



Houston Area
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Sugar Land, TX 77496
www.moaahoustonarea.com

March 2022 Issue – Newsletter to Members

### President's Message...

Greetings Friends,

February was quite a busy month for the Chapter. We are putting the finishing touches on our new web site. We picked up a new member for the Chapter and ya'll are doing a great job of bringing your dues current. We are quite happy to report that Eugene Tulich, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret),



received the Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Leadership Award from the Naval Order of the United States for his work in the Houston community. COL Christopher Govekar, the XO of the 75<sup>th</sup> Innovation Command gave us a good insight into the recently formed 75<sup>th IC</sup> and equally important, an overview of the operations of Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base.

The next Chapter meeting will be Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at Rudy Lechner's German Restaurant. Our guest speaker will be Colonel Wayne Marotto. COL Marotto is the Director of Public Affairs for III Armored Corps at Fort Hood, TX. This should be an interesting discussion given the current situation in Europe. Along those lines, I would like to call your attention to our Chaplain's corner where Major Dave Essells, our Chaplain, has penned a very thoughtful message.

Finally, March 29<sup>th</sup> is the National Vietnam War Veterans Day, lest we forget. Thank you for your service and welcome home brothers.

Respectfully, Rob Robin P. Ritchie, COL, Infantry, USAR (Ret)★

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### Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 @ noon MOAA HA BOD Meeting

Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant 2503 S Gessner Rd Houston, TX 77063

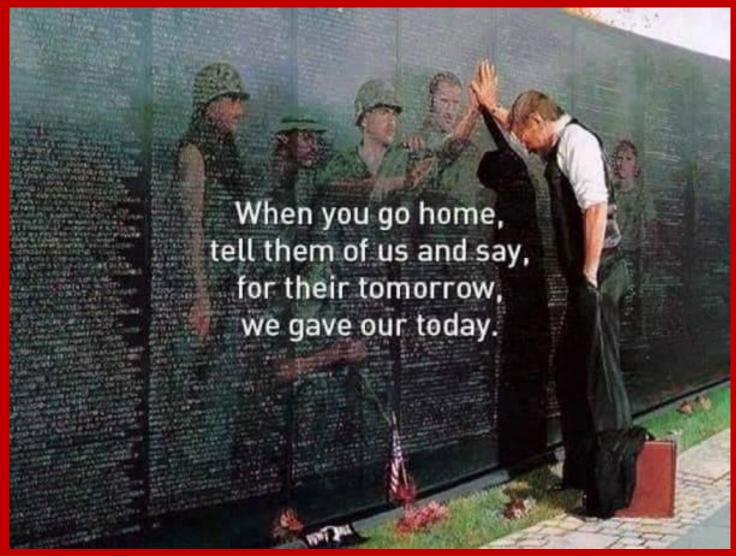
### Saturday, March 26th, 2022 @ noon MOAA HA Chapter Meeting

Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant 2503 S Gessner Rd Houston, TX 77063 RSVP to Rob Ritchie

Email: rpritchie@earthlink.net

# National Vietnam War Veterans Day March 29<sup>th</sup>





# Commander Eugene N Tulich, USCG (Ret) Receives the Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Leadership Award

The Texas Commandery of the Naval Order of the United States honored Commander Eugene "Gene" Tulich with its 2021 Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Leadership award. The award was presented at the 2022 Annual Banquet, held in Houston on February 19.

The Fleet Admiral Nimitz Leadership award is awarded to a person who has served in the sea services and who has demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership such as those of Admiral Nimitz. The first recipient of the 36 annual awards was the Honorable John F. Lehman, former Secretary of the Navy.

Commander Tulich is the Chairman of the Houston Military Affairs Committee where he advocates for and supports the military and veterans in the Houston area. He is Vice Chairman of the Ellington Field Task Force and was involved in the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission which resulted in the formation of Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base to include four DoD services along with Coast Guard Air Station Houston and Sector Houston-Galveston. He is a former Commissioner of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission which advises the Governor on military matters. He



represents the Houston area with the Association of Defense Communities, as well as representing the military at the Greater Houston Partnership. Commander Tulich serves on Senator John Cornyn's Academy Selection Committee.

