



SWEETWATER CHAPTER MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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THE MARINERS LOG

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March 2026

FUTURE HAPPENINGS

****First Monday, March 2, 2026: Chapter Board meeting at 9:00 A.M.** at Bonita Golf Club Lounge, 5540 Sweetwater Road, Bonita, CA 91902.

****Second Wednesday, March 11, 2026:** MOAA, Sweetwater Chapter luncheon meeting at 11:00 AM, at IHOP Restaurant, 1430 E. Plaza Blvd., National City, CA 91950.

**** March 8, 2026** Daylight Savings Time

**** March 17, 2026** St. Patrick's Day

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

***** March 8, 2026 is daylight savings time.**

Don't forget to set forward your clocks one hour at 2 a.m.

***** Council and Chapter Leaders:**

Good morning — I'm writing to update you on a VA interim final rule released earlier this week and then promptly rescinded by VA leadership. I ask that you share this with your members through your communications channels. MOAA's official statement in this matter follows.

A new VA rule designed to "clarify existing policy" regarding veteran disability ratings met sharp criticism from veterans and advocates in the hours after its release, leading VA Secretary Doug Collins to announce the department will be "halting enforcement" of the rule immediately.

"MOAA joins others in thanking and applauding Secretary Collins' decision to halt the implementation of the interim final rule," MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), said after the VA announcement. "We appreciate the secretary's continued focus on veterans' concerns and on ensuring veterans receive all benefits they have earned as quickly and conveniently as possible. Veterans should never have to consider whether seeking treatment or taking medications could lead to a reduction in their benefits."

Veterans' advocates stated the rule could allow the VA to lower disability ratings (and compensation) for veterans whose conditions are controlled or improved by medication. Such a rule could lead to unintended consequences and may not account for a medication's side effects or other ways a veteran's daily life may be impeded by their ailments.

Many also took issue with the VA's rule making

process, which did not include the customary notice-and-comment process or meaningful engagement with veterans service organizations and other stakeholders. Although comments were not solicited before the rule was considered final, there reportedly were nearly 9,000 comments on the Federal Register website within 48 hours of the rule's posting.

"Transparency, clarity, and trust are bedrocks for veterans and are non-negotiable elements in supporting the continuance of the all-volunteer force," Kelly said. In a social media post announcing the reversal, Collins said the intent of the rule was "to clarify existing policy and protect Veterans' benefits in the wake of an ongoing court action." But many interpreted the rule as something that could result in adverse consequences.

The VA "does not agree with the way this rule has been characterized," Collins continued, but noted that "the department always takes Veterans' concerns seriously."

MOAA looks forward to continuing work alongside the VA to ensure the delivery and maintenance of service-earned benefits, Kelly said.

MOAA will continue to monitor this issue and, as we learn and understand more, will communicate any associated MOAA actions in this matter through our member communications channels.

Thanks again for your leadership and support, V/R

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Stop VA Claim Sharks: Why MOAA Backs the GUARD VA Benefits Act

By: Jen Goodale February 10, 2026 MOAA Newsletter



Olivier Le Moal/Getty Images

Veterans and survivors face a growing threat from predatory companies that siphon earned disability benefits under the guise of "help."

At the center of MOAA's work to combat this threat is

the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act (H.R. 1732), a bipartisan bill which would restore long-overdue accountability to the VA disability claims process.

A System Built on Trust ... and a Dangerous Gap

Federal law is clear: Only VA-accredited attorneys, claims agents, and veterans service organizations (VSOs) may assist veterans with disability claims in exchange for compensation, and no veteran can be charged when filing an initial claim, even by an accredited agent. The law clearly states that accreditation requires training, ethical compliance, continuing education, and fee oversight.

But in 2006, Congress repealed criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who illegally charge veterans for claims assistance. That decision created a regulatory gap, one that predatory companies have spent nearly two decades exploiting.

VA's only enforcement tool against these actors is a cease-and-desist letter, a measure that has proven to be largely ineffective. Over the past decade, the VA has issued more than 40 such letters, yet most of the companies that received warnings continue operating,

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((**GUARD Benefits** *Continued from page 2*)

advertising, and charging veterans thousands of dollars in unauthorized fees.

A Perfect Storm for Exploitation

VA disability claims are complex and slow, leaving frustrated veterans searching for help. The passage of the MOAA-supported Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, a critical expansion of benefits for toxic-exposed veterans, dramatically increased the number of new and reopened claims, creating a larger pool of newly eligible veterans vulnerable to exploitation.

