



Houston Area
PO Box 18372
Sugar Land, TX 77496
www.moahoustonarea.org

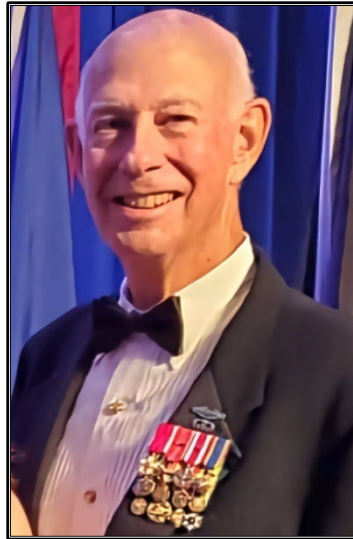
~ Five Star ★★★★★ Chapter ~

President's Message...

August 2024 Issue

Greetings Colleagues,

Semper Paradas! Happy 234th birthday to the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was formed in August 1790 at the request of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. Its mission was to enforce the tariff and revenue laws of the newly formed Republic. You can find more details in Dan Gutierrez's "Let's Not Forget!" article.



Three other things to note in this month's newsletter are that we are now up and running with our new Facebook page thanks to JC Nicholson. It looks great and I encourage everyone on Facebook to check it out and utilize it. Secondly, we now have an operational PayPal account which may be used for dues and Chapter Assistance. JC has a nice article explaining in detail how to utilize both Facebook and PayPal. And lastly, our MOAA grant check was presented to The Warriors' Refuge which was quite timely in the wake of Hurricane Beryl.

In closing, our July Chapter lunch meeting was the largest get together in recent memory. We had to add additional tables to accommodate all of the attendees. I would encourage all of you to join us for great fellowship as well as informative guest speakers.

Never Stop Serving!

Rob
Robin P. Ritchie, COL, USA (RET)
President

★★★★★

In this issue >>>

- *President's Message, Robin P. Ritchie, COL, Infantry, USAR (Ret)*
- *LET'S NOT FORGET!*
- *What the New TRICARE Contract Will Mean for Your Earned Benefit in 2025*
- *Reach Out to Your Lawmakers TODAY and Support MOAA's Summer Campaign*
- *Surviving Spouse Corner: Community Involvement Guides MOAA Surviving Spouse Liaison Honoree*
- *Chaplain's Corner*
- *Monthly Chapter Meeting Photos*
- *Membership Application / Renewal Form*

August 2024...Chapter Events:

Tuesday, August 27th, 2024 @ Noon

MOAA HA BOD Meeting

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

Saturday, August 31st, 2024 @ 11:30am

MOAA HA Chapter Meeting

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



LET'S NOT FORGET!

*By: Dan Gutierrez
August, 2024*

It was August 6, 1945 when suddenly a flash of super radiated light blinded anything and everything over and around the sky over Hiroshima, Japan. The atomic age had arrived and the world has not been the same since.

The atomic bombing of Japan was the culmination of a massive effort led by the United States and supported by the United Kingdom and Canada. The program to develop a nuclear weapon was organized under a Top Secret government organization designated the "Manhattan Project" and placed under the auspices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and headed by **Major General Leslie Groves**. Much of the brainpower of the western world was applied to the project and by the end of the program many famous names of science would emerge on to the public stage. Noble laureates such as **Ernest Lawrence, Niels Bohr, Edward Teller, Enrico Fermi, Arthur Compton and Leo Szilard** are just a few of the notables involved. Other top physicist, engineers and technicians were employed in the thousands and posted to laboratories and developmental facilities across the country. Some of the more famous ones would be Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Hanford, Washington and Los Alamos, New Mexico. Theoretical physicist **J. Robert Oppenheimer** headed the Los Alamos Laboratory and was charged with designing the bombs. His name became synonymous with atomic development and would earn him the title of "Father of the Atom Bomb."

Much debate and second guessing has and continues to occur over whether the actual deployment and use of the bombs was necessary to end the war. I do not know. But what I do know is that if I had been a GI or Marine earmarked to make the assault on Japan, knowing about the horrors of Peleliu, Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, I certainly would have voted for a "GO."

