



MOAA REPORTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

STEVEN COLE — SBCOLE@SBCGLOBAL.NET



MOAA Greater Dallas Chapter's 50th Anniversary

October 7, 2017 – Save the date! Join us to celebrate the MOAA Greater Dallas Chapter's Golden Anniversary at Maggiano's Little Italy North Dallas Restaurant on Saturday, October, 2017. We are honored to have Lt Gen Dana Atkins, USAF (Retired), President and CEO of MOAA, to be our guest speaker for this event. Help us relive significant events in the chapter's history and honor our past leaders who helped make the chapter one of the best in MOAA.



We've made the meeting arrangements as convenient as possible to encourage every member to attend. Traffic will not be a problem: Maggiano's is conveniently located at US 75 and Northwest Highway; they offer free valet parking. Conflict with work schedules will not be a problem: The dinner is scheduled on a Saturday. Night driving will not be a problem: The social will start at 4PM, dinner at 5PM and program from 6 to 7:30PM. Cost will not be a problem: Only \$50 per person for selections from Maggiano's fantastic menu.

Don't miss this celebration! We are expecting a large crowd and may have to limit attendance. Send in your reservation today to guarantee your seat at the table. We will contact you in August for payments.

Complete and mail your reservation coupon available on page 4 of this newsletter or sign up online at www.moagreaterdallas.org/rsvp50th.html today.

MOAA-GDC receives 2016 Five-Star Level of Excellence Award



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monday, April 24, 2017 Veterans
Center of North Texas 2nd Annual
Community/Veteran Fellowship
Golf Tournament.



See Page 8 for more details

Tuesday, April 25. Luncheon
meeting. Our Speaker is Walter
Coughlin who was a Special
Agent for Kennedy, Johnson and
Hubert Humphrey.



See page 4 for more details.

Saturday October. 50th
Anniversary Dinner.



See Page 4 for early
reservation coupon.

SAGE SURVIVOR BY NANCY RUTHFORD SODEMAN

Interdependence leads to independence. Shared interest can help keep us free.

We, the public, need to work to achieve equality of opportunity. We need to change our lackadaisical attitudes and engage in town meetings, attend city council meetings and meetings with senators and representative on state and federal levels. We must be heard. We cannot be nose-led and let democracy wither. We need to all work together and debate issues.

So many of the headlines and articles today are opinions instead of facts and filled with sensationalism, cronyism, and fake news designed to capture our attention.

Sensationalism - the use of exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy, to provoke public interest or excitement.

Fake News - Fake news is a type of hoax or deliberate spread of misinformation, whether is it published by traditional news media or via social media, the intent is to mislead in order to gain financially or politically. It often employs eye-catching headlines or entirely fabricated news-stories to increase readership and online sharing.

Placing a “**spin**” on the truth is nothing new in our society. Examples date back to WWI. However, the number of news outlets and the sheer volume press releases, polls, news and opinions fashioned as news has risen dramatically through the increase in digital publications and social media.

Another way to describe this phenomenon of sensationalism, fake news and spin is dishonesty. **Dishonesty** is defined as lack of honesty or integrity and a disposition to defraud or deceive.

Dishonesty characterized as spin with no apologies has reigned too long. Dishonesty is pushing the greatest values of democracy out of our lives.

It is too late to simply shrug our shoulders and dismiss the subject as if dishonesty has become too rampant to try to change the situation?

Those we elect into office should be reminded that as citizens we are afforded the opportunity make our own judgments and be told the truth.

The media has lost much of the public's trust. We also need to seek the truth for ourselves. Read more than the headlines. Research the information through different sources. Ask yourself if the information presented is based on facts or opinions. Otherwise governmental officials will assume their constituents support their positions or have simply acquiesced.

Interdependence leads to independence. Shared interest can help keep us free.

President Trump signs law declaring National Vietnam War Veterans Day

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of was signed into law by President Trump on March 29, which is now designated as National Vietnam War Veterans Day The U.S. flag is to be flown in commemoration of those who served in Vietnam. Previously, a proclamation by President Obama declared March 29, 2012, Vietnam Veterans Day. With the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 signed into law, Vietnam veterans will be commemorated annually for their service.

Commissaries



The Armed Services committees have reserved oversight authority over all of these reforms. They need to hear from you. To send a message go to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=76546626> asking your legislators to ensure that their oversight includes review of the GAO critique.