Commander Tulich's Coast Guard career included two tours of duty in Vietnam serving in the Cutters CAMPBELL and MORGENTHAU. He led several projects while assigned to Headquarters. He was the project officer to establish Reserve and Auxiliary Stations on the Great Lakes that continues 50 years later as the largest Reserve training program. He was assigned to start the national Drug Interdiction program which is now the largest budget item in the Coast Guard. While doing the drug interdiction program he took it upon himself to create the Maritime Law Enforcement School which is now a an internationally renowned Academy of 211 personnel. While assigned to Coast Guard Pacific Area he organized Pacific Area Intelligence and an intelligence center which now has 110 personnel with Hawaii and Japan subunits. He was also the N2 for US Maritime Defense Zone Pacific. Other assignments were Rescue Coordination Center New York, 11th Coast Guard District in Long Beach, and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force in Houston.

Commander Tulich wrote the first Coast Guard Historical Monograph "The Coast Guard in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Conflict."





## I REMEMBER GENERAL "CHARLIE" RODGERS

By Daniel M. Gutierrez March 17, 2022

March 25<sup>th</sup> is Medal of Honor Day. This brought to my mind one of the most fascinating and inspiring leaders I ever encountered during my military career. In 1970, I was the executive officer of Battery C, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 42<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Group in Giessen, Germany. My rank was first lieutenant.

I was acting as a critique officer on the observation team of a sister artillery battalion undergoing its annual live fire exercises. Live fire artillery combat readiness evaluations were conducted at the

Grafenwoehr training center in Bavaria. It was here I met Major General "Charlie" Rodgers (then a colonel). He said, "I liked your briefing and thought I'd introduce myself. You see I'm coming over to take command of your group soon."

Indeed, soon after, I was overseeing motor pool duties with my own battery of 175mm guns when suddenly behind me came a rather high squeaky voice, "well, Danny, I've always been in the light artillery and I don't know much about this heavy stuff. But pretty soon I am going to know everything about it and then I am coming down here and drive you crazy." And he did – he seemed to appear everywhere, at any time, especially readiness alerts and field exercises. We soon learned who "Charlie" Rodgers was.

Just before assuming command of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Group, Colonel Rodgers had been presented with the Medal of Honor by President Nixon at the White House. We discovered that on November 1, 1968, Colonel Rodgers had been serving as a lieutenant colonel in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division ("Big Red One") in Vietnam during an operation near the Cambodian border. One of his batteries was situated at Fire Base Rita and he was with that unit when it came under intense attack. In the early morning hours the fire base was overrun. Rodgers rallied his men through hails of fire and even though wounded, led an attack against the breach on the perimeter. For this act of courage and intrepidity, Colonel Rodgers earned the Medal of Honor. He kept a close eye on me and my battery. One Sunday evening after about a year under his command, he came to my apartment. He announced that I was now commander of Battery A, 6th of the 9<sup>th</sup>. I was stunned and explained I felt, as a first loowey, I was not experienced enough. He sat me down and convinced of his trust and confidence. I have never forgotten that.

"Charlie" Rodgers was a soldier in every sense of the word. He eventually became a major general. But on a Sunday evening he honored me, personally. General Rodgers is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. When next I visit Arlington, I will pay honor to this great man.



# MOAA TEXAS COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS MEETS FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER OF 2022

By Daniel M. Gutierrez, Major, USA (Ret.) March 17, 2022

On March 4 and 5, I represented the Houston Area chapter at the MOAA Texas Council of Chapters (TCC) first quarterly meeting of 2022 in Waco, TX. This was the first live and in-person meeting held by the council in more than a year. The council's newly elected president, Si Simonson, introduced himself and his executive officers. Simonson, a retired army colonel, is president of the North Dallas-Fort Worth chapter and represents that chapter on the TCC. Other chapters represented were Heart of Texas Chapter (Waco), Wichita Falls, Greater Granbury, Central Texas (Killeen-Ft. Hood), Alamo Chapter (San Antonio) and the Rose Capitol Chapter (Tyler).

