

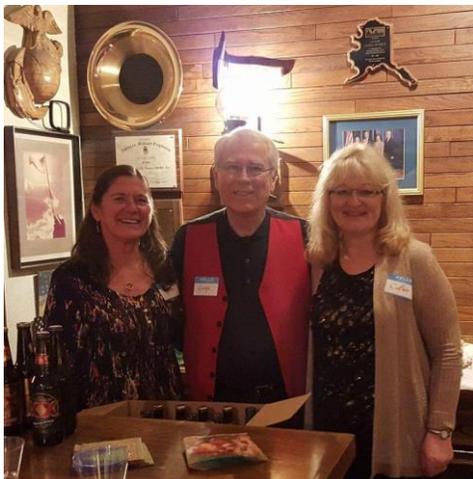
Happy New Year!

2016

2015 is in the books! Hope everybody had a healthy and prosperous year. This will be a big year. Presidential and Congress elections, pivotal decisions on the how-to-handle international tensions (state and non-state), the state and national economy and budget. It's safe to say that a lot of big chips are on the table. MOAA will continue to keep our national defense interests, our military personnel, veterans and military families in the forefront of their efforts as these tectonic events unfold. Thanks for being with us.

Christmas Party

The chapter enjoyed a lovely holiday evening on 9 December at the home of Members Brenda and George Wuerch.



L to R: Martha Wilder, George Wuerch, Catkin Burton



Merry Christmas 2016!

Our thanks to our hosts for opening their homes for a wonderful evening. We all know the stress of getting ready for an event like this, and it is very much appreciated!



Secret Santa was kind!

Veteran's Day

On Veteran's Day, the Captain Cook Chapter of MOAA again participated in ceremonies in and around Anchorage. We appreciate living in an area with the regard and care for the military community that is evident at every turn. Our thoughts and prayers for those who came before and who are in harm's way.



Catkin Burton & Gordon Severson

Voter Registration

In a new effort, the Captain Cook chapter is going to take the lead in a non-partisan Voter Registration effort on Joint Base Elmendorf. We are still working on details, but expect to do this episodically starting in late January. If you are interested in participating, please let us know.

January Dinner Social

Our next dinner social will be January 21, 2016 at the Coastal Inn in Anchorage (3333 W International Airport Rd, Anchorage, AK 99502, from 6 to 9. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Verdie Bowen, Director, Office of Veterans Affairs, State of Alaska. Please join us.

Future Events

- Next month, the Captain Cook Chapter will attend the ASYMCA Salute to the Military (February 20, 2016; 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm). Go to their home page for tickets (www.asymca.org/alaska/).

- In March, our speaker will be Mr. John Parrott, Manager Ted Stevens International Airport, State of Alaska Department of Transportation.

MOAA's TRICARE Reform Survey Results

December 5, 2015

As part of the FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act, the House and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairmen included language indicating that they anticipate their committees will be undertaking a reform of military health care programs as part of next year's defense bill. The Chairmen expressed concern that most reform efforts to date have focused on raising beneficiary fees, and that while they believe increased fees will be on the table in their reform consideration, they also want to look at the whole system from top to bottom to sustain readiness, implement efficiencies and deliver better care.

To help prepare for these discussions, MOAA developed a survey and asked for your inputs. MOAA's intent was to gauge beneficiaries' experiences in accessing their health care, what they perceive as a reasonable cost for their care, and the quality of that health care received. Over 30,000 of you responded. Once accessed, the vast majority of survey respondents are satisfied with their health care. Here is a summary of satisfaction ratings on several key topics:

Care Quality	95%	86%	81%
Able to pick Dr?	90%	81%	62%

Cost 86% 68% 80%

On the ability to get routine care within the 7-day DoD timeliness standard, 20% of TRICARE Prime beneficiaries said they "rarely or never" can get care that fast - almost double the TFL and Standard responses.

Among Prime beneficiaries, those seeking care in military facilities reported much greater problems getting appointments than those seeing civilian providers. The most consistent responses among all survey takers were on the question, "Is it reasonable to ask military beneficiaries to pay more?" The percentage saying "definitely not" or "probably not" was 76% for TFL beneficiaries, 74% for Prime, and 78% for Standard, with all categories reporting 56-58% saying "definitely not".

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Major Part B Spikes Reduced

December 18, 2015

2015 saw the biggest changes to the military retirement system in a generation. While the changes largely will affect only new recruits in 2018 and later years, Congress approved a major overhaul to military retirement in this year's defense bill, cutting their future retired pay by 20 percent and asking them to help fund their own retirement via Thrift Savings Plan accounts.

2016 is already shaping up to be the year where every military beneficiary - past, present, and future - could see

dramatic changes to their health care benefits.

Armed Services Committee leaders have already tipped their hand in this year's Defense Authorization Act.

