

MOWWW REVIEW





America 250: Our Proud MOWW Heritage



My Grandfather was drafted and served during World War One. When he was discharged in 1919, he received a letter that G/A John “Blackjack” Pershing sent to each of his soldiers, enlisted and officers alike, a letter that all Companions are very familiar with: General Pershing stated the following: “. . . In leaving the scenes of your victories, may I ask that you carry home your high ideals and continue to live as you have served—an honor to the principles for which you fought and to the fallen comrades you leave behind.” In the spirit of carrying out carrying-out the General’s mandate, soldiers who served during the Great War founded what is known today as MOWW, thus our Order’s heritage was born . . . one of service.

Enlisted members and officers within MOWW have carried this vital torch, serving our “Youth, Community, and Nation.” It is this legacy of service, coupled with defending the rights and freedoms of our Nation, which we protected during two World Wars, that sets MOWW apart from other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). This legacy, articulated with a sense of pride by our Companions as delineated in the first line of our Preamble, “To cherish the memories and associations of the World Wars waged for humanity” should be a starting point with each of our Companions when we describe our Order to veterans and the community alike: it is this linkage to our heritage that gives MOWW a clear and unambiguous purpose. We are unique in that we have a relatable kinship through our value proposition that is not limited to two world wars, but includes all conflicts for which each of us have served in over the last 107 years, defending in each conflict the same core values of this great country, the fabric of our nation critical to our long-term survival.

As we celebrate America’s 250th birthday, it is important we clearly articulate to today’s youth the aforementioned core values we have fought for. President Abraham Lincoln stated: “It is not merely for today, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children’s children, this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives.” As veterans, it is our obligation to promote what our country stands for, a message that binds all of us: one of our greatest services to this country is to perpetuate President Lincoln’s message through our flagship Patriotic Education programs, not just in 2026 but for years to come. In short, today’s younger generation of veterans will enthusiastically become part of our heritage and assist in giving voice to our message through YLC/YLSs, patriotic service projects, and presentations to schools and youth organizations.

They need merely to be asked . . .

Lt Col David J. Worley, USAF (Retired)
Commander in Chief and CEO, MOWW, Inc.

Pictured Above: CINC Lt Col David and Gayle Worley were presented with a replica Liberty Bell from the Philadelphia Chapter by VCINC COL Joseph P. Kirlin III, USA (Ret) (left) during their visit for America 250 events.

MOWW OFFICERS

Commander-in-Chief & CEO, MOWW, Inc.

Lt Col David J. Worley, USAF (Ret)
worleymoww@earthlink.net

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief

Lt Col Marlon Ruiz, USAF (Ret)
ruizmarlon08@gmail.com

Vice Commanders-in-Chief

CPT James A. Brady, USA (Fmr)
mowwaugusta@aol.com

COL Joseph P. Kirlin III, USA (Ret)

eaglejpk@aol.com

COL Michael P. Peck, USA (Ret)

colpeck@yahoo.com

Col Adalberto Rivera, USAF (Ret)

adal_rivera@yahoo.com

Immediate Past CINC

BG Victor S. Pérez, USA (Ret)
perez56@gmail.com

Chief of Staff, & COO, MOWW, Inc.

Col Michael Farrell, USMC (Ret)
chiefstaff@moww.org

Treasurer General & CFO, MOWW, Inc.

CW4 Gary L. Smith, Sr., USA (Ret)
treasurergeneral@moww.org

Judge Advocate General

CPT Harold Greenberg, JD, USA (Fmr)
harold@hglaw.pro

Surgeon General

CPT Dan L. Cameron, Jr., USA (Fmr)
dancameron789@yahoo.com

Chaplain General

LTC Victor W. Burnette, USA (Ret)
vicburnette@aol.com

Historian General

HPM Mr. Charles W. Bennett, Jr.
lpdchief@aol.com

HQ MOWW

435 North Lee Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

703-683-4911

www.moww.org



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ON THE COVER

Former POW and US Air Force MSGT William Andrew Robinson (captured 20 Sep 65) salutes the colors upon his arrival on the C-141 Starlifter from Clark Air Base, Philippines. MSGT Robinson was in the first group of POWs released on 12 Feb 73 by the North Vietnamese government in Hanoi.
Source: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6504170>



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The Air Force's First "Battlefield Commissions"^[1]

LT COL SHELDON A. GOLDBERG, PH.D., USAF (RET)
GENERAL MEADE CHAPTER, MD

On 20 September 1965, ESSEX 04, an F-105 piloted by Capt Willis E. Forby, was shot down in Ha Tinh Province, North Vietnam. Airman Third Class (A/3C) Arthur N. Black, a Pararescueman, and Airman First Class (A/1C) Bill Robinson, the flight engineer, along with the pilot, Captain Thomas Curtis, and Captain Duane Martin, the co-pilot, rushed to DUTCHY 41, an HH-43B "Huskie" rescue helicopter, to initiate a search and rescue operation.

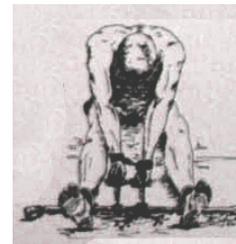
When DUTCHY found Capt Forby and lowered the sling on the mountain slope for him, North Vietnamese troops emerged above them and began shooting down on the helicopter, apparently hitting the engine, causing the Huskie to lose power and fall into the bamboo foliage, where it got wedged just above the ground. All four crewmembers got out of the chopper and headed down the slope, accompanied by Capt Forby, but were captured by North Vietnamese militia coming up the slope. Capt Martin, however, headed in a different direction and evaded capture.^[2]

Once captured, the four were dragged with ropes around their necks past villagers who hit them with sticks and threw punches at them along the gauntlet. For the next seven days, they were blindfolded, beaten and interrogated as they marched 200 miles north to Hanoi, to Hoa Lo Prison, dubbed the Hanoi Hilton.

Approximately six weeks later, on 1 November 1965, Staff Sergeant (E-5) Arthur Cormier, a Pararescueman aboard a CH-3C helicopter, JOLLY GREEN 85, piloted by Captain Warren Robert Lilly, USAF, and co-pilot 1Lt Jerry Allen Singleton, USAF, was shot down during a rescue mission for Capt. Richard Eugene Bolstad, pilot of an A-1E Skyraider (SANDY 2) north of Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam. As Cormier's unarmed aircraft approached the recovery area, it encountered

heavy ground fire and burst into flames, forcing the crew to bail out. For eight days, Cormier eluded capture, once waving off rescue attempts because of the danger to his rescuers. Exhausted, thirsty, and in pain from shoulder and arm injuries, he was finally captured, as were two of his crew. Cormier, Lilly, and Singleton became POWs in the infamous Hanoi Hilton.^[3]

The conditions all three were placed in were intolerable. They resembled an old adage that described flying as "hours and hours of sheer boredom interspersed with moments of stark terror." Multiply the adage's time factor, and one can just begin to understand what these three enlisted men went through during what was called "the Hell Years" from 1965 to Ho Chi Minh's death in September 1969.