More than 40 unaccredited companies now actively market themselves as “consultants” or “coaches,” claiming they can maximize ratings or speed decisions. Some charge contingency-style fees totaling tens of thousands of dollars. A veteran awarded a 100% rating can be charged nearly \$20,000 for assistance that is legally available for free through accredited VSOs. Other companies charge flat fees for consultations with medical examiners, nexus letters, and other supporting documentation.

These companies are not subject to VA oversight, ethical standards, or fee limits. Veterans report aggressive data-targeted marketing, misleading contracts, and long-term payment obligations tied to future benefit increases ... even when the company does no additional work. One retired Navy petty officer and longtime volunteer advocate described veterans being contacted almost immediately after filing claims by companies falsely implying VA affiliation and armed with detailed, sensitive claim information. This erosion of trust underscores the urgent need for accountability.

Enforcement Works — When It Exists

States have begun stepping in where federal enforcement is lacking. Most recently, the Texas Attorney General successfully prosecuted Vet Claims Insiders, affirming that these practices harm veterans and violate consumer protection laws. But veterans should not have to rely on a patchwork of state actions to protect their federal benefits. Congress created this enforcement gap, and Congress must work to close it.

What the GUARD VA Benefits Act Does

The GUARD VA Benefits Act restores the enforcement authority Congress originally intended by reinstating criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who charge unauthorized fees. The bill does not limit veterans’ choices or access to help. Instead, it ensures assistance comes from qualified, accountable, and regulated professionals.

MOAA urges lawmakers to advance this legislation to protect service-earned benefits for veterans and survivors, and to restore integrity to the VA claims system.

VA Fully Rescinds Disability Ratings Rule ... Here’s What Should Happen Next

By: Kevin Lilley February 27, 2026 MOAA Newsletter

After feedback from veterans, advocacy groups, lawmakers, and other stakeholders – 20,000 of whom provided comments via the Federal Register – the VA fully rescinded an interim final rule that may have punished veterans for receiving medical treatment.

VA Secretary Doug Collins announced Feb. 19, two days after the new rule was published, that it would not be enforced. The official rescission echoes Collins’ Feb. 19 statement, which said the rule served to clarify existing policy, but notes the department “recognizes that many commenters construed the interim final rule as something that could result in adverse consequences.”

MOAA was among those commenters, noting that the rule “fails to account for treatment burdens, creates harmful incentives, destabilizes access to benefits, and was promulgated without adequate public input.” While the VA’s Feb. 27 move to rescind the rule represents a first step toward rebuilding trust with the veteran community, three other key recommendations from MOAA’s public comment should come next:

End the Legal Fight

The VA’s short-lived rule change came after the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled against the department in *Ingram v. Collins*, stating that the VA should issue disability ratings based on the severity of a veteran’s condition, following precedent “requiring the discounting of beneficial effects of medication.”

In the rule, the VA said the court “erred” in its determination, and noted the case and other recent judicial rulings as grounds for rapid passage of the clarifying regulation. MOAA and other stakeholders disagree with this interpretation, and so long as the VA proceeds with appealing *Ingram* and similar cases, veterans’ benefits would remain under threat.

“Continued pursuit of an appeal is in direct opposition to the halted enforcement of the [interim final rule],” MOAA wrote in its public comment.

Clarify the Ratings Process

The rescinded rule had been meant to “reaffirm the proper understanding of VA policy,” according to the rule text. And while the rule is going away, such reaffirmation is still sorely needed.

The department should state clearly that a disability rating will not be reduced based on the effects of treatment, and that a veteran’s ability to address chronic injury or disease with medication should not be confused with “medical improvement.”

Many veterans suffer a reduced quality of life from

(VA Rescinds Continued on page 4)

SWEETWATER CHAPTER MOAA – BOARD MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 12, 2026

- I. 9:35 A.M.** – The Board meeting was called to order by President Ernie Liwag.
- II. Ernie Liwag** led the Pledge of Allegiance. Attendees were Ernie & Remy Liwag, Vivian Rinehart, Oscar & Veronica Garcia, Marvelyn Hoyt, Rich and Jean Wilson.
- III. Secretary’s Report** – Submitted by Secretary, Rich Wilson. Motion made by by Jean Wilson, 2nd by Vivian Rinehart, minutes approved.
- IV. Treasurer’s Report** – Submitted by Treasurer, Oscar Garcia: December 1, 2025 - November 30, 2025 Ending Balance brought forward: \$ 4082.49. INCOME: October JROTC Opportunity drawing \$35.00. Expenses: None. December 31, 2025 Ending Balance: \$4117.49. Motion to approve by Rich Wilson, 2nd by Jean Wilson, Motion Approved.
- V. Presidents Report** – Submitted by Ernie Liwag:
 - a. Next Board meeting: Monday, February 2, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. at Bonita Golf Club Lounge,5540 Sweetwater Road, Bonita, CA 91902.
 - b. Next Luncheon meeting: Wednesday, January

