



Charleston Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

May, 2011 Issue 5-2011

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Web site: www.chasmoaa.org

May Luncheon

20 May is the date, Charleston Airport Radisson is the place! Mr. Dennis Christensen, Mt. Pleasant Elder Law attorney, has been gracious enough to re-schedule his presentation to MOAA Charleston Chapter this month. Mr. Christensen hosts a weekly Saturday morning program on WTMA radio in which he addresses the myriad issues which can confront us as we become more "seasoned." As anyone who has heard Dennis on the radio will agree, this is a wonderful opportunity to hear him speak and ask whatever questions we may have. Given the extensive range of topics encompassed by his practice, it is entirely likely that each of us will encounter one or more during our 'Golden Years.' So, come join us! Don't pass on this opportunity to ask the question(s) we all wonder about but never quite get around to asking.....

- Place: Radisson Hotel, Charleston Airport (5991 Rivers Avenue, North Charleston).
- Date: Friday, May 20th, 2011.
- Time: Social Hour 11AM accompanied by a cash bar.
- Lunch: 12 Noon.
- Menu: Classic salad and assorted dressings, sliced roast beef with hunter sauce, garlic mashed potatoes, green beans almondine, warm rolls and butter, Chef's choice of dessert, iced tea and coffee.
- Cost: \$18.00 per person. Make checks payable to Charleston MOAA.
- Dress: Casual.

Who's this Month's MOAA Profile?
See Page Three

RSVP: Check to arrive NLT Tuesday, May 17th, 2011.

Mail to: Dave Farley, CDR, USN (ret)
126 Cainhoj Landing Road
Wando, SC 29492

For additional information call 881-9452 (home) or 708-8110 (cell) or E-mail: defarley@bellsouth.net

Dennis J. Christensen, P.A. is the legal expert for WTMA's Senior Focus, Saturday mornings at 9:00. An attorney who specializes in Elder Law, Disability and Estate Planning, his law office is located in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina.

Dennis is on the Advisory Board and is a founding member of the Coastal Alzheimer's Chapter for South Carolina. He is also a member of the Charleston Estate Planning Council and is a frequent lecturer to the public and lawyers on issues involving estate planning, advance directives, Medicaid, and elder law.

Dennis graduated from Michigan State University in 1972 and the Marquette University School of Law in 1976.

Legislative Update

CDR John E. Nolan, SC, USN

TESTIMONY HIGHLIGHTS SBP, PAY, HEALTHCARE

In April, the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Jim Webb (D -VA) held hearings focusing on personnel and compensation for the military community. Sen. Webb led off with an acknowledgement that "Defense is not immune " from budget cuts in this increasingly austere fiscal environment. Webb stated that the subcommittee intends to conduct scrupulous oversight to ensure that funded programs are effective and efficient.

The panel's first witness was SBP champion Bill Nelson (D-FL) who urged substantive action this year on his legislation (S-260) to end deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefits Plan annuities. He noted that the Senate has passed the bill almost every year, only to see it dropped in final deliberations with the House for lack of funding offsets. Nelson said he's committed to finding offsets and that taking care of veterans and survivors should be considered a cost of war." I've got a lot of experience in the insurance business" he observed, "and I know of no other purchased annuity that would deny payment based on receipt of a different benefit ". Webb expressed empathy noting that his father had purchased SBP as a military retiree.

The next panel featured the senior enlisted advisors of the four military services who particularly focused on the importance of improving dwell time to "restore balance" to military family lives. Webb asked what programs their services are providing to help separating service members transition to civilian life, and each offered an impressive list of initiatives, from resume, education, and job counseling to assistance for wounded warriors.

Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond Chandler said that he had experienced some deployment-related effects and took advantage of behavioral health counseling that "made me a better man, a better husband and a better soldier." He cited his own example to help eliminate any stigma associated with seeking help.

The final panel featured leaders of several military association including MOAA. These witnesses covered a range of goals, from sustaining the military pay raise and funding for family support services to eliminating inequities affecting survivors, disabled retirees and Guard/Reserve members. Col. Strobridge focused on health care issues urging the subcommittee to resist inclusion of Deficit Commission proposed TRICARE for LIFE cutbacks in the upcoming budget resolution, further oversight to ensure proper care for wounded warriors and caregivers, and putting language in the law acknowledging that career service members prepay very large in-kind premiums of service and sacrifice and capping the percentage increase in TRICARE fees in any year to the percentage increase in retired pay.

