



The High Desert Bugle



The Mojave Desert Chapter of



PO Box 785, Victorville, CA 92393

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February 2026

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.)

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

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

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

SECRETARY: Phyllis A. Skirvin, PhD

SURVIVING SPOUSE: Open **LEGISLATIVE:** Open **COMMUNITY PROJECTS:** Open **PROGRAMS:** Open

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 luncheon on Wednesday, **25 February 2026** at the **Bear Valley Country Club**, at 13299 Spring Valley Parkway, Victorville CA 92395.

The social hour will begin at **1100 hours** followed by lunch at **1200 hours**.

The “Michelin Star” meal will include a delicious entrée with vegetables, dessert, and a varied assortment of non-alcoholic beverages.

A vegan meal is also available upon request, but please make reservation for it by Monday 23 January.

The cost is \$28.00 per person. Please make reservations by **Monday, 23 February** by contacting our President at michaelwmoticha@verizon.net or (760) 792-5004 (cell).



The guest speaker this month is Daniel Tate, founder of the Don Ferrarese Charitable Foundation. The Don Ferrarese Charitable Foundation supports education and community initiatives through scholarships and programs for students and families. Don (June 19, 1929 – November 4, 2024) was the son of Hugo and Bruna Ferrarese of Apple Valley and a professional Major League Baseball player. Daniel is a staunch supporter of our veterans.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

LTC Michael W. Moticha

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



WILL YOU BE MY VALENTINE?



Be My Valentine--Those three words have haunted every one of us since we were old enough to understand their meaning and the relationship to us. The use of *I Love You* far exceeds the use of the Valentine expression of endearment, because love is spoken every day of the year. The constant use indicates that love means much more. The *I Love You* phrase was the first expression of devotion that we learned as a baby, and we have accepted them ever since. The fact that the term Valentine rarely appears and is only celebrated once each year, for a day, puts a limit on its use and value to express passion and deep affection for someone.

Valentine's Day will be celebrated this year on Saturday, 14 February. If you have not already planned your Valentine activities of sending cards, buying candy or flowers, or simply saying "Happy Valentine's Day" to someone special, or a few close friends, you still have a couple of days to participate. As a young boy, my one remembrance of Valentine's Day was buying the little box of candy hearts, covered with endearment expressions, the day before and spreading them out on a table. The end result was to determine how many of each written expression I had and to which girl I was going to give them. Believe it or not, there was much more heart throbbing and enjoyment taking place in preparing the particular gifts to hand out to those I considered "girlfriends" than there was in the outcome. Most of what you thought was going to result from your expression of "true love" never happened. You returned to school the next day as though the Valentine's Day Celebration was just another day.

Whether your efforts this year bring you joy or disappointment, it is not important. At our age the giving of a Valentine's Day gift is a true commitment from you to another individual. I find making that person smile, with their own personal satisfaction, is paramount for me in today's Valentine's Day purpose. Enjoy your efforts to make others smile and think of you. Here's to your receiving your share of Valentine gifts.

CHAPTER DUES:

The Chapter members who have yet to pay their dues for 2026 need to step up with their wallets or check books as soon as possible. According to the Chapter's By-Laws, the due date for the payment of the new year's dues is 31 December of the previous year. We currently owe \$300 in dues to CALMOAA for our state membership. If you are not sure whether or not you owe dues, please see the Chapter's Treasurer Report in this newsletter and contact Maj Matsuda.

Please Read On!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(Continued)

CHAPTER AWARDS FOR 2025:

Our entries for the “*Marvin J. Harris Communication*” and the “*MOAA's Level of Excellence Awards*” for 2025 were both submitted to MOAA prior to the 31 January 2026 due date. They will be evaluated by a panel of judges during March, and we should have the results sometime in April. Our Chapter did some outstanding things during the 2025 year, which were included in both award submissions. The best issue of the Chapter's newsletter from last year, thanks to Jack Barry's editing, was sent in for the Communications Award as our ideal means of communicating with the Chapter Membership and the local community. The Chapter's Annual Youth Awards Ceremony and the recruitment of six new Chapter Members during 2025 were included in the LOE submission. I do not have the ability to forecast the future, but I feel good about our Chapter's award chances.



MEMBERSHIP SCAMS:

MOAA often uses email and online channels to communicate with members about their membership status. However, they realize it may sometimes be difficult to discern legitimate messaging from scams. If you receive an email or an online message about your membership that seems suspicious, do not respond. Contact MOAA's *Member Service Center* immediately at 800-234-6622 to verify its legitimacy.