August is also the month in which our longest and possibly our most frustrating war finally ended after 20 years – Afghanistan. The war began as a direct result of the attacks upon us of September 11, 2001. The United States and its military coalition began attacks on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 eventually occupying all its major population centers resulting in the overthrow of the Islamic Emirate. A prolonged and bloody insurgency followed with alternating gains and losses over the course of two decades. Over 2,300 US service members and another 1,440 coalition service members were killed. Also, another 3,900 contractors lost their lives. 20,730 American service members were wounded in action with countless more suffering PTSD and other trauma from their experiences in the war.

August 7 is Purple Heart Day. Let us honor and remember all who wear this badge of honor.

On a less somber subject, I hope you all join me in offering salutations to our brothers and sisters in the Coast Guard on their 234th anniversary. Founded on August 4, 1790 at the request of Secretary of the Treasury, **Alexander Hamilton**, the U.S. Congress resolved that ten vessels be built to enforce revenue and tariff laws and that a service be established to effect that mission. So, to my friends in the Coast Guard, I offer congratulations and, my salute.

LET'S NOT FORGET!



What the New TRICARE Contract Will Mean for Your Earned Benefit in 2025

By: Kevin Lilley



After [protests](#), a [lawsuit](#), and [scheduled payouts of \\$136 billion](#) over nine years, TRICARE beneficiaries are set to start receiving care under a new provider contract, dubbed “T-5,” in January.

Here’s a quick primer on what this changeover will mean moving forward. Keep up with the latest on your health care by visiting [MOAA’s news page](#).

The Basics: Who and Where

- Humana Military remains the TRICARE East Region contractor under the new setup.
- TriWest takes over the TRICARE West Region from Health Net Federal Services. TriWest previously held the West Region contract for 17 years (1996-2013).
- Six states will move from the East to the West: Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin. This move will affect [about 1.5 million TRICARE beneficiaries](#).
- The new contract will NOT affect TRICARE Overseas users, U.S. Family Health Plan members, or TRICARE For Life beneficiaries.

Changes to Your Care

- Care appointments scheduled under current providers for after the T-5 changeover [will be honored](#), according to the Defense Health Agency.
- Both Humana Military and TriWest will publish provider directories in November, which will allow beneficiaries to find in-network care for the coming year.
- According to TRICARE, the new contracts will allow for better referrals between regions, improved access to “highly specialized medical and surgical care,” and more telehealth options.

[RELATED: [Looking for a Mental Health Provider? TRICARE’s Directory May Not Help](#)]

What You Need to Do

- East Region beneficiaries should not see a change in their care management.
- West Region beneficiaries – including those in the six states mentioned above – should receive detailed communications from TriWest regarding any changes in the coming months.
- TRICARE officials have asked beneficiaries to confirm their [Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System](#) (DEERS) information is up to date. This will ensure beneficiaries receive the correct updates.

[UPDATED MONTHLY: [MOAA’s TRICARE Toolkit](#)]

MOAA and T-5

- MOAA will continue pursuing greater oversight of the TRICARE network, to include a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report addressing access issues in some geographic areas.
- Regardless of the contractor, MOAA will continue its work to make TRICARE coverage more flexible, allowing beneficiaries to find the care they need. This includes expanding TRICARE Qualifying Life Events (QLEs) to give TRICARE users more options to change plans when facing access-to-care concerns.
- We continue to serve as a conduit between our members and the Defense Health Agency regarding the on-the-ground results of new policies, new providers, and other changes to your care. Contact legis@moaa.org with your TRICARE feedback, especially with access issues that may be driven by contractor changeover.

Have More Questions About Your Health Care Benefit?

MOAA’s TRICARE Guide answers some commonly asked questions.

[ACCESS THE GUIDE](#)

Reach Out to Your Lawmakers TODAY and Support MOAA's Summer Campaign

By: April Vogel
AUGUST 07, 2024



In this pivotal year for our nation's servicemembers and veterans, MOAA remains at the forefront in the fight for key legislative changes. Our spring campaign event, Advocacy in Action, saw hundreds of supporters from across the nation gather on Capitol Hill to spotlight critical issues affecting the uniformed services and veteran communities.

MOAA is grateful to those who have engaged in our advocacy efforts through MOAA's Legislative Action Center. To sustain this momentum, we are urging you and our more than 360,000 members to connect with your elected officials during the congressional summer recess. Legislators will be in their home states for the next month, providing a unique opportunity for personal outreach.

