



Alta Gram



Alta California Chapter • Military Officers Association of America

October / November 2024

Never Stop Serving

Volume 58, No. 6

President's Corner

Our Voices Will Be Heard

As we move into the fall and the days grow shorter, the sunsets seem more beautiful to me. Maybe it's just the cooling weather, but when I sit on the back porch and watch the last rays settle into the western mountains I'm reminded just how blessed we are to be Americans.

I'm still working, still keeping an eye on Russia, China, North Korea, even Yemen and Iran.

The greatest difference I see between America and those dictatorships is the value of each person's vote in our country. Our candidates are chosen by our parties, not by any supreme leader. Each American's vote still counts and we're allowed to vote for who we want. Few countries in the world can say that.



Sometimes it feels like the end of the world as we look toward the U.S. elections; the right fears the left, the left fears the right. Neither

side seems willing to engage the other. But we've been here before and our country will be alright. Our Constitution guarantees rights to the people and it limits the powers of all leaders, ultimately the Constitution forces parties to work together.

Please turn to page 2, column 2

Save the Date

Holiday Luncheon

Mark your calendar now for our chapter's holiday luncheon Thursday, December 12. Reservations will be needed by Monday, December 9. Details will follow in the next *AltaGram*.

Next Meeting

October 24: Annual Air Force and Navy JROTC Recognition

It will be our privilege on October 24 to recognize the outstanding cadets of the Lindhurst High School AFJROTC and Yuba Cty High School NJROTC programs.



The mission of AFJROTC is "to develop citizens of character dedicated to serving their nation and community." The program offers classroom education in air and space fundamentals as well as hands-on learning opportunities in a number of extra-curricular activities.



The objective of the NJROTC is to create tomorrow's leaders through a regimen of leadership development, academic success, health and fitness, and civic service. The basic curriculum is designed to develop pride in the organization and foster personal qualities of patriotism, citizenship, and leadership.

Upcoming Luncheon Meeting

Thursday, October 24, 2024
11:15 a.m. Social Hour, 12 Noon Lunch

Cool Hand Luke's
1669 Colusa Hwy, Yuba City, CA 95993

Please make your reservation by email or phone not later than Monday, October 21, to:

Email: t.walther@att.net

Phone: (530) 673-5499

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Alta California Chapter MOAA, P.O. Box 541, Yuba City, CA 95992

MOAA Alta California Chapter

Chartered 18 Mar 1966

2024 Executive Committee

President:	Lt Col Ed Harvey	318-505-3236
1st Vice Pres.	LT Maury Castaneda	808-351-4393
2nd Vice Pres.	Lt Col Marcus Bole	530-633-0117
Treasurer:	CDR Bill Crocker	530-673-8982
Secretary:	Col Steve Witmer	916-408-2455
Past President:	Capt Tom Walther	530-218-3847

Advisors and Committee Chairs

Membership:	Capt Tom Walther	530-218-3847
Programs:	RADM Dawn Wyllie	218-556-9292
Chaplain:	Lt Col Marcus Bole	530-633-0117
Webmaster:	Capt Tom Walther	530-218-3847
Legislative Chair:	Col Steve Witmer	916-408-2455
CALMOAA SSL:	Kathy Prout	619-980-6623

Personal Affairs / Sunshine / Hospitality

Yuba City Area:	Robin Walther	530-218-3847
Grass Valley:	RADM Dawn Wyllie	218-556-9292
Lake Wildwood:	RADM Dawn Wyllie	218-556-9292
Lincoln Hills:	Lt Col Shirley Schultz	916-645-7539

Mission

To serve the needs of active duty, retired and former military members and their surviving spouses.

Membership

Find membership information at these links:

MOAA National: <https://www.moaa.org/join>

Alta Calif. Chapter: <http://altamoaa.org/memberships>

Editorial Policy

National MOAA is a nonpartisan organization. The content of this newsletter is intended to be nonpartisan, in accordance with national policy.

Legislative Updates

Find out about MOAA's legislative initiatives by accessing the MOAA national website at: moaa.org/takeaction.
For state issues visit: www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/.

Chapter Recognition



2023 5-Star Level of Excellence Award



2023 5-Star Communications Awards:
Website and *AltaGram*

AltaGram Contributions

Contributions to the *AltaGram* are appreciated.
Please send material for consideration to:

Col Steve Witmer, Editor
1582 Summerhill Lane
Lincoln, CA 95648
altacalifmoaa@gmail.com

Treasurer's Report

As of August 31, 2024, the chapter's treasury balances were:

Checking	\$3,085.85
Cash Fund	250.00
Total	\$3,335.85

Membership Report

As of August 31, 2024, the chapter's membership totaled:

Regular	39
Surviving Spouse	2
Total	41

It's That Time Again!

It's hard to believe the end of the year is near and 2025 will be here before we know it. With the New Year in mind, a form to begin or renew your chapter membership for 2025 appears on page 6. Please note that this is also your opportunity to support the chapter's ongoing service projects such as the Veterans Stand Down, the Civil Air Patrol, Sea Cadets, and the local high schools' Air Force and Navy JROTC programs.

