



December 2011

Vol. 2, Issue 6

New River Chapter Newsletter



5-Star Chapter  
Awarded For:  
2010



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Doug Ehrhardt, CAPT, USN (Ret)

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Charles Knapp, COL, USA (Ret)

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Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret)

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C.M. (Mac) Hunt, CDR, USN (Ret)

Personal Affairs Committee Chair:

Karen Strickland, CAPT, USNR (Ret)

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Ron Schuette, LTC, USA (Ret)

At-Large Director:

Louis Burge, Maj, USAF (Ret)

Auxiliary/Spouse Liaison:

Betty Schuette

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Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret)

Webmaster:

Doug Ehrhardt, CAPT, USN (Ret)

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**December Program:** Pot-luck holiday social at the home of Charles and Mary Knapp. The fun begins at 1730 on 3 December. Bring your favorite dish to share...drinks will be provided.



### From the President...

Thanksgiving's come and gone and as I think about this edition of the *New River Current*, I have to pause and consider the many things for which I have to be thankful. As your President, I'm especially thankful for the interest and support our members have shown since our chartering on 28 August 2009. Add to that the opportunity Cathy and I had to travel to San Antonio to receive a streamer identifying our Chapter as a 5-Star MOAA chapter and I feel even more thankful. The Community Heroes Appreciation Banquet and the Levels of Excellence Awards Dinner gave me many reasons to pause and reflect...I hope you'll feel the same.



If you've had a chance to visit the "News and Events" link on our website: [www.newrivermoaa.org](http://www.newrivermoaa.org), or the "Daily Buzz" on MOAA's webpage: [www.moaa.org/main\\_secondary.aspx?id=8079](http://www.moaa.org/main_secondary.aspx?id=8079), you may have already read the inspirational stories of four individuals and four groups that were presented awards for providing services and care for our warriors and veterans. If not, follow one of the above links and do so now. In one sense, their stories made me feel especially proud to be associated with MOAA and the things the more than 370,000 members of the organization are doing to support military servicemen and women, their families, and veterans everywhere. In another sense, however, I heard about their efforts and thought, "I wish there were more that we could do!"

In short, while we live in the beautiful mountains of northwest North Carolina – for which I know we are all thankful – we don't have the sheer numbers of warriors and veterans of say Florida, Texas or California, but there are ways we can be involved. If you've not already signed on to receive MOAA National's legislative update, make a point to also do so at this time. Our "One powerful voice," MOAA's tag line, could not be more important and relevant as it is at this time when the Congress looks for ways to trim the federal budget, often at the expense of the military!! Happy holidays, and thanks for being a part of the New River Chapter.

Very respectfully, *Doug* (MOAA Life Member)

# New River Chapter Happenings

## Sears Scholarship Fundraising Event

**Big Success:** Besting our success during the *Christmas in July* celebration, members manning our *Festival of the Frescoes* booth in Glendale Springs received scholarship donations for nineteen sets of postcards on 8 October. Pictured at right are: Doug Ehrhardt, Louise Holmes, Lee Holmes (holding "Sam I Am") and Monica Madden-Lynn. The Sears Scholarship Fund was established in 2010 for the purpose of providing local college-bound JROTC cadets with a scholarship.



## Annual Meeting Held on 18 October:

The membership unanimously voted to keep the Chapter dues at \$20.00 annually. In addition, several amendments were made to the Chapter bylaws to streamline the election of officer and board members. Mac Hunt also proposed the terms of office be set at two years for all officer and board members. All proposed amendments were unanimously approved. (See p. 5 for Board of Director election results.)



## 5-Star Streamer Awarded:

Chapter President Doug Ehrhardt and his wife Cathy attended MOAA's annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas during the last weekend of October where he accepted our first-ever 5-Star award streamer on behalf of the membership! Four of North Carolina's 17 MOAA chapters received National's top award.



Doug Ehrhardt, Fred Black (NC Council of Chapters President) and Arlie Smith (Cape Fear Chapter) with streamers.