PERSONAL AFFAIRS BY BEN COLE

COMMUNICATION AND COMARADIE

I want to bring to your attention some issues that we have been thinking about recently. We need to have a more frequent line of communication between our members. Yes, I know that we can get together at our luncheons, a picnic or a golf tournament, but this isn't often enough. The result is that we begin to lose track of one another and what's going on in our lives.

Did you know that we sometimes don't learn of the death of a member until the following year when we start calling about annual renewal of chapter memberships? We also don't even know about your health conditions or other difficulties of life.

The Chaplain and others would like to visit with you and lend a helping hand when this sort of issue or event occurs, but, alas, it happens too often in solitude and we don't even know about it until months later.

So, what can we do about this? Well, we already have some active bridge clubs and maybe a few other social gatherings.

Please think of other social gatherings and projects that we could plan. Museum visits, Arboretum visits, quilting parties, notes-to-servicemen-and-women-groups and other times to get together. Send your suggestions to me.

Email Address: ben19320428@att.net

Mail Address: 619 Winchester, Richardson TX 75080.

Then we will start organizing some groups and put out information about them in our newsletter or by other means. Come On!! We can get this done, but not without your inputs and assistance.

DFW NATIONAL CEMETERY

Although we have mentioned this before, we want to repeat and emphasize the availability of the DFW National Cemetery. As you may know, it began operations in May, 2000 and will ultimately have a capacity of 280,000 grave sites as well as five columbaria to accommodate cremated remains.

Perhaps many of you, including myself, purchased grave sites either locally or maybe even out of state before the DFW National Cemetery began operations. Some have even considered selling their earlier arranged burial sites and using the National Cemetery.

Your funeral home personnel know how to make all the arrangements to do so, and also how to request Military Honor Guard attendance. You might want to consider this change.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY APRIL 2017 BY JIM BROWN



VA would see 6 percent boost under Trump's FY18 budget

Military Times reported on March 16 that the Department of Veterans Affairs would get a 6 percent boost in programming funds under President Trump's fiscal 2018 budget, one of only a few federal agencies given an increase in his funding plan.

Discretionary spending would reach \$78.9 billion "so that VA can continue to meet the ever-growing demand for health care services while building an integrated system of care that strengthens services within VA and makes effective use of community services."

The VA saw increases in its budget annually under former President Barack Obama, but Trump came into office promising more fiscal discipline and a strong focus on eliminating federal waste and redundancy. He has also repeatedly promised to "fully fund" the Department of Veterans Affairs, saying he wants to reverse years of what he sees as bad treatment of veterans.

The proposed budget for next fiscal year includes \$3.5 billion in mandatory budget authority to continue the Veterans Choice Program, which allows veterans to receive private medical care if they face lengthy wait times for VA care or significant travel obstacles to visit VA facilities. VA Secretary David Shulkin has promised to reform the Choice program and simplify its operations.

Note: Legislative article continues on page 5.



PROGRAMS BY BEVERLY THOMPSON

April 25, 2017 Luncheon Meeting – Walter Coughlin

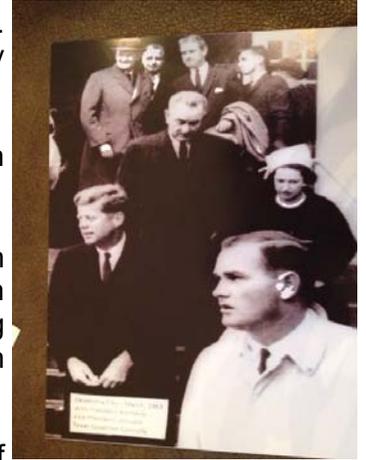
Our speaker for April is Walter Coughlin (in the forefront in the photo).

Walt was Special Agent for Kennedy, Johnson and Hubert Humphrey. He was in San Antonio preparing for the Kennedy's visit the day before the assassination in Dallas.

Walt also was Special Agent in charge of the Democratic and Republican conventions in Miami Beach in 1972. He received an Outstanding Service Award for his work.

I had the privilege of hearing him speak at a Docent Assembly at the George Bush Library and one of the stories he told was of traveling with Kennedy in a South American town and there was to be a meeting at the Embassy...as they approached the building with a circular drive he had an intuition and told the driver to go around back ... just then shots rang out from snipers in the trees on the decoy car and all inside were killed.

