



February 2012

Vol. 3, Issue 1

New River Chapter Newsletter



5-Star Chapter  
Awarded For:  
2010



**February Announcement:** Chapter dues of \$20 for 2012 were



due by 31 Jan. If you haven't yet paid your dues, please mail a check to the following address: NRC MOAA, Box 1202, Jefferson, NC 28640.

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

Personal Affairs Committee Chair:

Karen Strickland, CAPT, USNR (Ret)

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Auxiliary/Spouse Liaison:

Betty Schuette

Newsletter Editor:

Ken Lynn, Col, USAF (Ret)

Webmaster:

Doug Ehrhardt, CAPT, USN (Ret)

### From the President...

Between my December 2011 column and now, I'm feeling very privileged to be able to serve as your Chapter President. In just three short months, it has been my honor to attend, and represent New River at the annual meeting of MOAA National in San Antonio, TX, and recently, to participate in a quarterly meeting of the North Carolina Council of Chapters at Fort Bragg, NC. In each instance, I came away from the two days of activities – dinners, workshops on ways to improve MOAA's outreach, award ceremonies, and listening to guest speakers – with a heightened sense of pride and personal gratification at being part of one of the truly greatest member organizations anywhere. The fact that one of MOAA's goals is to be a leading voice on compensation and benefit issues for retired servicemembers, that effort pales in comparison to an even more important and relevant mission on ways to support the **currently serving** members and their families.



I was particularly humbled while listening to the guest speaker at Fort Bragg, MG Mark Graham, USA, who gave a riveting testimony of his family's heartbreaking story of losing a son to suicide from the unseen dangers of depression and only a few months later, another son to the war in Iraq. If you've not already had a chance to visit our [www.newrivermoaa.org](http://www.newrivermoaa.org) website, follow the link to *News and Events* and learn more on this story. It certainly gave me pause to feel blessed beyond words for the many, many good things I've enjoyed during my years of active, and now retired military service.

But that's not the end! To support MOAA's current and potential, members, I urge everyone to read the *WashingtonSCENE* article, page 40, in the January 2012 **Military Officer** magazine to learn what MOAA has done for uniformed personnel in the last decade. Then, let's all strap on our 782 gear and get to work to stay focused on the Association's goals and how our "**One Powerful Voice**" can work to influence the Hill in 2012. I plan to, and I hope you will too!

Very respectfully, *Doug* (MOAA Life Member)

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# New River Chapter Happenings

**Taps:** RADM-Ret Scott L. Sears, a charter member and the New River Chapter's senior-ranking officer passed away on 31 December 2011. In his 29-year military career, Scott held numerous leadership as well as technical positions. He commanded the Los Angeles class nuclear-powered attack submarine USS Albuquerque, and spent more than three years as a Program Manager at the Naval Sea Systems Command where he oversaw development of the combat system for the Seawolf class attack submarine. In 1992, he took command of the 7,000-member Naval Undersea Warfare Center where he was responsible for leading the nation's premier undersea research, development and engineering organization. Scott retired from the Navy in 1995.



RADM-Ret Scott L. Sears

After his distinguished naval career, Scott spent more than a decade excelling in the private sector where he worked for AT&T, General Dynamics and Raytheon. After permanently retiring in Warrensville with his wife Barbara in 2007, Scott served on both the county and regional library boards. He was a member of the Blue Ridge Electric Membership Advisory Committee and served as an assistant coordinator for the library's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. He was also a founding member of the Ashe County Frescoes Foundation, serving as a past president. In addition, he was a two-time volunteer helping put on the Ashe County Armed Forces Tribute.

In an interesting twist of fate, Scott passed away at 7:06 p.m.; 706 was the hull number of the USS Albuquerque that he commanded. The New River Chapter thanks Rear Admiral Sears for his long and dedicated service to our country and for his invaluable leadership in helping us stand-up our Chapter. Fair winds and following seas. Click here to read a more extensive bibliography/obituary: [http://www.jeffersonpost.com/view/full\\_story/16996246/article-Scott-L--Sears?instance=secondary\\_stories\\_left\\_column](http://www.jeffersonpost.com/view/full_story/16996246/article-Scott-L--Sears?instance=secondary_stories_left_column)



## **Ehrhardt Named NC Council of Chapters 3rd Vice President:** New River Chapter President

Doug Ehrhardt was sworn in as the 3rd Vice President of the North Carolina Council of Chapters on 14 January. There are currently 17 active MOAA chapters in North Carolina and Doug will serve two years as 3rd Vice President, dealing primarily with membership issues within the state chapter system, before continuing up the line of succession and ultimately serving as President for the North Carolina Council. In his new capacity he'll be able to keep us informed of important activities ongoing both state-wide and nationally.





