



Alta Gram



Alta California Chapter • Military Officers Association of America

August / September 2025

Never Stop Serving

Volume 59, No. 5

President's Corner

We Make a Difference

Tamie and I were reminded recently about the importance of our community taking care of Airmen. We assisted an Airman from the 427th Reconnaissance Squadron who had been in an accident near base. A distracted driver had run into his vehicle. Tamie called the Command Post and the Airman's squadron while I assisted with first responders.

The 427th is the sister squadron of the 74th, for whom Tom and others put on a barbecue last year after they lost one of their Airmen. In both cases MOAA was able to show Airmen that we care. The importance of being there for your community cannot be overstated.

Speaking of making a difference, AB-53 passed the California Legislature in June. MOAA was instrumental in pushing this legislation for years, and finally pushed it over the goal line. Starting 1 Jan 2025, veterans and surviving spouses in California will have up to \$20,000 of benefits tax-free. Thank you to all who wrote and called state legislators; your impact makes a difference for all who follow.

I'd like to thank all of you who have donated over and above to our chapter; it allows us to be there when we're needed, whether that's an unexpected squadron event or support to high school JROTC cadets. It's your service — when people don't even know they need you — that allows us to step in and make a difference when we're needed.

Beale remembers. Airmen remember. We are blessed to still be able to have an impact.

- Still Serving,
Ed Harvey, Lt Col, USAF (ret)



Next Meeting

Vietnam Huey Pilot, POW to be Guest Speaker on August 28

Plan now to attend our August 28 luncheon meeting when our guest speaker will be Mike O'Connor, a UH-1 Huey helicopter pilot in Vietnam and a prisoner of war.



Originally from Warren, Michigan, Mike enlisted in the Army for warrant officer training in 1966. He was appointed a warrant officer and designated an army aviator upon completion of helicopter

training in June 1967.

He was soon deployed to Southeast Asia where he served as a UH-1 Huey pilot with the 1st Cavalry Division in South Vietnam until he was shot down, captured and taken as a prisoner of war on February 4, 1968. After spending 1,857 days in captivity, Mike was released during Operation Homecoming on March 5, 1973.



He was subsequently recognized for his "gallantry and intrepidity in action in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force while a prisoner of war in North Vietnam," and was awarded the Silver Star.

Upcoming Luncheon Meeting

Thursday, August 28, 2025
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, August 25, 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

2025 Executive Committee

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2nd Vice Pres. Lt Col Marcus Bole 530-633-0117
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Membership: Capt Tom Walther 530-218-3847
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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



2024 5-Star Level of Excellence Award



2024 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 June 30, 2025, the chapter's treasury balances were:

Checking	\$3,105.43
Cash Fund	250.00
Total	\$3,355.43

Membership Report

As of July 19, 2025, the chapter's membership totaled:

Regular Paid or Free	35
(Including 4 surviving spouse)	
Unpaid	9
Total	44

Remaining Meetings in 2025

Date	Time	Venue
Thurs, 28 Aug	11:15 a.m.	Cool Hand Luke's
Thurs, 23 Oct	11:15 a.m.	Cool Hand Luke's
Thurs, 11 Dec	11:15 a.m.	Cool Hand Luke's

Chapter Achieves 5-Star Awards

Another great year in 2024! Our chapter received the overall chapter 5-star award. We also received the communication 5-star for both the *AltaGram* and website.



Remember September 19: POW/MIA Recognition Day

You Are Not Forgotten – that's the central theme



behind the POW/MIA remembrance movement which honors America's prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action and their families.

For every POW/MIA Recognition Day since 1982, the POW flag has flown just below the stars and stripes at the White House. In 1998, Congress ordered it to also be displayed on Armed Forces

Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

–Military.com

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June 26 BBQ Featured Cadet Program Recognition

Chapter members and guests enjoyed excellent food, fine weather and great camaraderie at our popular annual barbecue at Tom and Robin Walther's home on Thursday, June 26.

Cadets and leaders from our region's Air Force and Navy Junior ROTC detachments, Civil Air Patrol and Sea Cadet programs attended and accepted \$400 donations from the chapter.



Many thanks are due once again to Tom and Robin for their continued generosity and exceptional hospitality in hosting this much-appreciated annual event.

