



Photo © 2010 by Ed Kane

Mount Rainier Chapter Christmas Gala a Success!

Story By: Jerry Jackson Photos: Phil Raschke and Lonnie Lai

We need to keep meeting like this. MOAA Christmas Gala 2018 at the American Lake Conference Center was the most well attended in recent years. MOAA, MOWW, AROWS, and guests comprised a gathering of 79 to celebrate the season. MOAA Treasurer, Paula McCarty, did her usual due diligence in ensuring that all were logged in and accounted for.



Sharing a table photo were (L-R) Pam Strong, Cindy Nelson, Lonnie Lai, Al Strup, Barbara Strup, Barbara Vest and Sabrina Li.

The evening opened with the invocation by Pastor Bill Johnson followed up with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by Doug Taylor.

Our format this year was similar to past years being a scholarship fundraiser. Penny Jackson

shepherded the gala with input from past chairs Carolyn and Chris Guppy. White elephant gift bags were provided by Judy Knight and sold with help from her assistants Karen Schwartz and Coti Dotson.



The conference center kept the refreshments flowing and the buffet dinner fulfilled. The dessert auction was a big success along with some home-made which were a special treat.

Something new to the Christmas gala this year was the presentation of a membership in MOWW to 2LT Johanna Forbes by present and past MOWW Commander's Dick Muri and Dave Gibson. Johanna was home on leave so the timing was perfect.



Music was provided again this year by Jan Peterson who played many of our favorites and a few of his from his 40 plus years of entertaining the Puget Sound region. Dancing was enhanced by Jan's music and lighting coupled with subdued overhead lighting. Heinz Haskins commented that the dancing was not as robust as last year. Part of that was due to his lack of participation this year. Ask him about his suspenders, it's actually good news.



As the 2018 MOAA Christmas Party came to a close, remaining guests gathered around the Christmas tree for the annual group photo taken by Phil Raschke.

Everyone had a rocking good time. We have booked next year along with Jan Peterson and are looking forward to an even better Gala 19.



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**MEMBERSHIP REMINDER
2019 Chapter Dues**

Have your Chapter dues expired or about to expire? If you are not sure please contact our 2nd Vice President, Bob Brown. Dues paid now will cover 2019. 2019 dues are due 1 January 2019.

Please note: Chapter dues are separate from national dues. Dues are \$20 a year or \$55 for three years. For our auxiliary membership it is \$5 a year or \$12 for three years. Also there is the new electronic membership for **Officers 35 and under**. Electronic membership provides members with a Chapter newsletter via email, but no printed copy.

The Electronic membership is free to those under age 35. Just send your name, birthday and e-mail address to postal address below.

2019 dues are due 1 January

If you are a National Life Member, please advise the Chapter of your Life status.

Mail your dues to:

MOAA Mount Rainier Chapter
P.O. Box 99212
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Thanks!

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MOAA National "Take Action"
<http://www.moaa.org/takeaction/>



Your Monthly History Note

January 1, 1863 - The [Emancipation Proclamation](#) by President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the states rebelling against the Union.

January 5, 1972 - President Richard Nixon signed a bill approving \$5.5 billion over six years to build and test the NASA space shuttle.

January 7, 1714 - A patent was issued for the first typewriter designed by British inventor Henry Mill "for the impressing or transcribing of letters singly or progressively one after another, as in writing."

January 10, 1776 - [Common Sense](#), a fifty page pamphlet by Thomas Paine, was published. It sold over 500,000 copies in America and Europe, influencing, among others, the authors of the Declaration of Independence.

January 13, 1898 - French author Emile Zola published *J'Accuse*, a letter accusing the French government of a cover-up in the Alfred Dreyfus case. Dreyfus had been convicted of treason for selling military secrets to the Germans and had been sent to Devil's Island. As a result of Zola's letter and subsequent trail, Dreyfus was completely vindicated.

January 17, 1773 - The ship *Resolution*, sailing under Captain James Cook, became the first vessel to cross the Antarctic Circle.

January 20, 1945 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated to an unprecedented fourth term as president of the United States. He had served since 1933.

January 23, 1849 - Elizabeth Blackwell was awarded her MD by the Medical Institute of Geneva, New York, thus becoming America's first woman doctor.

