



Houston Area  
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August 2021 Issue – Newsletter to Members

## President's Message...

Dear MOAA HA Members,

Welcome to the dog days of summer in Houston. I hope that everyone's summer has been fun, productive and safe.

Last month we were honored to have Captain (P) Jessica Masters who currently is the Southern Company Commander, Houston area Recruiting Battalion as our guest speaker. Her presentation was excellent and quite informative particularly regarding the Military's current recruiting changes. This month's featured speaker is LCDR Osvaldo Vera USCG, the commanding officer of the Houston area Maritime Safety and Security Team. This should be an outstanding and timely presentation.



There are some very good articles in this month's newsletter including Dan Gutierrez's TCC quarterly report and a little-known WW2 story of Texas and Oklahoma drillers and roughnecks in England.

Have a great month.

Respectfully,

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

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### August...

#### Upcoming Chapter Events:

**Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 @ noon**  
**MOAA HA Chapter Meeting**  
Golf Crest Country Club  
2509 Country Club Drive  
Pearland, TX 77581  
*RSVP to Rob Ritchie*

**Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 @ noon**  
**MOAA HA BOD Meeting**  
Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant  
2503 S Gessner Rd  
Houston, TX 77063

# August MOAA HA Guest Speaker...

**MOAA HA Chapter Meeting**  
Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 @ noon  
Golf Crest Country Club  
2509 Country Club Drive  
Pearland, TX 77581  
RSVP to Rob Ritchie



## LCDR Osvaldo Vera

Commanding Officer  
Maritime Safety and Security Team  
Houston (91104)



Lieutenant Commander Vera assumed the duties as Commanding Officer, MSST Houston (91104) in June of 2020. Prior to assuming command, he served as the MSST Force Manager within the Deployable Specialized Forces Section at Atlantic Area Command. He was responsible for six MSSTs in execution of Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security, Drug Interdiction, and Migrant Interdiction missions. He developed Adaptive Force Packages to support 400+ emergent and planned operations including presidential security missions, National Special Security Events, five major hurricane responses, and Joint Interagency Task Force South Drug Interdiction missions on U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Naval, and Allied ships.

Prior to his assignment to Atlantic Area, he served as Command Center Chief at Sector Corpus Christi where his duties included Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator, Command Duty Officer, and Regional Coordinating Mechanism Operations Officer. He facilitated execution of all Coast Guard missions and coordinated efforts with Federal, State, local emergency responders, and port industry partners for emergent operations in an area encompassing 400 nautical miles of waterways, three ports, including the third largest U.S. petrochemical complex and the maritime boundary line with Mexico.

He previously served as Waterside Security Division and Maritime Law Enforcement/Force Protection Division Chief at MSST Los Angeles/Long Beach where he led nationwide maritime security deployments and increased security of the nation's busiest container port. He supported operations that included enforcement of security zones, High Interest Vessel boardings, protection of military outloads and major marine events, and augmented shoreside security at waterfront facilities. His efforts supported critical force protection for nationally significant events and ensuring delivery of vital military supplies.

LCDR Vera enlisted in 2000 and served at Air Station Sacramento prior to completing Officer Candidate School in 2005. His previous staff tours include assignment within the Evaluations Branch at Personnel Service Center, Officer Personnel Management Division. He also served as Command Duty Officer while assigned at the U.S. Embassy, Nassau Bahamas, Operations Bahamas, Turks and Caicos where he coordinated assets including U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army, Drug Enforcement Administration, Customs and Border Protection, and Royal Bahamas Police and Defense Forces supporting multinational multiagency counter-narcotics interdiction operations.

LCDR Vera graduated from U.S. Naval War College with a Masters of Arts in Defense and Strategic Studies, American Military University with a Masters of Arts in Public Administration, University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, and Joint Forces Staff College where he completed the requirement of Joint and Combined Warfighting School - Joint Professional Military Education Level Phase II.



## TCC MEETS VIA ZOOM— August 7, 2021

By Daniel M. Gutierrez, Major, USA (Ret.)

On August 7, the MOAA Texas Council of Chapters (TCC) held its third quarterly meeting of 2021. Normally the quarterly meetings are held in conference at a location in Texas. COVID-19 however, has altered normal practice. The meeting was conducted via zoom as has been the case all year.