Hours of boredom turned into days and/or weeks of solitary in several of the 14 North Vietnamese prison camps to which they were moved. And the moments of stark terror became hours of interrogation. The three were constantly interrogated and tortured (the Vietnamese called

POWs endured systematic torture designed to break their will. (L-R) Above: Steel shackles, locked onto wrists and ankles for weeks without removal. Top Right: Interrogators forced prisoners to kneel with arms raised overhead—a position that became agonizing within minutes and left men unable to walk for weeks. Lower Right: Some POWs remained shackled in stress positions for months, their bodies contorted in unrelenting pain. Source: National Museum of the United States Air Force <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196025/return-with-honor-american-prisoners-of-war-in-southeast-asia/>. Drawings by Mike McGrath.



Battlefield Commissions, rank upon retirement: (L-R) Captain Bill R. Robinson, Captain Arthur Cormier, Maj Arthur N. Black

it punishment), and no form of communication amongst them was allowed. At some point, however, Black and Robinson had contact with Lt. Colonel Robbie Reisner, one of the most senior and tortured POWs, who had been shot down just a few days before them but who taught both the “Tap Code” and told Robinson to be “prepared to die for his country.” Risner also told him, “One other thing Risner said to me, ‘If we survive, we must Return with Honor.’”

The torture varied. Black, for example, was forced to sit on a concrete stool for days on end without moving, starved and thrown into ditches. ratcheted in handcuffs, tied up in ropes and horsewhipped.

Cormier was forced to confess “his crimes” during several days of interrogation and torture, during which he passed out several times. He finally agreed to write that he was on a rescue mission on an unarmed helicopter that violated the territory and airspace of North Vietnam. His captors weren’t happy with that, so they made him add that his aircraft bombed and strafed innocent women and children and bombed dykes. Even Robinson did not escape torture and was beaten for refusing to write confessions. Perhaps the most intolerable part of their imprisonment was the scarcity of food and medical care.

In mid-1967, Robinson was moved to the Zoo (Cu Loc prison) only to be joined by Black later that year. In 1968, all three, Black, Robinson, and Cormier were moved yet again and ended up being held together in Room 4 of the Zoo-Annex. The Annex consisted of eight rooms, each holding 9 POWs, all of whom held the rank of Captain or O-3

equivalent or below. The Zoo held an equal number of POWs with the ranks of Major (O-4) and below.

On the night of 10 May 1969, Air Force Captains John Dramesi and Edwin Atterberry escaped from Room 5 but were captured the next day. All the senior officers of each of the eight rooms of the Annex were removed from their cells, including Dramesi and Atterberry, and underwent intense and brutal interrogations. Dramesi survived the beatings. Atterberry, who may have been waterboarded, did not. Many were put in leg irons. All air vents were sealed, and medical treatment was denied. In the 120-degree heat in the sealed cells, all men quickly developed boils, ringworm and heat rash over their bodies. The three enlisted men were no exception.

The six officers of Room 4 decided that since the three enlisted men in their room, Black, Cormier, and Robinson, had gone through the same rough treatment as the rest of the officers in the camp, they should be given a “battlefield commission.” The Senior Ranking Officer (SRO) of Room 4, LTJG Richard Brunhaver, USN, requested permission from Air Force Captain Conrad Trautman, the Annex camp SRO in Room 5, to approve a battlefield commission for the three men.

Captain Trautman agreed. He said the Air Force could consider the legality of the battlefield commission after eventual release. The men of Room 4 set up an Officer Candidate Course for the three men. This later proved to be an important decision the Air Force took under consideration upon their return. After the course was completed, Room 4 SRO, Richard Brunhaver, turned over the



Arthur Cormier is embraced by fellow pararescuemen on his arrival at Scott AFB, Ill., after more than seven years as a POW in North Vietnam.

responsibility of administering the Oath of Office to 1st Lt John L. Borling.

Following the Son Tay raid on 21 November 1970, the North Vietnamese, realizing that the POWs could be rescued, moved them all to the Hanoi Hilton. Later, in Camp Unity, the name given to one of the compounds there, the SRO of all Vietnam POWs, Air Force Colonel John Peter Flynn, was briefed on the commissioning event and he too, approved. Colonel Flynn, however, insisted on a longer, more detailed Officer Candidate School course, but also made it his personal mission to see to it that the commissions became legal when the POWs were repatriated.

There are several versions of how the legalization of the commissions came about: three versions of the reception General Flynn received from the Air Force when presenting his case for legalization, and two versions of who presented it to the president. What is important is that when President Nixon was briefed on what these three men went through and what actions the officers of Room 4 had taken, he liked what he saw and said, "Yes, make it happen." And it did.

Robinson and Black, both of whom had reached the rank of MSGT (E7), were sworn in as Air Force second lieutenants on 9 April 1973. Brigadier General Flynn swore in Black. Colonel Fred Vann Cherry, USAF, swore in Robinson. Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) (E8) Cormier held off on accepting his commission, as he was up for promotion to Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) (E9).

It was important to him to reach this accomplishment, the highest level of promotion for the enlisted ranks. After he was promoted to CMSgt in February 1974, Cormier accepted his promotion to first lieutenant, and his date of commission was backdated to 9 April 1973.

Arthur Neil Black would later retire with the rank of Major, USAF; Arthur Cormier and William A. Robinson retired as Captains. Black and Robinson are the longest-serving enlisted POWs in history, and the first two Air Force enlisted men to receive the Air Force Cross. ★



BLACK AND ROBINSON AWARDED THE AIR FORCE CROSS

The Air Force Cross (AFC) is the United States Air Force and US Space Force's second-highest military decoration for airmen and guardians who distinguish themselves with extraordinary heroism in combat with an armed enemy force. The medal is awarded to any person, while serving in any capacity with the Air Force or Space Force, who distinguishes themselves by extraordinary heroism.

Total recipients 198

 [1] This article is based on a series of email and telephone interviews with Major Arthur Niel Black throughout 2025 and his 2018 oral interview with the Incline Village Crystal Bay Veterans Club: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UPqJlpzVig>; Email and telephone interviews with Captain William Robinson, December 2025 and his various interviews on YouTube and the Veterans History Project; Captain John M. McGrath, USN (Ret) and Shai Macl, www.vietnamwarpows.com, FAQ, Battlefield Commission; and Colonel Leo K. Thorsness, USAF (Ret), "Commissioned in Hanoi," Air Force Magazine, April 2010, pp. 56-60;

[2] Captain Duane Martin, the co-pilot of DUCHY 41, went in a different direction and somehow was able to evade capture. He made his way to Laos, where he was captured by the Pathet Lao, but following a second escape two weeks later with U.S. Navy pilot Lt. Dieter Dengler, he was attacked and executed by a Laotian tribesman. Dengler was able to evade death and was eventually found and rescued four days later. <https://www.pownetwork.org/bios/m/m163.htm>

[3] <https://www.jbsa.mil/News/News/Article/462421/7-years-in-hanoi-retired-captain-reflects-on-time-as-airman-pow/>. A fourth member of the Jolly Green 85 crew, SSgt. Berkley E. Naugle, flight engineer, was badly burned but managed to escape, evade, and was rescued. <https://veterantributes.org/TributeDetail>.