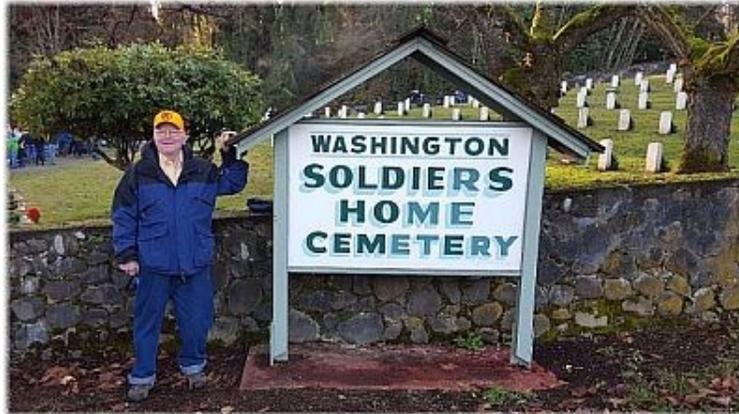
January 24, 1848 - The California gold rush began with the accidental discovery of the precious metal near Coloma during construction of a Sutter's sawmill. An announcement by President Polk later in the year caused a national sensation and resulted in a flood of "Forty-niners" seeking wealth.

January 25, 1959 - An American Airlines Boeing 707 made the first scheduled transcontinental U.S. flight, traveling from California to New York.

January 28, 1915 - The U.S. Coast Guard was created by an Act of Congress, combining the Life Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service.

Mount Rainier Chapter Supports Wreaths Across America

Wreaths Across America's theme is to REMEMBER (our fallen U.S. Veterans), HONOR (those who serve), and TEACH (your children the value of freedom). On December 15, 2018 commencing at 9 AM Eastern Standard Time, 1.8 million wreaths were placed on Veteran's graves across the country. These were distributed nationally via nearly 600 truck loads from volunteer trucking companies and drivers.



Locally, 2566 gravesites at Washington Soldiers Home at Orting were so honored. Twenty-two Mt. Rainier Chapter members donated a total of 97 wreaths to the effort. On December 15, the wreaths were placed on the gravesites at Orting by many volunteers including chapter members: Doug Kotrba, Bob Brown, Ray Dotson, Jerry Jackson and AROWS own, Cheryl Toland.



Due to the success of this first time effort for the Mt. Rainier Chapter, we expect to participate again in 2019. Please visit the Wreaths Across American website for more information on this annual event while we continue to promote: Remember, Honor, and Teach while observing our own: Never Stop Serving.



Tricare to Stop Covering Some Vitamin Supplements

Article by Patricia Kime: Military.com

Starting Jan. 1, TRICARE will stop covering certain vitamin supplements, including some multivitamins, fluoride and iron, for roughly 25,000 beneficiaries.

Those affected received letters at the end of November from Express Scripts, the company that manages TRICARE's pharmacy benefit, notifying them that only vitamins that have been reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through clinical trials are considered prescription medications and therefore eligible for coverage.

The supplements -- 389 varieties, according to Defense Health Agency (DHA) spokesman Kevin Dwyer -- lost their "preferred drug" status because they have not been reviewed by the FDA to treat a condition and are available over the counter.

According to the letter, "the change isn't the result of any issues with the vitamins themselves."

Affected beneficiaries simply will need to pay full price for these supplements if they want to continue taking them. DHA officials said roughly 60 percent of affected patients are TRICARE for Life beneficiaries. The Defense Health Agency oversees the health benefits of 9.6 million patients. An Express Scripts spokesman said TRICARE is making the change "consistent with industry standard."

"Some of the previously covered ... vitamins (those medications that require a physician-written prescription) [are becoming] over-the-counter (OTC). Thus, the vitamins will no longer be covered by the pharmacy benefit but rather available OTC," the Express Scripts spokesman said.

Patricia Kime covers military and veterans health care and medicine for Military Times.



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MOAA's 2019 Key Goals:

MOAA's top legislative goals for 2019 will be featured in an upcoming edition of [Military Officer](#) magazine. Here's a preview of one key issue; see the links below for the rest, including ways you can make your voice heard.

The Goal: End concurrent receipt penalties for military retirees.

Background: Retirees with a 40-percent or lower disability rating and those with a 30-percent or higher disability rating who are forced to retire before completing a full 20-year military career, are prohibited from receiving military retired pay concurrent with VA disability compensation. Political pressure to keep budget costs down has remained the main threat to getting legislation passed to end these financial penalties.