He was assigned to the White House for eight years. He attended the University of Maryland on a football scholarship. He has two wonderful children and five grandchildren and lovely wife named Ann that he married 52 years ago.



The Park City Club 5956 Sherry Lane, 17th Floor Dallas, Texas 75225
Social 11:00 AM — Buffet Opens 11:15 AM Meeting 12:00 Noon

Please send your reservations early to ensure we can make an accurate and timely reservation count. Mail the reservation coupon to MOAA-GDC Programs, PO Box 515495, Dallas, TX 75251; email Dave Schafer moaschafer@att.net or reserve online at www.moaagreaterdallas.org/onlinersvp.html. You may also call Dave at (214)577-4107.



50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER SATURDAY OCTOBER 7, 2017

Mail Early Reservation for the October 7, 2017 50th Anniversary Dinner
Social 4:00 PM — Dinner 5:00 PM — Program 6:00 to 7:30 PM

of Attendees _____

Contact Information: Name _____

Mail Reservation to:
 MOAA-GDC Programs
 PO Box 515495
 Dallas, TX 75251

Phone _____

Email _____

You will be contacted you in August for payments.

Reserve online at www.moaagreaterdallas.org/rsvp50th.html

Email is sent to the membership to include, meeting information, legislative alerts, and other information related to MOAA-GDC and its members If you are not receiving these messages please email MOAAGDC@yahoo.com.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY APRIL 2017 BY JIM BROWN CONTINUED

Trump's budget plan also provides \$4.6 billion in new funding "for VA health care to improve patient access and timeliness of medical care services for over nine million enrolled veterans," but offered few specifics on what that will entail.

White House officials also said the budget supports VA programs to end homelessness among veterans, but ends all funding to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, a move which could have an adverse impact on homeless veterans.

And the plan "invests in information technology to improve the efficiency and efficacy of VA services," a promise that department officials have been repeating for years, but with mixed results.

Only the VA, Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security would see significant increases under Trump's proposed budget. Combined, the three would see almost \$60 billion in new spending over fiscal 2017 levels (defense spending is \$52 billion of that).

Trump meets with veteran leaders, promises VA reforms

President Trump held his first face-to-face meeting with representatives from 10 prominent veterans groups on March 17. The meeting with Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin and senior White House staff covered issues including medical care access for veterans, accountability for VA employees, veterans' caregiver programs and the president's campaign pledges to make veterans services more efficient.

Trump spoke briefly to press at the start of the meeting, saying that "as commander in chief, I will not accept substandard service for our great veterans," and repeating his assertion that veterans have been treated poorly by VA in recent years.

People at the event reported that Trump was involved in the conversation throughout the meeting, questioning the groups on their priorities and ways the White House can help. Since his election last fall and inauguration in January, Trump has held several meetings with health care officials to talk about ways to solve problems with VA health care offerings.

"We believe that the president and his administration are committed to improving the VA system of care and expanding choices for veterans seeking healthcare outside of the VA system," Sherman Gillums Jr., executive director of Paralyzed Veterans of America, said after the meeting.

In a statement, Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) Executive Director Mark Lucas praised Trump for "a bold vision of VA reform that includes choice and accountability" and said his group is grateful that he "has given us a seat at the table in these important discussions."

Are Commissaries in jeopardy?

MOAA is warning of dangers that the commissary benefit may be jeopardized. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) recently released a report that identifies certain areas where the standards used by the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) are inefficient. However, MOAA says that the report may not be accurate because during GAO's review, DeCA already was already implementing new ways of doing business.

The GAO concludes that:

1) "DeCA lacks reasonable assurance that it is maintaining its desired savings rate for patrons." Not included in this report are DeCA's recent changes to its savings calculation that will now compare the prices of private-label items to commissary private-label items. However, these items are not yet available at commissaries.

2) "The way DeCA manages products sold at commissaries limits its ability to operate efficiently." GAO recommends DeCA find efficiencies based on store sales or customer demand. DeCA has seen decreasing sales numbers since 2012 and is in the process of rolling out its own private label. To make room for private-label stock, commissaries will have to remove some brand-name items. Those are items may that patrons may prefer. Introducing the private label as a cost-savings maneuver seems risky when other efficiencies may not have been thoroughly explored.