ADM (Ret) Steve Abbott, MOAA Board Chairman, and Doug Ehrhardt.

### Levels of Excellence

Each year MOAA recognizes its best performing chapters through its 4- and 5-Star *Levels of Excellence* program. Points are assessed based on established grading criteria with a maximum of 240 eligible to be earned. In 2010, its first year eligible, the New River Chapter earned 235 points and 5-Star status.



## Programs & Membership Committee Report

Mac Hunt, CDR, USN (Ret) & MOAA Life Member

New River Chapter members present at the October annual meeting will remember my appeal for your communications to members of Congress with regards to the possibility of further significant reductions in Department of Defense (DOD) budgets if the joint House of Representatives—Senate "Super Committee" failed to reach agreement on measures to realize the target for decreases in overall federal spending. Now with the knowledge of that group's admission of defeat, the arrival of 2013 will herald the beginning of yet another round of evisceration of DOD capabilities — to the tune of \$600 billion in lost support — during the following decade, unless Congressional actions modify or reverse those scheduled curtailments. Otherwise, this nation's Army will be on track to devolve to its 1940 scale and the Navy will return to 1915 strength (*Editor's Note: ...and, according to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, the smallest Air Force in its history*). If these force-structure projections alarm you, I strongly encourage sharing of those sentiments with the members of your North Carolina delegation to Congress, whose contact information is published elsewhere in this issue of *New River Current*.

In a related item, in September the administration proposed \$27 billion in cuts in military retirement and health care benefits during the next 10 years. The November, 2011 edition of MOAA's *Military Officer* magazine features columns by the Editor, Colonel-Ret. Warren S. Lacey, "Join the Fight" and by MOAA President, Vice Admiral-Ret. Norb Ryan, Jr., "Battle Stations." These features can be accessed via: [www.qg.com/smartools/ebook/hosted.rails?issue=4c7237e7affd4ce3a569820e93a13a99a0389ab5aac14b59bd97820e93a13a99](http://www.qg.com/smartools/ebook/hosted.rails?issue=4c7237e7affd4ce3a569820e93a13a99a0389ab5aac14b59bd97820e93a13a99).

Select pages 10 and 12 with the arrows flanking the counter at the top of each page; then use the magnifier to the right of the counter to read the columns. As VADM Ryan states in the introduction to his article, "MOAA needs you to join the fight" in Congress to preserve the earned benefits of the current and retired members of the U. S. armed services. Please do so, regardless of your armed-forces or civilian status, by reading this "Action Alert" message, personalizing the "letter," and sending it to your Representative and Senators: <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=53748506>.

The same issue of *Military Officer* also features letters from three MOAA members which are germane to the subject of proposed diminution in the armed-services' members' earned benefits. Those can be accessed as well through the website: [www.qg.com/smartools/ebook/hosted.rails?issue=4c7237e7affd4ce3a569820e93a13a99a0389ab5aac14b59bd97820e93a13a99](http://www.qg.com/smartools/ebook/hosted.rails?issue=4c7237e7affd4ce3a569820e93a13a99a0389ab5aac14b59bd97820e93a13a99).

Select pages 14 and 16 with the counter at the page top; then, as before, use the magnifier to the right of the counter to read the letters. Two of these letters are printed below for ease of reading:



"After reading the latest MOAA *Legislative Update*, I feel that our commander-in-chief is being misled by his staff advisors. I'm referring to the administration proposal to reduce the military health care program by \$27 billion and a further reduction in the military retiree health care program, i.e., the financial intent being to generate savings by bringing the military health care and retirement systems more in line with civilian plans.

It is highly probable that administration staff making these recommendations are nonmilitary personnel who have no idea what a tour of military duty is like. I am reluctantly ready to accept a "fair share" financial sacrifice because of the financial plight of our country, but if my health [care] benefits are being compromised to make them the same as [those of] federal service civilians, who suffer from "computer fatigue" rather than "battlefield fatigue," then I say no way.