TCC President Jim Cunningham from the San Antonio chapter, after a long and arduous illness, returned to lead the council and set the agenda. Highlights of the meeting were the reports from the various members of the council concerning activities and events in their chapters over the last three months. I was happy to report that in the Houston area, the chapter had recruited 6 new members (a total of 13 over the course of this year), had published 3 monthly newsletters, and had been recognized by MOAA National as a 5-star Levels of Excellence (LOE) chapter for the second year in a row. Also, the chapter was further recognized by National by being awarded a cash prize for its community outreach efforts. Finally, I reported that once the quarter ended on September 30, the

chapter would have completed its third monthly members' meeting and luncheon featuring a guest speaker. This program of meetings/luncheons with guest speakers represents an important aspect of the chapter's commitment to provide meaningful service to its members.

On future events the reminder of this year, I reported that the chapter will continue to hold its monthly members' meetings, would conduct its annual members meeting and election of officers for 2022 and would publish its award winning monthly newsletter. I reported that the chapter would play its part in community-wide activities by participating in Retiree Appreciation Day at Joint Reserve Base Ellington on October 9 and by attending the annual Houston Military Affairs Committee (HMCA) Armed Forces Day Military Banquet and Ball (delayed from May) on October 16. The US Navy has the honor this year of organizing the gala event. Finally, the chapter will play its part in meetings of MOAA's Surviving Spouse virtual chapter led by our own Judith Thomas. It is my pleasure to report that Mrs. Thomas has been repeatedly singled out as a mainstay of the surviving spouse chapter and we are honored to have her as a member of our chapter.

The TCC will hold its 4<sup>th</sup> quarter meeting in a face-to-face in person meeting in San Antonio on December 6 and 7. This will also be the TCC's annual members meeting and banquet. All MOAA members are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Additional information will be forthcoming soon.

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## Surviving Spouse Corner

There are two programs I would like to bring to your attention.

The United States Vietnam War Commemoration Commission has a program to recognize Surviving Spouses of deceased Veterans who served honorably on active duty in the U.S. Military between November 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975, no matter where that service occurred.

In addition to the Surviving Spouse Lapel Pin, there is a Certificate of Honor from the Commission. Through a Commemorative Partner, I am authorized to present these Pins and Certificates to Surviving Spouses. If you have not received the Pin and Certificate, I would be honored to present them to you at a MOAA meeting or at a location of your choosing. The website for this program is [www.vietnamwar50th.com](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com).



This picture of me shows a Folded Flag In Memory Pin from the In Memory Program sponsored by the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund ([www.VVMF.org](http://www.VVMF.org)). Each year VVMF hosts an In Memory program at the Vietnam Wall to recognize veterans who served in Vietnam and their deaths were ruled service-connected because of that Service. If you would like more information about this program, please contact me. My husband was honored at the 2019 Ceremony.

Judith Thomas  
Surviving Spouse Liaison  
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Richmond, TX 77469



## Chaplain's Corner...

My devotional readings this week have been II Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah. These are the accounts of the Jewish exiles tenuously coming back from the Babylonian exile and rebuilding Jerusalem. The Old Testament is full of stories of the underdog, The Israelites fighting huge armies & being told by God to fight the courageous fight against all odds. The bottom line is that God wins. He will take care of His People and we are all HIS PEOPLE.



With the fall of Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban and with the current operation of returning our Embassy, American Support Personnel and our Afghan & European Allies the best thing each of us can do is pray for the miracle of safety.

1. Pray for the safe exit of as many people that we & our allies can retrieve from Afghanistan.
2. The end of our Civil War, WWI and WWII were a model exit from War and the repatriation of all participants on both sides of the conflict. Pray for safe repatriation of Afghan governmental authorities, Afghan Soldiers and even Taliban.
  - ◇ Pray that the Taliban will take the actions they are saying that they are taking to restore order and safety of their citizens without vindictiveness or retribution.
  - ◇ Pray that order will be restored to the country.
  - ◇ Pray that all of their citizens will be granted amnesty by the Taliban just like they have just given amnesty to the prisoners they have been releasing this week.
  - ◇ Pray for the safety and well being for all the men and women who will be under Taliban control as the country moves forward. That persecution will be avoided.
  - ◇ Thank God that Kabul has currently experienced a transition of power without the great bloodshed which would have been the result of a battle.