FY 2016 Defense Authorization Conference Report

In order to modernize and improve the military healthcare system, the conferees agree that all elements of the current system must be re-evaluated, and that increases to fees and co-pays will be a necessary part of such a comprehensive reform effort.

As the report language indicates, nothing about the current system will be sacrosanct when lawmakers examine TRICARE - and neither will your wallet.

Proposals earlier this year recommended scrapping TRICARE altogether, forcing beneficiaries into plans similar to those of federal civilians, imposing significantly higher fees, and means-testing TRICARE and TRICARE For Life (TFL) benefits so beneficiaries with higher incomes would pay even more. All of those and others could be on the table again in 2016.

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Other Recent National Military News

US advise-and-assist teams may be utilized in Afghanistan this year:



Going into the new year, US troop levels in Afghanistan are expected to stay steady at about the current 9,800, with "expeditionary advise-and-assist" teams helping Afghan forces at various hot spots, according to the deputy chief of staff for communications for US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan. "The expeditionary advising may be the model that we go to as we continue to bring the force levels down," noted Army Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner. *Navy Times (1/3)*

US named as security threat to Russia in Putin-signed document: Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a document that names the US as a security threat to Russia for the first time, signaling how tense the relationship between the two nations has become. The document, which is used to plan Russia's national security strategy, also calls NATO's expansion a threat to national security. *Reuters (1/2)*

Campbell: More US troops may be needed in Afghanistan: All 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan should stay there as long as possible because of the volatile security situation, says Army Gen. John Campbell, adding that more may be needed. Campbell will brief officials in Washington on the situation soon. *USA Today (12/29)*

US, Iran at odds over rocket tests in Strait of Hormuz: US officials say Iran conducted rocket tests in the Strait of

Hormuz last week, not far from US warships and commercial traffic. The move has renewed tensions between the US and Iran after the two nations struck a nuclear deal. *The Associated Press (12/30)*

Disability claims backlog has eased but won't disappear, VA says: The Veterans Affairs Department says its backlog of disability claims has shrunk a great deal, reaching its lowest level in six years. About 75,000 cases are yet to be handled, down 88% from the highest level of 612,000 cases in 2013. "While complete elimination of the backlog may not be achievable under our current processing systems and procedures, we know there is still more that we can do," the VA said. *Military Times (12/29)*

Congress has military health care reform on its 2016 agenda: Congress will consider an overhaul of the military health care system in the coming year. Lawmakers are looking at ways to make patient care better and to improve efficiency. *Air Force Times (12/27)*

US tops foreign arms sales in 2014 with \$36.2 billion: The US made \$36.2 billion in foreign arms sales in 2014, a jump of about 35% over 2013, according to a congressional study. Russia was a distant second in arms sales, netting \$10.2 billion, followed by Sweden (\$5.5 billion), France (\$4.4 billion) and China (\$2.2 billion). US ally South Korea was the biggest buyer with \$7.8 billion,

followed by Iraq with \$7.3 billion and Brazil with \$6.5 billion. *New York Times (12/25)*

VA will cover ReWalk exoskeleton for paraplegic veterans: The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced coverage of the ReWalk powered exoskeleton for qualified veterans who have lower-limb paralysis, marking the first federal coverage decision for the technology.



Although the powered exoskeleton was approved by the FDA, few private insurers cover the device. Several VA centers across the country will begin training staff on how to administer the ReWalk system. *EMS1.com/The Associated Press (12/20)*

House Democrat urges US to keep 10,000 troops in Afghanistan: The US should keep 10,000 troops in Afghanistan indefinitely to help battle the Taliban, says Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif. "If we ignore the Middle East, the Middle East will still not ignore us," said

Sherman, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Almost 9,800 US troops are scheduled to remain there through most of next year. *The Hill* (12/22)

VA alters procedure for confirming veterans' deaths: The Veterans Affairs Department is changing its procedure for confirming deaths after it wrongly declared scores of veterans deceased and stopped their benefits. Now the VA will send letters to the addresses of veterans it thinks are dead, asking for confirmation from family members. The VA will stop benefits if it doesn't hear back. *The Associated Press* (12/22)

China accuses US of "serious military provocation": The US says two B-52 bombers did not intend to fly over one of China's man-made islands in the South China Sea on Dec. 10. But China on Saturday accused the US of "a serious military provocation." Pentagon spokesman Mark Wright said the mission was not a "freedom of navigation" operation and there was "no intention of flying within 12 nautical miles of any feature." *Military Times/The Associated Press* (12/20)

(Editors Note: There are numerous contentious maritime disputes in the Western Pacific. China is involved in some of these (notably the Spratly islands, the Senkaku islands) and China is also building on otherwise deserted islands/atolls/reefs to exert claims on both resources and transit rights.

Historically, the western Pacific has been an important maritime transit and resource development has become more important over time. Freedom of transit and resource development generally lie at the core of these disputes. While piracy and other criminal activity is a concern, it is the action of state actors which provides the greatest threat to stability in this area. Disputes over potentially resource-rich islands as may contribute to future destabilization of existing norms, as different nation-states scramble for maritime strategic advantage.)