MOAA provides scam prevention resources at moaa.org/scams that can help you combat all types of fraud. Some MOAA-specific details that may help you spot suspicious messaging are:

- * Life members whose dues are paid in full will never be asked for additional dues payments.
- * Spouses of deceased Life members inherit their membership at no additional cost.
- * Spouses are not eligible for membership; **MOAA** will never solicit a spouse to join. (Surviving Spouses, however, are eligible for membership.)
- * Basic and Premium members may receive renewal or upgrade communications from **MOAA** via mail, email, text message, or phone. If you're unsure whether a message is authentic, Do Not Reply to the message--contact the Member Service Center at 800-234-6622 for confirmation

PARADE OF PIANOS:



On Sunday, 1 March 2026, the Parade of Pianos, one of our Chapter's community projects, is having their Spring Concert. The event will be held at the Church of the Valley, 20700 Standing Rock Road, Apple Valley in the Church's Sanctuary at 3:00 PM. Admission is **FREE** and there will be an opportunities drawing for items donated to the organization. Refreshments are always provided. Monetary donations from individuals are also appreciated. Your checks should be made payable to the High Desert Community Foundation, specifying the Parade of Pianos in the memo section of the check. Let's plan ahead and attend this worthwhile concert and show our Chapter's support. If you are new and not familiar with POP's Concerts, there are both instrumental and vocal presentations performed by students from grade school through college. They all have the desire to fulfill their musical passion but no money to purchase instruments or pay for lessons. That's when the Parade of Pianos organization stepped into the student's life and did their magic. *See you there!!!*

Please Read On!

Reach out and touch someone with love on Valentine's Day

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(Continued)

OUR NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS:



(L-R) MAJ James A. Skirvin, Veterans Benefits; LTC Michael W. Moticha, President; LTC. Donald Amador, Board Member-at-Large; Maj. Ronald Matsuda, Treasurer; and Maj. David A. Meyer, Historian.

ABSENT: MAJ Meera Maheswaran, Vice-President; Lt. Col. Thomas J. Brown, Membership; Phyllis A. Skirvin, Secretary; and CPT Byron Ward, Editor BUGLE Newsletter.

District Representative from Senator Valadares' Office, Alfredo Miranda installed the Board members.

At the 28 January 2026 General Membership Luncheon, a brief chapter business meeting was held to complete two activities for the chapter. The first item on the agenda was a motion to recommend and vote CPT Byron Ward, USA (Ret), to the Chapter Board of Directors. The motion was seconded and approved by the Chapter Members attending.

The second item was the planned installation of the 2026 officers and Board of Directors voted in during the December Christmas Dinner. Alfredo Miranda, a District Representative from Senator Suzette Valladares' Office in Adelanto, CA was requested to be the Installation Officer. Not all of the Officers and Board of Directors were able to attend and will be installed at the 25 February luncheon. The accompanying photo shows the 5 attending elected officers, being sworn in by Mr. Miranda.

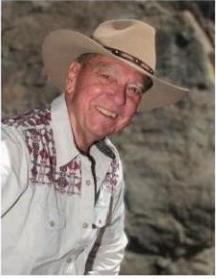


Our boots are made for serving others.

"Never Stop Serving!"

EDITOR'S REPORT

1st. Lt. Jack Barry



This Is My Swan Song!



This is my “swan song” edition of our High Desert **BUGLE** newsletter.

With the March edition, I am turning over the Editorship to our very own Byron Ward, a most capable Editor. Byron has published over 500 newsletters in his career. Most certainly, he will have his own style of writing and design to further enhance the quality and content of our **BUGLE**.

I came to **MOAA** in August 2024 and voluntarily accepted the Editorship in June 2025, with my first edition in July. This opportunity to serve such an august group of individuals has been a delight...a great gift to me. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once proclaimed: *“Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.”* And as Mahatma Gandhi stated: *“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

Our **High Desert MOAA Chapter** is deemed by **MOAA** National to be a one of the finest in the Nation. Of course, we ought to take great pride in that acknowledgement. But it comes at a cost: Members actively in the trenches digging into the actual realities of our Chapter’s operation. To have someone like Byron voluntarily stepping forth to serve is an excellent example of what it takes for our Chapter not to survive, but to **THRIVE**.

Our Board of Directors currently has four positions eagerly beckoning your stepping forward to fulfill the work needed to be accomplished for the successful continuation of our Chapter: Legislative; Surviving Spouse; Community Projects; and Programs. This begs the question: Do you believe it is the right thing for Michael and Meera to be carrying the additional burden of fulfilling those positions? Of course, you don’t. You are cordially invited to step forward and contribute your valuable time and resources to this most worthwhile cause: Our **MOAA** Chapter. Our Board members await you with joy-filled open arms!!!

A lesson I have learned and strive to live by is to truly be alive, to **LIVE**...just not survive. Prime Minister Winston Churchill said it best: *“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”*



As for me, I will be focusing my time, energy and God-given skills in my faith-based writings of three screenplays and four books God has placed on my heart over these past four years. I have the first drafts of two of the screenplays prepared and seek to finalize my *The Whipping Post* by year’s end.

In closing, I offer my sincere *“Thank You”* to those who so kindly encouraged me in my Editorship endeavor.



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.

“Find a Need and Fill It!”

SLOGAN OF KAISER PERMANENTE CEMENT COMPANY



TREASURER'S REPORT

Maj. Ronald Matsuda

A Word to the Wise!



Before you file your California State income tax returns, I would like to remind you that \$20,000 of retired pay and surviving spouses benefit are exempt from California income taxes starting with 2025!

We began the month of January 2026 with \$8,904.60 in our chapter accounts. We had revenues of \$926.00 and expenses of \$720.00, resulting in a balance of \$9,110.60 on 31 January 2026.

Our Youth Awards Fund has \$5,904.81 while the Barstow Veterans Home, the Apple Valley Legacy Museum and the Flight Museum have \$133.00 each and the Parade of Pianos has \$158.00.