MOWW National Convention 2026



Fiesta San Antonio



“Celebrating Service and Community”

*** 11-16 August 2026 ***

Select Attractions near The Westin

The Alamo:

~0.4 miles (8-minute walk)

Briscoe Western Art Museum:

~0.1 miles (2-minute walk)

La Villita Historic Arts Village:

~0.2 miles (4-minute walk)

Check out Over 200 Restaurants near the Hotel:

<https://www.opentable.com/landmark/restaurants-near-the-westin-riverwalk-san-antonio>

Hotel:

The Westin Riverwalk,
420 W Market Street

The Westin Riverwalk is a 4-star hotel in San Antonio, known for its prime location directly on the historic Riverwalk, offering easy access to the Alamo, shops, and dining, with amenities like riverview balconies, an Italian restaurant (Zoka), a cafe (Cafesito), a rooftop pool, and a fitness center

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/cZhJS97VMnVWwvTW7>

Explore San Antonio's website <https://www.visitsanantonio.com/>



Nominating Committee Process

PCINC LTC MICHAEL A. OKIN, MD, USA (RET)
VIRGINIA PIEDMONT CHAPTER, VA

During the 2025 MOWW Convention in Tucson, Arizona, the members of the Nominating Committee expressed their desire to simplify and streamline the process for arriving at a recommended slate of National Officers for presentation to the delegates at the convention. As a result, a revised Appendix E: MOWW Candidate Nominating Process document was drafted, reviewed by members of the Nominating Committee, approved by the EXCOM, and included in the latest update to the MOWW Policy Manual. This document can be reviewed in the Member's section of the MOWW website, and should be read by all potential candidates for national office as well as all members of the Nominating Committee.

The following is a summary of the pertinent changes to the nominating process:

1. Potential candidates for national office will need to declare their intentions in writing to the Chief of Staff and the Chair, Nominating Committee, NLT 1 June. After 1 June, a potential candidate will need to be nominated from the floor per instructions in Appendix E.
2. Instead of using convention time for candidate presentations, the candidate shall write and submit a one-page document NLT 1 June containing the following items: picture; biography; activities and offices held in the MOWW; platform. This document will be published on the MOWW website, in the MOWW Convention Almanac, and in any other venue to ensure the widest distribution to Companions.
3. Unopposed candidates for a specific office by 1 June will automatically be approved to be on the slate of national candidates that is presented to the delegates at convention by the Nominating Committee.
4. Those offices that have two or more candidates competing for the same position will require an in-person Nominating Committee meeting to select the one candidate who will appear on the Nominating Committee's selected slate of candidates.
5. A Nominating Committee meeting will only need to be conducted if there are two or more candidates competing for the same national office.
6. Nominations from the floor will still occur during the business meeting portion of the convention.

The MOWW needs Companions' ideas, energy, and commitment. Please consider running for a National Office.

The MOWW is already halfway through the current OY 2025, and only six months from the 2026 MOWW Convention in San Antonio, Texas. Although it seems early, the time is now to begin to consider running for a position as an MOWW National Officer. National officers include: Commander in Chief; Senior Vice Commander in Chief; Vice Commanders in Chief (4); Treasurer General; Judge Advocate General; Surgeon General; Chaplain General; Historian General. These positions are open to any Companion in good standing, with no further prerequisites. ★

**The MOWW needs Companions' ideas, energy, and commitment.
Please consider running for a National Office.**





MOWW NATIONAL CONVENTION 2026 HOSTED BY REGION VIII

America 250

Fiesta San Antonio

“Celebrating Service and Community”



The Westin Riverwalk,
420 W Market Street, San Antonio, TX

HOTEL: (888) 627-8396

★ IMPORTANT CHAPTER DEADLINES ★



PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS ARE DUE NLT 15 MARCH 2026

- Submit proposed amendments to the Chairman of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, PCINC BGen Frederick R. Lopez, USMCR (Ret), via email to flopez23@cox.net

NATIONAL OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF NLT 1 JUNE 2026

- Submit all reports in a Word.doc format (3-page limit) as an attachment to an email to chiefofstaff@moww.org

CHAPTER PROGRAM AWARD NOMINATIONS ARE DUE TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS NLT 1 JUNE 2026

- Submission requirements are IAW the MOWW Policy Manual, as supplemented by the applicable national committee's guidance.

COMMANDERS' NATIONAL CITATION NOMINATIONS ARE DUE TO HQ MOWW NLT 1 JUNE 2026

- Commanders at all levels submit their National Citation recommendations via the online MOWW Form 17, National Citation Nomination.

COMMITTEES SUBMIT PROGRAM AWARD RECIPIENTS TO HQ MOWW NLT 15 JUNE 2026

- National committee chairs must email the committee's list of award selectees to membership@moww.org by 15 June annually. The selectees can either be in the body of the email or as a Word.doc attachment.

HANN-BUSWELL MEMORIAL CHAPTER GRANT REQUESTS ARE DUE NLT 1 JUNE 2026

- Submit the Grant request in a PDF format to the Hann-Buswell Chapter Adjutant, LTC William Rapp, USA (Ret), via email to williamrapp@mac.com (for instructions see moww.org, *The Officer Review*® January–February 2025, page 9)



The Expert Rifleman As Typist

BG Raymond E. Bell, Jr., Ph.D., USA (RET)

BG Bultman Chapter (At Large)

Ward Smith served his country as a draft-era soldier with two special qualifications. He liked to call himself a “no-class” enlisted man, but that hardly speaks to how he functioned in an environment that one would hardly call a military one. The first special qualification he claimed is that he could type forty-three words a minute, a speed that first framed his brief career in the United States Army. The second qualification of being an expert marksman with a rifle went largely unnoticed but could have been significant nonetheless.

It all started for him in the late nineteen fifties and early sixties. It was the Elvis era: Presley in 1959 was a soldier stationed in a tank unit in Europe. The United States was not at war, but its troops in West Germany stood guard against a potential invasion by the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies. The U.S. Army was manned by young men

who were serving under a universal, selective-service system, but with many exemptions. One of those exemptions was attendance at an institution of higher learning, which postponed reporting for active service in some United States military organization. Ward qualified for the temporary postponement by first attending Harvard University as an undergraduate and then earning a master’s degree in business administration. He graduated from the business school in 1962 and was immediately hired by a prestigious New York City bank. So far, so good, but what about his military obligation, which he had no intention of avoiding?

Most young men after the age of eighteen either volunteered to enter the Regular Army for three years or were inducted for two years of active duty. Ward, however, entered the Army in 1962 under different circumstances. He volunteered for the Enlisted Reserve, the serial number of whose members had an ER prefix. One could enlist in the Enlisted Reserve for 6 years and perform no



other active duty, except for basic and advanced individual training. But if required, the individual could still be called to active duty. Since Ward was gainfully employed in the banking world, the Enlisted Reserve option suited him the best.

