Apple Valley
CALIFORNIA

CAPTAIN JOSEPH MCCONNELL JR.
U.S.A.F. PARK

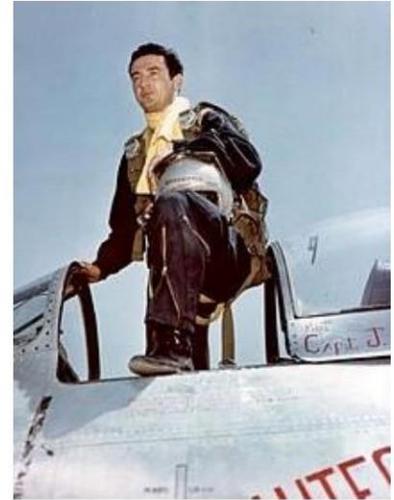
RIBBON CUTTING
&
VETERANS MEMORIAL
DEDICATION

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
NOVEMBER 11, 2025 AT 1:00 P.M.
21878 Pah-Ute Avenue, Apple Valley, CA 92308

Event's Program



Apple Valley Veterans Memorial was dedicated as an overflowing crowd of residents, distinguished guests, and visitors cheered with great appreciation.



Captain Joseph McConnell, Jr.

Veterans Day was celebrated in style in both Victorville and Apple Valley Tuesday, 11 November. Starting at 0900, the **29th Annual Veterans Day Parade** rolled its way down Seventh Street—the old **Route 66**—ending at the Veterans Statue at Forrest Street. Student groups included Air Force and Army Jr. ROTC units, a large combined California Cadet Corps marching group representing several schools, High Desert Young Marines, and four marching bands. Other groups represented were two American Legion Posts, DAV, Fort Irwin Jeepers, and the Tuskegee Airmen, as well as Shriners, Vettes 4 Vets, Victorville City Council members, and representatives from various city departments.



Don Holland (lt) observes as Trish McConnell, Joe's oldest daughter, cuts the official Grand Opening Celebration Ribbon.

The touching ceremony following the parade kicked off with the flag raising and National Anthem. Tributes to each military branch, and Veterans of every war from World War II through the post-911 era, as well as active military, were interspersed with musical numbers.

Apple Valley resident, Captain Joseph C. McConnell, Jr., earned national acclaim during the Korean War, becoming the highest-scoring jet fighter pilot in American history. McConnell's journey began in 1940 when he joined the Army Air Corps, which in 1947 became the United States Air Force (USAF). Initially serving as a navigator on a B-24 Liberator in World War II, he later pursued his passion for flight, ultimately becoming one of the Air Force's first jet pilots.

In 1952, prior to his deployment to Korea, Captain McConnell and his family settled in Apple Valley. During his time in Korea, he achieved an astounding 16 aerial victories against enemy MIG-15 jets. On May 18, 1953, in a fierce engagement against 28 Communist MIG-15s, McConnell, along with his wingman, shot down two more enemy aircraft, making him the Nation's first triple ace. Upon his return to the United States, McConnell received a hero's welcome. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations by President Eisenhower. Apple Valley's residents demonstrated their gratitude by donating labor and materials to build a new home for the McConnell family on Highway 18.

Captain McConnell served with the 435th Fighter Squadron at George Air Force Base in Victorville. Sadly, his life was tragically cut short on August 26, 1954, when he died in a crash while testing an F-86H at Edwards Air Force Base due to an equipment malfunction. The story of his death became national news. His life was chronicled in the Warner Brothers feature film, "The McConnell Story," starring Alan Ladd and June Allyson.

The Town of Apple Valley is honored to dedicate this park in recognition of Captain McConnell's heroism and his connection to the community.

From the cockpit of his F-86, Captain McConnell proudly showcased his aerial prowess with 16 red stars symbolizing his victories. He affectionately named his aircraft "Beadle's Bitch," a tribute to his wife, Pearl.

On May 18, 1953, Captain McConnell achieved the distinction of becoming the nation's first triple ace, a feat captured in this photograph taken the very day he scored his final three kills.

In June of 1953, upon his return from the Korean War, Captain McConnell was presented with a key to the Town which was then known as Apple Valley Branches.



LTC Michael Moticha is flanked by MAJ Meera Maheswaran (rt) and Corine Mora, Field Representative for Congressman Jay Obernolte.



Trish accepts a case holding her father's reissued military medals.



"Being terrified but going ahead and doing what must be done—that's courage."

~ Piers Anthony ~

VETERANS DAY PARADE

The parade attracted thousands of freedom loving folks to *Old Town Victorville*.



A glorious sky provided a magnificent day for the tribute parade remembering our veterans.



The 18th Brigade of the California Cadet Corps, LTC Cook Askins, a group our MOAA Chapter supports with pride.



LTC J. Michael F. Yates on the American Legion Post 256 Float.



The Victorville Employee Float was a big hit paying tribute to veterans.



Daughters of the American Revolution, Chapter 92 With Bill Kinnard.



AOC R. Castellanos marches with his dog.



The Fort Irwin Jeepers roared through with flying colors!



The presence of the Buford Johnson Chapter of the renown Tuskegee Airmen added depth to their rich legacy.



MAJ Chaplain Peter Kim with High Desert Marine SGT Steve Ostrander.

We will always remember.



The Victor Valley Vettes 4 Veterans added a touch of class to the day's event.



Apple Valley Shriners



THE HIGH DESERT CHAPTER

P. O. BOX 785 ~ VICTORVILLE CA 92393



RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR THE NEW YEAR

REMINDER!

Our Dues Year is Calendar: January through December.

Please make check payable to TMDC/MOAA.

Your prompt renewal will help ensure that our Chapter will have the funds to meet our expenses and plans for upcoming functions, activities and projects.

LAST NAME: _____ FIRST: _____ DATE: _____

RANK: _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____

___ RETIRED AND FORMER OFFICER \$35.00 \$ _____

___ ACTIVE DUTY: \$10.00 \$ _____

___ SURVIVING SPOUSE: \$10.00 \$ _____

At this time, you may also make donations to our various Community Projects supported by our Chapter, as listed below. The funds collected for these activities go directly for their support and are not used for any other expenditures.

___ YOUTH FUND FOR JROTC, YOUNG MARINES, CALIFORNIA CADET CORPS: \$ _____

___ APPLE VALLEY LEGACY MUSEUM/VICTOR VALLEY LEGACY MUSEUM: \$ _____

___ PARADE OF PIANOS (POP): \$ _____

___ BARSTOW VETERANS HOME: \$ _____

___ FLIGHT MUSEUM (EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE): \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

NOTE: Chapter members may pay up to three years in advance: 2026-2027-2028. Accordingly, let us know by multiplying your dues by one, two, or three.

PLEASE NOTE ANY CHANGES TO YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION BELOW

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: (_____) _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

2026



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