MOAA's Stance: All eligible retirees should receive both retirement and disability compensation.

Actions: Ensure legislation is introduced in the 116th Congress to address Chapter 61 inequities. Educate legislators and congressional staff about the impact these financial penalties have on some of our most vulnerable retirees. Mobilize our membership and The Military Coalition to engage Capitol Hill.

The Goal: Prevent disproportional TRICARE fee increases.

Background: The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently introduced, as a potential option, TRICARE for Life enrollment fees and minimum out-of-pocket requirements as ways the federal budget could escape red ink. Independent of the CBO report ([PDF](#)), DoD and Congress have stated retiree health care costs are spiraling out of control, and beneficiaries do not pay enough for their health care. Based on DoD's own data, MOAA knows this is not true - the difference is attributable to rising institutional and readiness costs. Despite that, the report and the ongoing budget pressure have turned TRICARE For Life into a potential target for fee increases to offset readiness or other programs.

MOAA's Stance: Military retirees, through their service and sacrifice, have paid in full for their TRICARE For Life benefits. Congress - not DoD - should determine appropriate TRICARE fees.

Actions: Reverse or significantly decrease the 2018 TRICARE Prime copayment increases for grandfathered/Group-A beneficiaries. Modify fee structure to reduce out-of-pocket costs for successive specialty appointments, such as physical therapy or mental health care. Protect TRICARE For Life as a second payer to Medicare Part B.

The Goal: Ensure any TRICARE reform sustains access to top-quality care.

Background: Access to quality care is paramount for all beneficiaries in TRICARE programs and VA Community Networks - regardless of location. Access has been enhanced by technology, such as the DoD-VA Electronic Health Record and the expansion of telehealth capabilities.

MOAA's Stance: Savings gained from reforms should benefit the health care system and beneficiaries. Military treatment

facilities (MTFs) remain instrumental to an operational medical force, which is necessary to support a military ready force, and should continue to support beneficiary care to sustain medical training platforms.

Actions: Strengthen our partnership with Defense Health Agency (DHA) working groups and executive sessions. Engage The Military Coalition's Healthcare Committee. Continue to administer and drive results of MOAA's health care surveys. Closely monitor the new role DHA has for oversight of MTFs.

The Goal: End financial penalties for military survivors.

Background: Nearly 67,000 military survivors lose between \$900 and \$1,500 per month due to the [widows tax](#). The widows tax is the amount of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payment offset by Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

MOAA's Stance: SBP and DIC are two different payments for two different reasons. The offset should be eliminated, and DIC should be improved to align with other federal survivor benefits. Additionally, survivors' and dependents' educational assistance benefits should be increased.

Actions: Ensure legislation is introduced in the 116th Congress to address survivor benefits. Educate legislators, staffers, and other stakeholders about the inequities. Mobilize MOAA members and The Military Coalition to engage and press for legislation to be included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The Goal: Ensure timely access to service-earned VA benefits.

Background: The veteran population of nearly 22 million is projected to decline in coming years. Demand for VA health care and benefits, however, steadily grows because of the aging and unique demographics of this population.

MOAA's Stance: Major health care and benefit system reforms have been implemented in recent years but require an ongoing commitment and investments to meet demand and ensure timely access. Continuing implementation will pose challenges to fund evolving technologies, infrastructure, [electronic health records](#), full staffing at every echelon, and the various support systems that tie these efforts together. Further, political forces continue to threaten or erode the core VA health and benefit missions and foundational services.

Actions: Oppose efforts to use veterans' disability benefits compensation or other benefits to pay for VA system improvements and diminish or restrict access to service-earned benefits. Press DoD and the VA to achieve true interoperability of electronic medical, personnel, and benefits records to improve medical outcomes and delivery of benefits. Mandate DoD and the VA to develop protocols and establish a mechanism to address service-connected illnesses and environmental exposures and institute a framework for managing toxic exposures that might happen in the future.

The Goal: Sustain military pay comparability with the private sector.

Background: A residual 2.6-percent pay-raise gap still exists between Service members and private-sector civilians, attributable to three years of pay-raise caps. Political pressure to reduce costs might lead Congress to again cap military pay raises, widening the pay-raise gap between military and civilians.