Approximately 20 members still owe dues for 2026. Please pay. Remember that your dues go exclusively for our Chapter's administrative costs. Please note that our administrative costs are comparatively low as our dues are \$35.00 per year and \$10.00 per year for surviving spouses and active-duty personnel. If you have a question as to whether or not you have already paid for 2026, please email me at rtmatsuda@outlook.com and I will advise you whether or not you have paid for 2026.



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. In the "memo" line please designate "Dues," "Youth Awards" or any of the other charities that we support.

Thank You!

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS REPORT

MAJ Meera Maheswaran



Tricare Introduces New Coverage



This article by Patricia Kime originally appeared on [Military Times](#)

Tricare health beneficiaries who fill prescriptions outside a military health facility will pay more for medications in 2026, but they also have expanded access to new treatments for conditions like lung cancer and chronic back pain. According to a notice in the Federal Register, most Tricare prescription copayments for medications purchased at retail pharmacies and through the Tricare mail-order pharmacy increased beginning January 1, 2026.

In 2026, the rates for 30-day retail prescriptions remain at \$16 for generic drugs, but increased to \$48 for brand-name medications. Ninety-day mail-order prescriptions now cost \$14 for generic drugs and \$44 for branded prescriptions. Non-formulary drugs are now \$85 for the 30-day retail or 90-day mail-order prescriptions.

Prescriptions filled at military hospitals or clinics will continue to be available at no cost to patients, and active-duty personnel still won't pay cost-shares or copays at retail pharmacies for covered medications. The new rates reflect a 12% to 15.8% rise over the current copays, which were set at the start of 2024. The increase is part of a plan initiated in 2018 by Congress and the Defense Department to increase the share patients pay for their medical services through the military health program.

In addition to the increase in retail pharmacy costs, Tricare introduced new coverage for some procedures, according to the announcement. Those include: radiofrequency ablation for uterine fibroids; cryosurgery for lung cancer or other cancers that have metastasized to the lungs; coronary calcium tests for patients suspected of having heart disease; and Basi vertebral nerve ablation for patients with chronic back pain.

Tricare also plans to cover the cost of electric devices, known as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, or TENS units, to address post-operative pain. Tricare will allow patients who meet the criteria for a likelihood of developing certain types of cancer to have prophylactic surgeries, including mastectomies and hysterectomies.

The military health program also will no longer require some dependents who have lost their hearing to use hearing aids for at least three to six months before being eligible for cochlear implants, according to the announcement.

Tricare will continue to cover monoclonal antibody drugs for early treatment of Alzheimer's disease — a benefit it began in 2024. Patients must receive pre-authorization to receive the medication and must undergo testing to determine they have the condition.

Dental and vision plans under the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) now see average monthly premium increases of 3.3% (dental) and 0.5% (vision) for 2026, according to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Premium increases in 2026 for select "self plus one" dental plans (for more information about dental rating areas, [download the rating area spreadsheet at the OPM website](#)):

Aetna Dental (Area 2): 1.8% high plan increase, 5.4% standard plan increase.

Blue Cross Blue Shield FEP Dental (Area 3): 2.9% high and standard plan increase.

Delta Dental (Area 5): 0.6% high plan increase, 3.9% standard plan increase.

Dominion National (Area 2): 9.6% high and standard plan increase.

GEHA (Area 4): 5.9% high plan increase, 6.7% standard plan increase.

Humana Dental Advantage (Area 3): 3.0% high plan increase, 6.7% standard plan increase.

MetLife (Area 4): 0.9% high plan increase, 1.9% standard plan increase.

United Concordia Dental (Area 4): 4.2% high plan increase, 7.7% standard plan increase.

UnitedHealthcare Dental (Area 3): 7.9% high plan increase, 11.0% standard plan increase.

Premium increases in 2026 for self plus one vision plans (all locations):

Aetna Vision Preferred: No change.

Blue Cross Blue Shield FEP Vision: No change.

The MetLife Federal Vision Plan: 8.0% high plan increase, 10% standard plan increase.

UnitedHealthcare Vision Plan: 1.4% high plan increase, 3.1% standard plan increase.

VSP Vision Care: No change.



For additional information, search: MOAA legislative action center website



COMMUNITY PROJECT

Contributed by MAJ Jim Skirvin

Changes in Barstow Veterans Home

*Home
Sweet
Home*

Barstow Veterans Home Changes

After speaking with our contact, Laura Moroco, at the Barstow Veterans Home, I learned that the Home enjoyed the Holidays. A change in residential care is being anxiously anticipated, which will benefit each of the 77 residents (the oldest is 95 years old)—70 men and seven women.

The Holidays found members of the High Desert Marines under Mark Hotchkiss' direction with LTC Michael Moticha present playing pool with the residents, who enjoyed the interactions.

However, the Home's entertainment program is changing over to a "Sing-Along" one, which will allow the residents to have fun sharing their hidden talents!

Laura shared that she has been at the Home for six years, having previously been with the City of Barstow for 24 years. Her dedicated service to serving others is inspiring!

I will continue to collect information on the Barstow Veterans Home to relay to you as changes occur.



What You Should Know: The Home Almost Closed!

In 2020, Governor Newsom proposed the closing of the Barstow Veterans Home as a budget strategy. In response came AB7 submitted by Assemblyman Jay Obernolte.