[TAKE ACTION: Contact Your Lawmakers Today]

Key MOAA advocacy priorities for our Advocacy in Action Summer Campaign:

Junior Enlisted Pay Raise

Competitive pay remains critical to the health of the all-volunteer force, and both the House and the Senate seek to address this issue in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The House NDAA calls for servicemembers E-1 to E-4 to receive a 15% pay raise beyond the 4.5% earmarked for all in uniform, while the Senate version calls for an additional 1% increase for servicemembers E-1 to E-3 (beyond the 4.5% raise).

Restoring the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)

Access to quality housing and promoting financial wellness are important to sustaining the all-volunteer force. Restoring BAH addresses both issues.

The House version of the NDAA would restore BAH to 100% for FY 2025 – a move toward MOAA's goal of full repeal of the BAH reduction, but not a permanent fix. Unfortunately, the Senate version does not address the issue.

Concurrent Receipt

Tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans lose a dollar of earned DoD retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation. For three years in a row, over two-thirds of Congress has supported the Major Richard Star Act, which would end that unjust financial offset.

Despite this vast support, neither version of the NDAA includes the bill. However, it is critical lawmakers continue to hear about this important issue, especially as we approach the start of the 119th Congress.

Stay Informed

Keep up with the latest on these issues and others through *The MOAA Newsletter*, by following MOAA on social media ([Facebook](#) | [X](#) | [Instagram](#)), and by watching our weekly Advocacy Update on MOAA's YouTube channel.

Your participation amplifies our collective voice in shaping policies that support our nation's servicemembers past and present, and their families. Thank you for your continued dedication to MOAA's mission. ★

The Warrior's Refuge Grant

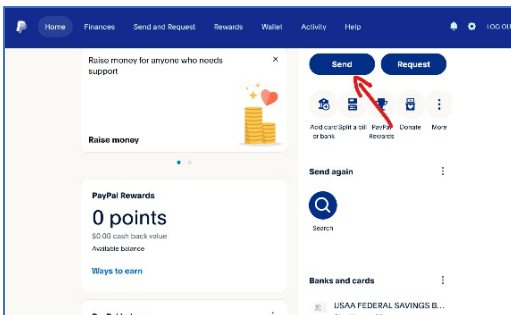
MOAA Houston has provided a \$2,250 grant to the Warrior's refuge in West Columbia, TX. The Warrior's Refuge is a Veteran 501C3 non-profit founded in 2019 and has since made a commitment to end veteran homelessness. The Refuge is a 60-bed transitional housing facility for Veterans that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The commitment to ending veteran homelessness doesn't end with just giving them a bed to sleep in. Our veterans while in the facility are provided with professional case management, mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment, job training and placement assistance and so much more. The Refuge is a place for our veterans facing homelessness to reset, recharge, and rebuild their lives. The Refuge has brought people in from all over the state of Texas and from several other states. The goal is to help the men and women who fought for us, have a place to push the restart button on life.

The MOAA grant money will be used to assist in the Hurricane Beryl clean up.



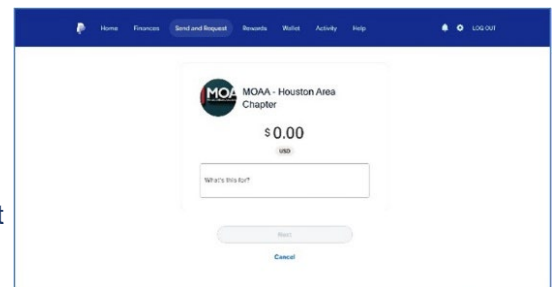
Facebook and PayPal...

For those who attended our July meeting, you heard me speak of the chapter's social media presence and our effort to provide a means to donate and pay our dues electronically. My hope is the summary below will encourage you to take advantage of the new offerings and hopefully find them useful.



First, we are back on **Facebook!** The chapter had a presence a few years back but there hasn't been much activity since then. We were unable to revive the old site, so we created a new one. For those who have an account with FB, you can follow us at **MOAA – Houston Area Chapter**. I will be regularly posting information about our meetings and speakers as well as including some fun photos. I also will be posting our award-winning newsletter on a monthly basis. Our FB page has some great feeds that include the USO, the DeBakey VA, and Tricare. Associated with the FB page is our private chapter FB group, **Military Officers of America – Houston Area Chapter**. Once you join you can post interesting articles and events that you think would be of interest to the group.