Continued on Page 5

MOAA's 2019 Key Goals:

Continued from page 4

MOAA's Stance: As the cost of labor increases across the nation, so too should the paychecks of our uniformed Service members. Adequate pay and allowances - including competitive raises - are key to recruiting and retaining an effective all-volunteer force. This issue affects all currently serving uniformed personnel and their families, and succeeding on this issue has a positive, far-reaching impact. Any pay raise set by the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) must match the Employment Cost Index (ECI) increase of 3.1 percent -- anything lower will make the pay gap wider.

Actions: Maintain continuous, unified messaging to legislators and service leadership, advising annual military pay raises approved by Congress correlate with ECI to help overcome damage done by the three recent pay caps (2014-2016). Coordinate with The Military Coalition to address this wide-reaching imperative of support to those in uniform, and seek closure of the 2.6-percent gap as soon as feasible.

The Goal: Stop erosion of compensation and non-pay quality-of-life benefits.

Background: Other components of compensation are equally essential to recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force. Political pressure to reduce costs could encourage Congress to reconsider the calculations for the basic allowance for housing (BAH), as it has done in recent years. First was an attempt to do away with BAH for dual-military families. The following year, Congress attempted to do away with the with-dependent rate BAH for those dual-military couples with children.

MOAA's Stance: Other pays and allowances are essential to shaping the force with the proper skill sets and experience. As the Blended Retirement System matures, these pays will become even more important to recruiting and retention.

Actions: Continue to oppose proposals to reduce compensation or undermine long-term retention. Assess progress of the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation's review of Regular Military Compensation and potential changes to a salary system.

The Goal: Strengthen DoD-VA collaboration and services to support wounded warriors and an expanding population of women veterans.

Background: Programs developed to support wounded warriors and their families and caregivers since Sept. 11, 2001, continue to be essential to readiness and the war-fighting mission of the future. Veterans who served in past and current wars still struggle to obtain needed benefits due to the lack of congressional action on key issues, particularly [toxic exposures and their long-term impacts](#). The Pentagon has worked to forge collaborative relationships with other government and nongovernment agencies - most significantly the VA. Also evolving is a greater appreciation for the specific differences in health care and support for women veterans.

MOAA's Stance: Improving upon this collaboration will require investments in leadership, resources, and funding - to include oversight and reporting. As we progress, DoD's and the VA's evolving systems must continue in sync and remain fully aligned to delivering seamless care and benefits.

Actions: Monitor the FY 2019 NDAA requirement for a review and assessment of DoD and service wounded warrior programs. Seek legislation forcing the VA to address known gaps in benefits to veterans. Involve The Military Coalition's Veterans Committee to expand influence and reach in all areas affecting veterans' issues. Engage and advocate on behalf of the VA - when needed - to ensure the agency is adequately resourced and equipped to deliver benefits to veterans without backlogs or delays. Preserve the integrity of and access to DoD and VA health systems for dually eligible beneficiaries.

The Goal: Achieve equity of benefits for Guard and Reserve members with their active duty counterparts.

Background: An operational Guard and Reserve is an essential component to the national defense strategy because they make up approximately 38 percent of U.S. uniformed manpower.

MOAA's Stance: Achieving pay and benefits parity with active duty forces is vital to recruiting, retaining, and sustaining forces for the Guard and Reserve supporting our nation's defense strategy.

Actions: Encourage Congress to advance equal pay and benefits for similar service by the Guard and Reserve relative to active duty troops. Build partnerships with federal agencies, such as the Department of Labor, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and state governors to expand and strengthen employer support for Guard and Reserve members. Appeal to The Military Coalition and its Guard and Reserve Committee to expand influence and reach in all areas affecting pay and benefits issues.

The Goal: Protect military and veteran family support programs and policies.

Background: Congress and DoD recognize military and veteran family quality of life is critical to recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force. Often, support programs for military and veteran families are the first to be cut when government funds become tight.

MOAA's Stance: It is necessary to update family support programs and policies to reflect the needs of today's military families. Spouse employment, children's education, special needs, commissaries and exchanges, and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) programs are essential today. Adequate, affordable, and safe housing remains a concern for all military families, especially those in high-cost areas where options are limited.