Sen. Webb expressed his strong concern that the nation keep its "moral contract " with military retirees on that score. Strobridge strongly agreed but reiterated that there is nothing in current law reflecting any such contract and putting it in the law is essential to help sustain it in the future.

LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS

It is important that you continue support of MOAA's goals and objectives, particularly is the upcoming era of tight fiscal restraints. Call the MOAA toll free Capital switchboard ,1-866-272-6622 and ask to be connected to our Senators or Representative. This will take three separate calls, or contact their local offices:

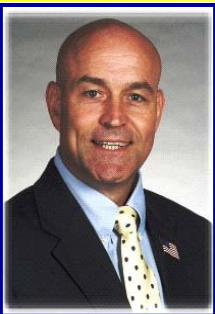
Sen Lindsay Graham
530 Johnnie Dodds Blvd
Mt Pleasant, SC 29464
Tel 849-3887

Sen Jim Demint
112 Custom House
Charleston, SC 29401
Tel 727-4525

Congressman Tim Scott
2000 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Suite 3007
Charleston, SC 29409
Tel 852-2222

Please give the support you have given to me to our new Legislative Director, CDR. Gordon Hobgood USN.

**I bid you all adieu.
John.**



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Col Bill Sessoms, US Air Force

Multi-Talented Member



Life in the Air Force is often described in superlatives, ranging from the winning score at a football game to the number of “on time” take offs and landings an outfit might enjoy.

For retired Air Force Col. Bill Sessoms and his wife, Debbie, their superlative number is 18, representing their number of moves over 27 years in the service. Not a record, perhaps, but still a lot.

“I was born in Fort Bragg, N.C., an Army brat,” Bill said recently. He graduated from high school in 1966 and enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“Chapel Hill was a liberal bastion,” he said. “I learned more outside of school than in.”

In December, 1969 he also learned that his number in the newly created draft lottery was 38 — low enough to guarantee life in the military was looming.

“I was a scrawny kid, in line for the draft,” Bill said. He explored his options and looked into the Air Force. He passed all the tests, married his wife, Debbie, and left Raleigh on Oct. 30, 1970 for Officer Training School in San Antonio, Texas.

The trip to Texas was the first time he had ever been on an airplane.

Ninety days later he was a second lieutenant en route to pilot training at Laredo, Texas. A year after that, he and Debbie were heading for South Carolina and the first of three tours at Charleston Air Force Base, flying C-141 transports.

Bill and Debbie moved back to Texas in 1977 where Bill taught Air Force pilots how to teach instrument flying to student pilots. That job lasted barely a year when the outfit closed.

“My boss told me to head over to MPC (the Military Personnel Center in San Antonio) and find myself a job,” Bill said. He wound up moving across town to Lackland Air Force Base where he became an instructor at the Air Force’s Officer Training School.



2nd Lieutenant Bill Sessoms in Pilot Training at Laredo, Texas in 1971



COL Bill Sessoms and his wife Debbie

It was the most rewarding job of his career. “I had a great boss and I was making officers out of civilians. It was a challenge I enjoyed.”

In 1981, Bill received a call from MPC telling him he needed to return to a flying job. “I had a choice: Charleston or McGuire (a base in New Jersey). It was no contest. We came here.”

The move, however, began with tragedy. “The packers arrived on the same day our daughter, Kara, fell ill,” he said. Kara died of an aggressive form of leukemia less than two days later.

“It almost destroyed us,” Bill said. Debbie put it another way: “We didn’t get over it, but you learn to live with it.”

Two years later the Sessoms moved again, this time to the Pentagon where Bill became an action officer with the Air Force Reserve. Like many jobs at the Pentagon, there’s no school to learn the job beforehand. “It’s sink or swim,” he said.

The Sessoms returned to Charleston in 1987 where Bill became operations officer for the 41st Military Airlift Squadron. Two years later he was placed in command of Charleston’s airlift control element squadron, known as the ALCE.