Reprieve for Veterans: Approximately 200 veterans who were at risk of eviction from the Barstow Veterans Home received a temporary reprieve. State lawmakers approved a budget plan that does not include the proposal to close the facility.

Legislative Support: Assemblyman Jay Obernolte expressed his satisfaction with the legislative decision, emphasizing that the home is vital for the veterans and the community. He stated that the budget plan guarantees that no veteran will be involuntarily displaced from the home.

"As the Vice-Chair of the Assembly Budget Committee and a member of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee and the Budget Conference Committee, I will fight against this proposal. The Governor may propose the budget, but the Legislature writes it, and I will not idly sit by and allow this home to be closed. Closing it will only save the state \$400,000 in this budget year, but the loss of per-diem paid to the state by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for these residents will cost \$3 million per year. That math simply doesn't add up.

"This veteran's home was originally opened due to its unique proximity to multiple military installations, including Barstow Marine Corps Logistics Base, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base, the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, and Edwards Air Force Base. Our community has one of the highest concentrations of veterans in the state, and the support for this home is overwhelming. I am committed to ensuring that this home remains a part of our community."

Supporting the Barstow Veterans Home is a worthy cause!

MOAA HIGH DESERT CHAPTER MEMBER PROFILE

MAJOR DAVID J. MEYER

CPT Byron Ward

Although he ended up in California, David Meyer was born and raised in eastern Nebraska, ultimately graduating from the University of Nebraska with a degree in geology. A geological career was not in his future, however, as his participation in the ROTC program while at college led him to Williams Air Force Base in Arizona. In April, 1968 he officially went on active duty and started pilot training in a Northrop T-38 Talon, a two-seat, twin-engine, supersonic jet training aircraft, an example of which is on display outside the Luz Observatory at the Lewis Center for Educational research on Thunderbird Road in Apple Valley (photo above).



Lieutenant Meyer graduated from pilot training in May 1969, and served another 20 years in the Air Force, including a combat tour in F-4 Phantom fighters from 1970-1971. In total, he flew 304 combat missions in North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. After Vietnam, Captain Meyer's career went into an interesting direction, taking him into two other branches of the military. An exchange program with the Marine Corps took him to an assignment as a pilot at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina, then, from June 1975 to February 1977, he went to sea with the U. S. Navy aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, during which he made over 200 carrier landings at sea. That's him on the flight deck of one of the Navy's most prestigious capital ships in the photo at left. Assignments in Florida at McDill and Homestead Air Force Bases followed, then he moved to the High Desert, specifically George Air Force Base, and he was an instructor pilot and safety officer there from 1983-1989. In April 1989 he retired from the Air Force with the rank of major, having logged 3,473 hours in the F-4 Phantom II during his time in uniform (Dave is shown with his F-4 in the photo below). His decorations include two Distinguished Flying Crosses and at least a dozen Air Medals.

Following his retirement from the military, Dave stayed in our area, and for 23 years was an astronomy instructor at Victor Valley Community College, retiring just two years ago in 2024. While teaching, he met and married his wife Linda, who is also an astronomer. They make their home in Victorville and are active in the community, particularly with the Mojave Desert Chapter of the MOAA, which Major Meyer has been a member of for over thirty years.





SURVIVING SPOUSES REPORT

Contributed by Jack Barry, 1st Lt. USAF

MOAA: Serving the Surviving Spouse



MOAA never stops serving to honor their steadfast commitment.

MARKERS:

For older spouses, dwindling support system and burdened or confused by tasks they have never had to deal with, like financial matters.

Uncertainty and fear about what's next in terms of spouse's assignment and potential deployment; difficulty putting down roots in a community; different schools and routines for children; careers often put on hold; sacrifices made to support spouse; financial matters fall on their shoulders.

In essence, surviving spouses served the military alongside their servicemembers and want to be viewed and respected for their tremendous and selfless efforts.

MOAA PROVIDES:

- Advocacy to support surviving spouses
- Publications: *Survivor's Checklist*, *Military Family Legislative Action Guide*, *Military Spouse Employment Guide* (provided by MOAA Foundation) and *Military Officer Magazine*
- Travel discounts
- MOAA insurance plans
- Community and camaraderie through local Chapters

You are not meant to do this alone.

BENEFITS REPORT

MAJ Jim Skirvin



The PACT Act and Your Benefits



The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history. The full name of the law is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

The PACT Act is a law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve. Starting 5 March 2024, VA health care to millions of Veterans was expanded—years earlier than called for by the PACT Act.

The information provided below offers what the PACT Act means for you or your loved ones. You can also call the VA at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711). And you can file a claim for PACT Act-related disability compensation or apply for VA health care now.

The PACT Brought These Changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras
- Adds 20+ more presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures
- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation
- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care
- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures

If you’re a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits.

What Does It Mean to Have a Presumptive Condition for Toxic Exposure?

To get a VA disability rating, your disability must connect to your military service. For many health conditions, you need to prove that your service caused your condition.

But for some conditions, we automatically assume (or “presume”) that your service caused your condition. We call these “presumptive conditions.”

We consider a condition presumptive when it’s established by law or regulation.

If you have a presumptive condition, you don’t need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumption.

Am I eligible for VA health care under the PACT Act?