- 14,2026 at 11:00 AM at IHOP Restaurant, 5540 Plaza Blvd, National City, CA 91950.
- c. MOAA, San Diego Chapter merged with the Miramar Chapter.
- d. CALMOAA to increase dues for Chapter members to \$6.00 but Sweetwater Chapter will remain \$4.00 per member.
- e. Membership fees are due starting this month through March 31,2026.PO Box rental of \$105.00 paid until June 2026.
- f. PO Box rental of \$105.00 paid until June 2026.

- VI. Newsletter Editor Report** (Jean Wilson): N/A (Ernie will bring Roster next month)
- VII. Sunshine Report** (Marvelyn Hoyt): N/A
- VIII. Surviving Spouses Report** (Vivian Rinehart): N/A (Ernie will bring Roster next month)
- IX. Old/New Business** N/A
- X. Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Rich Wilson, 2nd Marvelyn Hoyt. **Adjourned** 10:08 A.M.

(VA Rescinds *Continued from page 3)*

effective treatments – anything from moderate to severe side effects to medication and treatment needs that disrupt life’s regular rhythms. They should not worry about losing earned benefits while they deal with these second-order effects.

Keep Veterans Healthy

By weighing medication as part of a VA disability rating (and subsequent benefits), the department inadvertently created an incentive for veterans to skip treatments prior to an evaluation, or otherwise mask any treatment-related improvements.

The VA can address this concern moving forward by releasing guidance that would “explicitly prohibit adverse rating consequences tied to treatment compliance, ensuring veterans are not discouraged from following prescribed care,” MOAA wrote in its public comment.

The Next Step

MOAA and fellow veterans service organizations will continue to engage with the VA on this issue; the lack of engagement with such groups has been cited by many as contributing to the confusion caused by the recent rule, which was passed without a traditional feedback period.

No veteran should feel that undergoing treatment for an illness or injury could lead to unexpected downgrades in their service-earned benefits. Keep up with this issue and other MOAA priorities via our news page.

Caregivers Sustain Our Veterans. Ask Congress to Protect Their Futures

By: René Campos February 02, 2026 MOAA Newsletter



Ivan-balvan/Getty Images

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Family caregivers quietly sustain our veterans' health care system. They manage medications, provide personal care, coordinate appointments, and stand watch through complex physical and behavioral health challenges. Because of them, veterans can remain at home, avoid costly institutional care, and live with dignity.

But when caregiving ends, too many caregivers face an uncertain future.

As the House Veterans' Affairs Committee prepares for a critical Feb. 12 hearing, MOAA urges Congress to advance the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act (H.R. 2148 | S. 879) out of committee and toward passage. This bipartisan legislation recognizes a simple truth: Caregiving is an essential service, and serving as a caregiver should not jeopardize an individual's future well-being.

The need for caregivers is growing rapidly. Veterans age 65 and older represent an increasing share of VA patients, and most will require some level of long-term support as they age. Millions of family members and loved ones provide this care every day, often over many years.

VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers clinical support and a monthly stipend to tens of thousands of families. But that stipend is classified as unearned income, meaning caregivers cannot build Social Security credits or retirement savings during years of full-time caregiving. When caregiving ends – because a veteran recovers, eligibility changes, or a loved one passes away – caregivers may face a sudden loss of support with no clear transition path.

The result can be frightening and financially destabilizing.

Real-Life Scenarios

Caregivers' experiences vary, but patterns have emerged:

- **Trouble finding work:** A caregiver steps away from the workforce for years to provide daily, in-home care. Professional licenses lapse, skills grow outdated, and résumé gaps widen. Reentering the workforce becomes harder when caregiving ends, especially without help renewing credentials or accessing training.
- **Abandoned at a critical time:** Caregiving ends abruptly with the death of a loved one. Faced with stress and grief, support services fall away quickly. With little time to prepare, caregivers must rebuild their lives – not just finding income, but establishing purpose and direction.
- **Facing an unclear retirement:** Long-term caregivers emerge from their role with limited retirement savings, having spent years covering out-of-pocket

costs while sacrificing wages and employer-sponsored benefits. Without intervention, many face an increased risk of relying on Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, or other income-based assistance.