The main focus of the meeting were presentations by the executive vice presidents for federal and state advocacy. Federal issues centered mainly on passage of the Major Richard Star Act that would offer concurrent medical retirement and VA benefits to veterans with combat related disabilities; support action to protect the value of military health care benefits; and fight for legislation to reduce TRICARE mental health copays. MOAA is organizing for its National Advocacy in Action effort which will be held April 1-30 in Washington, D.C. This is MOAA's main push to visit all members of congress and advocate for the military establishment and its service members and families. Any chapter member wishing to participate should contact me.

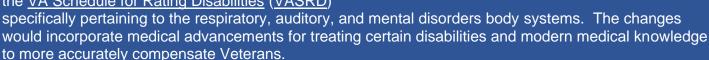
State advocacy discussions centered on council and chapter preparations for the next state legislative session (spring of 2023), and solidifying and identifying priorities. The council also discussed chapter membership including individual chapter experiences and lessons learned. Membership will be a major topic for the council this year.

Each chapter representative gave reports about activities, successes, and challenges of their chapter. My report focused on the first quarter of 2022. I reported that the Houston Area chapter had gained two new members, conducted three membership/luncheon meetings with guest speakers (by the end of the month), and had published three monthly newsletters. Also, I was glad to report the chapter will soon go on line (by the end of March) with its new and improved web page and will soon be a member of the Houston Regional Military Chamber of Commerce. Chapter challenges were gaining and maintaining members, getting members to serve on the board of directors and funding.



### VA Proposes Updates to Disability Rating Schedules for Respiratory, Auditory and Mental Disorders

In a <u>news release</u> posted today, VA proposed changes to the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD)



VASRD is used to determine the appropriate level of compensation for each service-connected disability based on the severity of the condition as documented by supporting medical evidence. VA is in the process of updating all the body systems in the VASRD to reflect modern evaluative criteria based on advancements in medical terminology, diagnostics and treatment.

On Feb. 15, the Veterans Benefits Administration will publish proposed rules in the <u>Federal</u> <u>Register</u> regarding changes to the regulations for the two body systems: respiratory system; ear, nose and throat conditions, and auditory disorders; and mental disorders. Veterans and the public will have 60 days to comment on these proposed rules.

Since these are proposed changes, they will not affect evaluations of any Veteran currently receiving compensation for an impacted disability. Instead, this is an opportunity for Veterans and the public to comment on these proposed changes over the next 60 days. VA will consider the comments received and address them in a subsequent final rule which may make these changes effective.

Some of the proposed changes include modernizing the evaluation criteria for sleep apnea by evaluating it based on the symptoms' responsiveness to treatment. If symptoms are fully treated by a CPAP machine or other treatment, a Veteran would be rated at 0% and not receive compensation; VA will award progressively higher percentage evaluations based upon how symptomatic the condition remains after treatment. This will bring the rating criteria for sleep apnea more closely in line with the stated purpose of the rating schedule, which is to provide evaluations based upon average impairment of earning capacity.

For respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the proposed rules would slightly lower the requirements for a 100% rating. For tinnitus, the proposed changes would recognize that symptom within the Veteran's broader ailment and provide service-connected compensation for tinnitus through the disease to which it is attributed.

The proposed rules for mental health conditions would increase the minimum disability rating from 0% to 10%. The rule would get rid of a dated part of VASRD that prevents a Veteran from getting a 100% rating for a mental health condition if they are able to work.

VA will ensure Veterans get the compensation they need and deserve, especially when it comes to mental disorders. Under the proposed changes, VA plans to use new evaluation criteria to more accurately capture the different domains of impairment caused by mental disabilities and provide more adequate <u>compensation for financial</u> losses experienced by Veterans with service-connected mental disorders.

Rather than assigning an evaluation based on the number and type of symptoms present, these changes would evaluate mental disorders based on how impactful the disability is across five domains of impairment: Cognition, interpersonal interactions and relationships, task completion, life activities and navigating environments, and self-care.

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

#### VA Proposes Updates to Disability Rating Schedules...(Continued from previous page...)

Veterans, their caregivers and other partners can read the proposed rules for themselves on the <u>Federal</u> Register and are welcome to provide feedback.

- 1. 87 FR 8474 Schedule for Rating Disabilities: Ear, Nose, Throat, and Audiology Disabilities; Special Provisions Regarding Evaluation of Respiratory Conditions; Schedule for Rating Disabilities-Respiratory System Content Details 2022-02049.
- 2. 87 FR 8498 Schedule for Rating Disabilities: Mental Disorders Content Details 2022-02051.