So what part did his speed typing and his expertise with the rifle play in his military career? At the time of his service, it appears the Army needed more typists than riflemen. So, for that armed service, speed typing ability was important. For the Army, therefore, the fact that Ward, originally from the Middle West, had spent his youth shooting pheasants and was used to handling firearms, his rifle expertise seemed to mean nothing.

Upon entering the military service, all young men took classification tests with the ostensible purpose of “putting round pegs in round holes.” The results of Ward’s testing soon revealed his typing talent, while his expert performance on the rifle range during basic training, though noteworthy, appears to have escaped further notice. When it came time to award Ward his Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) during Advanced Individual Training (AIT), he was designated a military Clerk/Typist. At the same time, his special typing ability of forty-three words a minute did not escape notice, and during his AIT, Ward frequently coached less gifted soldiers trying to learning the skill. Many of his fellow clerk/typists owed their proficiency to Ward’s efforts, for which they were grateful since it meant they would not be reclassified and sent into the ranks of foot soldiers.

After his basic and advanced training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, Ward’s enlistment option kicked in. As an Enlisted Reservist, he was not assigned to some active or reserve army unit. Instead, he was placed in a stand-by status, available for unit assignment only when called. All he had to do was report his availability status on a periodic basis to a higher headquarters, that being the Army Reserve II Corps headquarters located at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. For the next five years, Ward

communicated regularly with some nameless entity at II Corps headquarters. And he never rose above the basic rank of enlisted grade E-2, or as he called it, “private no class,” or “p.n.c.”

Ward, while in inactive duty status, rose through the ranks of the banking world, excelling as he did so, but no longer having to hone his typing skills in a civilian capacity. Yet, as a good soldier, he reported as directed—until “crunch time” came. As Ward neared the end of his military obligation, the world situation changed. By 1968, the United States was becoming heavily involved in Vietnam, and additional manpower was needed for duty there.

Now well established as a banker and married with children, Ward was near ending his service commitment. The word came down that those in the Enlisted Reserve could be called to active duty and sent to South Vietnam. With only six months of service remaining and a normal Vietnam tour of twelve months, there was slim chance of Ward going into battle even as a clerk typist. But he was not one to shirk his military obligation, so he reported to the headquarters of the Army Reserve’s 77th Infantry Division in New York City for duty. In the remaining six months, Ward spent two weeks speed typing at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in a temporary duty status, for him an unusual adventure, and the rest of the time sorting unusable World War II equipment at the division headquarters.

So much for Ward’s two special qualifications. But although never promoted to Private First Class, he could state with authority that he never went Absent Without Leave (AWOL), was never busted in rank, nor ever faced other disciplinary action measures. Special qualifications notwithstanding, he legitimately referred to himself, in the army vernacular as “p.n.c.” short for “Private No Class.”

Ward, a true American and veteran patriot in the mold of MOWW Companions, passed away in May 2024. ★



Building New York's Saratoga Cadre

CAPT MICHAEL P. GOLDEN, USMC
SARATOGA CADRE, NEW YORK



After becoming a Companion of the Theodore Roosevelt Chapter of New York in 2020, I was appointed as Chapter Scouting Chair by Chapter Commander Paul Farinella. This role allowed me to work remotely from my residence in upstate New York.

Upon becoming Junior Vice Commander and after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Paul and I decided to conduct an in-person annual meeting.

Obstacles were apparent as the Theodore Roosevelt Chapter was the only New York State Chapter and located in Long Island, New York. The meeting had low attendance as many members were unable to travel the distance. New York is a state that encompasses 54,555 square miles with an estimated population of 20,000,000. The state is further divided into regions such as Western New York, New York City, Long Island, and Upstate New York. One chapter alone was not enough.

Shortly after COL Joe Kirlin took command as Vice Commander in Chief over our area, he instructed that it was time to start a Western and Upstate Chapter. Work was done to host a Youth Leadership Seminar in Niagara, NY. For Upstate New York, we had six members agree to join and start a Cadre. As the cadre was established during America's 250th, we voted to name it the Saratoga Chapter. COL Michael Stenzel, a former member of both the Long Island and New York City Chapters, became instrumental in establishing the new chapter by volunteering to serve as Adjutant and assisting with paperwork. Gunnery Sergeant Eric Tjornhom jump-started us further by recruiting many members of the New York State Naval Militia.

A recruitment strategy that worked for us in the Upstate NY Chapter has been to reach out to an active military organization filled with potential

members, such as the New York Naval Militia. The New York Naval Militia is the naval component of the New York State defense forces. As part of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, the Naval Militia complements the Army and Air National Guard programs, as well as the New York State Guard. The New York Naval Militia is recognized by the United States code (Title 10) and has established partnerships with many federal and state agencies, including the US Coast Guard.



Cadre Commander Capt Michael P. Golden, USMC, installs the Cadre Vice Commander CPT Mark T. O'Rourke, USA (Fmr).

A second strategy is to look for key partners connected to veterans, such as the New York State Military Museum. CPT Mark O'Rourke, a former Long Island Chapter member, agreed to join our Cadre as he lived close to COL Stenzel and me. CPT O'Rourke is President of the Board of Trustees for the Friends of the New York State Military Museum and is assisting the Saratoga Chapter with establishing a formal partnership to investigate hosting of Youth Leadership Seminars at the museum.

We are looking forward to being approved as a Chapter and continuing to contribute to MOWW's mission and strategic growth plans. ★



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Honoring Our Heritage and Forging Our Future

VCINC COL JOSEPH P. KIRLIN III, USA (RET)
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, PA

When our forefathers began their journey to establish our nation, the roadmap continually changed from week to week as they tried to decide which actions they needed to take to build a new nation and a model that would last for generations. That path was not always straight and required great sacrifice, even bloodshed. Those decisions and events have brought us to our current-day celebrations in remembrance of what actions they took to establish America. As we celebrate and commemorate our 250th Birthday, it is not only to recognize what they did but also to reinforce their vision through what we do today, tomorrow, and in the future.

Historical events began in 2025 across many places on the East Coast as MOWW was involved in historic celebrations commemorating the founding of the Army, Navy, and Marines. From 13-15 June 2025, in Philadelphia, MOWW participated in, collaborated on, and sponsored events held in Valley Forge.



Companion COL Joseph P. Kirlin III, USA (Ret) addresses the Kick-Off America 250 Press Conference at the First City Troop

On 13 June, at the Washington Chapel and at the Freedoms Foundation (now called “Founding Forward”), a wreath-laying ceremony was held at the Medal of Honor Grove. An evening recognition event was held in the Great Hall at Founding Forward, with US Army General Robert Brown (Ret), President, AUSA, as the guest of honor.

On 14 June, Independence Hall hosted a series of events featuring speeches by Philadelphia Mayor Cherrele Parker, representatives from the National Parks authority, and Ken Wong, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army. A pass-in-review at Independence Mall included members of the First City Troop, the oldest serving volunteer mounted

military unit in the United States, founded in 1774 and historically serving as George Washington’s bodyguard. Participants also included members of the MOWW Philadelphia Chapter, the Philadelphia Eagles Cheerleaders, Scouts from Scouting America, and 250 Army recruits, who were sworn in by Army Vice Chief of Staff General James Mingus, the guest of honor. The day concluded with General Mingus cutting the birthday cake.