- **Navigating serious health concerns.** The intensity of daily care leaves many caregivers little time for their own health. Caregivers commonly report unmet mental health needs, contributing to burnout and compounding long-term health and economic risks.

These are not isolated stories. These are actual outcomes of a VA health care system that relies on caregivers but fails to help them plan for what comes after caregiving.

A Practical, Preventive Solution

The 3R Act offers targeted, cost-smart reforms that support caregivers through transition rather than creating long-term dependence. It will help them renew licenses, pursue continuing education, and prepare to reenter the workforce. It will strengthen reemployment pathways, including opportunities within the VA, by recognizing the value of caregivers' skills and experience.

It also will provide retirement planning assistance and explore caregiver-focused savings options to address long-standing financial insecurity.

Together, these measures will help caregivers rebuild stability while reducing the likelihood they will need other federal assistance programs.

Caregivers save taxpayer dollars every day by keeping veterans at home and out of institutional care. Helping them transition back to work and plan for retirement prevents cost-shifting to other federal and state programs down the line. It strengthens VA's capacity today and preserves it for the future.

Supporting caregivers is not just the right thing to do: It is smart policy.

Now Is the Moment to Act

The Senate has already advanced its bill (S. 879) with bipartisan support. The House must now do its part.

Caregivers enable veterans to live with independence and dignity. They stabilize families, communities, and the VA health care system itself. They should not be left to rebuild their own lives alone once caregiving ends.

MOAA calls on lawmakers to promptly move the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act out of committee and pass it through the House without delay. Add your voice to our cause via our Legislative Action Center.

Caregivers stepped up for our veterans. Now, Congress must step up for them.

MOAA Life Member Awarded Medal of Honor During State of the Union Address

By: Kevin Lilley February 25, 2026 MOAA Newsletter



Capt. Royce Williams, USN (Ret), receives the Medal of Honor during the State of the Union address in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 24. (Photo by Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images)

More than seven decades after a heroic – and secret – dogfight in the skies of Korea, 100-year-old Capt. Royce Williams, USN (Ret), received the Medal of Honor on Feb. 24 during President Donald Trump's State of the Union address in Washington, D.C.

"His story was secret for over 50 years," Trump told the audience near the conclusion of his address. "He didn't even want to tell his wife. But the legend grew and grew. But tonight, at 100 years old, this brave Navy captain is finally getting the recognition he deserves."

Williams, a MOAA Life member, was the second Medal of Honor recipient in an evening that included a number of awards – Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eric Slover, USA, was honored for his role in the January capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro. Slover, still recovering from injuries suffered during the mission, received the award alongside his wife.

Follow-up ceremonies honoring Williams are planned in San Diego in the near future, but full details have not been released. Williams was honored Feb. 25 at the Pentagon with a formal induction into the Hall of Heroes:

The dual awards marked the first time Medals of Honor were presented during a State of the Union address; with Trump at the podium, Slover received his from Lt. Gen. Jonathan Braga, former head of Army Special Operations Command and nominee to serve as the next leader of U.S. Special Operations Command, and Williams received his from first lady Melania Trump.

Battle over Korea

Piloting his F9F-5 Panther, Williams engaged with seven Soviet MiG-15s in near-blizzard conditions over

Korea in 1952. He's credited with shooting down four of the planes, though full details of the encounter weren't made public for decades. He spoke of the mission in a 2022 interview with MOAA.

Williams initially earned a Silver Star for shooting down one of the MiGs and damaging another. The award was upgraded to a Navy Cross in 2023 as work continued to secure Williams a Medal of Honor – first through military pipelines and later through legislation, which ultimately succeeded in the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act.

President Trump called Williams on Feb. 3 to inform him of the award. The retired Navy captain who also served in World War II and Vietnam is not only the newest honoree, he's also the oldest to wear the medal in the award's history – days older than Lt. John Finn, USN (Ret), who earned the award for his actions during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and passed away in 2010 at age 100.

Love Defies Borders: The Legacy of War Brides



February 03, 2026 MOAA Newsletter

Servicemembers dance with young women in a nightclub in Osaka, Japan, in 1946. (National Archives photo)

(This article by Latayne C. Scott originally appeared in the February 2026 issue of Military Officer, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members who can log in to access our digital version and archive. Basic members can save on a membership upgrade and access the magazine.)