May I suggest the president take these staffers out of their air-conditioned offices and place them in the heat of the Afghanistan climate for a tour of duty? If they then like the military retiree health [care] benefits, they can remain in service and earn them after 20 years." — CMDR. Loren M. Thorson, USNR-Ret. via email

"Why is it that in all of the discussions on possible new rules for retirement pay there is no mention of the "hip pocket" orders that I carried with me for 18 years after leaving active duty?

As a Regular Army officer I was subject to recall until the age of 60, at the pleasure of the president, without a national emergency being declared. I had 72 hours to report to my designated duty station in Fort Huachuca [Ariz.] for assignment in some intelligence capacity. I turned 60 in 1990 and missed being a part of the first Gulf War by about six months.

The money I received in retirement had very real strings attached. The possibility of being involuntarily recalled to active duty was always present, yet that fact is never presented in discussions of future military retirement. The public has never heard of hip pocket orders, and I'll wager neither have some of the bean counters working in DOD. Let's get the word out and be sure it is factored into any discussion on future military retired pay." — Lt. Col. I. T. Shepard, USA-Ret., Ph.D., Bainbridge Island, Wash.

In summary, I urge you to take action on these issues by making your voice heard loudly and clearly by members of Congress. (*Editor's Note: See a related story on p. 5, "Do Legislators Read Your Mail?"*)



## Personal Affairs Committee Report

Karen Strickland, CAPT, USNR (Ret) & MOAA Life Member

The monthly electronic retiree account statement (eRAS) is now in effect as of 1 November 2011. This means a military retiree will be getting a new eRAS on their MyPay website account every month. Presently there are close to 1 million military retirees who choose to go electronic in order to monitor their personal benefits such as current pay, survivor benefits, allotments, and to check on tax withholdings and to confirm direct deposit. There is also a counter on the eRAS which informs the member how much longer they will be paying premiums for SBP (survivor benefit plan). As you may recall, effective Oct 2008 participants reaching the age of 70 years of age or making a total of 360 payments will no longer have to pay premiums for SBP coverage.



Most active duty and reserve military are already familiar with the website MyPay <https://mypay.dfas.mil>, where they are able to view their gross pay, SBP costs, and taxable income, including the amount of federal withholding status, total exemptions and federal income tax withheld. Now, with the new eRAS, retirees will receive e-mail notification each month when their eRAS is available. In the past the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

only issued a RAS in December or when there was a change in the retiree's benefits, in their pay or account information. The annual RAS statements will continue as usual along with the new eRAS information.

The eRAS website is available/open 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world, so if any changes need to be made concerning your address, changes in banks or withholdings etc., then the changes can be made on-line and will become effective in 3 to 5 business days. If a member should have trouble opening their account, then they may fax or mail a request to: DFAS Retired Military Pay, P.O. Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130. The fax number is 1-800-469-6559. Another option is to use the "AskDFAS" link on the DFAS home page to request information concerning your account. If you are on Facebook, like so many of us, then you can "like" the DFAS page and post your question on their wall and a representative will respond to you. If any MOAA member should require or need assistance in receiving this valuable information from the DFAS, then please go to another savvy MOAA member who can guide you through the steps of logging into MyPay and following the detailed instructions on the [www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary](http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary) website.

Finally, just a reminder about the change in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2011 which means that DFAS will now process your pay by the first day of the month (if the day falls on a holiday or a weekend then the pay date is moved to the prior business day). Consequently, you will receive 13 checks in the 2011 tax year and then will resume to the usual 12 checks by 2012 (this schedule does not affect annuity payments).

Please feel free to submit article requests for the Personal Affairs column that may be of interest or concern for you.



## Auxiliary & Spouse Update

Betty Schuette, Auxiliary & Spouse Liaison

As a surviving spouse why not consider creating a legacy as a meaningful way to honor your spouse's memory? One way to do so is to designate a scholarship in his or her name. With a donation of \$25,000 over a five year period, a scholarship will be created and awarded annually to a deserving student of a military family. The student receives an interest free loan and a small grant to help pay expenses.

