

New River Chapter MOAA Meeting Minutes 15 June 2010

Call to Order: After enjoying meals, snacks and refreshments, President Doug Ehrhardt called the meeting to order at 1850 hours on 15 June at the West Jefferson Coffee House. After extending welcoming remarks, Doug asked everyone to stand for the playing of the National Anthem.

Members Present: President Doug Ehrhardt, 1st Vice President Charles Knapp, Legislative Committee Chair Porter Hicks, Personal Affairs Committee Chair Karen Strickland, Member/Programs Committee Chair Mac Hunt,

members Lee Eldreth, Jim Gee, Pat Gobble, Bruce Heuster, Bill Horner, Edith Jones, Rose Koontz, Linda Marsh, Ron Schuette, Dan Strickland and Steve Tucker, and member-spouses Cathy Ehrhardt, Linda Gee, Wanda Huester, Frances Hunt, Mary Knapp, Lois Rhoades, and Betty Schuette. Also present was potential new member Cliff Mezey.

Old/Unfinished Business:

Membership Dues/Budget/Non-Profit Update: President Doug Ehrhardt presented information provided by Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Ken Lynn that there have been no expenditures since the last meeting and that the current operating balance on hand at the start of the meeting stood at \$1,303.79. Information was once again presented about the IRS approval of the New River Chapter's tax exempt, non-profit status. The 50/50 raffle that was held at the end of the meeting yielded \$54.00; \$27.00 was retained for the Chapter's operating balance and \$27.00 was presented to Auxiliary member Linda Marsh. Finally, Doug pointed out that there are still 6 members with outstanding balances on their annual dues, and asked that the unnamed individuals please remit as soon as possible.

Committee Reports: Legislative Affairs Committee Chair, Porter Hicks gave a report on information obtained from the MOAA website concerning "Legislative Updates" that concerned benefits for early retirees, as well as places to get health care insurance. Under the federal plan, there is no waiting period. Also, information was reported on a \$250 rebate program for prescriptions; TRICARE's drug program does not contain the donut hole provision found in Part D plans of medicare recipients. It was noted that the insurance reform program has no lifetime limits. Also, there was some misinformation circulating regarding the value of a person's healthcare costs being added to their W-2 as taxable income, but that is not the case. The value will appear on an employee's W-2 for information purposes, but will not be considered taxable income.

Personal Affairs Committee Chair, Karen Strickland reiterated some of the points made by Porter concerning health care reform, but also pointed out there is a wealth of information on the MOAA National web site, as well as our Chapter web site regarding where to go for information and support. Karen also made it clear that any Chapter member who needs help in any area of personal support, they can contact her at any time. Lastly, Karen made an appeal to Chapter members who would consider serving as part of the Personal Affairs Committee to contact her.

The Member/Programs Committee Chair, Mac Hunt opened his remarks by echoing Karen's sentiment that any members who would like can contact him to help work with his committee to make it a "group" effort. Mac stated that he had been "out of the loop" as having only recently returned to Ashe County from his winter home. He welcomed new member Bruce Heuster and his wife Wanda, and also made reference to the "Give Me 10" campaign that Secretary/Treasurer Ken Lynn spoke of at the last meeting and which is still underway. Lastly, Mac talked about his knowledge of a VFW Post – 2087 – in Greensboro that was competing in the PepsiCo corporation program that grants funds to organizations with "great ideas" called "Return the Favor." He suggested that everyone support Post 2087's bid by visiting their website, but also going to the PepsiCo site for information on all the applicants and ways to vote for their "ideas."

Ashe County High School Junior ROTC Program support: President Ehrhardt briefly described the Chapter's participation in the annual awards ceremony held at ACHS and announced that the award recipient, Tyler Wadsworth, was an exceptionally qualified candidate. He and his parents were invited to the meeting, but Tyler was attending a leadership camp this week; they will be asked to another meeting in the future so the Chapter can recognize him in person. Both the Jefferson Post and the Ashe Mountain Times ran the story, with picture of Tyler receiving the award. Doug also thanked members Bill and Joan Horner, Karen Strickland, Jerry and Lee Lafferty, Lee Eldreth, Linda Marsh and Cathy Ehrhardt for attending to represent the Chapter along with Ken Lynn and himself.

Fundraising: First Vice President Charles Knapp addressed the status of a project the Chapter has undertaken to develop a lithograph using artwork from the county that can be sold to raise awareness of our Chapter, and funds. Work was started, but had to be revised as Charles learned of some proprietary issues that are under the control of the Ashe County Arts Council. The project is headed in a new direction at this time with the goal of having a finished product – the exact nature is being kept close hold – in time for end of year sales.

New Business:

Membership: President Ehrhardt again welcomed new member Bruce Heuster and his wife Wanda and reported that along with Bruce, our "Give Me 10" count is two as member Jim Need upgraded his regular membership to life membership for which we received credit. Doug also introduced and welcomed Cliff Mezey, Korean War veteran Navy pilot. Cliff learned of our Chapter from our West Jefferson Coffee House on the Backstreet host, Julie McGunegle. We look forward to adding Cliff to our roster and to our "Give Me 10" count. Finally, Doug presented Auxiliary Membership pins obtained by Secretary/Treasurer Ken Lynn to Pat Gobble, Edith Jones, Rose Koontz and Linda Marsh. Pins are being held for the other three Auxiliary members and will be presented or sent to them shortly.

