



San Diego - Miramar Chapter Newsletter

A Publication of the Military Officers Association of America

The national and local MOAA organizations are non-partisan

Volume XXV Issue No 5

Editor, HT Linke, COL/USA (Ret)

Nov-Dec 2025

Message from the Miramar Chapter President: Greetings! I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving and are gearing up for a wonderful Holiday Season with your loved ones and friends.

We had a GREAT December Luncheon with an excellent turnout for our guest speaker Fred Shatsky from the USS Midway, and many of our attendees also brought along a toy to donate to the Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots Drive, thank you!! [See page 5 for more details on both matters.]

During the meeting I shared significant news regarding the merging of the Miramar & San Diego Chapters. We have been meeting together for luncheons for the past two years and first discussed merging our chapters a year or so ago. Following the passing of BG Dean Mallires, who was the President of the San Diego Chapter, the remaining Board Members of the San Diego Chapter approached me regarding merging our chapters. Our Miramar Board met and agreed that this would be an excellent path forward regarding the strength and stability of the local organizations. In November we officially notified HQ MOAA of the merge plans, and we are all now members of **MOAA San Diego - Miramar Chapter**. I expect the actual transition will be transparent to chapter members but here are a few key takeaways:

- ◆ Colonel Darryle Grimes has already made and distributed new name tags to members attending luncheons. Thank you, Darryle, great job! Be sure to sign up for our February 5th luncheon to receive your new name tag at sign-in.
- ◆ Colonel Jerry Davenport is working with HQ MOAA to merge the 80 or so MOAA San Diego members with the MOAA Miramar member list to create our official new MOAA San Diego - Miramar membership list.
- ◆ For now, the MOAA San Diego web page and the MOAA Miramar web page will remain unchanged as will letterheads and bank accounts.



(President's message continues on next page)

(President's message continued)

- ◆ Thanks to Colonel Merv Avants and Colonel Darryle Grimes for aligning the respective chapter funds.
- ◆ Lists, letterheads, web pages, links and more will be updated in the next few months.
- ◆ While the current Miramar Chapter Board Members will constitute the majority, Merv Avants & Jerry Davenport have graciously accepted Board positions in the merged chapter providing continuity.

The San Diego chapter is one of the oldest chapters within ALL of MOAA and we wanted to keep that legacy and lineage, hence the name "San Diego – Miramar Chapter." We expect that for the majority of the membership there will be very little change and hope that our combined membership numbers and experiences will add to the strength of the new organization. You may see additional emails and communications, but we expect to have most of the transition tasks completed in the month of December and complete the transition by our February 5th luncheon.

I also have some financial updates that our board is working through. As I'm sure many of you feel every month, inflation is real and our chapter is experiencing it too. While I don't have final numbers now, the cost of our bi-monthly luncheons will be going up along with annual dues. Your board will be evaluating actual cost increases that we are seeing and ensure that those increases to our membership are kept to a minimum.

As always, we appreciate your input on:

- ◆ Potential guest speakers for our luncheons.
- ◆ Opportunities for supporting local Veteran / Servicemember related activities.
- ◆ Any Activities you may have participated in where we can showcase our community support (we want to highlight those in our newsletter).

Finally, thank you for your membership and support, never stop serving!

S/F, Gerard Cloutier, LtCol. USMCR (Ret), President, MOAA San Diego - Miramar Chapter



Miramar Chapter of MOAA Treasurer's report for November 2025:

We ended the month with a checking/savings balance of \$14,932.20 with the bank and in our checkbook. Our JROTC fund balance is \$788.71.

Thanks to the following members for their Nov-Dec 2025 ROTC donations: Leroy Bannach, Gerard Cloutier, Darryle Grimes, Desirae Smidt, Michael Truett, and Carl Weiscopf.

Birthday and Anniversary Celebrations

November and December Birthdays



November

MRS E JOAN BOGGS
LCDR DAVID A CACHO
MRS MARILYN CARROLL
Maj TIM CULLEN
CDR ALAN L DAHLVIG
MRS DEBORAH FLECK
CDR JOHN J GORMAN
MRS FIONA GRIMES
Col DARRYLE GRIMES
MRS MYRA HELTSLEY
COL MICHAEL A HILL
CPT DARRELL ISSA
Col JOHN M KAHENY
MRS VIRGINIA LIVINGSTON
LCDR ALAN W LOCKWOOD
MRS LCDR DON NEWTON
MRS RUTH W ROLLINS
CAPT HAROLD P SEXTON
LCDR STEVEN STREIGHTIFF
MRS MARY STREIGHTIFF
CWO2 CHRIS YATES
MRS FRANCINE YORCK