You can visit [moaa.org/facesofdonors](http://moaa.org/facesofdonors) to see photographs and read stories of donors who have honored a loved one through a designated scholarship. The donation is tax deductible and not one penny goes toward administrative costs.

Learn more at [moaa.org/scholarship](http://moaa.org/scholarship) if you are interested in this way of honoring your spouse's memory.



## Board of Director Election Results

Military Officers Association of America



New River Chapter

Per the Chapter bylaws which were amended at October's annual meeting, the following slate of candidates were elected to fill officer and board positions for the next two years: **President:** Doug Ehrhardt; **1st Vice President:** Charles Knapp; **Secretary/Treasurer:** Ken Lynn; **At-Large Director:** Ron Schuette; **At-Large Director:** Louis Burge.



### Do Legislators Read Your Mail? (Condensed from *Military Officer*, Nov. 2011)

And that's just counting the various media options we have the ability to monitor. In the past few months alone, you've generated more than 300,00 email messages to Congress. A regular question from members is, "Do those form emails, letters, and postcards get listened to? While the impact can vary with individual legislators, issues, and volume of mail, the short answer is "definitely."

In 2010, MOAA members generated more than 1 million communications to Congress.

The most powerful communication is a short, hand-written letter. But relatively few actually do that. That's where MOAA can help — by providing suggested text, electronic systems that automatically load your legislators' email address, and pre-addressed tear-out letters and postcards in (*Military Officer*) magazine. How do we know legislators pay attention to that communication? Because they and their staffs tell us they do. At one Armed Services Committee hearing, the chair had hearing tables stacked with thousands of MOAA-generated tear-out letters. He told governments witnesses, "If you think we're going to ignore these letters, you need to think again."

We also know they listen based on legislators' cosponsorship of our key legislation (which rises after a mail campaign) and by our success in winning enactment of legislation. Will some staffers tell you they ignore mass mailings? On occasion. But that almost certainly isn't their boss' position. Legislators know they ignore constituent input at their electoral peril. Most Hill offices have a rule of thumb that for every letter, there are another 10 or more constituents who care about the same issue. Some organizations or individuals generate mass messaging from a single fax machine, etcetera. Those aren't real inputs, and do get ignored for the most part. But when large numbers of individual constituents take the time to send individual messages or letters, that's a different thing. So don't let anybody tell you sending an MOAA-suggested message or letter won't make a difference. In the tough budget times ahead, maximizing grassroots input to legislators has never been more important — © 2011 MOAA.

## How to Contact Your State and Federal Representatives

**Rep. Jonathan Jordan:** NC House of Representatives, 300 North Salisbury St., Room 418C, Raleigh, NC 27603-5925; Tel.: 919-733-7727; E-mail: [jonathan.jordan@ncleg.net](mailto:jonathan.jordan@ncleg.net)

**Sen. Dan Soucek** NC Senate, 300 North Salisbury St., Room 310, Raleigh, NC 27603-5925; Tel.: (919) 733-5742; E-mail: [dan.soucek@ncleg.net](mailto:dan.soucek@ncleg.net)

**Rep. Virginia Foxx:** 1230 Longworth House Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515; Tel.: 202-225-2071 [nc05reply@mail.house.gov](mailto:nc05reply@mail.house.gov)

**Sen. Kay Hagan:** 521 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510; Tel: 202-224-6342

**Sen. Richard Burr:** 217 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510; Tel.: 202- 224-3154

### TidBits

The following link takes you to a summary of state benefits for veterans: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/north-carolina-state-veterans-benefits.htm>.