Once again, there will be no change to any Veteran's current rating based on these proposed changes. When the proposed changes are finalized, Veterans who currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition can apply for increased compensation. And even if a Veteran's symptoms no longer warrant the current evaluation they have based on the finalized changes, no reductions shall be made unless an improvement in the Veteran's disability is shown to have occurred based on the last schedule used to assign their evaluation.

Since September 2017, VA has updated the rating schedule for the following body systems:

- Dental and oral conditions.
- Endocrine system.
- Gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast.
- Organs of special sense (eye conditions).
- Skin.
- Hematologic and lymphatic systems.
- Infectious diseases, immune disorders, and nutritional deficiencies.
- Musculoskeletal system and muscle injuries.
- Genitourinary and cardiovascular systems.



MOAA Chapter Luncheon March 26,2022 1200 - 1300

Guest Speaker: Colonel Wayne Morris Director of Public Affairs III Armored Corps



Meal options: chicken schnitzel, pork schnitzel or spinach quiche Meal includes main, sides, dessert and coffee/tea Cash Bar

Price: \$25 per person



Venue Address: 2503 S. Gessner Houston, TX 77063 Please RSVP to Rob Ritchie Email: rpritchie@earthlink.net Phone: 713-818-0408



<u>Surviving Spouse Corner</u>
Judith Thomas
Surviving Spouse MOAA Liaison jthomas482@aol.com

By: Shane Ostrom
JANUARY 08, 2021
PeopleImages via Getty Images

Recent changes in law, including some stemming from legislation

signed this month, have changed what remarriage will mean for you and your earned benefits.

What Happens When I Remarry?

MOAA Answers Your Concerns on SBP,

MOAA has heard from members seeking remarriage guidance, with many covered by the situations listed below. These represent some of the top remarriage concerns as they relate to finance.

TRICARE, and More

#### Situation 1:

A retiree is remarrying, and their former spouse holds the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

Once a former spouse is awarded SBP due to a legal divorce document, only a change to the legal document — or the death of the former spouse — will release the SBP back to the retiree. These actions allow the retiree to change the beneficiary to the current spouse. The ex-spouse and current spouse cannot be covered simultaneously.

#### Situation 2:

A surviving spouse wants to remarry and has concerns about SBP and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.

One's age at remarriage can affect survivor benefits. If you are 55 years old or greater, SBP and DIC payments will continue after you get remarried. If you are younger than 55, both SBP and DIC payments will be suspended. If the remarriage ends, payments can start again.

(While it's a completely different topic, those with questions about the process eliminating the DIC offset from SBP payments can find answers at this link.)

Unless you remarry another military retiree, all other military benefits stop during the remarriage (TRICARE and ID card-related). If the remarriage ends, ID card-related benefits will return, but TRICARE benefits are lost forever. If you have remarried a military retiree, all of these benefits will continue. If the retiree dies, survivor programs and benefits (including TRICARE) will start — unless the SBP is owned by a former spouse.

**Regarding Social Security:** Survivor payments continue for remarriages at/after age 60 (or age 50 if you're disabled). If you are the divorced spouse of a worker who dies, you could get survivor benefits as long as your marriage lasted 10 years or more. To collect a survivor benefit, you must be age 60 or caring for a child under age 16. As for retirement benefits, at age 62-plus, you can get retirement benefits on your new spouse's work if those

(Continued on next page...)

#### What Happens When I Remarry? (...Continued from previous page)

benefits are higher. As a former spouse, you also have eligibility to a retirement benefit based on your exspouse's work record beginning at your age 62. See the Social Security pamphlets (downloadable PDFs) on retirement and survivors for more details.

#### Situation 3:

A former spouse is awarded retired pay from a military retiree and is concerned about what happens to the retired pay if the former spouse remarries.

Was the retired pay awarded by the divorce court? If so, the retired pay was awarded to the former spouse by legal means and is in the divorce decree. Unless something about remarriage was stipulated in the divorce decree, the retired pay will continue to the ex-spouse.

The only ways to change or stop the retired pay to a former spouse are:

- The former spouse gives up the payment through legal means (amended decree), or
- The former spouse dies. Upon the death of a former spouse, notify the pay agency with a death certificate and retired pay will be restored to the retiree.