President's Corner, continued from page 1

That same Constitution that we swore to support and defend as officers has kept our country on track for 237 years and it's not about to fail.

This fall, it is my sincere hope that all of us will vote and engage in the political process. America will continue to be strong, whichever way things go. And whichever way you vote, your vote matters as much as it ever has.

Never stop serving.

- Ed Harvey, Lt Col, USAF (ret)

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Share those Memories

We are featuring the military bios of our members in our bimonthly newsletters. I will be contacting you, one at a time, as the months progress, asking that you provide a 300-word history of your military experience. We all have served in different capacities and have stories to tell. It will be interesting to read these histories and learn more about our members.

– Bill Crocker

There I Was...

...a brief look back at the military history of

Tom Walther

In 1964, I was tired of school and facing the draft, so I decided to join the Navy. While looking for the Navy recruiting office, I encountered an Air Force recruiter. He asked, "Why not join the Air Force?" One month later, I was on my way to Lackland AFB in Texas for basic training.

In basic, I swayed all my tests to become an air policeman. Guess what? I got it! After all, I had seen



the MPs in San Francisco looking sharp in their white hats. Nobody told me about guarding B-52s in Alaska! I guess

things happen for a reason because I tore the ligaments in my thumb in defense tactics and was able to cross-train to communications.

To Beale AFB I went. Two years later, I left for Istanbul, Turkey, and then Hill AFB, Utah. While at Hill, I served on temporary duty at McClellan for computer operator training and then temporary duty at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, for computer programming.



I then was transferred to the Communications Computer Programming Center at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. After four years, I was sent as an on-site programmer back to Hill AFB, then to the same position at Hickam AFB, Hawaii. I had attended four colleges during this time, so I finished my degree there and attended Officer Training School in Texas.

Probably my favorite assignment was to NORAD where I programmed the early warning display software at Cheyenne Mountain. My final assignment was back to Beale at the PAVE PAWS radar site.

August 9 Barbecue Feted Beale's 74th Recon Squadron

Tom and Robin Walther, with \$500 in funding from our chapter, led the effort to host a barbecue in tribute to Beale's 74th Reconnaissance Squadron



after the unit suffered the loss of one of its members.

Joined by Yuba City representatives and Beale AFB support personnel, Alta California Chapter members Norb and Carol Budzinski, Bill

Crocker, Tamie Harvey, Steve Witmer and CALMOAA Area 1 VP Chuck Jamison contributed to the effort.

► *Lt Col Nicholas Briney, commander of the 74th Recon Squadron, joined Chuck Jamison, CALMOAA Area 1 vice president, and Tom Walther at the event.*



Col Bob Downs' Memorial Ceremony Held September 20

A memorial ceremony for Col Bob Downs was conducted at the Dixon National Cemetery on September 20. Tom and Robin Walther represented the chapter at the event.

► *Tom Walther joined Bob Downs' wife Lynn at a photo display at the reception following the ceremony.*

Bob Downs was a longtime member of the Alta California Chapter, he authored the popular "On Downs' Beat" column in the *AltaGram* and served as chapter president in 1999.



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80 Years Later, Belgian City Honors U.S. WWII Troops with Parade

Some 200 World War II military vehicles rolled through the streets of Mons, Belgium on September 1, marking 80 years since U.S. soldiers helped free it from Nazi occupation. The annual Tanks in Town event honored the Americans and Belgian resistance fighters who liberated the city on Sept. 3, 1944, while emphasizing the value of standing together against aggression, a reminder that felt particularly relevant to some attendees amid Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

Vintage tanks, jeeps and armored cars proceeded through villages and locations



around Mons for several hours in the morning, retracing the route taken by the Army's 3rd Armored Division as it advanced from the French border into Mons eight decades ago.

The first U.S. troops, other than an earlier reconnaissance mission, entered Belgium on Sept. 2, 1944, at Cendron in Hainaut province. The following day, they liberated Mons, about 40 miles north. It was part of a broader strategy by the Allies to push German fighters out of Belgium and drive them deeper into Europe. Within 10 days, American, British, Canadian and other Allied troops had liberated most of Belgium.

The efforts of the Allies in Belgium 80 years ago paved the way for the establishment of NATO in 1949. Today, the bloc's command headquarters, known as Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, is located just outside Mons.

- Stars and Stripes

Air Force Receives New Aircraft for Electronic-Attack Missions

The Air Force in September took possession of its first EA-37B Compass Call electronic-attack aircraft slated for training and operations, flying it into Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona.

The new EA-37B Compass Call will jam enemy radar, communications and other signals and allow forces to get closer to enemy targets, the Air Force said.

The plane took off from L3Harris Technologies' facility in Waco, Texas, where it was adapted from a Gulfstream G550 business jet with electronic attack components built by BAE Systems.

The Air Force plans to buy 10 EA-37B Compass Calls (*photo right*),

which will conduct multiple electronic-warfare missions. It will jam enemy communications, radar and navigation signals, among others, and suppress enemy air defenses by blocking their ability to transmit information between weapon systems and command-and-control networks.