## Programs & Membership Committee Report

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

“ALL HANDS ON DECK:” The target audience for this column far exceeds the membership of New River Chapter (NRC), because all of us stand to lose in the current efforts in Washington further to slash the weapons and people-program budgets of the U. S. armed services — most of all, those of you receiving this newsletter who have never served, and will never serve, in a Department of Defense (DOD) uniform against this nation’s armed enemies. Currently, fewer than 0.5 percent of your fellow citizens make the sacrifices to defend and protect you; and that figure is already scheduled to decrease significantly, by previously enacted legislation.



I consider these issues so important as to dwell on them again in this month’s publication. Each of us has a stake in the outcomes of these deliberations; consequently, each of us must educate him/herself on the proposals before Congress, and convey to his/her members of Congress directions on how to vote on them. Once again, I urge all of you — regardless of status — to perform this communication by means of the following easily used Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) editable “Action Alert” message format: <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=53748506&PROCESS=Take+Action>. Both my wife and I have used this mechanism.



As I stated in December, the failure of the appointed Congressional “Super Committee” to agree on recommendations to decrease the federal budget deficit by \$1.2 trillion during the next 10 years is scheduled to trigger automatic cuts, beginning January, 2013, in the budgets of designated departments — with half of that total to come from the defense budget. Combining that \$600 billion sum with \$450 billion in budget reductions already underway for the DOD will result in more than \$1 trillion in losses to weapons and personnel programs. Benefits for active and retired armed services personnel, and their families, will suffer significantly, with the obvious consequences of the recent-history-proven losses of even greater numbers of men and women, because of their unwillingness — under the voluntary-force concept — to make potential life-and-limb sacrifices for reduced rewards and compensation. The January issue of MOAA’s *Military Officer* features comprehensive, to-the-point summaries of the details of all the current assaults on the funding of our defense structure (“Benefits at Risk,” page 10; “Stay Engaged,” page 12; and the “Washington Scene,” pages 31 - 38): <http://content.yudu.com/A1uzox/201201/resources/33.htm> (select the page numbers 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). I urge you to read these articles, and to use their information as a basis for personalizing your “Action Alert” message, as referenced in the 2nd paragraph. I further encourage the viewing of the MOAA video-recording “Dear Soldier” (<http://www.youtube.com/themoaachannel>) and the sharing of this column and *New River Current* with all your contacts.



Finally, there is a position on the MOAA Board of Directors for this region (North Carolina and Virginia) to be filled by the MOAA membership, through balloting in August of this year. Details regarding submissions of nominations or candidacies for this seat can also be located in *Military Officer* (<http://content.yudu.com/A1uzox/201201/resources/33.htm>, pages 28 and 29).

**Quote of the Month**  
 “We’re going from three cops to two cops in a pretty tough neighborhood.”  
 — Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta on the effects of impending defense cuts.

### Important Dates in 2012

- Mid Feb:** President submits annual budget; administration and Pentagon’s \$450 billion defense cuts are visible.
- Late March:** Six weeks after budget, Congress submits their “views and estimates” of spending and revenue.
- April:** House and Senate Budget Committees draft and mark up concurrent budget resolutions.
- May:** House and Senate Armed Service Committees begin work on FY2013 Defense Authorization Bill.
- May – July:** Full House and Senate pass their respective versions of the defense bill.
- July – Oct:** House and Senate negotiators resolve differences between their respective versions.
- Oct – Dec:** Final Defense Authorization Bill passed by House and Senate and becomes law.
- Dec 31:** Deadline to pass alternate debt reduction plan to avoid sequestration process cutting another \$600 billion.