If the retired pay is being given voluntarily to the former spouse by the retiree with no legal direction, then the retiree controls where the money goes.

All servicemembers can find information on former spouse issues via the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) at this link.

#### Situation 4:

A retiree remarries and wants to start spouse benefits?

The SBP is suspended and no premiums are paid when a retiree does not have a beneficiary, like after a divorce or death of a spouse. To restart your SBP, make sure you <u>notify DFAS</u> (or your <u>Coast Guard pay agent</u>) within the first year of your remarriage. SBP will start again on the first anniversary unless your former spouse has the SBP.

You can only have one SBP beneficiary: your spouse or your former spouse, not both. You will owe back premiums if you forget to notify your pay agency until after the first anniversary.

Retirees have three SBP options after remarriage:

- 1. Stay at your current coverage level.
- 2. Increase your coverage level if your current coverage is less than the maximum coverage. The higher premium is retroactive, so you will owe the back premiums, plus interest.
- 3. Cancel the coverage with spouse approval.

Take your new spouse to the ID card office for an ID card and enrollment in the DEERS-TRICARE registration system.

#### **Situation 5:**

You divorced a servicemember and qualified for benefits upon divorce (20/20/20 rule).

Upon remarriage, TRICARE health care is lost forever. Other ID card benefits are suspended until the remarriage ends. If you remarry a military retiree, all of these benefits will continue.

(Note from MOAA: Portions of the above were originally published in August 2019 and were updated in January 2021.)



#### 2022 Officers

#### **President**

Robin P. Ritchie, COL, USA (Ret.) 713.818.0408 rpritchie@earthlink.net

#### **Vice President**

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#### **Treasurer/Secretary**

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#### **Chapter Newsletter Editor**

Kathy Frank 713.203.5058 kathyfrank23@gmail.com

### We need <u>YOU</u>... to remain a MOAA HA Member!



# Debating whether to renew your chapter membership?

#### Talking to a potential new member?

Benefits to belonging to a chapter:

- Camaraderie and Connections: when you attend chapter functions, actively serve on a committee, or take a prominent leadership role, you forge lasting ties with other MOAA members.
- Community Involvement: Membership provide opportunities to contribute to your community in a variety of ways, from providing scholarships to local students, to supporting causes that support wounded warriors and their families.
- Legislative Advocacy: We advocate for the entire military community-all ranks.
   Members play a critical role in advancing legislation in both Austin and Washington, D.C. This grassroots advocacy is key to MOAA achieving its legislative goals.

Chapter dues reminders will be emailed/sent out in November to those members needing renewal. We are on a calendar year for our chapter dues.

Annual renewal is \$30 for one year, \$20 for each additional year paid with renewal. Surviving Spouse \$15 initial membership; \$10 annual renewal.

Membership Application on the last page!

### Chaplain's Corner...

For many of us in the church this is the Season of Lent. It is the time when we give to God some form of sacrifice in order that we can somehow share in the sufferings of Christ. Christ told His disciples of His suffering and death so that they would be forewarned of the cost of redeeming the world from the penalty of sin, which is death. Right now, the evil that is happening in Putin's war in Ukraine is a potent reminder of that penalty and the horrendous cost of sin entering the world and currently propagated by one man. Many of us are asking ourselves "Where is God in all of this?"

I don't have an answer, but God did when he gave us Jeremiah 29:11-12. He said through the exiled prophet Jeremiah: "I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord; they are plans for good and not for evil; plans to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and pray to me and I will listen to you."

We are hoping and praying for the people of Ukraine. We ask ourselves and our government, "What more can we do to support the Ukrainians?" We try to understand their suffering as we see the destruction and seeming hopelessness of the refugees. Even in their hopelessness we see the hope and courage of the refugees as they tell us how much they look forward to returning to their homes. We see their courage even though most of them have no idea where they are going. And we pray for the Ukrainian Soldiers and Citizens who are courageously defending their country. Their fearlessness and solidarity in defending Ukraine is a model for every lover of democracy and peace around the world.