Final spending deal includes \$572.7B for defense: The omnibus spending measure signed by President Barack Obama includes \$572.7 billion for defense. "Getting the appropriations bill is huge, just having to live under a [continuing resolution] and all the uncertainty that comes with that," said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee. "Of two years, this is one year, so we're going to have more work to do further down the line." *Defense News* (12/18)

Obama rejects calls for more ground troops in Mideast: President Barack Obama this week defended his resistance to sending more ground troops to fight the Islamic State in response to recent terror attacks, warning that doing so could result in the deaths of as many as 100 US troops a month. He noted that sending troops to Syria could lead to future deployments to Libya and Yemen.

The New York Times (12/17)

Spending bill provides more funds for military aircraft: Funding for aircraft procurement was boosted in the spending bill passed by Congress today. The bill gives the Defense Department \$1.33 billion for 11 F-35s across the service branches, \$80 million for four MQ-9 Reapers for the Air Force and \$1.01 billion for the Navy to buy seven EA-18G Growlers and five F/A-18 Super Hornets. *Defense News* (12/17), *The Huffington Post* (12/18)

Medal of Honor

John P. Bobo



Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

Company 1 was establishing night ambush sites when the command group was attacked by a reinforced North Vietnamese company supported by heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire. 2d Lt. Bobo immediately organized a hasty defense and moved from position to position encouraging the outnumbered Marines despite the murderous enemy fire. Recovering a

rocket launcher from among the friendly casualties, he organized a new launcher team and directed its fire into the enemy machine gun positions. When an exploding enemy mortar round severed 2d Lt. Bobo's right leg below the knee, he refused to be evacuated and insisted upon being placed in a firing position to cover the movement of the command group to a better location. With a web belt around his leg serving as a tourniquet and with his leg jammed into the dirt to curtain the bleeding, he remained in this position and delivered devastating fire into the ranks of the enemy attempting to overrun the marines.

2d Lt. Bobo was mortally wounded while firing his weapon into the main point of the enemy attack but his valiant spirit inspired his men to heroic efforts, and his tenacious stand enabled the command group to gain a protective position where it repulsed the enemy onslaught. 2d Lt. Bobo's superb leadership, dauntless courage, and bold initiative reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Little Known American Heroes

Joe Foss

In October 1942, Joseph Jacob "Joe" Foss, along with VMF-121 pilots and aircraft, were sent to Guadalcanal as part of Operation Watchtower. His air group, code named "Cactus", became

known as the Cactus Air Force, and their presence played a pivotal role in the Battle of Guadalcanal.



Foss soon gained a reputation for aggressive close-in fighter tactics and uncanny gunnery skills. Foss shot down a Japanese Zero on his first combat mission on October 13, but his own F4F Wildcat was shot up as well, and with a dead engine and three more Zeros on his tail, he landed at full speed, with no flaps and minimal control on the American-held runway at Guadalcanal, barely missing a grove of palm trees.

On 7 November his Wildcat was again hit, and he survived a ditching in the sea off the island of Malaita. As lead pilot in his flight of eight Wildcats, the group soon became known as Foss's Flying Circus., with two sections Foss nicknamed "Farm Boys" and "City Slickers." After a short absence due to a contracted case of malaria, he returned to Guadalcanal, to continue combat operations which lasted until February 9, 1943.

In three months of sustained combat, Foss's Flying Circus shot down 72 Japanese aircraft, including 26 credited to him. Upon matching the record of 26 kills held by America's top World War I

ace, Eddie Rickenbacker, Foss was accorded the honor of becoming America's first "ace-of-aces" in World War II and was also awarded the Medal of Honor.

2016 Calendar of Events

General dates of interest are noted below. Membership meetings are generally on the 4th Thursday of each month except as noted.

- Jan 21: Dinner Social (Verdie Bowen, State of Alaska Veterans Affairs)
- Feb 20: ASYMCA Salute to the Military
- Mar 24: Dinner Social (John Parrott, Mgr, T. Stevens Intl Airport)
- April ##: MOAA Storming the Hill
- Apr 28: Dinner Social (Speaker TBD)
- May 26: Dinner Social (Speaker TBD)
- Jun 14: Army Birthday
- Aug 4: Coast Guard Birthday
- Sep 18: Air Force Birthday
- Sep 22: MOAA First Dinner of Season
- Oct 13: Navy Birthday
- Oct 27: Dinner Social (Speaker TBD)
- Nov 10: Marine Corps Birthday

Contact Information

Please share this newsletter with active duty, Guard, Reservist and retired Officers you know and encourage them to join. Contact information below:

- E-mail: c2burton@gci.net
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- Address: 1143 M Ct.
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- Annual chapter dues: \$25
(payable to Capt. Cook Chapter)

President: Clyde T. (Tom) Burton
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