### Funny Bone



**Bomb Squad Humor...**



## Navy News

Compiled by Jim Dunne, CAPT, USNR (Ret) & MOAA Life Member

- The U.S. Navy's 2ND Fleet was officially disestablished on 30 September 2011 at Norfolk, VA, in an effort to reduce organizational redundancy and cut costs. From the 1950s through its retirement, the 2ND Fleet was the Navy's East Coast operational hub. It supported U.S. interests and responded to contingencies ranging from the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis to the 2010 Haitian earthquake relief efforts. It was a major player during the Cold War, working to deter Soviet aggression and supporting NATO's efforts to keep the Atlantic Ocean open for the transport of men and material to Europe if war had broken out between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The Fleet's assets have been merged with the U.S. Fleet Forces Command.
- The Department of the Navy is working through an unspecified number of budget scenarios as it deals with the Budget Control Act of 2011, passed in August, and prepares for its part of a 10-year spending reduction that will impact DoD. The Navy currently has a requirement for 323 ships and the hope is that any reductions in the force structure will be matched to the national military strategy. One worst-case assessment being discussed on Capitol Hill would be a reduction of 50 or 60 ships, including two carrier strike groups, to a level of 238 ships.
- The U.S. military plans to add a lethal new drone to its fleet – a robotic helicopter for the U.S. Navy equipped with laser-guided rockets. The armed Fire Scouts will mark a new era in naval warfare, offering an alternative to pilots flying attack helicopters or fighter jets off warships and reflecting a broader shift to robotic technology across the U.S. military in recent years. An unarmed version of the MQ-8B Fire Scout is already flying surveillance and reconnaissance missions for the U.S. Navy, using cameras and sensors inside a cone on the aircraft's nose. Northrop Grumman won a contract in September worth \$17 million to outfit the choppers with 70 mm rockets and with racks capable of carrying eight or 14 of the weapons on an aircraft.



## Marine Corps News

Compiled by Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret) & MOAA Life Member



- The Marine Corps celebrated its 236th birthday on 10 November. When created by Congress, the mission of the Corps was to protect American interests at home and overseas. Today the mission remains the same...although the tools of the trade are a bit different.



- In an agreement announced last month between President Obama and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, plans are in the works for 250 Marines to deploy to Australia next year to lay the groundwork for up to 2,500 to deploy over the next several years. The move is viewed as a response to China's growing aggressiveness and Beijing responded quickly condemning the announcement. The Marines will be organized as a special purpose MAGTAF and be based at Robertson Barracks in Darwin, a military base on the northern coast. In addition to the Marines, more U.S. aircraft will also rotate through Australia and more U.S. ships will transit through Sterling naval base south of Perth. Defense Secretary Panetta said the goal of the new security pact is to signal the two countries will stick together in the face of threats.



- Working with the Office of Naval Research, Marines at Camp Smith, HI, are testing a high-tech trash disposal system that reduces a 50-gallon bag of waste to a half-pint jar of ash. The Micro Auto Gasification System (MAGS) may be a solution to help Marines win the battle against waste disposal at remote forward operating locations. MAGS is environmentally friendly and fuel efficient. It has a low carbon footprint, invisible emissions and waste heat can also be used for other purposes such as heating water or living quarters.



## Army News

Compiled by Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret) & MOAA Life Member



- President Obama designated historic Fort Monroe, VA, as a national monument under the National Park Service (NPS) last month. Built in 1819 after the British sailed up the Chesapeake Bay and burned the nation's capitol during the war of 1812, Lt. Robert E. Lee was one of the young engineers who worked on the seven-sided fortress and he personally supervised construction of the moat. The fort also played a very prominent role during the Civil War, aiding in protecting the Union coastline. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was held as a prisoner at the fort after the war. The NPS will manage 57 percent of the land while some of the other buildings will be leased and 174 housing units will be rented to military and civilian families.



- The first Apache Block III helicopter was delivered to the Army on 2 November. The new aircraft has better engines, improved avionics, a more integrated computer-networking capacity and increased maneuverability over other attack helicopters. The Army plans to acquire 690 Block III Apaches through 2026. Some aircraft will be remanufactured and others will be built completely new. Maj. Gen. Tim Crosby, the Army's program executive officer for aviation, called the helicopter "an amazing game-changer." During a press conference, he went on to say that no other helicopter in the world could match the new Apache.