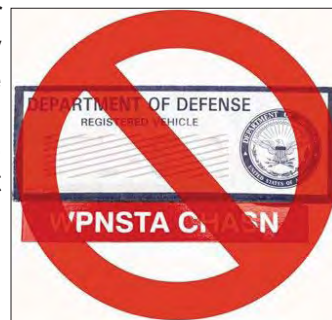


## Personal Affairs Committee Report

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

Soon those military decals one sees on the windshields of all active duty, DoD, Reserve and Retiree vehicles will become obsolete on major military installations. The decals were never meant to be a means of security protection for military bases. The decals only indicated to the security guards posted at the entrance to the base that the decal was issued to an individual who met all the requirements for registration of their vehicle on the day that the decal was issued. The requirements were: 1) current vehicle insurance, 2) current driver's license, 3) and state registration and inspection of the vehicle. Since the decals are valid for three years there is the possibility that the above requirements are not current at the time a vehicle enters a base and that vehicle does not have legitimate access to the base. Other concerns related to military decals are: 1) the decal could be counterfeit or, 2) displayed on a used vehicle that the former owner neglected to remove or, 3) the decal was removed from a legitimate military vehicle and replaced on a non military car to gain entrance to the base. It may be possible to do this but I would think it would be difficult to remove the decal very easily without damaging it.

Post 11 September 2001 (9/11), the entrance to military installations became a major security concern. Consequently all bases required a 100% military ID check for all vehicles entering a military installation, thus eliminating the need for vehicle decals. The Air Force was the first military service to take action concerning the ongoing cost of, and redundant use of, decals on vehicles. Air Force officials reported they spent as much as \$700,000 alone in 2005 just printing the DD form 2220 or decals. Officials believed the administrative demands in terms of manpower, plus supplies and printing the decals did not justify the benefits after 9/11. There was also the fear that decals presented a "red flag" in identifying military vehicles to potential terrorists or those persons or organizations having issues with the military and thus a threat to the driver and vehicle. Beginning in March 2007, Air Force installations no longer required privately owned vehicles to be registered or issued decals on their installations. Actually, Hill AFB in Utah instituted the new policy in 2005 on that base. Soon other bases followed: Hurlburt Field, Eglin AFB, Tyndall AFB, Keesler AFB, Goodfellow AFB, Columbus AFB, Dyess AFB and Lackland AFB. (No overseas bases use decals). The Navy and Army followed the Air Force's lead in not requiring decals on vehicles. In March 2011, the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and the Environment issued a directive ending the practice of issuing decals to active duty troops and base workers.



Civilians entering military installations still need to show their driver's license, insurance and registration at the visitor's center to obtain a pass. If they are driving a rental vehicle they will be required to show the rental contract which will serve as proof of registration, licensing and insurance. All visitors and contract workers must be sponsored by an individual or an organization and registered at the visitor's center before gaining base access.

Security guards at some military installations are now using a handheld scanner to input visitors' license plate information which is quickly checked in a database. This is now in practice at MacDill AFB.

Presently here at Kings Bay Submarine Base, both decals and ID checks are required. Ultimately the commander of a military installation can choose or not choose to discontinue use of the decals on vehicles. According to Military.com news, the Army Provost Marshall, Major General David E. Quantock, "has authorized the post and garrison commanders to do away with motor vehicle registration and decals if the commander sees no added value to security."

## Auxiliary & Spouse Update

Betty Schuette, Auxiliary & Spouse Liaison



The Auxiliary Member Advisory Committee reports the Cell Phone for Soldiers program has been a great success and the final report will be in the March *Affiliate*. Although we didn't collect enough old cell phones to report to the national committee, the cell phones we collected will be turned in to a nearby collection point and will be turned into phone cards for soldiers.



MOAA will continue to lobby on behalf of survivor benefits and Concurrent Receipt as they are discussed and voted upon in Congress during 2012. The national Auxiliary Committee is looking to chapters and their auxiliary liaisons to come up with new ideas and more ways to assist service members and their families in their community. I must become more familiar with service members

and their families residing in our area. If anyone has information or suggestions about needed help please let me know. I know our Chapter would be willing to help any service member or their family. Although our military community in this area is small, I'll keep close attention on what other chapters are doing and hope to gain some ideas as to ways we can become more active in assisting individuals or families who might benefit from our help.



## Sears Memorial Scholarship Fund Update

Linda Marsh, Scholarship Chairperson

In the wake of the loss of our beloved friend, community leader, and fellow MOAA chapter member, RADM-Ret Scott Sears, we're pushing ahead with this year's plans to boost this fund so a substantial JROTC scholarship can be awarded to a local student. The fund currently stands at \$7,670. We need to create a base principal that generates as much interest as we can find. If you have any ideas as to a risk-free, lucrative investment of these funds, please contact a committee or Board member.