Second, our chapter has a PayPal account to afford you an electronic option of making payments and donations. Simply sign up for an account, link your credit card to the account and you're set. On the main PayPal menu there is a **Send** button that allows you to transfer funds. Click the button and you will be brought to a search box. Just type **MOAA – Houston Area Chapter** into it and you will see the donation page. The rest is simple.





Surviving Spouse Corner:

August Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter Newsletter

This is a great resource for Surviving Spouses! Please contact me if you want more information about the MOAA Surviving Spouse virtual chapter. We meet monthly via Zoom or phone. We also have a book club.

~Judith Thomas



MOAA – Houston Chapter Luncheon
August 24, 2024
1130am - 1330pm

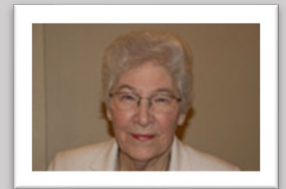
Speaker
John D. Royalty
Senior Area Operations Manager USO Houston



Meal Options: Chicken Schnitzel, Pork Schnitzel or Sausage Sampler
Meal includes: Main, sides, dessert and coffee/tea
Cash Bar
Price: \$30.00 per person

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

Please RSVP to Rob Ritchie
Email: rpitchie@earthlink.net
Phone: 713.818.0408



Surviving Spouse Corner: Community Involvement Guides MOAA Surviving Spouse Liaison Honoree

August 06, 2024

Article by Judy Christie, a writer based in Colorado

1st Lt. John Glenn, USMC (Ret), 76, was buying lumber at a large hardware store in Missouri earlier this year and asked the cashier about a military discount. During the transaction, the checker thanked him for his service and mentioned that her husband had been a veteran, operating burn pits in Bahrain. He had died of lung cancer 20 years earlier, leaving her with two young sons.



Glenn, surviving spouse liaison for [MOAA's Missouri Council of Chapters](#) and an active member of the [Greater St. Louis Chapter](#), went into his default mode: service to veterans and their families. Married for 51 years to his wife, Bettye, he became interested in helping surviving spouses after the death of a chapter member whose wife "had no clue" about what to do next.

"Have you been drawing all your benefits?" he asked the hardware clerk.

"No, I haven't gotten anything," she replied.

In the days that followed, Glenn assisted her with paperwork and — after she ran into delays — got in touch with a high-ranking officer at the VA. "You're going to have some good news for her," the officer told him.

At age 70, after 20 years of widowhood and 15 years as a cashier at the store, the woman has received back payments and her first monthly check, a financial settlement that will, she told him, "change her life."

[GET INVOLVED: [Find a MOAA Chapter](#) | [MOAA Virtual Chapters](#)]

"That's the kind of work we do," Glenn said matter-of-factly. "We're trying to identify spouses who have entitlement. ... We have these spouses, male or female, who are out there."

For his many outstanding contributions, he has received the [2023 Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award](#) at the council level. His efforts — which he is quick to say are done with the help of other MOAA members — include working for the elimination of the "widows tax" and helping to organize a "Military Retiree, Veteran, Spouse and Surviving Spouse Educational Seminar" attended by 120 people, a blueprint for other chapters.

"His experience and knowledge of community service organizations have been invaluable," said Lt. Col. William D. Wolfinger, USA (Ret), president of Missouri Council of Chapters. "In his military service, he had been involved in personnel management and thus really understands the problems and issues that the military personnel and their families experience."

[RELATED: [Surviving Spouse Corner: Know Your Benefits](#)]

Glenn was raised in public housing in St. Louis and "just wanted to be a Marine," he said. He served 21 years, including a combat tour in Vietnam, the Easter Offensive of 1972. While there, he was in the former squadron of his famous namesake, astronaut Col. John Glenn, USMC (Ret), a tidbit noted in the Command Chronology.

After military retirement, he spent 23 years with the United Way of Greater St. Louis on a team that raised nearly \$1.5 billion, and he has been inducted into the Missouri Veterans Hall of Fame. Among recent passions is the new Guardian Hills Veterans Healing Center, which will help with physical, emotional, and relational injuries for veterans. "It's awesome. It's going to make a difference," he said.

This summer, he and his wife traveled to Europe to visit their children and grandchildren and catch some of the Olympics in Paris. But he said he's already preparing for more volunteer efforts upon their return. "I have a lot of things lined up for when I get back."

Chaplain's Corner...