It was like a scene from a 1950s movie: The beautiful young secretary saw the tall, dark-headed young man in uniform standing across the room. Their eyes met and locked.

The rest was history.

Except this was no movie, and the young woman was Ingrid Marie Runge. As a teenager, she survived the 1945 Allied bombings of Berlin, she told Military Officer. Some

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(Brides Continued from page 6)

of her most vivid memories are of crowds of neighbors, elbow to elbow in a basement, gingerly avoiding the boiler in the corner and trying to distract themselves from the nightly explosions rocking the building.

Nine years later, in a different crowded room in Berlin, she saw that young man in his uniform.

George Sondergaard, then a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force, had just announced his plan to become a monk once he would return home to Bronx, N.Y. But the fateful moment George met Ingrid, he knew the solitary life of monasticism was “out the window,” a friend of George recalled the veteran as saying.

Aided by the fact George spoke several languages, including German, their whirlwind romance turned into marriage and immigration to the U.S.



George Sondergaard, left, met Ingrid Marie Runge, right, when he was in the Air Force. (Photo courtesy of Ingrid Sondergaard)

Remembering the Relationships

Today, the stories of war brides are vanishing with them. This is especially true for those who married around World War II and are still alive, likely at over 95 years of age; those from the Korean War era, like Ingrid Sondergaard, are also likely in their 90s, if not older. Brides from the Vietnam War era are estimated to be at least in their 70s.

But there are efforts to save these stories of wartime and love. Several online projects feature their faces and their voices.

The accounts are often visceral: Lilly Yuriko Krohn, for example, only escaped the Aug. 6, 1945, Hiroshima bombing because she was late for work that day. A decade later, she married a master sergeant in the U.S. Army and immigrated, eventually settling on a farm in southern Indiana.

Online language-learning portal Babbel provides audio and video recordings as well as transcripts of war brides' stories from Japan, France, Belgium, Italy, and the Philippines.

For instance, an Italian woman named Emilia Zecchino had already been through major transitions before she met her husband to be. She'd spent time in an Ethiopian concentration camp as a child and returned to bomb-ridden Italy in 1943. Thus, when she met an Italian-American servicemember (both pictured), a move to New York was not the kind of transition it was for many other war brides who had never lived outside their native

countries.

Another resource, “The War Bride Experience,” is meant for fifth grade through college and stems from over 100 interviews and a decade of research. It's free and designed to spark conversations about immigration, and it offers a teacher's guide and 40 short audio stories. Part of that is “Japanese War Brides: An Oral History Archive,” which provides fascinating “stories from across the U.S. as told to a daughter of a war bride,” Kathryn Tolbert.

Then there's Yayoi Winfrey's award-winning film series *War Brides of Japan*, a docu*memory. The project chronicles the experiences of her father, 97 years old as of this writing, and her deceased Japanese-born mother, Lily.

“My dad was a soldier, but my mom was such a survivor,” Winfrey said of her mother, who survived both the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the 1945 firebombing of Tokyo before meeting Winfrey's father. The earthquake and the bombing each killed about 100,000 people, although estimates vary.

Winfrey found Japanese brides very reticent.

“I personally interviewed 14 Japanese war bride families,” she told Military Officer. “Out of that number, only five brides were willing to speak. I ended up with only three who spoke on camera.”

For her part, Leah Spellman Berger organized a reunion of war brides in 2019. She says about a million women from around the world married U.S. servicemembers between 1942 and 1952, and Spellman was able to connect with about a dozen.

She interviewed them after the gathering, and the stories are available online as part of her “World War II War Brides Project.” (For more by this researcher, see her article “Leaving Home for Love” in the February 2020 issue of *Military Officer*.)

The Smithsonian Institution also has a traveling exhibit on the history of war brides. Its limited-time multimedia display, “Japanese War Brides: Across A Wide Divide,” began in late 2024 and will run through summer 2028, with upcoming showings in New York, Louisiana, California, and Michigan.

The exhibit includes audiovisual kiosks, historical objects, memorabilia, and an educators' guide. These features tell the stories of the nearly 45,000 Japanese war brides from the World War II era — “the largest women-only immigration event in U.S. history.”

“Their experiences altered U.S. society and reshaped communities by challenging foreign policy, immigration laws, and race relations,” according to the exhibit's website.

Entering a Foreign Land

Just as language proved to be no barrier for the Sondergaards, neither was America's immigration policy.