The EA-37B will replace the Air Force's decades-old EC-130H Compass Call fleet, which was flown extensively during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and are now being retired. Nine EC-130Hs have so far been retired, out of the fleet of 14 older planes.

- Defense News

VA Moving to Let Living Veterans Prep Their Online Memorial Pages

Veterans Affairs planners expect to expand their Veterans Legacy Memorial platform by the end of this year to allow living veterans to prepare their own tribute pages with personal details of their time in service, officials said Monday.

The five-year-old project — which allows family



members to update online memorials of deceased veterans — has grown to include nearly 10 million veterans interred in VA-run cemeteries, Department of Defense sites and thousands of private cemeteries.

Veterans would not be able to have the pages displayed while they are still alive, but would be able to view it themselves to ensure the information there will be accurate when made public, officials said.

Of the nearly 17 million veterans in America today, nearly half are 65 or older.

- Military Times

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New MOAA Publication: *Preparing for the Loss of a Military Spouse*

This newly released guide is designed to help you get your personal affairs in order and help survivors through the first steps they need to take after a loved one's death. Learn about accessing survivor benefits, how to draw up an estate plan, and much more.



Premium and life Members can receive benefits and financial counseling with MOAA staff experts for assistance through this process. Life membership in MOAA entitles your surviving spouse to life membership with access to all benefits upon your death.

Visit www.moaa.org/publications to download *Preparing for the Loss of a Military Spouse*.

Multilateral Maritime Forces Demonstrate Resolve in the Pacific

The Philippines held a joint patrol in the South China Sea during September that included forces from Japan, Australia, the U.S. and New Zealand.

Activities included drills in maritime domain awareness, replenishment at sea and contact reporting, and were conducted in the vicinity of the Philippine exclusive economic zone off Luzon.



◀ *Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ship JS Sazanami sails behind Royal New*

Zealand Navy ship HMNZS Aotearoa while conducting a Dual-Replenishment at Sea with HMAS Sydney and USS Howard during a Maritime Cooperative Activity in the South China Sea on Sept. 28, 2024.

The Australian, Japanese, and New Zealander vessels participating in the drills previously sailed through the Taiwan Strait to reach the South China Sea. This was the first time a Japanese ship was announced transiting the 90-mile wide strait separating Taiwan and China.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner said the patrol was in line with international

law and affirmed the right of freedom of navigation and overflight.

On the same day of the Philippines' joint patrol, China announced its own drills around Scarborough Shoal, which Beijing gained de facto control of following a standoff with Manila in 2012.

– USNI News

Army's Mounted Warrior Museum Now Open at Fort Cavazos

After 14 years and \$14.5 million, the National Mounted Warrior Museum opened to the public in September. The museum shares the story of how America's soldiers have used horses, bicycles, helicopters and tanks to fight in every conflict from



the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror.

The museum is intended to honor all who have served in the mounted units, particularly those at

Fort Cavazos (formerly Fort Hood), which is home to the 1st Cavalry Division and III Armored Corps.

While much of the museum is about the wars in which they fought, there's a particular focus on the troops, their families and even the communities that were displaced to establish the base during World War II.

The more than 12,000 square-foot facility features a main gallery and a rotating gallery that now displays combat camera work from World War II. It also includes nods to two famous soldiers who were once assigned to the base – Jackie Robinson and Elvis Presley.

The National Mounted Warrior Museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

– Stars and Stripes



Monday, November 11, 2024

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Alta California Chapter Annual Dues, Membership Year 2025

January 1, 2025

Dear Valued MOAA Chapter Member or Prospective Member -

Your support for MOAA and the Alta California Chapter is much appreciated. As with all organizations, our strength is in numbers, and we need your voice along with ours to advocate for the many issues facing our active, former and retired military, as well as surviving spouses. In addition, we count on local dues to help fund important projects such as the annual Stand Down for veterans in our area. We also support the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the Yuba Sutter Sea Cadets, Lindhurst High Air Force JROTC, and the Yuba City High Navy JROTC programs.

We hope you will join our chapter or renew your Alta California Chapter membership and enjoy the camaraderie of the members and the excellent presentations at our luncheon meetings and activities. Specific information about meetings and activities appears in our *AltaGram* newsletter. The Alta California Chapter appreciates your membership and support.

Annual Dues for Alta California Chapter MOAA, Jan 1, 2025 – Dec 31, 2025

\$20.00 Regular Member ** or \$10.00 Surviving Spouse (SS)

Add \$_____ for additional donation to fund such causes as Veterans Stand Down, Civil Air Patrol, Sea Cadets, Naval JROTC and AF JROTC.

Total Enclosed \$_____. Please make check payable to: Alta CA Chapter MOAA

*Mail to: Alta California Chapter MOAA, P.O. Box 541, Yuba City, CA 95992
 or renew online at: <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>.*

Name: _____ Service: _____ Officer Rank _____

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Check if Surviving Spouse Check if interested in serving in a leadership position

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*** Help us recruit a new member. Those who do not already belong to national MOAA can receive one or two years' FREE Chapter membership by joining national MOAA. See: www.moaa.org.*