SOLDIERS AND FREEDOM

Today was the 55th Anniversary of Woodstock, the gigantic 3 Day Rock Concert in a farmer's field in Upstate New York. It was advertised as a concert of free love, peace and rock music. A crowd of a half million showed up for names like Jimmy Hendrix, Janice Joplin, Crosby Stills Nash and Young who were all on the ticket. It certainly raised a lot of eyebrows of many American Parents. The concert promoted love, peace and freedom. Many of us in our chapter missed the opportunity...Of course some of the participants were so stoned that they missed it as well. We all know that it happened, we just weren't available. Like myself many of you were in Vietnam at the time of Woodstock. We were fighting the war that parts of the crowd were protesting. When I got back in country, I heard a lot of complaints and I participated in those complaints because I felt the freedoms had gone to far. Age has tempered my views. At this point of my life I believe that I have a little better understanding of freedom.

Freedom is the foundation of our country. God has chosen to give mankind freedom in order that His love can be given to us and chosen by us. He wants our love for Him to be our choice not his. His choice is to love us unconditionally. When we seek God's precepts, His truth and his laws, we are guided by the words. He has spoken and those truths become a part of our lives. His Spirit, our conscience and our heart help us to stay on the right path. His truth becomes our guidance. Freedom is not unconditional however. It comes with limitations and responsibilities. We are not free to do anything we want to do. That would bring chaos and anarchy. That is why we have government, laws and responsibility for our actions. God also limits our choices even though His love for us is unlimited.

James chapter 2:12 says, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom." That law is the free gift of love and eternal life that Jesus offered us by sacrificing his life for our sin on the cross. Understanding and believing that Jesus, God's only son, died for your sin and mine and asking for His forgiveness is the acceptance of that free gift. That gift is available to all people and all nations. His punishment on the cross redeemed us from the bonds of death and hell and gave us the opportunity to receive eternal life. That is God's promise. Once we ask for and accept that promise we can experience the freedom James explained above. The remainder of our lives becomes an expression of gratitude for his grace, love and forgiveness.

As good leaders we don't flaunt our good behaviors and choices. But we share our lives, our attitudes and our faith by the way we live and serve. We learn and are taught humility and that God honors that humility and is given honor when we do good. Living by faith is not necessarily easy but it does offer the freedom and peace that only God can provide. Scripture tells us that when we do our good deeds He'll keep track of them. Jesus tells us we will be rewarded in heaven, not necessarily by our peers here on earth. Some of our peers have told us that we should do all our labors as if God is watching us. He is.

~ David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET

MOAA – HA Chapter Meeting July 27, 2024



**Rob Ritchie and Tom Duncavage, Lt Col USMC (R),
Senior Engineer for the Automation and Robotics Division at
NASA Johnson Space Center and a Commissioner with the
Texas Military Preparedness Commission**



Gene Tulich



Judith Thomas



J.C. Nicholson



Alan Ostendorp



David Essells



Denis Blindauer



John Martinec



Rick Frank



Kathy Frank



Rollins & Pat Collins



Jennifer Collins



**Constance White &
Lester Niblock**



Jeff Hokett



Ed Memi



Harry Stevenson

2024 Officers

President

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

Vice President

John C. Nicholson, Captain USN (Ret.)
346.404.4494
johncnicholson.md@zohomail.com

Secretary

Ivan L. Santiago, CW5, USA (Ret.)
832.797.1320
ivan.santiago1@live.com

Treasurer

Alan R. Ostendorp, MAJ, USAF (Ret.)
321.514.0486
alanostendorp@gmail.com

TCC Chapter Representative

Daniel M. Gutierrez, MAJ USA (Ret.)
281.543.1527
danielgutierrez1751@gmail.com

Legislative and VSO's Liaison

Eugene Tulich, CDR, USCG (Ret.)
281.376.0061
gene42@flash.net

Surviving Spouse MOAA Liaison

Judith Thomas
formerly Mrs. Billy Thomas, LTG USA
(Ret.)
719.331.8485
jthomas482@aol.com

Chapter Chaplain

David Essells, USAR, MAJ (Ret.)
817.682.1054
artychap@yahoo.com

ROTC/JROTC Liaison

Rollins J. Collins, LTC, USA (Ret.)
704.213.2334
rollins.collins93@gmail.com

Chapter Newsletter Editor

Kathy Frank
713.203.5058
kathyfrank23@gmail.com

*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 December 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!

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 \(quorum.us\)](http://MOAA | Take Action Center (quorum.us))

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 add'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: _____