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(Brides Continued from page 7)

The War Brides Act of 1945 had paved the way for both foreign-born spouses — about 300,000 (and some were men) — and the children of servicemembers to come to the U.S. Before the War Brides Act, the Immigration Act of 1924's strict quotas and country-specific bans had made immigration, especially for most East Asians, nearly impossible.

Although the War Brides Act helped smooth the path for foreign-born spouses to enter the U.S., there were also downsides. For instance, marriage didn't automatically confer citizenship nor the associated public assistance.

Loneliness and homesickness also played their parts.

"Japanese war brides came to the states immensely disliked due to Japan starting the war," Winfrey said. "Plus, English was harder for them to grasp, and a lot of European women already knew how to speak it."

Winfrey's father is Black, which further complicated the process of integration into American life due to prejudice. But she said there was an unexpected bonus.

"I realized that white fathers just expected their kids to assimilate even though they were half Japanese," she said, noting they often didn't learn their mothers' language and customs. "But the Black fathers, who were still struggling with segregation until 1965, just assumed their children wouldn't be a part of the mainstream. So a lot of those mothers taught their kids customs, culture, and language."

Within a year of the massive immigration of war bride families to the U.S., a third of those marriages ended in divorce, according to a 2023 report on the research database EBSCO.

However, the report noted, "the majority of the marriages that lasted through the first year continued to last. Many of the war brides not only preserved their marriages but also became valuable members of their communities and contributors to American culture, which became even more diverse as a result."

A Success Story

So what happened to the Sondergaards, the starstruck couple who met in Berlin?

Their happy marriage would last 58 years, produce six children, and lead to the founding of a parish in the desert of New Mexico. George died in 2013. Ingrid, now 92, lives in Albuquerque, N.M.

The parish reflects the couple's international roots, with parishioners born in over a dozen foreign countries.

"I don't know why God saved me during the war, but I know it was for the man I was in love with," Ingrid said, "and he was in love with me."

Latayne C. Scott is an Albuquerque, N.M.-based author of 31 books and thousands of shorter works.

Surviving Spouse Corner: Getting to Know TAPS

By: Cheryl Toland February 03, 2026 MOAA Newsletter

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) directly supports all grieving the death of an active duty servicemember or veteran, regardless of the survivor's phase in their grief journey.

TAPS' team of experts, staff, compassionate volunteers, and peer-support network stand ready 24/7 to embrace bereaved families, friends, and battle buddies and connect them with immediate and lifelong tangible resources and emotional care. This includes casework and education assistance, community-based connections, in-person events, a thriving online community, and the National Military Survivor Helpline, (800) 959-TAPS (8277), which is answered by a knowledgeable, caring survivor care team member anytime, day or night.

TAPS was founded in the wake of a military tragedy following a 1992 C-12 crash in Alaska that took the lives of eight soldiers. Among the grieving family members was Bonnie Carroll, the widow of Brig. Gen. Tom Carroll, USA. After realizing that no support network was in place for the families of the fallen, Bonnie spent two years researching best practices while navigating her own grief alongside fellow survivors.

In 1994, TAPS officially opened its doors to military and veteran survivors. Today, Bonnie and the TAPS team have supported over 100,000 military and veteran survivors as they grieve, heal, and honor the life of their loved one.

Each day, an average of 26 new survivors connect with TAPS in search of support, resources, and community, such as:

- **Programs.** TAPS offers a wide variety of programming, seminars, online groups, and workshops. Learn more at [TAPS.org/programs](https://taps.org/programs).
- **Advocacy.** Efforts are dedicated to empowering survivors to use their voices to spark change while working closely with government leaders and lawmakers to advance policy and legislation that impacts life after unspeakable tragedy. Visit [TAPS.org/advocacy](https://taps.org/advocacy).
- **TAPS Magazine:** This quarterly publication, mailed to members/survivors, is a comprehensive resources for grieving families. Visit [TAPS.org/magazine](https://taps.org/magazine).
- **Facebook group.** In this group, a survivor can share and receive support from other survivors, staff, and professionals. Learn more at [Facebook.com/tapsorg](https://facebook.com/tapsorg).



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Our new open to the public CALMOAA website is active at calmoa.com. The current pages include: our Council, Chapter Programs, Advocacy, Chapters, How to Join, Upcoming Events, and our Seven Services. The website is still expanding, and the populating of the pages is in progress, but today it is a benefit for all chapters. Please take a few minutes to review, visit frequently.





SWEETWATER CHAPTER

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