Actions: Educate members of Congress and their staffers on the importance of military family readiness and issues affecting military and veteran families. Protect programming and subsidies essential to MWR and family readiness. Eliminate health and safety hazards in military base housing. Decrease military spouse unemployment and underemployment. Ensure quality of life and health of military and veteran families.



More Christmas Gala Photos



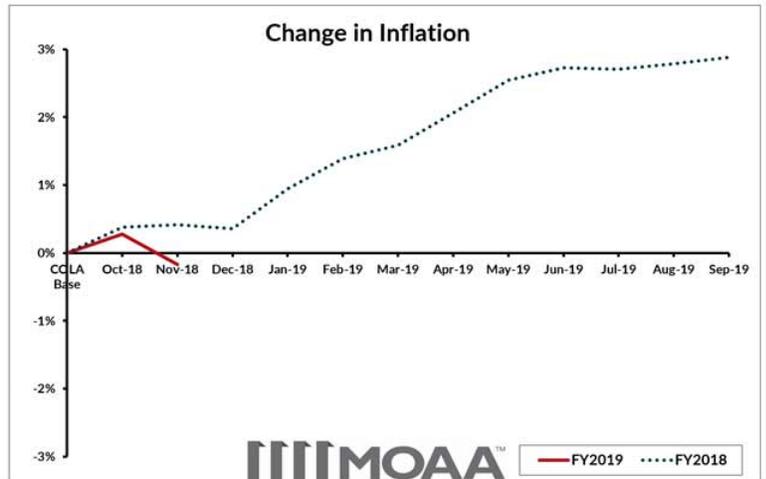
Following dinner and dessert (L-R) Ray Swalley, Linda Wakeley, Ray Dotson, Coti Dotson and Don Wilbur are all smiles.



Doug Kotrba and Bob Lawrence have a serious discussion following dinner.

December 2018 COLA Watch

The November 2018 CPI is 245.933, 0.2 percent below the FY 2019 COLA baseline. Note the drop from October to November. **The Consumer Price Index for December is scheduled to be released on January 11, 2019.** The CPI baseline for FY 2019 is 246.352.



Bev and Phil Raschke plus a small Camo dressed friend enjoy a holiday photo opt.



Following dinner and dessert (L-R) Ray Swalley, Linda Wakeley, Ray Dotson, Coti Dotson and Don Wilbur are all smiles.



The fabulous "Fun Factory" sounds of DJ Jan Peterson got Christmas Party guests to the dance floor.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by the spending patterns for each of two population groups: all urban consumers and urban wage earners and clerical workers. The all urban consumer group represents about 93 percent of the total U.S. population. Prices are obtained by personal visits or telephone calls from the [Bureau of Labor and Statistics](http://www.bls.gov). Collectively, the CPI is also used to adjust annuities for other federal retirees,

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Chaplain's Corner

*"Old Age Ain't
No Place for
Sissies"*

Attributed to Bette Davis, I find myself rehearsing this quote more and more lately. I

remember when weddings and baby showers were where I would see large gathering of my friends. Now I see large gatherings of my friends at memorials and funerals. The last two of these I attended I found, in the end, to be quite rejuvenating.



There was sadness, of course. One was a member of another veteran group who had been decorated for valor while in the service and was very involved with our chapter. The other was a man I knew from the church I attend who was almost a decade younger than I am.

Each service was completely different, with one exception. There was a palpable feeling of peace among the family members of each of the men who had died. Even testimonies about the men who had died had a definite feeling of peace

intermingled with the sadness that comes with the loss of a family member or close friend.

In both cases, much of the service had to do with life and relationships, especially how each man enjoyed relationships. This not only included relationships with many different people, but also with the Living God in the person of Jesus. Though each man had died within a week of Christmas, there truly was a peace that passes (earthly) understanding among the family members and many of those who gathered to remember someone who was special to them.

I love this time of year with the promise of new beginnings, and I love that my two friends are at a new beginning in their eternal lives. It will be hard for me adjusting to their absence here on earth. But then I remember what Jesus says to all of us who die while in a relationship with Him here on earth: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise".

Gail Porter



New in 2019: Are Exchanges and Commissaries Headed Toward a Merger?

This year could mean the beginning of more big changes.

By Jan. 1, a formal report was to have been submitted to [Congress](#) detailing why defense officials think it makes good business sense to [consolidate exchanges and commissaries](#).