You’re eligible to enroll now—without needing to apply for disability benefits first—if you meet the basic service and discharge requirements and any of these descriptions are true for you:

- You served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11, **or**
- You deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, **or**
- You were exposed to toxins or other hazards during military service at home or abroad

Specific toxins and hazards include burn pits, sand and dust, particulates, oil well or sulfur fires, chemicals, radiation, warfare agents, depleted uranium, herbicides, and other occupational hazards.

NOTE: For more exact information, go to: [The PACT Act and Your VA Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#)



Raising of the Flag on Iwo Jima

Contributed by Sarah Holzmann, Wikipedia



The iconic photograph of U.S. Marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima was taken on February 23, 1945, during World War II and symbolizes American perseverance and sacrifice.

History of Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima 80th Anniversary

The 80th anniversary of the flag raising on Iwo Jima will be celebrated with various events and activities. The Iwo Jima Association of America (IJAA) is organizing a trip to Iwo Jima on March 29, 2025, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the battle. This event will include a flag presentation ceremony and other activities to honor the bravery of the Marines who fought on Iwo Jima. The IJAA is dedicated to preserving and commemorating the history of the battles for Iwo Jima and the Pacific Islands, as well as supporting the veterans who served.

On February 23, 1945, four bloody days after U.S. troops landed on Iwo Jima—one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific Theater, with approximately 20,000 U.S. casualties--Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal captured an image of Marines raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi. The photo went on to win the Pulitzer Prize and to visually define the Pacific Theater of World War II...and raise \$26 billion for the war effort and served as the basis for the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia.

Iwo Jima, a volcanic island about 660 miles south of Tokyo, was of interest to the U.S. military because of its use by Japanese forces to launch fighter aircraft. After taking off from Iwo Jima airfields, these planes intercepted U.S. B-29 bombers and attacked critical airfields on the U.S.-occupied Mariana Islands.

In response, officials decided the military needed to capture Iwo Jima from the Japanese. Following months of attacks by air and sea, the Marines launched their ground invasion on February 19, 1945. The brutal battle that ensued lasted 36 days, resulting in the deaths of roughly 7,000 Marines. Another 20,000 were wounded in combat. By March 26, 1945, the United States declared control of the island.

The Photograph

The image depicts six Marines—Michael Strank, Harlon Black, Franklin Sousley, Ira Hayes, Harold Shultz, and Harold Keller—raising a larger American flag after a smaller one had been hoisted earlier that day. This flag was meant to be more visible to the troops on the island and the ships offshore. The photograph was taken shortly after the Marines captured the mountaintop, and it quickly became a symbol of American resolve and victory.

Significance and Impact

Rosenthal's photograph won the **Pulitzer Prize for Photography** in 1945 and has since become one of the most recognizable images of World War II. It inspired the **Marine Corps War Memorial**, dedicated in 1954, which honors all U.S. Marines who have died in service since 1775. The image has been widely reproduced and has played a significant role in American culture, symbolizing patriotism and sacrifice.

Legacy

The photograph's legacy continues to resonate, serving as a reminder of the sacrifices made by U.S. servicemen during the war. It has been the subject of numerous discussions, documentaries, and analyses regarding its authenticity and the identities of the Marines involved. The image remains a powerful symbol of American military history and the enduring spirit of those who serve. In summary, the photograph of soldiers raising the American flag on Iwo Jima is not just a historical moment; it encapsulates the bravery and determination of the U.S. Marines during one of the most challenging battles of World War II.



CHAPLAIN'S REPORT

Phyllis Skirvin, PhD

A Tribute to the Four Chaplains of February 3, 1943



Story courtesy of Wikipedia

The **Four Chaplains**, also referred to as the **Immortal Chaplains** or the *Dorchester Chaplains*, were four chaplains who died rescuing civilian and military personnel as the American troop ship SS *Dorchester* sank on February 3, 1943, in what has been referred to as one of the worst sea disasters of World War II.

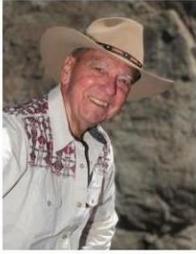
The *Dorchester*, a civilian liner, had been converted for military service in World War II as a troop transport of the War Shipping Administration. The ship left New York on January 23, 1943, en route to Greenland, carrying approximately 900 as part of a convoy of three ships escorted by Coast Guard Cutters *Tampa*, *Escanaba*, and *Comanche*. During the early morning hours of February 3, the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-223* off Newfoundland in the North Atlantic. The chaplains helped the other soldiers board lifeboats and gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. The chaplains joined arms, said prayers, and sang hymns as they went down with the ship.

The impact of the chaplains' story was deep, with many memorials and extensive coverage in the media. Each of the four chaplains was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart. The chaplains were nominated for the Medal of Honor, but were ineligible as they had not engaged in combat with the enemy. Instead, Congress created a medal for them, with the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

Life is precious. Try to take in as much of life as possible.

MOAA LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

"Celebrities Who Have Served in the Military"



Actors have long tried to give audiences a taste of the realities of war and military service since the earliest days of the motion picture industry. But if called upon to portray a member of the Armed Forces on screen, many actors could draw from their own life experience. Some of history's biggest stars served their countries in times of war and peace. Some experienced combat, while others were stationed in friendly countries or at home. Some celebrities, such as Elvis Presley and Clint Eastwood, are well known for having as having served in the military; others, like Bea Arthur and Iced-T, are not.