At its March meeting, the Board will consider proposals for fund-raising for the scholarship fund. One idea is for our Chapter to sponsor a Sears Memorial Walk/Hike/Potluck in a nearby location (Mt. Jefferson, Price Lake) this summer. Walkers/hikers would pay a fee and bring a dish to share. Again, please let the scholarship committee know if you have ideas for fundraising.

Committee members are Monica Madden-Lynn, Jerry Lafferty, Barbara Sears, Cathy Ehrhardt, Ken Lynn (ex-officio), and Linda Marsh, Chairperson.

## Legislative Update

Last month DoD announced budget cutting proposals including increased TRICARE fees, large force cuts, future pay cutbacks and a military retirement and base closure commission. Retiree health care benefits take a big hit - most affected will be working age retirees under age 65. DoD's proposed changes include:

1. New enrollment fees and additional fee increases for retirees under age 65 enrolled in TRICARE by creating a "tiered" approach based on retired rank. This means-testing will require senior grade retirees to pay more for their health care;
2. An enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries 65 and older; and,
3. Additional increases in pharmacy co-pays with the goal of increasing the use of generics and the mail order pharmacy.

The "tiered" approach would make military retirees the only group of government retirees subject to healthcare means-testing; a concept we've fought ardently as it flies in the face of logic for military service incentive - basically, the longer and more successfully you serve, the less benefit you earn — © 2012 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



Need help finding the perfect kid-friendly hotel or the best resorts for that much needed relaxing weekend? Find military travel

discounts, tips and resources for planning your next trip along with other added benefits for MOAA members through National's own travel service provider!

### Funny Bone



Morocco Mole's sidekick, Secret Squirrel, formerly known for his crime-fighting prowess and spy master sleuthing, has been called to active duty!



## Navy News

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

- A Defense Information School Naval officer at Ft. Meade, MD recently returned home to recover after a surgical procedure in which he donated life saving bone marrow to a person he does not know. While the procedure itself is usually no more than two hours, the path to the hospital bed started for the 15-year veteran and Navy lieutenant commander more than two years ago. In July 2009, John T. Schofield was stationed aboard the USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77). He was asked by the ship's senior medical officer to run a marrow-donor registration drive for the C.W. Bill Young DoD Marrow Donor Program. Already a regular donor himself, Schofield was not only willing to help publicize the event, he also registered. Three years later, he got the call he never expected. "They called me early last month and told me I had been identified as a potential match for someone in need of a bone-marrow donation," he said. After all the follow-up tests, he got the news he hoped for: the donation was a go. Now that he's out of the hospital, he said he was humbled by all the thanks he received from the doctors and nurses following the surgery. But as much as he appreciated it, it wasn't necessary. A 57-year old patient needed his marrow for a chance at life. "The act of being a donor doesn't seem to me that it's something you should be thanked for," he said. "It's just something you should do."

- The fourth littoral combat ship was christened "Coronado" during a ceremony at Austal USA Shipyard in Mobile, AL on 14 Jan. Designated LCS 4, Coronado is an innovative surface combatant designed to operate in littoral seas and shallow water to counter mines, submarines and fast surface craft threats in coastal regions. The ship is capable of speeds in excess of 40 knots and can operate in water less than 20 feet deep. Coronado will address a critical capabilities gap in the littorals and conduct the Navy's mission to enhance maritime security by deterring hostility, maintaining a forward presence, projecting power and maintaining sea control. The ship's name recognizes the city of Coronado, CA., and honors the city's deep ties to the U.S. Navy. Two previous ships have been named after this city: USS Coronado (PF-38), a Tacoma-class patrol frigate, and USS Coronado (LPD/AGF-11), an Austin-class amphibious transport dock later re-designated as an auxiliary command ship.



## Marine Corps News

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

- Marine Capt. Kyle Ugone recently received a certificate naming him a Guinness World Record holder for the most completed Lego sets in a private collection. Although his collection contains 1,251 sets, only 1,091 sets were counted due to some being reproductions or not having original instructions. He began building Legos when he was five years old. Originally designed in Denmark, the toys are colorful interlocking plastic bricks and other accessories that can be assembled and connected in a variety of ways to build all types of objects.



- Defense Secretary Leon Panetta recently visited Naval Air Station Patuxent River to announce he's taking the Marine Corps version of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter off probation. The decision to embrace the F-35, one of the country's most expensive weapon systems in history, comes just as the DoD faces a cut of at least \$485 billion from its budget over the next decade. Technical issues and delays had plagued the program, but progress has been made. The Marine variant is complex because it's designed to take off from the shortest of runways and land vertically like a helicopter. It's expected in the next DoD budget, Panetta will call for postponing the purchase of a large number of aircraft of all variants.