December

LCDR LUCAS E BABBITT
LCDR JOSELITO T BALUYOT
MRS SUSAN BECKER
MRS ELAINE BOKESCH
LCDR PATRICK M DOYLE
CDR LINDA C DRABEK
CDR LUIS R ERAZO
MRS KATHRYN T HARVEY
CAPT LAURIE A MCKEE
MRS ELLEN NELSON
MRS BLANCHE N PETERSEN
CWO2 ERIK D PETERSEN
MRS JESSICA WHITSETT

Membership Report: As of December 1st we have 84 Regular, 15 Surviving Spouses, and 2 Associate members. Seventy-one members have renewed their membership for 2026. See page 4 for information on membership renewal.

November and December Anniversaries

November

CDR LUIS & CAROL ERAZO
Col DARRYLE & FIONA GRIMES
CDR MICHAEL & FELICIA LAJEUNESSE
Maj DAVID & CASSANDRA MARVIN
CAPT ANDREW & KATHLEEN SEVERSON
CAPT THOMAS & JUDY SPLITGERBER
LCDR SAMUEL & HELGA STRONG



December

CDR JOSELITO & JING BALUYOT
LtCol JOHN & MARILYN CARROLL
LCDR PATRICK & MARY DOYLE
CAPT WALTER & SANDRA GOFF
LCDR DAVID & LORI HILL
CDR DONJA & RICHARD STEPHENSON

Why Join the Military Officers Association of America? MOAA is the country's leading organization preserving and protecting service-earned benefits for uniformed servicemembers and their families. Those who belong to MOAA not only lend their voices to a greater cause, but they also gain access to extensive benefits tailored to the needs and lifestyles of military officers. **Never Stop Serving.**

Our annual renewal drive began on October 1st. If your membership expires at the end of this year, you will receive an email from John Gorman letting you know that it is time to renew. If you receive the Newsletter through regular mail, the mailing label displays the date the membership is expiring.

There are a number of ways for you to renew. The first is by U.S. mail. A renewal form/application is located on the chapter website: [Home - MOAA Miramar Chapter](#), or by contacting John Gorman (jgorman1@san.rr.com), You only need to fill in your name and any info that has changed and mail it to the PO Box listed on the form.

This year MOAA has introduced a new online renewal system. It can be accessed at:

<https://my.cheddarup.com/c/miramar-chapter-moaa-renewals/items>. Just select the type of membership (Regular or Surviving Spouse) and the number of years (1-3) and add that item to your cart. You can also make a donation to our High School JROTC fund using this website. You will have the option of paying with a card or having the money withdrawn from your bank account. Any questions, please contact John.

If you have a Zelle account, you can pay your dues via Zelle. Our Zelle email address is miramarchapter@gmail.com. Finally, you can renew at one of our social events.

We hope that you will consider renewing your membership this year. MOAA's chapters provide critical grassroots support for MOAA's national legislative agenda. Our benefits are under attack, and MOAA is in the fight to preserve them. Chapter members let their legislators know what's on their minds and open doors for MOAA's legislative team in Washington, D.C. In these difficult times, MOAA members need to stick together, and our chapters are the best way we know to do that. MOAA chapters unite active duty, former, and retired officers from every branch of service, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as surviving spouses. These centers of camaraderie not only give you a chance to connect with other members with similar backgrounds and interest, but to also develop close and lasting friendships. Please encourage qualified friends/associates, to join our award winning Chapter.



Miramar Chapter MOAA Payments

Membership Renewal

Membership Payments:

One Year Regular Membership:	\$20
Two Year Regular Membership:	\$35
Three Year Regular membership:	\$45
One Year Surviving Spouse/Associate:	\$12
Two Year Surviving Spouse/Associate:	\$22
Three Year Surviving Spouse/Associate:	\$30

December's guest speaker - Fred Shatsky

Operation Frequent Wind (April-May 1975) was the topic for our December meeting speaker. Frequent Wind was a joint service operation designed to assist in the termination of the United States' involvement in Vietnam. Although a joint operation, the bulk of the forces involved were U.S. Navy ships operating in the area, including several aircraft carriers but chief among them was the USS Midway. Over the course of the operation, 7000 refugees were given safe haven as they escaped the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces sweeping the country and ultimately capturing Saigon. Nearly 3000 of those refugees were taken aboard Midway and moved to temporary relocation camps elsewhere in the Pacific.