In today's presentation, 1st. Lt. Jack Barry presented 33 celebrities who had served in the military. A few of the celebrities included:



Jimmy Stewart

Jimmy Stewart

Born in 1908, Col. Stewart appeared in more than 80 movies over his long and storied career, but none more famous or beloved than his 1946 classic *It's a Wonderful World*, his first film after leaving the military. Before winning Oscars and captivating audiences, Jimmy Stewart enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1941. Rising to the rank of Colonel, he flew combat missions over Europe, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Clarke Gable

Clarke Gable of *Gone with the Wind* fame was arguably the most celebrated leading man to dominate the silver screen during Hollywood's golden age. After his wife died in a plane crash in 1942, the Academy Award winner promptly abandoned his career and enlisted in the Army Air Corps at the age of 41. Not only did he make propaganda films for the Army, but he saw action as a tail-gunner during five missions over Germany, experiencing the dangers of wartime firsthand.



Clarke Gable



Charlton Heston

Charlton Heston

The late-Charlton Heston was an Oscar winner and the star of epic films like *Ben Hur*. Before starring on films, Staff Sergeant Heston served in the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) as a radio operator and aerial gunner, flying missions over the Eastern Front in Europe as part of the 77th Bombardment Squadron of the Eleventh Air Force.

Bea Arthur

Years before *Maude* and *The Golden Girls*, Bea Arthur (born Bernice Frankel) served in the United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve during World War II. She worked as a typist and truck driver—roles that demanded self-discipline and adaptability. Arthur's commanding timing and flinty wit seemed to draw from that non-nonsense foundation. Her character's steel-spined confidence felt authentic because she'd already proven her mettle in a very different uniform.



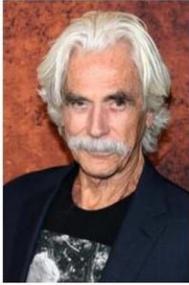
Bea Arthur

Balancing stardom with military, these celebrities demonstrated that: personal ambition can coexist with national service; even icons face challenges; contributing to a cause larger than oneself leaves a lasting impact on history; gives a perspective on humility, duty and perseverance in the face of adversity; dedication to service can provide life lessons that influence future success; even those destined for fame often begin with service and that their experiences of courage shape character and perspective.

MOAA LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

"Celebrities Who Have Served in the Military"

Story by Carissa Mosness



Sam Elliott
MovieStillsDB

Sam Elliott finally reveals his decades-long military guilt

Sam Elliott is an Oscar-nominated actor known for his roles in Taylor Sheridan's *1883* and *Landman*. Long before becoming a cowboy on TV, the 81-year-old was actually in the military and has since become a very outspoken advocate for veterans. To learn more about Elliott's career in the military, including why he has some long-lasting guilt about his time in the service, keep scrolling!

In *We Were Soldiers*. I played a guy who served in four different military conflicts ... and then I got an opportunity to go see the [Vietnam Memorial] on the fourth of July ... I've always felt guilty about the fact that I didn't go. I got into the National Guard, and I was one of the lucky ones."

And according to Elliott, that guilt never really went away--until he met a man at the Vietnam Memorial several years later.

"[At the memorial,] this guy in a wheelchair rolls over and he goes, 'Hey Elliott, get over it, man. If I could've gotten into the National Guard, I'd have been there, pal. Get over it,' he said on the *WTF* podcast. "And I did, but it took a guy in a wheelchair to tell me that it was okay."

How Sam Elliott became a vocal advocate for veterans

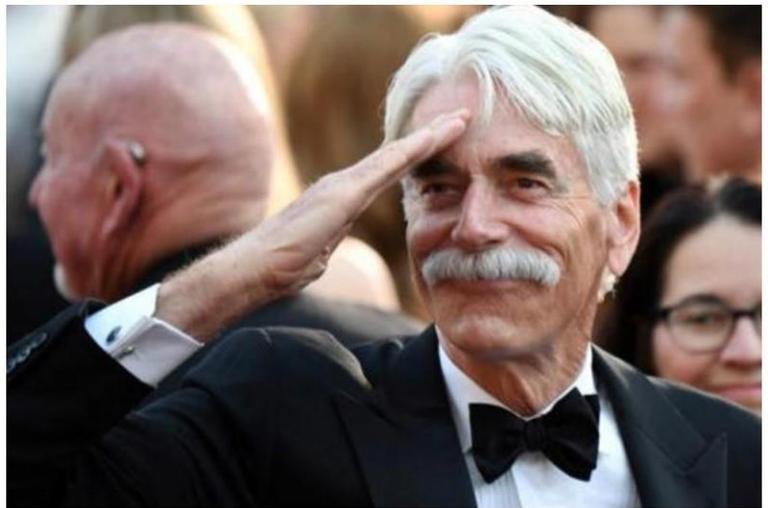
Even though he was never deployed, Elliott is an active supporter of veteran causes. In 2019, at a National Memorial Day concert, he read D-Day survivor and World War II hero Sgt. Ray Lambert's harrowing account of what happened during the War as a way to honor both him and other veterans.