- The Army's need for energy has become a legitimate energy security issue, which is defined as the uninterrupted physical availability of energy at a price which is affordable and respects environmental concerns. At Fort Bragg, NC, energy is a huge cost, but is vital for carrying out the mission. In 2010, the installation spent \$43 million on energy. The DoD has recognized the need for energy security at military installations and Fort Bragg has embarked on a Net Zero energy-saving initiative. Under this program the installation will eventually produce at least as much energy as it consumes, or more than it consumes, through the use of renewable technologies and conservation.

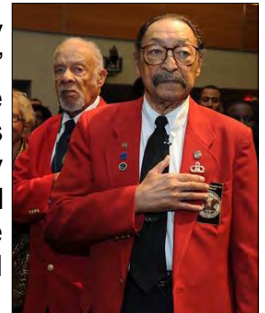


## Air Force News

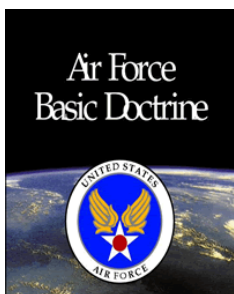
Compiled by Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret) & MOAA Life Member

Over 150 Airmen attended a red carpet event in Washington the day preceding Veterans Day to screen the documentary "Double Victory" about the Tuskegee Airmen. The documentary is in support of the new feature movie about the Tuskegee Airman, "Red Tails," that's scheduled to be released in January 2012. Air Force Secretary

Michael Donley and Tuskegee Airmen William Broadwater and Lemuel Lewie, Jr., attended the screening along with Cuba Gooding, Jr., narrator of "Double Victory" and star of "Red Tails." After the screening, Broadwater, Lewie and Gooding answered questions during a panel-style Q&A session.



- Defense Secretary Leon Panetta ordered the USAF to consider imposing stronger punishment on those responsible for the gross mismanagement of the military mortuary at Dover AFB. Earlier, Panetta had announced an independent review of how procedures could be improved at the mortuary. On at least two occasions, body parts were lost, in April 2009 and July 2010. The USAF took disciplinary action against the top three supervisors, but did not fire anyone. Panetta told Air Force Secretary Donley to examine whether the punishments were appropriate and to report back to him.



- The USAF has updated its two capstone doctrine documents, AFDD1 and 1-1. "Much has transpired in the world since the previous edition of AFDD1 was published in 2003," writes CSAF Gen. Norton A. Schwartz in the foreword to AFDD 1. The definition of airpower was refined as "the ability to project military power or influence through the control and exploitation of air, space and cyberspace to achieve strategic, operational or tactical objectives." Discussions of cyberspace, integration of nuclear support and an expanded discussion of Guard and Reserve integration were included in the update. AFDD 1-1 expanded the definition of "Airman." "When addressing the larger audience within the service, the term Airman now includes all uniformed members of the Air Force (including active, Reserve and Guard), as well as Department of the Air Force civilians."

# Calendar of Events

**Regular membership meetings** are held at the *West Jefferson Coffee House* on the Backstreet in West Jefferson starting at 1830 hours on the third Tuesday of the following months unless otherwise noted: March, April, May, June, July, August (picnic social), September, October (annual meeting) and December (holiday social). Board of Director meetings are generally held immediately prior to general membership meetings beginning at 1730 hours.

**Upcoming:** Pot-luck holiday social at the home of Charles and Mary Knapp starting at 1730 on 3 December. Bring your favorite dish to share. Hope to see everyone there!



**Want to Comment on Something You Read in the *New River Current*?:** Mail your response to: Editor, *New River Current*, P.O. Box 1202, Jefferson, NC 28640...or e-mail the editor at: [Lynn001@aol.com](mailto:Lynn001@aol.com). Please keep your comments to no more than 150 words. All responses must include your name, retired/former rank, and/or affiliation.

## NRC Thanks These Local Businesses for Outstanding Chapter Support




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MOAA is a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and the preservation of earned entitlements for uniformed services members, their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, or NOAA and their surviving spouses.