3) "DeCA has not conducted a cost-benefit analysis for its service contracts for stocking and custodial services and for distributing products to commissaries." More than 70 percent of the appropriations dollars (the subsidy) go to labor costs, which include staff pay and benefits, shelf stocking, transportation of goods, janitorial contracts and purchased services. There may be savings opportunities from the largest part of the government's subsidy prior to introducing variable pricing, a private label, and changing the way patrons shop.

MOAA's main concern is that GAO's report indicates there are many more avenues of savings that have not yet been explored.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY APRIL 2017 BY JIM BROWN CONTINUED

Veterans Secretary says “The VA is on a path toward recovery”

VA hospitals are still struggling to add staff, and many veterans still face long wait times to see a doctor. Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin is working with Congress to renew the Veterans Choice program, which allows some veterans to get medical care more quickly outside the VA system, and provides money for medical staff. He stated recently that “We have a clear mandate to do better, [and] to make sure that we're honoring our mission to serve our veterans.”

In a recent interview on National Public Radio (NPR), Shulkin also stated the following:

On filling 45,000 vacancies in the Department of Veterans Affairs

We're out actively trying to recruit many health care professionals ... and the negative attention that's been put on VA has hurt the morale of our work force [and recruiting efforts]. So what we're trying to do is get people to understand that when they come to work at VA, this is really a terrific place to work. It's filled with dedicated professionals, we're doing great work every day, it's a way to serve your country and we want people to come join us.

On NPR's finding that money was not given to VA hospitals with the longest wait times

We're talking about now something back almost three years ago. And when Congress authorized this [Veterans Choice] program, it was done with urgency. They asked the VA to get an entire national program up in 90 days. That's really never asked ever of any agency or any private company ever before. The VA had to make a lot of decisions really quickly. It went out to the field, and it said who thinks they can go and hire health care professionals? Who is able to use this money quickly?

I think many good decisions were made, but it wasn't done in the same way as if we would have had a year to implement this. So we ended up making some adjustments. In the end, I think that we ended up hiring where the wait times were the longest, but it wasn't done in the most thoughtful way because of the time that we had to stand this program up.

On the high rate of suicide among military veterans

There is no doubt that suicide is my number one clinical priority. I work on this, I think about this every day. ... I can tell you that nobody is doing more for behavioral health care in this country than the VA. We have extremely comprehensive systems. I have one thousand professionals who do nothing but suicide prevention every single day.

The problem is that we're responsible for the 22 million veterans in this country. And of the 20 vets who take their life every day through suicide, just six are getting care in the VA health care system.

We have to work with groups, with families and others, to identify the 14 that aren't getting care, that are out there right now [and] that we're very, very concerned about. One of the realities of our ability to address the suicide issue is that VA can't do this alone. We need help from community partners, we need help from scientists, we need help from technology companies. The suicide crisis hotline was one of those situations where the demand for our services was outpacing our ability to keep up with it. About four months ago, I made the decision to bring on an additional 200 Veterans Crisis Line responders. It took us a while to train them because these are highly specialized clinicians who have to answer these phone calls.

We opened up a second center in Atlanta, we have one in upstate New York and now today I'm pleased to say that, while we were not able to get to about 30 percent of the calls three or four months ago, really in the past six weeks we're getting to almost all the calls.

House passes contentious bills on veterans gun rights, VA accountability

House lawmakers approved a pair of veterans policy measures which would make it easier to fire Veterans Affairs employees and allow some “mentally incompetent” veterans to own firearms. The VA secretary could fire or suspend any employee for poor performance or misconduct, regardless of their position. Those employees would receive advance notice of discipline of not more than 10 days, and the secretary would have five days after the action to respond to any objections. If those employees appeal the punishment, judges with the Merit Systems Protection Board would have 45 days to issue a ruling.

The second measure — which passed 240-175 — would prohibit VA officials from submitting records of veterans with severe mental illnesses to the federal criminal background check system, thereby preventing them from purchasing firearms. Exceptions would be made for court orders mandating the conditions be reported.

Critics have called the practice an invasion of privacy and a violation of some veterans' constitutional rights. Opponents of the bill have called it a common-sense practice designed to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of unstable individuals, for their own safety and that of the public.