A Defense Department task force has finished its work analyzing whether to merge the military exchanges into one entity, and, at this writing, various officials in DoD and the services are discussing whether to buy into their recommendations. The task force also reportedly lays the groundwork and a timeline for merging the exchange systems with the commissary systems.

It's not clear yet how the merger would benefit [actual customers](#) of exchanges and commissaries, as officials have reportedly been working on plans for "above-the-store" operational structures.

But the merger business case analysis, prepared by Boston Consulting Group, reportedly claims about \$2 billion in savings over five years by merging all the systems. Some have expressed concern that the estimated cost to merge the systems could be around \$500 million, yet the savings are not guaranteed.

Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan signed a memo May 29, when he was the deputy defense secretary, to form the task force to do a business case analysis and begin planning for the consolidation of the defense resale enterprise. Retired Army major general and former retail executive Keith Thurgood was named to lead the task force. He was the chief executive officer of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service from 2007 to 2010.

Shanahan stated he had considered the views and responses of the military departments on consolidating the Defense Commissary Agency, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, the Navy Exchange and the Marine Corps Exchange into one organization, as recommended by DoD's Reform Management Group.

He agrees that "a single consolidated organization offers the greatest potential to achieve the economies and efficiencies" that are necessary to ensure that the commissary and exchange benefits survive, the memo stated. Laws would have to be changed in order to consolidate the commissary and exchange systems.

Defense officials got pushback from members of Congress on their plans to go forward with consolidation, which is why DoD is required to submit the report on the business case analysis. Congress will weigh in, and one possibility is that they will ask for an independent validation of DoD's conclusions

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Happy Birthday Wishes to Our Treasured Friends

- 1/4 Dennis Sapp
- 1/6 Landan O'Ban
- 1/8 Charles Brockway
- 1/10 Kristina Fortman
- 1/10 Gregory Vaught
- 1/11 Richard Mencarini
- 1/11 Monica Roberts-Brown
- 1/12 Dolores Stetson
- 1/14 Chlotilde (Coti) Dotson
- 1/17 Jon Castle
- 1/17 Bruce Dammeier
- 1/25 Ronald Dammeier
- 1/25 Nori Wendt (Wife)
- 1/26 James Manning

1/29 Carroll Dickson



*"The New Year, like an Infant Heir to the whole world, was waited for, with welcomes, presents, and rejoicings."
~ Charles Dickens*

Note: MOAA Meetings will be held at the Patriot's Landing unless otherwise noted. Social Time starts at 1200, the Buffet at 1230 is \$17.50/person and Program starts 1300. For all reservations or information contact Jerry Jackson at gerald.jackson1@comcast.net or 253.565.6409, Steven Schenk at steven.schenk@comcast.net, or Chris Guppy at guppyc@comcast.net.
Remember, when making a reservation, your word is your bond.

27 January 2019: Speaker: Col Erin Staine-Pyne, Vice Commander, 62nd Airlift Wing, JBLM

23 February 2019: Saturday Washington State Patriot's Day at Stadium High School Tacoma. Social at restaurant Rhein Haus, 649 Division Ave, Tacoma after ceremony.

17 March 2019: Ray Arment with Kerri Pedrick, Executive Director Washington Trafficking Prevention. Nominations for officers.

28 April 2019: Election of Officers – Program: Sound Military and Communities Partnership; Bill Adamson

19 May 2019: Installation of Officers – Program MOAA National Representative

23 June 2019: Lakewood Playhouse – "Producers", social to follow.

21 July 2019: Rainier Baseball, **Note this is a Sunday event.**



Northwest Patriot News

Editors Curtis Atkinson and Shirley Burrows

The information in this newsletter, both National and Local, is Nonpartisan

This newsletter is published monthly by the Mt. Rainier Chapter, MOAA at P.O. Box 99212, Lakewood, WA 98496-0212. Circulation 50 by mail and approximately 300 by e-mail.

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AROWS

The ladies of AROWS (Associated Retired Officers Wives), an auxiliary of the Mt. Rainier Chapter of MOAA, has members from every branch of the service. They meet monthly from 11:00 to 13:00 hours on the 3rd Thursday every month at Patriot's Landing. Reservations are required.

Contact Carolyn Guppy (253) 581-2662 for any questions.



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Mount Rainier Chapter Has Been Selected as a 2017 Four Star Chapter