While there were many heartwarming stories to come out of Frequent Wind, one was especially poignant as related by Shatsky. Hoping to escape the oncoming communist forces, one Vietnamese Air Force officer, Major Bung Li (aka Lee) managed to get his wife and five children, including one infant, into the fuselage of an OV-1 "Birddog" and fly out to the Midway. As he had no way to contact the ship, Major Li flew over the deck several times and finally wrote a note on his kneeboard (a type of pad) which he dropped on the deck of the carrier to signal his intent to land. While he had never landed on a carrier before, Major Li was able to bring his small plane down and use the rear landing wheel to snag one of the arresting cables on the deck and bring the plane to a halt with everyone in the family surviving the trip. To help secure their future the crew of the Midway took up a collection which ultimately raised \$10,000 for their benefit. Bringing us up to date, he showed a picture of the infant in the Li family, all grown up now, and a medical doctor, Vu Duong.

The 7000 refugees rescued during Frequent Wind were only the tip of the iceberg as nearly 137,000 more escapees followed over the course of the next few years. Amazingly, four Marines were the only fatalities during the operation. For anyone interested in more of the story, Shatsky recommended "Last Flight from Saigon" by Lt. Col. A.J.C. Lavalle.

Navy veteran Fred Shatsky is a member of the USS Midway speakers bureau and a 20 year volunteer docent at the museum. Commissioned through Naval OCS he served on board the USS Saratoga and at Ft. Allen in Puerto Rico. After discharge he resumed his career as a registered pharmacist and was employed at the UCSD medical center for 35 years. Shatsky has authored several articles in professional journals and a chapter in a clinical reference book. Married for more than 57 years, he and wife Gail have two sons and two granddaughters.



After the meeting, chapter president Cloutier delivered collected toys to Staff Sergeant Addington of "San Diego Toys for Tots"

Save the date for our FEBRUARY MEETING on THURSDAY, February 5th at 11:30 am at the Adm Baker Golf Course. Program speaker to be announced.

Next chapter board meeting is Thursday, January 8th at 6:00pm via Zoom.

MOAA National News Flashes

MOAA Again Recognized as a 'Top Lobbyist' by The Hill

DECEMBER 11, 2025

MOAA's ongoing work to hold the line on service-earned benefits has resulted in a 19th-straight appearance on the annual Top Lobbyist list published Dec. 11 by The Hill, a leading Washington, D.C., news outlet.

MOAA's recognition comes in the Grassroots category, alongside, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the Boys & Girls Club of America, and other awardees.

"We are deeply appreciative of this honor from The Hill, as it shows the influence MOAA continues to have on Capitol Hill on behalf of all who serve and have served, their families, and their survivors," said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret). "Whether you've joined us in D.C. as part of our Advocacy in Action campaign, sent messages to your lawmaker through our Legislative Action Center, or spread our message online or through your MOAA council or chapter, your work has been vital to our advocacy success." See more at: [MOAA - MOAA Again Recognized as a 'Top Lobbyist' by The Hill](#)
See also National MOAA Legislative Action Center at: www.MOAA.org/takeaction

Agent Orange Linked to Rare Blood Cancer That Develops Over Decades

December 10, 2025

WASHINGTON — Vietnam War veterans exposed to Agent Orange have a higher risk of developing a rare blood cancer that develops slowly over decades, according to a new study that for the first time links myelodysplastic syndrome to widespread use of the herbicide.

Researchers say the breakthrough could help veterans with the syndrome access benefits and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Without medical evidence that affirms a connection between Agent Orange and MDS, patients with the syndrome have struggled to qualify for service-connected benefits, said Dr. Michael Sekeres, chief of hematology at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami. Researchers at Sylvester conducted the eight-year study. See more at: [MOAA - Agent Orange Linked to Rare Blood Cancer That Develops Over Decades](#)

This article by Linda F. Hersey originally appeared on Stripes.com. Stars and Stripes serves the U.S. military community by providing editorially independent news and information around the world.

For more MOAA News Updates and Information see: [MOAA - News Listing](#)

Veterans News Corner

VA provides Veterans relief from Biden-era backlogged medical bills



WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced it will relieve Veterans of more than \$272 million in potential medical bills that accrued after the Biden Administration stopped certain copayment claims processing and collections in early 2023.

During the Biden Administration, certain copayments normally billed to Veterans for community care services were repeatedly paused starting in February 2023 due to technical issues with the department's Program Integrity Tool. The PIT centralizes community care claims data from multiple payment systems to ensure VA issues accurate payments to providers and accurate bills to Veterans.