God gave Jeremiah his message AFTER the Israelites had been totally defeated by the Babylonian army and taken hostage as exiles and slaves to Babylon. His message of hope was to those exiles. It is the same message He offers to us and to the Ukrainian people. The fact is that God is still with them throughout this disastrous war. The message of the cross is that Jesus died to redeem all of us and that redemption is available to all of us. Jesus said to us "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Eternal life is a free gift but God has given us freedom of choice to either take or reject that gift. The message of the cross is that suffering and death are still here and He hears our prayers and theirs. The message of the empty cross is that Jesus is still "Immanuel", God with us, and God is still with the Ukrainians...and even the Russian Soldiers.

As I pray for peace, safety and restoration of the Ukrainian Nation I also pray for Putin and the Russian Soldiers. That the wicked will turn from their evil plans and end the madness. That God will help us, the Western World, hold the wicked accountable for their devastation and evil plans working toward restoration and peace. I pray for the Ukrainian Fighters...that God will hide them from the bombs, missiles, bullets and Russians and that He will make them effective in their fight and strategies. And I pray for relief, food, safety and shelter for both for the refugees and those citizens now trapped within the cities under siege.

God's promise to the Jewish Exiles, the Ukrainians and us is still valid. He is still in charge and is hearing all of our prayers. He is listening and responding. Our decisions and governmental actions are complicated and sometimes flawed. They are, however the best we can do and God is still in control. Let us stand united in courage, support and prayer for our leaders. That is the way to bring an end to this challenge.

Please read Luke 1:68-79 to see Zechariah's (John the Baptist's father) prophecy about God's salvation and peace (vss 73-75).★

~ David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET

## Perks Marketplace



To log in to Perks Marketplace, <u>click here</u>. First visit? Read the details below.

Paid MOAA members have access to a wide array of entertainment, lodging, and rental car deals through Member Deals:

- Up to 40 percent off top theme park tickets nationwide;
- Up to 40 percent off movie tickets nationwide;
- Up to 40 percent off top Las Vegas and Broadway shows;
- Up to 60 percent off of hotels;
- Up to 25 percent off on rental cars; and
- Great savings on Disney and Universal Studios tickets

Through Perks Marketplace, PREMIUM and LIFE members can also unlock additional discounts:

- 50 percent off express shipping, 30 percent off ground shipping, and other members-only savings with UPS;
- Up to 25 percent off GE Appliances top brands

To access the MOAA Perks Marketplace, you must first register and create an account. This log-in is separate from your MOAA Login, as information and discounts will be sent to your email inbox. If you do not receive an email after registering, please check your spam or junk folder. You will need to confirm your email address through the link provided in the email. Once you have confirmed your email address, you will be able to access all benefits on the Perks Marketplace platform. Benefits are accessed from the "Benefits" tab on the left-hand side of the platform. (Please note: Some vendors may prompt you to create an account directly on their website before completing your purchase).

**<u>Click here</u>** to access the Perks Marketplace page and start saving!

Having problems logging in, or have other questions? Email msc@moaa.org or call our Member Service Center at 800-234-6622.



# MOAA HA Chapter Luncheon Saturday, February 26, 2022



**Christopher Govekar** 



Chris Govekar, Guest Speaker And Rob Ritchie





**Judith Thomas** 



**Rollins and Pat Collins** 





Red O'Laughlin



**Frank Urbanic** 



**Rhee Haun** 



**Paul Brennan** 



**Dennis and Tian O'Driscoll** 



Janice Nickie-Green



**Larry Rathbun** 



Joan Tulich



**Ken and Susan Tamberg** 



**Gene Tulich** 

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

#### **MOAA's Core Mission**

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is the country's leading organization protecting the rights of uniformed servicemembers and their families. MOAA's constituents proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, we have made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving.

MOAA's greatest mission is to improve the lives of those who serve and their families, which is achieved largely through the tireless advocacy efforts taking place in our nation's capital. For more than 90 years, MOAA has supported legislation that benefits the uniformed services community and has remained equally vigilant when fighting to stop legislation that threatens our livelihood. The larger our numbers, the greater our voice. For more detailed legislative actions see MOAA | Take Action Center (quorum.us)

Name: _						
(Please	print)	Last		First	Initial	Rank
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Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:						
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				,	•	e opportunity to become a so, please indicate here:
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