Both measures have drawn criticism from Democrats in recent days, who questioned why the bills were rushed ahead of widely supported proposals like a plan to reform the appeals process for veterans' disability benefits. A coalition led by retired Gens. Stanley McChrystal, David Petraeus, Peter Chiarelli, and Wesley Clark wrote a letter to lawmakers saying the proposal would “put America's veterans who need our support the most in harm's way, by providing them with easy access to firearms.”



APRIL 25, 2017



Reservation for the April 25, 2017 Tuesday Luncheon Meeting
The Park City Club 5956 Sherry Lane, 17th Floor Dallas, Texas 75225 Phone: (214) 373-0756
Social 11:00 AM — Buffet Opens 11:15 AM Meeting 12:00 Noon
 _____ Person's at \$25.00 each Check enclosed \$ _____
 payable to "MOAA - Greater Dallas Chapter"
Mail Reservation to: Dave Schafer
MOAA-GDC Programs, PO Box 515495, Dallas, TX 75251

 (Spouse/Guest)

Please print name's below exactly as you wish you name badge's to read:

Need a ride? _____ If yes, your ZIP code _____ Give a ride? _____ If yes, your ZIP code _____

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MOAA—GDC THE REPORTER is published monthly by the MOAA-Greater Dallas Chapter for the information and benefit of its members. Members are encouraged to submit letters and articles for publication to:
 Editor, William Hill, LCDR, USN, Retired ♦ 8358 San Leandro Drive ♦ Dallas, TX 75218-4317
 The MOAA-Greater Dallas Chapter is a nonprofit organization chartered on November 28, 1967.
 Annual dues are \$20.00 for members and \$10.00 for auxiliary members.



Veterans Center of North Texas 2nd Annual Community/Veteran Fellowship Golf Tournament



Join Community Leaders and Veterans in our
2nd Annual Fellowship Golf Tournament

When: Monday, April 24, 2017

Where: Heritage Ranch Golf and Country Club, Fairview

Registration and lunch: 11 AM; **Tee Off:** 1 PM; **Dinner and awards to follow golf**

Format: 4 Player Scramble

Cost: \$150/person; \$500/Team: All inclusive (No additional costs)
Green fees, cart, lunch, dinner and prizes!

Trophies for: Top Three Teams
Putting Contest
Hole-in-One: Chance to win a new Car!



Registration: <http://www.vcont.org/2017-Golf-Tournament.htm>
Information: 214-600-2966

Join the fun! Share community and military experiences!
Sponsorship and donation opportunities available

Veterans Center of North Texas is a Volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization serving North Texas Veterans and their families. EIN: 47-1465856 Guide Star rating: Gold www.vcont.org
www.facebook.com/vcont.org



Veterans Center of North Texas

2nd Annual Community/Veteran Fellowship Golf Tournament
Monday, April 24th, Heritage Ranch Golf and Country Club Fairview, TX

Sponsorship Opportunities: Call 214-600-6966

Signature Sponsor (donation amount = \$5,000)

Corporate logo on all advertising and promotional material, one foursome, space for corporate tent (either at clubhouse or on hole of choice), opportunity to speak to the group and award trophies.

Gold Sponsor (donation amount = \$1,000)

One foursome, space for tent and/or table at hole or clubhouse, hole sign and place item in ditty bag.

Silver Sponsor (donation = \$500)

Space for table or tent at hole or clubhouse, sign or banner at hole and place an item in the ditty bag.

Bronze Sponsor (donation = \$200) Small sign on hole and place item in ditty bag

Door Prize Sponsorships are available; please call 214-600-2966

Agenda: 11:45 Light lunch, 12:30 Putting Contest, 1:00 Tee Time, buffet dinner, awards ceremony, and gift drawing.

Prices are all inclusive e.g. Foursome = golf fees, cart, range balls, putting contest, ditty bag, lunch & dinner, and gift drawing.

Veterans Center of North Texas is a Volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization serving North Texas Veterans and their families. EIN: 47-1465856 Guide Star rating: Gold www.vcont.org
www.facebook.com/vcont.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The following is the meeting schedule for the Executive Committee of the Greater Dallas Chapter of the MOAA.

Meetings are held from 9 am to 11 am at the Point Building, C.C. Young Retirement Community, 4847 West Lather Drive, Dallas, TX 75214:

2017

20 May, 15 July, 16 September, and 18 November

All Chapter members are welcome to attend any Executive Committee meeting.