The evening concluded with a recognition ceremony at the First City Troop Armory for those who were part of the 3-day event team. LTC Paul McCullough, AUSA, Philadelphia Chapter, presided.



Above Left: Wreath laying ceremony held at the Medal of Honor Grove; Right: General George Washington on white horse leading procession to Independence Hall; Below: Pass-in-Review



On Sunday, the day's events began at Christ Church in Philadelphia with a prayer service for everyone, followed by the Commissioning of General George Washington at Independence Hall. The event was held at Independence Hall, where the Cabinet approved General Washington as our First Commander in Chief. General Washington remained in Philadelphia until his departure on 23 June for Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Philadelphia Chapter and MOWW National sponsored this historic event.

During the 2025 National Convention, Region XIII and the Santa Cruz Chapter hosted the MOWW historic marker dedication ceremony on 5 August at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Center in Marana, Arizona. Both local politicians and MOWW Companions braved the heat to get this done. Another successful event was completed to meet the CINC's strategic goals and local chapters' goals.

On 10 October 2025, CINC Lt Col Worley visited the Philadelphia Chapter during the Navy's 250th Birthday celebration and attended the Army-Navy Soccer Cup, where he was presented with an Award by AUSA for his support of the Army's Birthday. During the event, he swore in LTC David Stetson, USA (Ret), as the newest member of MOWW's Philadelphia Chapter. LTC Stetson is the incoming President of the Penn Franklin Chapter, AUSA. CINC Lt Col Worley and Gayle Worley were presented with a replica of the Liberty Bell from the Chapter as a memento of their visit.

Across the nation, more programs were completed in Hawaii, Chicago, Texas, and Puerto Rico. In Somerville, Massachusetts, Region I braved the freezing January 1, 2026, weather to hold the First Flag ceremony, commemorating both the birth of the Continental Army and the first public raising of the Grand Union Flag, also known as the Continental Colors.



Left: Chicago's tribute to COL Robert R. McCormick to commemorate America 250; Center: the MOWW historic marker dedication at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Center in Marana, Arizona; Below: Somerville, MA, (Region I) held the First Flag ceremony.



Region I and local Chapters were assisted by Continental reenactors.

Upcoming events will include a Colonial Ball, Massing of Colors, and a National Youth Civic Summit presentation in Alpharetta, Georgia, sponsored by Region V and the MOWW Gist Blair fund.

An ongoing program for the last 6 months with the San Diego Chapter is the Freedoms Bells App, which will be available to all MOWW members and other organizations. (See the back cover of this issue.) After downloading, the app will ring at 12 noon on the 4th of July 2026. The goal is to offer to other organizations as a

fundraiser. Additionally, the San Diego Chapter has been working closely with the Daughters of the American Revolution for this project. They collaborated on a float and participated in the Rose Bowl Parade on 1 January 2026.

Regions and Chapters are encouraged to raise money and hold local events. Funding support is available for America 250 projects that meet the criteria as a historical event. Companions should review the application on the moww.org website and submit requests for funds should be submitted to Jenna Tomas, jtomas@MOWW.org with a copy to eaglejpk@aol.com. ★

Visit <https://moww.org/america250>



Above Left: Region V America 250 event; Below Right: MOWW's San Diego Chapter collaborated on a float with the Daughters of the American Revolution and participated in the Rose Bowl Parade; Right: Region I presented The Powder Alarm, a false alarm which started the American Revolution. It occurred on 1 September 1774, in what is now Somerville, Massachusetts..

Why We Serve

CW4 EDWIN CRUZ MARTINEZ, PRARNG
PUERTO RICO CHAPTER, PR

All of us have served in many ways, in many places, and through professions that allow us to care for others. In some instances, we take on voluntary positions or *Ad Honorem*, to work for free! It takes a special kind of person to serve people or causes such as not-for-profit foundations or to volunteer to assist in emergencies. This type of act is done with passion, dedication, commitment, and, most of all, compassion; neither expecting anything in return nor seeking acknowledgment or recognition.

Kindness is what drives those who serve. They don't mind who is in need, the circumstances, or the kind of help provided. All is done quietly. Those who serve don't take time or money into account, which, for some, are the two most important things in life. Sadly, some servants perish when trying to help others. 9/11 First Responders are a good example of emergency personnel losing their lives in trying to save others.

So, the question is: What is service?

Service is the action of helping or doing work for someone; it is an act of assistance. The early sense of the verb (mid-19th century) was 'be of service to, provide with a service'.

What is the full meaning of service?

It is an act of helpful activity; “to fix” means helping others who need assistance. The act by itself shows love and concern for those who need help. Religiously speaking, there are two responsibilities: to love God and to love others.

Etymological Origins:

“Service” comes from the Latin word *servitium*, which means “servitude” or “slavery.”

It also has an Old French influence. It came from Middle English (*servise*), which in turn derived from *servitium*. The historical context of the word means “acts of help, aid.”

So how do we name the ones that serve?

One who always puts others before self is an altruistic human being.

In the most *profound* sense of the word, service is about selflessly giving oneself to benefit others. Hence, when one helps or serves others, one should treat them with:

- Kindness
- Dignity
- Mercy
- Discretion
- Purpose
- Grace
- Humbleness
- Respect



The Puerto Rico Chapter remains dedicated to serving youth, veterans, and the community.

(Left): MOWW Companion 1LT Juan M. Aguayo-Leal, USA (Fmr), President and CEO of TRAIKON LLC, a service-disabled veteran-owned business which provides consulting services in business development, workforce training and multimedia services to organizations such as LIFT. Here, he presents LIFT's mission, an organization that assists veterans and their families worldwide.

(Page opposite, Left): One of the CINC's priority items is the placement of a MOWW plaque at the national cemeteries, recognizing the Order and what it does. The intent of this visit was for CINC Lt Col Worley, USAF (Ret), and SVCINC Lt Col Ruiz, USAF (Ret), to see the Puerto Rico Chapter-sponsored monument at the cemetery.

(Far Right) Companions attend the Morovis National Cemetery Memorial Day Commemoration. The Chapter sponsored a wreath. (L-R): CPT Ramon Martinez, USA (Ret); Chapter Commander COL Ariel Jusino-Cordova, USA (Ret); MAJ Segundo Melendez, USA (Ret), and, PR Department Commander LTC Jorge Mas, USA (Ret).

Being able to help is always a blessing. Therefore, one must be thankful if in a position to help others.

So, why do we serve, and what is the main purpose of serving others?

- It is a calling that sometimes starts early in life.
- It satisfies the helping hand.
- It makes us feel complete!
- When you serve and help someone, everyone wins.

The purpose of serving is to bring solutions. It is to cultivate a deeper sense of purpose, show compassion, and develop a sense of connection.

What is the spiritual meaning of service?

The spiritual discipline of service means choosing to do something for someone else (often in secret) without expecting anything else in return. Service involves seeing a need and meeting that need without expecting thanks or any form of reciprocity.