Sam Elliott in 1968

"It was total confusion," Elliott read of Sgt. Lambert's account. "Shells exploding, boats blowing up, people yelling because they couldn't hear anything, machine gun bullets hitting the water all around you, the roar of the boats coming in. It's like you're all alone in the world of a million people because you're concentrating on what you have to do. I just kept going. I was thinking of only one thing--getting to the men who needed me."

"People who have never been in a war should understand what soldiers give up. The guys we left on Omaha Beach never had a chance to live the lives they dreamed of. A day hasn't gone by when I haven't prayed for the men we lost and their families," Sgt. Lambert's account continued. "I still wake up at night sometimes thinking about the guys. Every man that walked into those machine guns and that artillery fire on Omaha Beach that day. Every man was a hero. What kind of person would I be if I didn't tell their stories?"



Sam Elliott in 2019

Thank you for your service!

MOAA LUNCHEON GALLERY



LTC Michael Moticha and Dolores Payne discuss the success of our election of 2026 Board of Directors.



Rocky Pacini, Founder of American Veterans Fly Fishers, and fishing pal MAJ Chaplain Peter Kim check out the handout for today's presentation on "Celebrities Who Served in the Military."



MAJ Chaplain Peter Kim gives the Benediction.



CWO4 Bill Lundelius checks in with Maj. Ronald Matsuda and High Desert Marine Pat Haglar.



It is always a delight to have our local government officials represented by (L-R) Sonia Miranda, Alfredo Miranda and Miriam Munoz.



Debbie and Lindsay Fahnestock.



We enjoyed a great turnout to launch into our 2026 growth campaign.

Plan to join us on February 25th!



Dolores Payne, Suzanne Bughman and Mary Matsuda

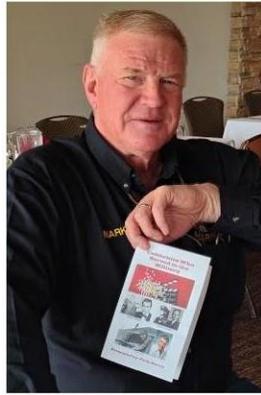


Lt. Col. Denton Crotchett, MAJ James Skirvin and Mai Jerome Johnson

MOAA LUNCHEON GALLERY



LTC Michael Moticha chats with Rocky Pacini, Founder of American Veterans Fly Fishers.



High Desert Marines Mark Hotchkiss.



(L-R) LTC Donald Amador, LTJG "Butch" Fahnestock, Capt. Clifford Jessen, and Lt. Col. Denton Crotchett share war stories.



LTC Michael and Diana Seixas celebrate their 11th grandchild!



Delightful opportunity drawing items to win!



Rosanne Smith, Miriam Munoz and guest Vicki Godden-Allen.



Winner Again! Miriam Munoz accepts for Pat Hagler



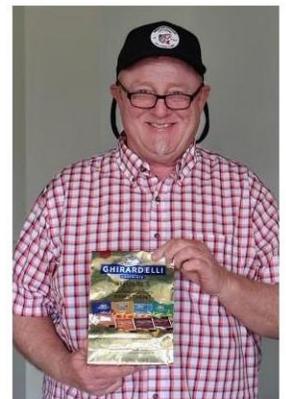
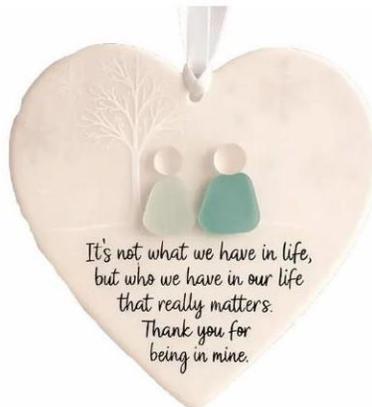
*Great fellowship is priceless!
Come join us February 25th.*



Winner Lindsay Fahnestock



Winner Jerome Johnson



Winner Rocky Pacini

THE MOST HIGHLY DECORATED U.S. SERVICEMEMBERS #11

REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD H. O'KANE

CPT Byron Ward



One of the most accomplished American submarine commanders in history, Richard O'Kane started his military career at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, graduating with the Class of 1934. After spending five years with warships designed not to submerge, he qualified as a submariner while assigned to the USS *Argonaut* in 1938, and remained on that boat until he received orders to become the executive officer on a new fleet sub, the USS *Wahoo*, a few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

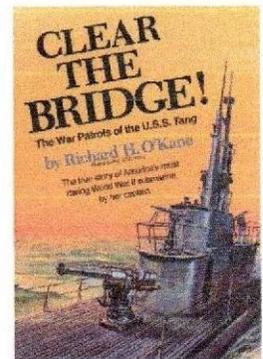
The first commander of the *Wahoo*, Marvin "Pinky" Kennedy, did not have complete faith in his second-in-command, but after two war patrols with disappointing results, it was Kennedy who was reassigned, and O'Kane was working under a new skipper, Lieutenant Commander Dudley "Mush" Morton.

To O'Kane's great future benefit, Morton had a highly unconventional practice that kept his XO, rather than himself, at the sub's periscope during an underwater attack. To the *Wahoo's* great benefit at the time, Morton's monitoring all aspects of an attack away from the scope worked superbly, and the submarine soon became a top scorer. With Dick O'Kane at the periscope, Morton earned three of his four Navy Crosses, and stands among the dozen sub skippers on the list of 100 most highly decorated servicemembers. O'Kane was rewarded with three Silver Stars.