Under President Trump, VA will resume proper PIT-related copayment claims processing and will relieve Veterans of the hardship that could result from the backlogged copayments the Biden Administration failed to process and collect. VA resumed billing for community care co-payments as of Nov. 11, 2025. [For more detail see: [VA provides Veterans relief from Biden-era backlogged medical bills](#)]

Veteran spouses, dependents and survivors getting faster access to CHAMPVA under Trump Administration

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs today announced it has completely eliminated the backlog of Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) applications, a major VA program that provides health care coverage to over 900,000 qualifying Veteran spouses, dependents, survivors, and caregivers.

When President Trump took office, there was a backlog of more than 70,000 CHAMPVA applications that the Biden Administration had failed to process. Applicants were waiting in some cases over 150 days for VA to take action. Those days are over.

As of October, the application backlog has been reduced to zero, with new applications now being processed in a handful of days. VA currently receives about 4,000 new applications per week and can process more than it receives.

VA has also substantially reduced the number of appeals waiting for processing. Under the Biden Administration, there was a backlog of more than 20,000 CHAMPVA appeals. This has been reduced to 1,000 and continues to rapidly decrease by the day.

The backlogs have been cut thanks to VA Secretary Doug Collins' immediate, two-pronged approach: provide CHAMPVA application processors with overtime pay to get the job done and implement process engineering and automation to sustain the gains going forward. As a result, Veterans' loved ones no longer face needless delays for health care coverage.

(Story continues next page)

[*VA News continued...*]

Long-term, automation will lead to faster processing times. In December, VA will complete its move to a more automated application processing system that increases the efficiency of processing CHAMPVA applications. In addition, more than 90% of medical services and pharmacy claims are electronically processed within days of receipt for more timely payment.

“Veterans around the country knew it was taking far too long to process CHAMPVA applications, and that meant delayed coverage for their loved ones,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins. “We listened, and now the application backlog that caused so many unnecessary delays has been wiped out.” For more detail see: [VA eliminates Veteran family health care backlog](#)

California Legislative Update

Update regarding the Veterans Benefits Protection Act: SB 694

This important bill needs help from our members to move this legislation forward and secure its passage.

When filing their initial VA disability claims, California veterans are being exploited by unaccredited 'claim sharks' who charge thousands of dollars for help that federal law requires to be FREE. These companies prepare documents but refuse to sign them, leaving veterans holding ALL the legal and financial risk for any errors. SB 694 (Archuleta & Schiavo) protects veterans filing initial claims and ensures only accredited representatives can legally assist them.

On the final day of the 2025 legislative session, SB 694, the Veteran Benefits Protection Act, was held in the Senate Rules Committee and is now a two-year bill. In California, a bill introduced in the first year that does not advance can still be taken up again in the second year of the session. This is not the outcome we wanted, but it is a call to remain engaged and keep building support and momentum so that when SB 694 returns, it is not ignored.

This outcome underscores the challenge we face: industry opposition poured nearly \$500,000 into lobbying against this bill, while veteran organizations cannot compete with that level of spending. Some legislators with military backgrounds sided with industry interests over veterans. Our path forward relies on veterans to organize the support of our organizations, our families, and our communities. We need to fully embrace grassroots advocacy and make clear how essential this bill is for protecting veterans.

The latest information we have is that in early January 2026, SB 694 will be voted on by the full Senate. Passage in the senate means the bill would then go to the governor for signature (or veto) since it has already passed in the Assembly.

Members can help push this legislation forward by visiting the website below and sending a message to your state legislators, especially if they are on the rules committee. At that site you'll find pre-selected messages which can be sent as is or tailored to reflect your style. In addition, place a call today to the office of your state senator to ask for their support of SB 694. **The time to do this is now as January will be on us in no time and we must get a positive vote on this bill.** [Take Action](#)

Chapter member recognized for exceptional service to veterans



Long time chapter member Fred Green was recognized on Veterans Day 2025 by the City of El Cajon as the El Cajon Veteran of the Year. Green received congratulations on the award by local Congresswoman Sara Jacobs (left photo) and El Cajon Mayor Bill Wells (right photo). Present at the ceremony and adding his congratulations was Chapter President Gerard Cloutier (center).

Are you a Surviving Spouse? The MOAA national website has a Surviving Spouses corner which is updated every month. [MOAA - Surviving Spouse Corner](#)

This page is designed to provide resources to surviving spouses and answer some of the more frequent asked questions of MOAA regarding survivor issues. Access more MOAA resources by visiting [MOAA.org](#) or [MOAA's Surviving Spouse page](#). Sample FAQs:

Q. What is the latest on efforts to repeal the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset, also known as the "widows tax"?