Service is an action that reflects your faith and heart and is a way to care for the poor, the sick, and the stranger. It also reflects a blessing on those who give generously.

What are the three ways of service?

The Scriptures tell us that there are three forms of service: eye-service, lip service, and heart service. While eye service merely looks good to others,

and lip service only sounds good, service from the heart is true and pure, and seems to be the only kind accepted by society and God.

How do you show service to others?

Ten practical ways we can serve someone today:

- Help your family. (Romans 12:10)
- Volunteer at church. (Peter 4:10-11)
- Donate items to a homeless shelter. (Matthew 25:46)
- Send someone an encouraging note. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Feed the hungry. (Acts 20:35)
- Quench the thirst of the thirsty. (Psalm 107:9)
- Watch someone's kids.
- Listen to someone who's lost hope.

If we have received from Christ, we ought to be on the same mission together, have a mutual love for one another, be united in one accord, and be thinking about the same things together.

In conclusion: When people who serve are asked why they care for the stranger and the needy, their answer is usually the same: "Because it makes me feel good and happy. It gives me the opportunity to share my life and do some good for others".

IN THE END, WE SERVE BECAUSE:

"IT IS NOBLER TO SERVE THAN TO BE SERVED." ★



MOWW Leads Massing of the Colors at Wreaths Across America Appreciation Dinner



On Friday, 12 December 2025, the Military Order of the World Wars proudly led a Massing of the Colors at the annual Wreaths Across America Appreciation Dinner in Arlington, Virginia, marking the second consecutive year MOWW has been honored to open this event.

The Massing of the Colors set a solemn, patriotic tone for the evening, bringing together volunteers, veterans, Gold Star Families, professional truck drivers, and corporate partners on the eve of National Wreaths Across America Day. Approximately 800 guests attended in person, with additional participants joining online and via Wreaths Radio.

This year's Massing of the Colors was led by CAPT Edward Gantt, USN (Ret), who also shared a brief history of MOWW and the tradition of the Massing of the Colors prior to the ceremony. His remarks reflected MOWW's longstanding commitment to patriotism, remembrance, and service.

The ceremony featured ten color guard units from across Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., with the marching cadence provided by the American Originals Fife & Drum Corps youth group. MOWW extends its sincere appreciation to the Companions who supported and helped coordinate the event, including COL Vicente Ogilvie, USA (Ret), LTC Edmund Feige, USA (Ret), and COL Kenneth McCreedy, USA (Ret). We are proud to continue our support of Wreaths Across America in honoring the service and sacrifice of America's servicemembers.

Participating units included:

- Civil Air Patrol, Maine Wing Color Guard
- Civil Air Patrol, National Capital Region, Fairfax Squadron
- Spotsylvania Career and Technical Center Army JROTC Color Guard - Team 1
- Spotsylvania Career and Technical Center Army JROTC Color Guard - Team 2
- Chantilly Academy Air Force JROTC Color Guard
- Arlington Career Center High School Space Force JROTC Color Guard
- U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Alexandria Division Color Guard
- U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Corsair Squadron (Maryland) Color Guard
- Troop 377, Scouts BSA, Fort Meade, Maryland
- Joint Task Force National Capital Region Color Guard ★





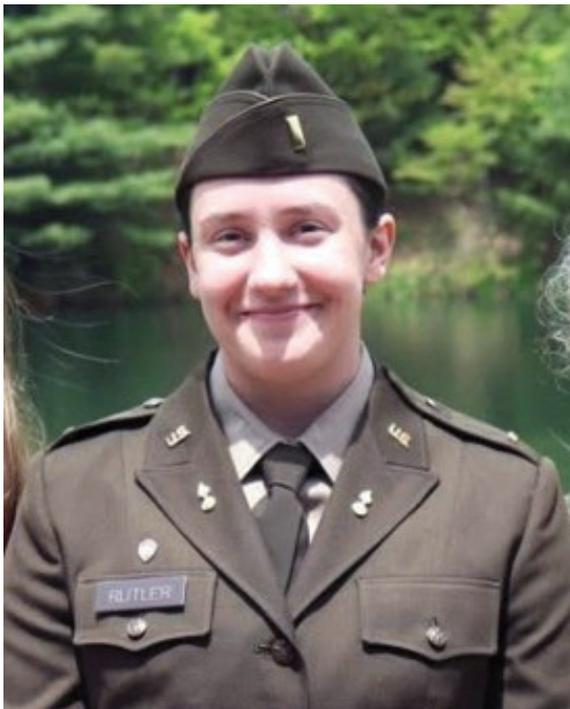
(Top row, L-R): Guests watch a fife and drum presentation; MOWW Companions. (Second row, L-R): Space Force JROTC with Joint Color Guard; Linton Hall Fife and Drum practice; Civil Air Patrol, Maine Wing Color Guard. (Third row L-R): Spotsylvania Career and Technical Center Army JROTC Color Guard; the audience stands to salute the flag.

(Page opposite, top): US Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Alexandria Division Color Guard. (Center): Arlington Career Center High School Space Force JROTC Color Guard. (Third row, L-R): Cadets and Joint Color Guard; Troop 377, Scouts BSA, Fort Meade, Maryland, with Joint Color Guard.

Welcoming Our Newest Companions

LTC VICTOR BURNETTE, USA (RET)
MOWW CHAPLAIN GENERAL

It is with great pride that our Chapter welcomes its two newest Companions: Second Lieutenants Paige Rutler and Luke Huddleston. Both are graduates of Woodbridge Senior High School—where I had the honor of serving as Senior Army Instructor—and of the University of Virginia at Wise. Their dedication, leadership, and promise as officers in the United States Army inspired me to sponsor them for membership in the Military Order of the World Wars.



2LT Paige Rutler

From her earliest days as a Woodbridge JROTC cadet, Paige distinguished herself as a scholar, athlete, and natural leader. She served in key leadership roles, including S-1, Battalion Executive Officer, and ultimately Cadet Battalion Commander. Active on the Color Guard and Unarmed Drill teams, she also excelled as

an AP Honors student and a member of the Cross Country team. Paige was instrumental in helping the Viking Battalion achieve Honor Unit with Distinction, the highest level of JROTC accreditation.



During her tenure as Cadet Battalion Commander, the Northern Virginia Chapter Commander of MOWW worked closely with Paige and the Viking Battalion to prepare for their JPA inspection, providing her with valuable advice and mentorship. He also guided her through the competitive process of applying to the US Military Academy and for various scholarships, mentorship that shaped her path forward.

In college, Paige earned a ROTC scholarship and was selected for Project GO, studying Arabic at the Qasid Arabic Institute in Jordan alongside cadets from across the Services. At UVA Wise, she continued to lead as S-2, ran Cross Country, competed in the Army Ten-Miler, and completed the Mountain Man Challenge. Paige earned her Bachelor of Science in Political Science and plans to pursue a Master's in Homeland Security. She commissioned into the Ordnance Corps and recently celebrated her marriage following graduation.