“It changed my life forever,” Bill said, referring to the long deployments he suddenly encountered. First came Hurricane Hugo in 1989, followed by the build-up to the first Gulf War in 1990.

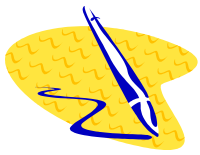
On Monday, Aug. 6, the phone rang telling Bill to prepare a deployment package in record time. Bill departed along with five C-141s for Saudi Arabia the following Wednesday. He didn’t return home until March.

Before leaving Saudi, however, he learned of his next assignment — the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pa. He was one of 18 Air Force officers attending the Army school.

One year later he returned to the Pentagon and his “most challenging job. He became chief of the Air Force’s Program Integration Division. It was a job no one wanted,” Bill said, because it was a bureaucratic nightmare. Bill and his division stood between Congress and a legion of Air Force planners, constantly trying to reconcile what the Air Force wanted in its next budget with what Congress wanted to provide.

After four years of constant turmoil, Bill returned to Carlisle, Pa., this time as a faculty member. He retired in 1997 and returned to the home he and Debbie had purchased in Summerville early in his career. He worked as a civilian for four years at Charleston Air Force managing Boeing’s C-17 simulator. He retired from that post in 2002 after a career of service.

Well done, Bill and Debbie!



President's Pen

Hello to everyone from Charlotte, North Carolina!! I am attending the 50th Anniversary Convention of the North Carolina National Guard; therefore, had to miss our meeting and tour of Fort Moultrie. Dave said it was a great success - \$70 collected for Toys for Tots and \$33 collected for the raffle!!! Positive feedback was received from all who attended. Thank you for making that event a success!!

I proudly sported my Charleston Chapter MOAA shirt at the convention and the first table of sponsors I saw was the MOAA table from North Carolina. The representative said they were having the same challenges with getting new members and finding the right mix of meeting places, times and programs.

A huge "Thank You" to John Nolan for his many years of service to MOAA and the Board. I hope everyone has a chance to see the broad smile on John Nolan's face since our last Board meeting!! CDR (ret) Gordon Hobgood has agreed to take the Legislative Director duties and he has been sworn in as a Board member. He had an interesting career and you can look forward to Terry's interview in a future issue of the Bridge View.

I ask two things of each of you. Please take time to write your congressman and senators to ask them to honor past promises to our nations service members and retirees. The MOAA magazine provides examples of correspondence in their issues. Secondly, please let Dave know your ideas for times, places and programs for future meetings to ensure we cover topics of interest to YOU!!

Again, thanks to all of YOU who make our chapter such a success!.

Ernie

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for these upcoming chapter events:

Friday, May 13th - Chapter Board Meeting, 12:15

Friday, May 20th - Lunch at Charleston Airport Radisson, 5991 Rivers Ave. Speaker will be Dennis Christensen. Menu & details are on Page 1. Price: \$18.00.

Saturday, May 21st - Chapter visit to the VA Hospital (Armed Forces Day)

Friday, June 10th - Chapter Board Meeting, 12:15

June (Date TBA) - Possible Evening event on the USS Yorktown

Photos from the March Luncheon



Doris Pearce and Andree Postick



John Kite and Bill Meisburger



Toby Spahr and John Nolan



Bill and Debbie Sessions

Our Apologies

Last month's issue announced the passing of COL William W. Thomas, USAF. In fact, it was another William Thomas who had passed on.

Our Apologies go out to our Colonel Thomas for the error.

Personal Affairs

If you missed the March Luncheon you missed a great deal of good information. With a turnout of 75 members and guests, Kathy Perry, from the Causality Assistance Office of Joint Base Charleston gave a persuasive talk about getting your documents together in case a member or spouse passes on. Kathy will assist military personnel, both active and retired with general information and benefits available to survivors of deceased military personnel. She can be contacted at 843-963-4406 and is located in Buildings 500.

As Director of Personal Affairs Charleston Chapter MOAA you may contact me for additional info concerning helping your survivors now. I am listed on page 6 under Officers and Board of Directors.

LCDR Bill Mehard

Need to get in touch with the chapter?