- Mandatory annual hearing tests for all Marines is the new norm under a policy designed to ensure "100 percent hearing readiness." Tests were already required for Marines working in noisy environments like aviation, artillery, infantry and armor. The goal of the new policy is an effort to boost early detection and further prevention of hearing loss. A GAO report looking at 2009 hearing loss compensation concluded the VA's cost exceeded \$1 billion paid to more than a million claimants from all services. The Naval Audit Service did a follow-up look and discovered that Marines who left the service in 2007 and 2008 submitted more than 9,000 claims with associated long-term costs exceeding \$404 million. The audit also found the Corps' hearing program was not being considered as a priority.

## Army News

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



- The 824th Transportation Company, a reserve unit based in Moorehead City, NC, just arrived in Kuwait for a year-long deployment aboard their floating home, the USA Vessel Kennesaw Mountain, a 174 foot Landing Craft Utility. The crew totals just 17 soldiers and their mission is to carry material throughout the Persian Gulf region. "The Army has more boats than the Navy," remarked Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tom Heald, Vessel Master of the Kennesaw Mountain. "Most people don't realize the size of our fleet."



- Recognizing a need for Soldiers in Afghanistan to engage the enemy at longer distances, the Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System, or MAAWS, has completed testing for possible fielding for traditional Army units. Previously, the weapon was used only by special operations forces. The MAAWS is unique in that it isn't a disposable weapon like the AT4 shoulder-fired, anti-tank system and can be used more than once. Several units are currently training with the weapon, including Soldiers with the 82nd Airborne division at Fort Bragg, NC. Feedback on the weapon has been very positive.

- The recent decision to cut the size of the Army by 80,000 Soldiers will drive the military to rely more on the National Guard and Reserves says Army chief of staff Gen. Ray Odierno. The Army's top officer says he's comfortable with the decision to go from 570,000 to 490,000 by 2017. However, he suggests the U.S. will need to keep its reserve forces at a higher level of readiness. Over the long-term, officials said they're planning to cut the number of combat brigades from 45 to possibly as low as 32. Odierno said eight brigades will definitely go over the next several years and officials will decide in the coming months if additional units will go as well. A brigade is roughly 3,500 soldiers, but can be as large as 5,000 for a heavily armored unit. If the U.S. had to fight two large, simultaneous wars, we'd have to rely on regional allies and a massive reserves mobilization the general expressed.



## Air Force News

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

- Some passenger terminals within Air Mobility Command are setting up Facebook pages to help provide passengers better predictability for making space-available and space-required travel. To help travelers, the terminals will post historical flight data on their page and customers can expect to see the number of flights, destinations, number of available seats and the lowest Space-A category reached. In addition, a tentative local terminal flight schedule should be visible 72 hours in advance. Interested travelers can find their local terminal on Facebook by entering the base's name followed by "passenger terminal."

- The demand for flying training resulting from the country's entry into WWII resulted in the creation of the Air Corps Flying Training Command on 23 January 1942. Last month marked the 70th anniversary of the now Air Education and Training Command (AETC), headquartered at Randolph AFB, TX. The command recruits, assesses, commissions, educates and trains Air Force enlisted and officer personnel. AETC also conducts joint medical service training. The command consists of 12 bases and is hosted at four others. It's made up of over 56,000 active duty personnel, 16,000 civilians and 4,000 Guard and Reserve members. AETC lives through its motto: "To develop America's Airmen today...for tomorrow."



- F-15E Strike Eagle 89-0487 reached a milestone 10,000 flying hours last month becoming the first F-15 of any variant to reach the 10,000-hour mark. During its 21 years on duty, the aircraft has participated in operations Desert Storm, Deliberate Guard, Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Primarily designed for an air-to-ground role, but equipped for an air-to-air mission as well, tail #487 is the only one of its kind to record an air-to-air kill. As a tribute to history, the honor to fly beyond the 10,000-hour mark was given to the squadron's youngest pilot and weapons system officer. (Editor's note: This is one of a hundred Strike Eagle aircraft I maintained while serving as the Maintenance Group Commander at Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC.)

# 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:** Our regular membership meetings will resume on Tuesday, 20 March at 1830. Please come out and participate in our first meeting of 2012!

**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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Visit MOAA National's website: <http://www.moaa.org/>

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