2LT Luke Huddleston

Luke likewise exemplified excellence at Woodbridge. An AP Honors student, Eagle Scout, and four-year football starter, he served as a company commander in the Viking Battalion. I was honored to attend his Eagle Scout ceremony, a clear reflection of his character and dedication.

At UVA Wise, Luke earned both football and ROTC scholarships, continuing to thrive as a cadet-athlete. He helped prepare the battalion for its annual inspection, played on the university's football team, and earned his Air Assault badge. His cadre consistently praised him as dependable, capable, and ready for any task. Luke completed his Bachelor of Arts in Communication and commissioned into the Transportation Corps. Like Paige, he also married his high school sweetheart, a bond that began in JROTC.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Both Paige and Luke have returned to Woodbridge to encourage and mentor current cadets, embodying the spirit of service that defines our Order. Their journeys reflect the very values we cherish: duty, honor, and country.

Please join me in proudly welcoming 2LT Paige Rutler and 2LT Luke Huddleston as Companions of the Military Order of the World Wars—exceptional young leaders whose example will inspire others for years to come.



Benjamin Rush

CHRIS W. SCHMIDT, MD
COMMANDER, WEST VALLEY CHAPTER, AZ



This year, we celebrate our Nation's 250th anniversary. It is appropriate to honor a founding father. Benjamin Rush was born in 1746 in Pennsylvania. His father died in 1751, leaving his widowed mother with seven children. Benjamin was sent to live with an aunt and uncle, where he benefited from an exceptional education. He graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) with a BA in 1760. He began a medical apprenticeship with a Philadelphia physician, who noted unusual promise and encouraged Benjamin to further his studies in Europe. While studying abroad, he witnessed the growing rift between Britain and the Colonies. He received an MD degree from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in 1768. When he returned in 1769, he was one of the best educated physicians in the Colonies. He would become the most well-known American physician of the 18th century.

He was also a passionate author, teacher, politician, speaker, and social advocate. He wrote the first textbook on Chemistry in the Colonies and several essays supporting independence. During the early revolutionary period, Rush was active in the Sons of Liberty and was elected to represent Pennsylvania in the Continental Congress. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was a friend of Benjamin Franklin and regularly corresponded with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine. Paine consulted with him when writing the powerful leaflet *Common Sense* in support of independence.

Still, Rush was harshly criticized by some who questioned why a physician was involved in politics. Rush served on the medical committee of the Continental Congress. In this capacity, he accompanied the Philadelphia militia during the Battle of Princeton. He noted that the Army Medical Service was inadequately dealing with both illness and battlefield casualties due to infighting among the Chief Surgeons. He accepted an appointment as Surgeon General of the Continental Army, Middle Department, to improve supply

and leadership of the Medical Service. He crafted an order, *Directions for Preserving the Health of Soldiers*, that formed the foundation of preventive military medicine and remained in publication into the early 20th Century. He adamantly supported vaccination against smallpox, influencing General Washington to mandate vaccination for the entire Continental Army. The combination of nutritional and sanitary guidelines with vaccination was state of the art preventative medicine for the time.

Unfortunately, Dr. Rush became embroiled in political controversy when he was exposed to have repeated gossip critical of General Washington in private letters. He resigned as Surgeon General and returned to private practice. He later expressed regret for this incident and was often noted to be very complimentary of Washington as both a leader and an individual.

Rush continued to be a highly regarded medical professor and consultant into the 19th century, though many of his treatments are now viewed as archaic. President Jefferson appointed him as the medical advisor for Lewis and Clark's expedition. He provided a medical kit. Pills that were to be used as treatment for diarrhea contained more than 50% mercury. The often-contaminated drinking water and a diet high in meat resulted in frequent use of the medication. As an interesting consequence, contemporary scientists have been able to trace Lewis and Clark's route by detecting the mercury in the soils.

Benjamin Rush, MD, died in 1813. He is recognized today for significant contributions to the nation as a physician, civilian leader in the Revolution, and reformer of the Continental Army.

As an aside, Rush serves as an example of a founding father with some very human traits. Can you imagine him sitting in a Philadelphia tavern during the Continental Congress with Franklin, Jefferson, and others sharing a tankard of ale and the latest juicy gossip about their fellow founding fathers? We will never know, but times and people probably haven't changed all that much.

This article was edited for space.



Shalom: Wholeness in Mind, Body, and Spirit in 2026

LTC VICTOR W. BURNETTE, USA (RET)
CHAPLAIN GENERAL, MOWW

Companions, in the January/February issue of the *MOWW Review*, our MOWW Surgeon General encouraged us to pursue balance in 2026—mentally, spiritually, and physically. Building on his message, I invite us to reflect on the biblical concept of Shalom, a Hebrew word meaning to make whole.

Shalom is more than the absence of conflict. It is the presence of completeness—restoration in mind, body, and spirit. Scripture captures this truth: *“The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7). Additional passages such as Psalm 29:11, John 14:27, Isaiah 26:3, and Romans 15:13 further illuminate God’s desire for our peace and wholeness.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR SHALOM

Prayer and Devotion. Daily reflection on peace, justice, and restoration helps us bring clarity and calm into a chaotic world.

Acts of Restitution. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and charitable giving “make things right” and extend Shalom to others. Chapter service projects—volunteering, community outreach, and supporting

those in need—strengthen cohesion and bless our communities.

PHYSICAL PRACTICES FOR WHOLENESS

Exercise. Build endurance, strength, and flexibility to support readiness and resilience.

Balanced Nutrition. Fuel the body for sustained energy and longevity.

Rest. Prioritize sleep and recovery as essential components of physical and spiritual renewal.

A CALL TO ACTION

Companions, let us reaffirm the ancient meaning of shalom: to make whole. When we connect biblical restitution with modern practices of mental, physical, and spiritual completeness, we embody the fullness of Shalom.

May we live Shalom in 2026—restoring what is broken, serving with purpose, and pursuing wholeness in our lives, our Chapters, and our communities. As members of the Military Order of the World Wars, let us commit to being instruments of restoration and peace throughout the year ahead. ★

WHAT DOES SHALOM REALLY MEAN?

When I greet you with Shalom, I’m not just saying “hey” or “hi.”

The Hebrew word Shalom means: peace, wholeness, completeness, well-being, and harmony.

So when I say Shalom, I’m actually speaking life over you:

Peace in your mind

Wholeness in your spirit

Safety in your steps

Harmony in your life

It’s a greeting, yes—but it’s also a blessing.





Recruit Training Command

Pass-In-Review

DVID-US NAVY PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS REYMUNDO A. VILLEGAS III.

The Honorable Hung Cao, Under Secretary of the Navy, presented the Military Order of the World Wars Award of Merit to Seaman Caleb Clayton during pass-in-review onboard US Navy Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes on 18 Dec 2025. Training is approximately nine weeks and all enlistees in the US Navy begin their career at the command. More than 40,000 recruits train annually at the Navy's only boot camp.