Call one of the Board members listed on page 6 or mail us at

Chapter Mailing Address

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Remember Memorial Day, May 30th

Proposed Changes to Chapter By-Laws

Members will be asked to approve or reject these changes at the next chapter function.

The recommended changes to Articles IV, V, VII and VIII of the Chapter By-Laws will permit spouses who express an interest in chapter activities to have the same rights, privileges and responsibilities of eligible individuals. In the event their partner is eligible for chapter membership **but has not become a member, the spouse can be considered for membership.**

Procedure: A regular membership application is submitted to the membership chairman to include the information illustrating the partner's chapter eligibility. The Board of Governors retains the right to accept or deny the application.

Article X changes reflect voluntary membership in the South Carolina Council of Chapters. Detailed information of each article can be obtained from the membership chairman.

The entire By-Laws document can be viewed on the Chapter web site.

Detailed information on each article can be obtained from the Membership Chairman.



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REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD (Appointed by the President)

EDITOR	COL Josiah (Butch) Fuller, USA	821-0169	ButchFuller@aol.com
CHAPLAIN	CAPT Henry Lovelady, USN	553-9581	capthensyl@comcast.net
SCHOLARSHIP	COL Rudy Smart, USAF	824-1263	rsmart1@gmail.com

News and Views herein are not necessary those of any Government Department or of other Chapters or Members. **Prospective Chapter Members:** if you are not a member of the Charleston Chapter, MOAA, you have received this copy as a courtesy invitation to call any Officer or Director for information about joining.

**Sam Stafford III, M.D.
Mt. Pleasant Dermatology**

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Donald Hurley

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Charleston Chapter MOAA *Membership Application Renewal Change of Address* (circle one).
Chapter Dues: \$10.00 a year for Regular membership. Auxiliary membership \$5.00 per year. Multiple year dues are encouraged in order to reduce paperwork. Make check payable to "Charleston MOAA". Mail to: Charleston MOAA, P.O. Box 70421, Charleston SC 29415-0421.

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

DOB _____ Rank _____ Service _____ Spouse's Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

If you are a member of National MOAA, please provide your membership number _____

Your status (circle one) Retired Active Duty Reserve National Guard Former Officer Auxiliary

Dues for Year (s) _____ Signature _____

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Total Membership: 463
Auxiliary Members: 100
Honorary Members: 27

Receiving E-Mail Newsletters: 101

Dues Questions

Questions concerning your status should be directed

to:

Al Smith, Membership VP. 572-2011
alandmarty@comcast.net

BE THE NEXT IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!!

Did you know that this newsletter is on line and in living color? Check out our website at www.chasmoaa.org/. You will need the latest version of Adobe Reader which is available on our site, and it's free. If you choose to access the newsletter from the web on a regular monthly basis instead of the U.S. Post Office "snail mail", you will:

- Be notified as soon as the newsletter is on the web.
- Receive your copy 5 to 7 days earlier.
- Help the environment by reducing paper waste and diminishing the number of trees needed to make paper.
- Help your Chapter to reduce the price tag involved in the cost of postage (postage rates up will go up again!!) and printing!

I hope this sounds like something you would like to do to help your chapter. If so, let Al Smith know at alandmarty@comcast.net.

If you select this option you will receive a personal e-mail in October and December of each year showing you your annual dues expiration date.

MEMBERS WHO HAVE PAID DUES FOR 5 OR MORE YEARS

One additional member has joined the ranks of those who have paid their dues for five or more years. In addition to those previously recognized, we are pleased to extend our wholehearted thanks to the following member:

Brig Gen Francis D. Rogers, USAF (Ret.)

Next VA Hospital Visit Scheduled for May 21st

Mark your calendars, and plan on joining us for our next visit to the VA Hospital on Saturday, May 21st, 2011.

Members and spouses enjoy these visits, and many bring along toiletries, candy and books that would be enjoyed by the patients.

As in the past, we plan on gathering at the Charleston Club at 0915, and convoy down under the leadership of Terry Joyce. Others can meet us at the hospital.

So, why not plan on being there. Call Terry at 871-6360, and let him know that you will be joining us. I know that you will enjoy the visit.

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