



**COLUMBIA CHAPTER  
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
OF AMERICA**

Post Office Box 290927  
Columbia, South Carolina 29229  
[www.columbiamoaa.org](http://www.columbiamoaa.org)  
November 2015

<p><b>Columbia MOAA Executive Committee</b></p>	<p><b>PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE</b></p>	
<p><b>President</b> COL(R) Warren Benson USA 803-463-2924</p> <p><b>1st VP</b> COL(R) Al Whatley, USA 803-661-8667</p> <p><b>2nd VP/Membership</b> COL(R) Ed Palekas, USA 803-699-7307</p> <p><b>Secretary</b> CAPT(R) Ken Sullivan USN 803-736-4093</p> <p><b>Treasurer</b> COL(R) Tom Robillard, USAF 803-730-6109</p> <p><b>Personal Affairs</b> MAJ(R) Bob Barnwell, USA 803-546-1639</p> <p><b>Legislative Affairs</b> COL(R) Tom Robillard, USAF 803-730-6109</p> <p><b>ROTC Coordinator</b> LTC(R) Wayne Smith, USA 803-788-9358</p> <p><b>Webmaster</b> COL(R) Jim Young, USA 803-735-9473</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DECEMBER DINNER MEETING FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 6:00 — 9:30 PM FORT JACKSON OFFICERS CLUB</b></p> <p>I hope all of you received a postcard in the mail reminding you to save the date, Friday, December 4, for the Chapter's Dinner Meeting commemorating the 50th Anniversary of affiliation with MOAA National—at that time, TROA. We hope to cover a lot of ground at the dinner and program. Col Tom Robillard has worked diligently on pulling all the pieces together for the evening's events, making sure the ambiance will be just right, and the buffet four course dinner will offer several entre selections. Tom contacted several past commanders of Fort Jackson and past presidents of the chapter to get their comments on how life on and off post has changed, and how that has affected our chapter. So we will be looking in the past history, getting a slice of the present, and where we, and the Services, may be heading in the future of our chapter. We'll hear comments on the past successes in legislation that has impacted on the financial pocketbook, how Fort Jackson has staved off past attempts to reduce the structure and mission of the post, and what can be done in the future. So it will be a filled evening of successes, activities, and the impact and support of the community and the post. Yet, there are challenges ahead. These comments will be brought together by our speaker, MG George Goldsmith who has been involved with the Columbia and Fort Jackson military community for some time. If you know of someone who used to come to the meetings, invite them or give us a note and we'll send invitations to them. See the last page for your reservation. During the evening, the chapter will be presented with the 50th Affiliation Recognition Award. Further, the chapter will be receiving the 4 Star Level of Excellence Award thanks to the efforts of COL Ed Pelakas. Both from MOAA national headquarters. And recognition will be given to COL CH Sam Boone on the well deserved award from MOAA and the Military Chaplains Association. See both later on page 3.</p> <p>Elsewhere in this publication are summaries of the SC Council and Chapters meeting, and the annual MOAA meeting in Orlando, both in October.</p> <p>Other notes: it's no surprise but because there is no positive growth in this year's CPI, there will not be any annual increase in the retired pays or Social Security. And the hurt will be felt further in the active duty compensation as the cap will be imposed again this year by presidential order. There is a real effort to put a heavy financial burden on the military—is it possibly due to the fact that fewer in Congress have any military background? And it appears that some rotations may begin again—it starts with "trainers" then becomes troops. The beat goes on in Washington between reality and political partisanship.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>COL(R) Warren Benson</b></p>
<p><b>Inside This Issue</b></p> <p>President's Message September Meeting SC Council Conference MOAA Annual Meeting— Orlando Election of Officers Bylaws Changes Reservation Form for December Dinner</p>	<p><b><i>It's time to renew your chapter membership!</i></b> Renew by the end of the year to help the chapter report our membership numbers to MOAA. See page 4. If you are not already a Life Members, why not sign up at MOAA and help the chapter achieve a higher percentage of Life members, and reduce the mailing costs.</p> <p>Have a wonderful, safe, and family Thanksgiving. See you all at the December dinner meeting. Blessings to all.</p> <p><i>Warren</i></p>	