MG Critz Chapter, OK

Eagle Scout Damon Thomas Huibregtse

BY LTC REGINALD BROWN, USA (RET)

On 20 January 2026, the Military Order of the World Wars, MOWW, General Critz Chapter in Lawton, OK, was honored to participate in the Eagle Scout Court of Honor for Damon Thomas Huibregtse, age 15, at Westminster Presbyterian Church. MOWW Companion Reginald Brown presented the MOWW Eagle Scout Certificate and the MOWW Eagle patch. For his Eagle Scout Service Project, Eagle Scout Damon Thomas Huibregtse installed three flag poles at the Cameron University Baptist Church.



Puget Sound Chapter, WA

Honoring Veterans from WWI to Present

BY PCINC COL DAVID B. GIBSON, USAF (RET)

The Puget Sound Chapter hosted NJROTC cadets from Stadium High School on 11 January at the Steilacoom Town Hall, who provided a great program honoring veterans from WWI to the present. Each student wore authentic uniforms from different eras of military service. Additionally, each cadet spoke at length about the military era they represented.

Hampton Roads Chapter, VA

Eagle Scout Court of Honor

SUBMITTED BY CAPT DANIEL SEABOLT, USAF (RET)

The Hampton Roads Chapter honored five Eagle Scouts on Saturday, 10 January 2026. Troop 205, part of the Colonial Virginia Council, is chartered to D. Potts, INC., and meets at St Luke's United Methodist Church, Yorktown, Virginia. Capt Seabolt, Hampton Roads Chapter Commander, presented each Scout with a MOWW Certificate of Recognition. The honored Eagle Scouts are (L-R): Samantha Titko, Ava Wyrick, Alexi Titko, Rachel Corbett, and Christina Morris.



Fort Knox Chapter, KY

Sixth Annual Fundraiser a Great Success

BY BG CHARLES D. ESTES, USA (RET)

The Fort Knox Spouses and Community Club hosted their sixth annual Bourbon Pull Fundraiser this year. This year's theme was Boots, Bourbon & Bling. The fundraiser is the club's biggest event of the year. Locals can buy a ticket that includes dinner and a guaranteed chance to pull a bottle of bourbon. This year, 189 tickets were sold, of which 147 were Pull Tickets. Along with the bottles of bourbon, the club also received donations for auction items and opportunity prizes, which this year ranged from a wine basket to a bourbon barrel display shelf—that alone was auctioned off for over \$400! To top all that fun off, there were also games guests could choose to participate in, with prizes ranging from \$600 to almost \$1000. Every single cent raised at this event is turned back around to the community through grants and scholarships. This year's event has raised over \$21,000, which is the largest amount raised by the event to date. Fort Knox Chapter donated a bottle of Maker's Mark with MOWW printed on the label. The Chapter thought this was a good opportunity to continue raising the community's awareness of our existence. Moreover, there are military members attached to all these spouses, so we're hoping this will affect our recruiting in the area.

Left: The Fort Knox Chapter contributed a bottle of Maker's Mark Bourbon with "Military Order" printed on the label. Right: BG Charles Estes, USA (Ret), with members of the Fort Knox Spouses and Community Club who hosted the fundraiser.





KEY 2026 VETERANS AFFAIRS UPDATES:



Disability Rating Rule Reversal

Following backlash, the VA abandoned a proposal that would have based disability ratings on how well a veteran functions while on medication, which critics argued would have reduced compensation for many.

“Effective immediately, VA is halting enforcement of the interim final rule, ‘Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medication,’” VA Secretary Doug Collins said in a statement posted to social media Thursday afternoon.

“VA issued the rule to clarify existing policy and protect veterans’ benefits in the wake of an ongoing court action. But many interpreted the rule as something that could result in adverse consequences,” Collins said.

Backlog Reduction

The backlog of veterans waiting for benefits is down 62% since January 2025, and claims processing is at record highs.

VHA Reorganization

The Veterans Health Administration is undergoing a restructure to eliminate duplicative middle management, aiming to empower local hospital directors and improve efficiency.

Staffing Challenges & Health Access

Despite adding 25 new clinics, the VA is facing significant staffing declines in some areas, leading to continued long wait times for care in certain regions.

Technology & Care

The VA is expanding the use of virtual and augmented reality in care delivery and has implemented new mobile tools for home-based primary care teams.

Budgeting

VA will spend nearly \$5 billion in FY26 to modernize, repair and improve health care facilities, the largest non-recurring maintenance investment in VA’s history. VA is also spending an additional \$800 million on infrastructure improvements to ensure department facilities provide safe and effective patient care. These additional funds come from savings gleaned from various VA reform efforts.

VA MOVES TO IMPROVE DENTAL CARE ACCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS



VA has released a request for proposals for a new dental care administrator to operate the department’s next generation network of community care dental providers.

The goal is to contract with a vendor that will support the department in building and maintaining a robust national network of licensed dental providers and practitioners. The network will include general and specialty dental care, preventive dental services and pharmacy support.

Through this new contract, VA aims to improve and standardize dental care delivery, ensuring veterans receive the preventive and restorative dental services they need to maintain their health.

VA’s community care program enables veterans to access health care from non-VA medical providers at the department’s expense. Community care has been an integral part of caring for veterans since the World War II era. In 2018, President Trump enshrined this right for Veterans by signing the bipartisan MISSION Act. Today, about 40% of all VA care is provided through community care.





Reveille

RANK/NAME (SERVICE)

NEW MEMBER

Sponsor

**Denotes PM/HPM **Denotes RM/HRM*

NOTE: Primary Memberships Only

DATA FROM DEC 2025 – JAN 2026

AUGUSTA CHAPTER GA

LTCOL ETHAN W. ANDREWS, USMC (RET)**

LTC Gary O. Engen, USA (Ret)

CAPT LAUREN R. BENSON, USMC**

LTC Gary O. Engen, USA (Ret)

COL GWENDOLYN FRYER, USA (RET)*

LTC David R. Titus, USA (Ret)

MR. DORAN LANGLEY**

Dr. James A. Brady III, CPT, USA (Fmr)

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Welcome to the Order



PUGET SOUND CHAPTER, WA

The Puget Sound Chapter inducted 2 new members on 1 February at the Steilacoom, WA Town Hall. (L-R): Army CPT Bob Williams, DDS, and SSG Jeffrey C. Brink, WAARNG, receive their MOWW pins.





Taps

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MOWW REVIEW

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PUBLISHER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Col Michael Farrell, USMC (Ret)
chiefofstaff@moww.org

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Diana M. Beruff
officerreview@moww.org



A Nationwide Call to Toll the Bells

RINGING ON JULY 4, 2026 AT 12 NOON LOCAL TIME

In honor of America's 250th Anniversary, MOWW National and the MOWW San Diego Chapter have created **Freedom Bells** – a free bell tolling web app designed to unite Americans in a synchronized moment of reflection and celebration.

On July 4, 2026, FreedomBells.org will count down to 12 noon local time, allowing Chapters, individuals, families, schools, and communities to toll bells together in a shared national moment proclaiming liberty. Whether gathered in a public ceremony, participating from home, or far from home, Freedom Bells makes it possible for everyone to take part in this historic moment.

MOWW's free web app designed to celebrate America 250!

- Synchronized countdown to 12 noon local time
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