A. Efforts by MOAA and others to repeal this unfair law resulted in a phased removal of the repeal becoming law as part of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

Q. How do I reach out to, or join, MOAA's Surviving Spouses Virtual Chapter?

A. Email the virtual chapter at mssvc02@gmail.com. You can also [join the chapter's Facebook group](#) to find details on membership, upcoming meetings, and other resources.

Q. What publications does MOAA provide to surviving spouses?

A. Click [here](#) for a list of survivor publications. You may also be interested in some [spouse and family publications](#), or [financial publications](#). Resources beyond publications, including advocacy news and monthly updates to MOAA's Surviving Spouse Corner, are available [here](#).

San Diego—Miramar CHAPTER
Military Officers Association of America
2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

<u>Position</u>	<u>Grade/Rank)/Name/Service</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>E-Mail Address</u>
President	LtCol Gerard Cloutier, USMCR	760-880-0246	cloutsus@yahoo.com
1st Vice Pres. (Program Chair)	COL Merv Avants		mavants@gmail.com
2nd Vice Pres. (Legislative Chair)	Vacant	TBD	TBD
3 rd Vice Pres Membership Chair (Acting)	CDR John Gorman, USN	858-538-6534	JGorman1@san.rr.com
Secretary	LCDR Stephen Streightiff, USN	858-569-8237	sstr8iff@gmail.com
Treasurer	COL Darryle Grimes, USAF	619-639-7217	grimesdj@gmail.com
Immediate Past President	COL Darryle Grimes, USAF	619-639-7217	grimesdj@gmail.com
TOPS Liaison	Vacant	For Job Assistance	www.navnetresources.com
Surviving Spouse Liaison	CPT Desirae Smidt USA	760-839-0441	d_smidt22@icloud.com
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Lay Chaplain	CAPT Elsa P. Ang, USN	858-558-4142	roger0461@att.net
Newsletter Editor	COL HT Linke, USA	619-972-1442	LinkesHi@hotmail.com
<u>Service Representatives:</u>			
Air Force/Space Force	Col Darryle Grimes, USAF	619-639-7217	grimesdj@gmail.com
Army	COL HT Linke, USA	619-972-1442	Linkeshi@hotmail.com
Coast Guard	CAPT Robert Glynn, USCG	619-582-3709	boglynn@cox.net
Marine Corps	LtCol David Yorck, USMC	858-794-7051	christianyorck@gmail.com
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(* USPHS)	CAPT Robert Glynn, USCG	619-582-3709	boglynn@cox.net
MOAA Poway Veterans Park Rep	CAPT Michael Puckett, USN	858 -679-2326	mikepuckett@cox.net
(* (Interim or Vacant Positions)			



Any members aware of recent passings of chapter members please advise the newsletter editor of the death.

Please remember all our families, and all those who are serving their country, and their families, in our thoughts and prayers.

From the December 2025 Retiree Military Newsletter

Scam Alert: The U.S. Navy is aware of a potential fraud scam targeting patrons seeking to make reservations at Department of Navy lodging facilities. All guests are reminded to book official and recreational DON lodging only through authorized channels - by calling the toll-free number 1-877-NAVY-BED (1-877-628-9233) or by using the local phone numbers listed on each property page at www.dodlodging.net

Initial reports indicate scammers placed fraudulent contact information to appear in response to online searches. Patrons should exercise caution when using phone numbers or websites found through online searches or social media, as fraudulent sites may attempt to collect personal or financial information.

Anyone who believes they may have been targeted or affected by a scam is encouraged to report it to 1-877-628-9233 and their financial institution immediately.

When making reservations, always:

- * Use the authorized phone number: 1-877-NAVY-BED (1-877-628-9233)
- * Use the official website: www.dodlodging.net
- * Be cautious of phone numbers and websites found through online searches.
(Source: cnic.navy.mil message 31Oct2025)

For more information, please visit the Chapter website <https://miramarmooa.us/Home-Page/>

On the website is most current information concerning:

- ⇒ Legislative Activities and Highlights
- ⇒ Surviving spouse matters
- ⇒ National MOAA and related organizations contact Information
- ⇒ Job Search Assistance
- ⇒ Volunteer opportunities



Editor's Note

Articles for Newsletter: Please submit articles or topic ideas directly to the editor at the e-mail below. The newsletter has been uploaded to our Chapter Website. (Current information is covered in the newsletter, along with articles/photos of interest to our members). Newsletter will continue to be mailed to members who prefer that method of delivery. **Complete PDF version will be posted on Website as Newsletter and available for download**, past copies are maintained in Editor files and available to members.

Editor: [HT Linke COL/USA \(Ret\) LinkesHi@hotmail.com](mailto:HT Linke COL/USA (Ret) LinkesHi@hotmail.com)