Military Retirement and SBP Tax Relief Finally a Reality

California's long fight to provide state income tax relief for military retirees and surviving spouses has succeeded and the change goes into effect immediately.



This means that California veterans and their families receiving Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities can claim a state income tax exemption on their 2025 taxes, to be filed in 2026.

Under the 2025–2026 state budget, California will now exempt up to \$20,000 per year in military retirement pay or SBP benefits for eligible taxpayers reporting:

- up to \$125,000 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) for individual filers, or
- up to \$250,000 AGI for joint filers.

This exemption applies to all retired uniformed service members, including the U.S. Armed Forces, Public Health Service, and NOAA, as well as surviving spouses receiving annuities under the Department of Defense's SBP.



The success of this legislation is due to the perseverance and commitment of Assemblyman James C. Ramos, who championed

this effort through multiple legislative sessions.

Other Bills to Watch

Below are just a few of the many veteran-related bills still active in the second half of this year's legislative session:

- **AB 264** (Carrillo) – Expands eligibility for state education benefits for veteran dependents
- **AB 587** (Davies) – Adds a veteran representative to the Student Aid Commission
- **AB 1346** (DeMaio) – Protects in-state residency status for military dependents reenrolling in college
- **SB 56** (Seyarto) – Excludes VA disability payments from property tax income calculations
- **SB 296** (Archuleta) – Expands the disabled veterans' property tax exemption
- **SB 694** (Archuleta) – Enhances oversight of unaccredited veteran service providers. Veterans

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are being targeted by unaccredited, for-profit “claims sharks” charging thousands of dollars to help file VA claims—services they are neither qualified nor legally allowed to provide. Senate Bill 694 would enforce federal law in California by ensuring that only VA-accredited representatives can charge fees for assisting veterans with their benefits.

70th Anniversary U-2 Flight Broke Endurance Records

On Aug. 1, 2025, a Lockheed U-2 aircraft was heard communicating to air traffic control about the intention to break the altitude and endurance records for the type. A few hours later, the U.S. Air Force confirmed that the aircraft indeed broke two endurance records and provided additional details.

► *TU-2S lands at Beale AFB Aug. 1, 2025. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Frederick A. Brown)*



The historic flight saw the TU-2S flying longer than 14 hours and traveling over 6,000 NM across all 48 contiguous states of the U.S.

According to the service, a TU-2S Dragon Lady from the 9th Reconnaissance Wing took off from Beale AFB on the evening of July 31, 2025, piloted by Cory “ULTRALORD” Bartholomew, 1st RS assigned flight safety officer and U-2 instructor pilot, and Lt. Col. “JETHRO”, 1st RS instructor pilot and U-2 chief pilot.

The flight was conducted on a special date for the aircraft, the 70th anniversary of the very first Lockheed U-2 Dragon Lady’s accidental maiden flight in 1955. On that day, during a planned high speed taxi test with test pilot Tony LeVier at the controls, the prototype U-2, then known as Article 341, lifted from Groom Lake at only 70 knots.

The goal for this special anniversary was to complete the longest single flight this platform had ever attempted, flying across all 48 contiguous states of the United States. When the Dragon Lady landed the next day at Beale AFB, it had flown longer than 14 hours and traveled over 6,000 nautical miles, breaking the endurance records for an aircraft of its class, the Air Force announced.



▲ *The team that made the flight possible included airmen from the 9th Reconnaissance Wing, 1st RS, 9th Physiological Support Squadron, and 9th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.*

“The incredible thing about this flight is that it shows not only the capabilities of the U-2, but that of our Air Force’s most important asset, it’s people”, said Col. Keagan McLeese, 9th Reconnaissance Wing commander. “Our Airmen demonstrated they are mission-ready in using the skills, adaptability, and innovation it takes to generate global air power.”

– *The Aviationist*

Lincoln Wings & Wheels 2025: A Weekend of High-Flying Fun

In just two weeks — August 22 and 23 — Lincoln Wings & Wheels will return to the Lincoln airport.

The event will include aerial performances, classic and custom cars and live entertainment.



More than 10,000 guests from across the region are expected to take part in this two-day event, showcasing the best of air, land, and local flavor.

General parking is free. Admission is \$5 per person Friday night and \$10 per adult on Saturday—kids under 18 are free both days.

Visit www.lincolinchamber.com/lincoln-airport-open-house for tickets and further information.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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