**CHAPTER MEETING—SEPTEMBER 10**



We had a great chapter meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup> at the Officers Club with 45 members attending as we greeted and listened to MG Cloutier, new CG of US Army Training Center and Fort Jackson. He provided information on the direction that the Army is heading with the pending reductions in troop strengths in the coming years in order to meet the mandated goals set by sequestration. Not an easy task – difficult to see any win-win especially in light of the noise levels in Europe, Russia, and China. MG Cloutier led the Army team from Washington that visited Army communities across the US to assess community support. You may have been in attendance when the team visited Columbia with its great turnout of support. It would appear that the support shown was indicative of the results for this community. Bill Dukes, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, was also in attendance at our meeting and echoed support for the community and MG Cloutier. In closing, MG Cloutier remarks stressed that all the Services have a difficult road ahead with the Congressional vs. Administration still unresolved financial issues, and an ever changing foreign policy issue over Syria, Russian intervention, China’s threats, cybersecurity, and ISIS. Thanks to those who came to the meeting, and we were able to also get some financial support for the scholarship program.



**SC COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS CONFERENCE**

The Biennial South Carolina Council of Chapters Conference was held on October 9-10 in Beaufort and events were held at the Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, and at the Marine Corps Recruiting Depot - Parris Island. Over 130 attended representing ten of the twelve chapters in the state. The conference was a joint effort of our chapter and the Low Country chapter, both who celebrated their 50th year of affiliation with MOAA. VADM Ryan, President and CEO of MOAA, was present and presented both chapter presidents with their Affiliate Certificates at the Lyceum Center on Parris Island. At the Council Business meeting, COL David Lobb, Aiken, was elected President of the South Carolina Council, replacing COL Dale Ellenburg after his six year term ended. COL Warren Benson was re-elected 1st Vice President, and Col Tom Robillard was elected as Vice President, Legislative Affairs. At the conference, the attendees were given a tour of the new F-35 jet fighters now stationed at the MCAS Beaufort. Awesome weapon system!



## MOAA 2015 ANNUAL MEETING—ORLANDO



The annual MOAA meeting was held in Orlando on October 30-31 and our chapter president represented the chapter during the conference. Our Chapter received the 4 Star Level of Excellence award for the first time in our chapter's history. Ed Palekas was responsible for collecting and submitting the myriad of data and information covering membership, legislative, chapter activities, and other pertinent elements to fulfill the requirements set out by MOAA. The MOAA Annual meeting was also held in conjunction with the Military Chaplains Association (MCA) as these two organizations have joined forces to have a greater collective voice on the Hill on legislative affairs dealing with personnel, families, and the protection of earned benefits. Also at the meeting, our chapter chaplain, COL CH (Ret) Sam Boone, received the David E. White Leadership Award from MOAA which recognizes lifetime commitment as a chaplain, vision for Joint service and inter-agency collaboration, and overall ministry professionalism. This annual award is selected by a committee from MOAA and MCA. Well done, Sam.



This was the last meeting for VADM Ryan, who after 13 years as President of MOAA, ended his tenure and comments by announcing his successor, Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret), whose appointment as president and CEO of MOAA will begin Jan. 4, 2016. He commented on the valuable support from the many chapters and councils as they "Stormed the Hill" annually to meet with each Senator and Representative from the home districts. He said that this is the heart and soul of MOAA. He also mentioned several recent changes, including the MOAA logo refresh, the redesigned website, and the new tagline "Never Stop Serving." VADM Ryan received many well deserved accolades from the meeting attendees and the MOAA Board members. A quick snapshot of the council and chapter system was presented to the attendees, including: 31 councils and 411 chapters; 16 satellite chapters; a new chapter in Traverse City, Mich.; 25,000 new email addresses gained over three years that can be shared with affiliates; and 2,000 new chapter members recruited in 2015. One goal of MOAA is to have a chapter in each of the 435 Congressional Districts.