Programs: President Ehrhardt talked about the publication of our second edition of the *New River Current*, and gave kudos to Editor Ken Lynn for the outstanding format and content. Doug reminded everyone that Ken still needs input, suggestions and ideas of the membership to improve the newsletter and to make sure it's

meeting the needs of the membership and is looking for persons to volunteer to write/compile the service-specific column six times per year.

As to other specific programming for our Chapter, President Ehrhardt talked about ways in which the Board of Directors are looking to take advantage of the larger number of members present during peak summer months in Ashe County, so we are planning to vary our monthly schedule somewhat to garner larger attendance at our planned activities. As of this time, efforts are underway to invite GEN Carl Stiner, who was the Commander, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and is now retired in Tennessee; 1st Vice President Charles Knapp heard him speak at a recent conference at MacDill AFB in Florida. GEN Stiner, if his schedule permits, is willing to come to Ashe County and speak on a variety of topics – specifically current force protection and post 9-11 anti-terrorism efforts in the US. If a date can be set, the Chapter will look to make the presentation available to our sister Chapter, the High Country, as well as the public. Other topics of interest that we are seeking to invite speakers to come to Ashe County include a presentation on the issues by Congressional candidate – prior to the November elections – and a subject matter expert on the health care bill.

President Ehrhardt briefly summarized the MOAA National Level of Excellence Award Program and asked that everyone be aware of the criteria. The honor of receiving the “5 Star” recognition is reachable and would mean added benefits to our Chapter. More information will be presented to all in future meetings/newsletters.

Lastly, an announcement was made concerning the Chapter’s August program which will be a picnic to be held at the Mount Jefferson State Park Pavilion on August 21st from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Look for a flyer with all the details in July.

North Carolina Council of Chapters Meetings: President Ehrhardt presented a program about his attendance at the first two meetings of the North Carolina Council of Chapters, in Winston Salem in March and Goldsboro in May. The information was presented in order to update New River Chapter members on the important work being conducted by MOAA National and our state organization.

Report highlights:

- COL Black, USA, Ret., Council President, referred to commitment and energy of chapters to support their membership and national.
- At the March meeting, Chapter presidents had a Roundtable discussion on “What’s working for us,” as well as the “Give Me 10” program. Of the 18 Chapters in NC, while there are 18,000 members of MOAA National, 2,000 have chapter membership.
- There was also a tribute to Amy Snow, spouse of a deceased helo pilot, who spoke about the *Snowball Express, a charity for children of fallen military heroes that was started in 2006 with a simple idea: Provide hope and new memories to the children of our fallen military heroes who died while on active duty since September 11, 2001.* Go to www.snowballexpress.org for more information.
- A presentation about “Undue Sacrifice” was made that detailed Combat-related special compensation (CRSC) and Concurrent retirement and disability pay (CRDP). Both of these actions are before Congress, and it

was recommended that to answer the question "What can WE do?" members should subscribe to MOAA's weekly legislative updates, free e-mail every Friday. The web site is

http://www.moaa.org/lac/lac_issues/lac_issues_update/default.htm.

- At the May meeting, COL Black gave an eloquent review of military honors in May that are significant: Spouse Appreciation Day, Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day.
- Legislative Efforts by MOAA
 - Veterans Day at NC General Assembly; Doug gave a bookmark to everyone that was used to highlight issues before the NC General Assembly: H 1366 and S 973 to create a cabinet level Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and H 345 and S 233 to provide equal treatment of government retirees (Bailey-Patton Act).
 - Other MOAA Legislative Efforts include Spouse Voting Rights and Licensing and Military Spouse Career Advocacy Accounts
- Concerning TriCare and the health care initiative, our Chapter has plans to invite Senator Burr's point man on the topic to speak later in year (September/October timeframe) when the dust has settled.
- MOAA e-mail about spam re: rumor mill and health care; CBO published a report with possible cost saving measures including some related to TriCare; routine part of their job responsibility, however, No ideas enacted and no legislation drafted. Essentially, the status of health care reform to this point is NO CHANGE to TriCare and TriCare for Life.

Closing remarks: President Ehrhardt shared the sentiment that the New River Chapter, MOAA is principally a fraternal organization to share common interests with other active or retired military personnel and their spouses, but it is through our interests and efforts that we receive multiple benefits:

- The Bailey/Patton Act - eligible retirees are exempt from state income tax on their government retirement benefits, however, in many cases, computer programs used by tax filing businesses do not automatically exclude retirement benefits.
- Insurance – go to the MOAA National web site for more information at http://www.moaa.org/serv/serv_health/serv_health_insurance/default.htm.
- MOAA TriCare Supplements
- Life Insurance Plans
- LTC Insurance
- Travel – www.moaatravel.org.
- TOPS – http://www.moaa.org/serv/serv_career/default.htm.

Finally, members are always encouraged to visit our Chapter web site, www.newrivermoaa.org and ANY LINKS WHEREIN WE CAN PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK!!!

Adjournment: Doug adjourned the meeting at 2005 hours.
Submitted, with approval re: BOD Input, by Doug Ehrhardt, President