After five war patrols aboard the *Wahoo*, O'Kane finally achieved command of the new *Balao*-class submarine USS *Tang*, and immediately started to set records. The first four war patrols resulted in O'Kane earning three Navy Crosses for success in sinking Japanese ships, and the one patrol that did not result in a decoration was a "lifeguarding" mission. On that patrol, no ships were sunk, but *Tang* rescued 22 airmen forced to ditch in the Pacific, an accomplishment that earned the submarine a Presidential Unit Citation.

The *Tang's* fifth war patrol to the Formosa Strait in September 1944 resulted in one successful sinking after another, culminating in a bold night attack on the surface. From a position in the middle of a large enemy convoy, O'Kane kept fighting until he fired the last of the *Tang's* twenty-four torpedoes. With no "fish" left, the boat's mission was complete, and all that was needed was to withdraw from the area and return to Pearl Harbor for a hero's welcome home. That did not happen. In a heart-wrenching turn of events, triumph turned to tragedy when the 24th torpedo malfunctioned and went into a circular run that exploded against the *Tang's* hull and killed 78 of her crew. Eight survivors, including O'Kane, were picked up by the Japanese and were POWs for nearly a year.

Shortly after the end of WWII, the *Tang*, the top-scoring submarine of the war with 33 sinks, received a second Presidential Unit Citation, and O'Kane was presented with the Medal of Honor by President Truman. He was promoted to captain and served another decade in the Navy. Because of his outstanding war record, O'Kane received a "tombstone" promotion to rear admiral upon his retirement in 1957. He went on to write a book about his experiences commanding the *Tang*, and another about his adventures onboard the *Wahoo*. He passed away in 1994 at the age of 83 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



COMMUNITY PROJECT

Parade of Pianos Spring Concert

March 1, 2026
Church of the Valley

20700 Standing Rock Road, Apple Valley

3:00 PM in the Sanctuary

Free Admission • Raffle Items Available!



Checks payable to:

High Desert Community Foundation

P.O. Box 2028, Apple Valley CA 92307

* OFFICE (760) 242-8877 * FAX (760) 242-8833

Specify "Parade of Pianos" in the memo section of your check.

Email: hdcf@verizon.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.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

American Fly Fishers

The American Veterans Fly Fishers was established March 3, 2025 to provide physical and emotional rehabilitation for our U.S. Veterans through the sport of Fly Fishing. We are a veteran-family orientated fly fishing club rooted in unwavering commitment to God, Country, and Family. American Veterans Fly Fishers offers numerous activities associated with outdoor activities along with our unique fly fishing program, to include participation in many of our other veterans groups, and other community organizations throughout the High Desert of Southern California.

Our goal is to introduce and educate those veterans who are interested in this sport, and all things associated with fly fishing, fly tying, fly rod building and conservation programs established to protect our fisheries for generations to come. This is all accomplished through a social setting both in the High Desert Veterans Center and on the water activities.

When you think you might be interested in joining our program, please contact our AVFF program Lead, Daryl Slawnikowski, at (760) 490-9612 or email him at avffusa@gmail.com.



Sponsored by American Veterans Fly Fishers, Inc.

Group meets every Thursday from 1600 to 1800 hours.
High Desert Veterans Center
15095 Amargosa Rd, Suite 107
Victorville CA 92394
(760) 261-5925

American Veterans Fly Fishers (AVFF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, established as a Fly Fishers International Charter Club (FFI)

Let's go fishin'!

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



THE LARGER OUR NUMBERS THE GREATER YOUR VOICE.

WHY MOAA CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM FOR MOAA NATIONAL & THE MOJAVE DESERT CHAPTER

FULL NAME _____

RANK _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE _____

___ ACTIVE ___ RETIRED ___ RESERVE ___ FORMER ___ NATIONAL GUARD ___ SURVIVING SPOUSE

SPOUSE'S NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

TO ENSURE THE DELIVERABILITY OF MOAA COMMUNICATIONS,
PLEASE PROVIDE A PERSONAL EMAIL

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF MOAA? ___ YES ___ NO ___ UNKNOWN

NOT A MOAA NATIONAL MEMBER YET? CHECK HERE
TO RECEIVE A BASIC MEMBERSHIP AT NO COST TO YOU.



And, for only \$4.00 per month, you can upgrade to **PREMIUM** membership, giving you immediate access to a full spectrum of career and financial resources, exclusive publications, college scholarships for dependents, and countless discounts on products and travel.

Visit: MOAA.Org/Join to learn more.

How did you hear about MOAA chapter involvement? _____

Are you a member of any other MOAA Chapter? ___ YES ___ NO

If YES, which one(s)? _____

TO COMPLETE YOUR ENROLLMENT: Fill in this form, scan and email it to: michaelwmoticha@verizon.net as an attachment. Or, print it out, fill in by hand, and with a check payable to **TMDC-MOAA**, mail to:
PO Box 785, Victorville CA 92393-0785.

Do not include credit card information. We will contact you to finalize payment.

CHAPTER
MEMBERSHIP DUES
& INFORMATION:

Dues Year is January
through December

ANNUAL FEES:

**Retirees and former
Officers: \$35.00**

**Surviving Spouse
and Active Duty
\$10.00**