### CHAPTER BUSINESS

It is recommended by the Executive Committee that some of the current Bylaws need some updating and changes. The last revisions of the Bylaws were in 1999, before TROA became MOAA. The changes proposed will reflect our current chapter address, include all of the Services eligible for membership, discussion of honorary membership in the chapter, dropping a member if dues are not paid within 90 days, and provisions pertaining to membership for "two years" yet specifying later that annual dues will be payable provides for a conflict in terms. These and other minor amendments will be presented to the membership prior to the annual meeting in January.

According to the Bylaws, the election of officers of the Chapter will take place at the annual meeting in January. The slate of officers will be presented to the membership at that time. Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting. We recently received a list of Life Members in our area who are not chapter members and we will be reaching out to them to become a part of our chapter and reconnect with MOAA. It is still hard to identify those officers who have had previous service, but not retired—yet they are eligible to become members.

### WASHINGTON BUSINESS

Budget Issues continue: House and Senate conferees finally agreed to move forward with an annual defense bill, one with a lower than expected pay raise and significant changes to military pay and benefits. Also impacted will be TRICARE fee increases, pharmacy changes, and retirement changes. Effective last month, most TRICARE beneficiaries were required to fill their long-term prescriptions via mail-order or through military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies. It started out as a pilot program, but like some government programs, once it gets in place, it soon becomes policy. Recently you may have noticed in the media about concerns in pharmacy compounding fraud amounting to millions of dollars in several states.

VA: Six years ago, the Obama administration set the ambitious goal of ending veteran homelessness in 2015 and ending the backlog in disability claims. It appears likely the Department of Veterans Affairs will miss both targets, even though it has made progress. MOAA is trying a test program in a few chapters to establish a chapter VSO to assist veterans with the filing and appeal processes. With too many wounded service members struggling to get timely and consistent mental health care at the Department of Veterans Affairs, the agency is looking outside its own walls to get them the help they need.

Plans to close Gitmo 'very close': The plan will provide several options for housing Guantanamo detainees in the U.S. It comes after months of research by a small Pentagon team, which assessed feasible options and costs in response to a Congressional request. As we know here in South Carolina, one of the options is in the Charleston area.

"Boots on the ground" policy appears to be changing as escalation continues in the mid-east, and what do you do when China builds an island in the ocean and claims it as their own? So now that we have reduced the troop strength in Europe over the past few years, is it now time to rethink what we did?

December 12, Saturday, 1200 Noon WREATHES ACROSS AMERICA—placing wreathes at each of the 4200 headstone markers at the Fort Jackson National Cemetery. Our Chapter again contributed to this activity this year.



January 30, 2016, Saturday, 0900 AM ANNUAL MEETING, Fort Jackson Officers Club

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2016**

Please renew your membership for the coming year and let us know of any changes in your address, email, phone, or family changes. If you are a member of MOAA at the national level, that does not automatically give you membership at our chapter. They are separate processes. The earlier you get your membership dues of \$25 in, the earlier we can finally publish a directory of active members. Send in your check with any information changes to Warren at the address below.



*Columbia Chapter 50th Anniversary Dinner  
Reservation*

*Friday December 4 from 6 to 9 PM  
Fort Jackson Officer's Club*

**QUEST SPEAKER**

*MG George Goldsmith (Ret)*

*Your Chapter—Past, Present, and Future*

RESERVATIONS RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 1 OR EMAIL:

COL WARREN BENSON  
304 PINWOOD COTTAGE LANE  
BLYTHEWOOD, SC 29016  
bensonwdb@aol.com C: 463-2924

COAT AND TIE ATTIRE

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

Spouse/Guest(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Reservations \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$35 \$ Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

I would like Seating Preferences (table) with: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check(s) payable **Columbia MOAA Chapter**, please write December 4 Dinner Meeting in the memo area.