In Summary, please join hands with ALL AMERICANS and people around the world of ALL RELIGIONS to pray for the safety of the Afghan People and the success of repatriation of all personnel both inside and leaving Afghanistan. God is still a God of miracles and people can still choose to do right.

*~ David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET*

*Another great history lesson not taught in school...*

## THE OIL PATCH WARRIORS OF WORLD WAR II

Seventy-five years ago this month, a Band of Roughnecks went abroad on a top secret mission into Robin Hood's stomping grounds to punch oil wells to help fuel England's war machines.

It's a story that should make any oilman or woman proud.

The year was 1943 and England was mired in World War II. U-boats attacked supply vessels, choking off badly needed supplies to the island nation. But oil was the commodity they needed the most as they warred with Germany.

A book "The Secret of Sherwood Forest: Oil Production in England During World War II" by Guy Woodward & Grace Steele Woodward was published in 1973, and tells the obscure story of the American oil men who went to England to bore wells in a top secret mission in March 1943.

England had but one oil field, in Sherwood Forest of all places. Its meager output of 300 barrels a day was literally a drop in the bucket of their requirement of 150,000 barrels a day to fuel their war machines.

Then a top secret plan was devised: to send some Americans and their expertise to assist in developing the field. Oklahoma based Noble Drilling Company, along with Fain-Porter signed a one year contract to drill 100 wells for England, merely for costs and expenses.

42 drillers and roughnecks from Texas and Oklahoma, most in their teens and early twenties volunteered for the mission to go abroad. The hands embarked for England in March 1943 aboard the HMS Queen Elizabeth. Four National 50 drilling rigs were loaded onto ships but only three of them made landfall; the Nazi U-boats sank one of the rigs en route to the UK.

The Brits' jaws dropped as the Yanks began punching the wells in a week, compared to five to eight weeks for their British counterparts. They worked 12 hour tours, 7 days a week and within a year, the Americans had drilled 106 wells and England oil production shot up from 300 barrels a day to over 300,000.

The contract fulfilled, the American oil men departed England in late March 1944. But only 41 hands were on board the return voyage. Herman Douthit, a Texan derrick-hand was killed during the operation. He was laid to rest with full military honors, and remains the only "civilian" to be buried at The American Military Cemetery in Cambridge.

"The Oil Patch Warrior," a seven foot bronze statue of a roughneck holding a four foot pipe wrench stands near Nottingham England to honor the American oil men's assistance and sacrifice in the war. A replica was placed in Ardmore Oklahoma in 2001.

**It is by no means a stretch to state that without this American mission, we might all be speaking German today.**

Special thanks to the American Oil and Gas Historical Society.

**"There are no noble wars; just noble warriors!"**



# July Chapter Luncheon Photos

## Rudi Lechner's – July 24, 2021



CPT Jessica Masters



Rob Ritchie and CPT Masters

Vernon Gillette



Bryan McKeen  
Diane Kalina



Mike Martin



Judith Thomas



Dan Gutierrez

## 2021 Officers

### President

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We need YOU...  
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 / RENEWAL FORM

### Military Officers Association of America – Houston Area

Membership is available to Officers who have held a Federal Warrant or Commission in any of the seven uniformed services of the United States or to the surviving spouse of such a person. Please use this form for application for membership, renewal or changes to the current directory of members. Additionally, The Chapter always welcomes donations to assist the Chapter's operating expenses and supporting our ROTC and JROTC programs.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print)                      Last                                      First                                      Initial                                      Rank

Branch \_\_\_\_\_ Status \_\_\_\_\_ MOAA Nat'l ID \_\_\_\_\_ \*

Spouse's First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. for Directory \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues:** Regular Membership – \$30 first year; annual renewal \$30 (Discount for multiple years if paid with renewal: \$20 for each addt'l. year **paid with renewal**)

Surviving Spouse – \$15 first year; annual renewal \$10 (same discount for multiple years)

#### Chapter Assistance Fund

\$100.00     \$50.00     \$25.00     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:

MOAA-HA  
PO Box 18372  
Sugar Land, TX 77496



For more information, call COL Robin Ritchie, 713-818-0408

*\*If not a MOAA national member, another benefit of chapter membership is the opportunity to become a national MOAA member at the BASIC LEVEL for free! If you would like to do so, please indicate here:*

YES     NO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_