



THE DEFENDER

A monthly publication of the Northwest Florida Military Officers Association
www.nwfmoo.org

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Serving All Branches of The Uniformed Services

MAY 2016

Lunch Meeting & Discussion

When: Thur, 5 May 2016

Time: Gathering 1130, Lunch 1200
 Program to follow

Place: Ft. Walton Bch. Yacht Club
 180 Ferry Road, NE, FWB

Program: State Senator Don Gaetz

Please:

- **MAKE A RESERVATION**

- Wear a name tag
- Bring proper change:
 \$13.00 for everyone

Reservation deadline is Friday at noon prior to meeting. Go online at www.nwfmoo.org and select the link where it says "Click here to make reservations", or email Dick Prater at nwfrservations@gmail.com, or call 850-613-6080 if you are attending.

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Another Welcome Visit from our State Senator

For our program on May 5th, we will enjoy a return visit from State Senator Don Gaetz. Senator Gaetz has appeared before our chapter in the past, but it's always nice to have a chance to visit with him again.

Former Florida Senate President Don Gaetz began his career in the private sector where he spent more than 30 years working to improve access to quality health care services. He is the retired co-founder of VITAS Healthcare Corporation, which provides innovative hospice care, working with patients and families to offer comfort and preserve dignity in the face of terminal illness. He also served as President of the National Hospice Organization.

While working in the private sector, President Gaetz became concerned with the quality of education his children were receiving in the local public school system. He joined the PTA and was later elected to the school board before

becoming the first non-educator ever elected Superintendent of the Okaloosa County School District. Under his leadership, Okaloosa Schools became the highest performing public schools in Florida and won numerous national awards for academic excellence.

In 2006, President Gaetz became the first non-legislator in more than 50 years to be elected to the Florida Senate with no opposition. In November 2012, he was unanimously elected by his Senate colleagues to serve as President of the Florida Senate.



Sen. Dan Gaetz

Senator Gaetz earned undergraduate degrees in religion and political science and a master's degree in public administration. Senator Gaetz and his wife, Victoria, have been married for over 30 years. The Gaetz's reside in Niceville where they are members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Their daughter, Erin, is a producer in New York and their son, Matt, is a State Representative for District 4 in Northwest Florida.

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

From the President's Pen

By Scott Berry

Greetings!

As usual there's a lot of going on and plenty to discuss but I'll try to keep my comments relevant.

Our change to a lunch venue has met with great success. I'm sure there are those who'd prefer a breakfast meeting but the numbers show lunchtime has increased

attendance. Our numbers continue to be well above the breakfast count and in fact are two to three times as many. That's great news in my book. I'm also very impressed by the Yacht Club's food. It's one of the best bang-for-the-buck lunches in town and very tasty as well.

We had several opportunities to gather in the last month aside from the lunch. Officers Call, for some reason, just didn't have the draw as in the past. We're going to change the location in the hopes of attracting more members. Also, we manned a booth at the FWB Military Appreciation Day. While we had enough to keep the booth open all day, we certainly didn't have too many people. Dave Parisot, who organized our participation, mentioned it was the same "usual suspects" as last year.

My point here is while our lunch meeting is going great guns, we're still missing the ball on other activities. Perhaps it's lack of publicity. In any event, I encourage everyone to watch this newsletter and your email closely for more opportunities in the future. We'll be manning a booth in Crestview next month. Several months ago we promised a tour of the E.O. Biophilia



Scott Berry

Center near Freeport after we got such a great presentation from their director. I'd hate for anyone to spend a lot of time organizing that and then have no attendees.

We do, though, continue to have members step forward and help with chapter administration. Les Matheson graciously volunteered to be a name tag person so if you'd like one, a \$10 bill to Les will make that happen.

And our membership is increasing as well. Last year was a banner year for new members. We had more new members in 2015 than the past previous years combined. I know I've said that before but it's important enough that it bears repeating. Increased membership runs contrary to the majority of the MOAA chapters—at least in Florida. We're on the way to doing the same this year. Offer your neighbor or a friend with an officer background a chance to join us. You may even get a free lunch in the process! The more the merrier and I think the success of our lunch meeting is proof positive of that.

Berry "OUT"

Veterans Corner

Submitted by Rich Comer from Congressman Jeff Miller's newsletter the last week of March

Latest VA Accountability Failures

Nearly every day we are reminded that accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs is almost non-existent. VA's announcement last week that no one will be seriously disciplined for wasting more than \$1 billion on a failed construction project and that a few executives might receive a weak slap on the wrist or a temporary written warning for a relocation scandal that cost taxpayers more than \$400,000 is more proof of this sad fact. One thing is clear: this dysfunctional status quo will never change until we eliminate arcane civil service rules that put the job security of VA bureaucrats ahead of the veterans they are charged with serving. The House acted to do just that last summer with passage of the VA Accountability Act, which would give the VA secretary the authority to swiftly fire or demote any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct while protecting whistleblowers and limiting the agency's ability to place misbehaving employees on paid leave. If the Senate doesn't follow suit with similar legislation to do the same thing, it is illogical to think VA's many problems will ever be fixed

PUBLIC RECORD

Life Member Renewal:
Auxiliary Iva Cain

New Member Correction:
Rod J. Gerdes, COL, USMC

Memoriam:
Mrs. Patricia M Colsch, spouse of
Maj Gary Colsch, USAF, (Ret) 4/13/2016

Margaret Shook
Former Auxiliary member, (Ret) 3/29/2016

Memorial Day

Monday, 30 May 2016

Memorial Day, an American holiday observed on the last Monday of May, honors men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings and participating in parades. Unofficially, at least, it marks the beginning of summer.

Early Observances of Memorial Day

The Civil War claimed more lives than any conflict in U.S. history, requiring the establishment of the country's first national cemeteries. By the late 1860s Americans in various towns and cities had begun holding springtime tributes to these countless fallen soldiers, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.

It is unclear where exactly this tradition originated; numerous different communities may have independently initiated the memorial gatherings. Nevertheless, in 1966 the federal government declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day. Waterloo—which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—was chosen because it hosted an annual, community-wide event, during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

Decoration Day

On May 5, 1862, General John A. Logan, leader of an organization for Northern Civil War veterans, called for a nationwide day of remembrance later that month. "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there. Many Northern states held similar commemorative events and reprised the

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NWFMOA

Community Outreach

By Dave Parisot

Janet and Scott Berry, Carol Baker, and Dave Parisot in the NWFMOA booth at Military Family and Veterans Appreciation Day at the FWB Landing on April 16th.

It's that time of the year with many opportunities to get our flag and banners in front of the local community. On Saturday, April 16th, the Chapter had an information booth at the **Military Family and Veterans Appreciation Day** at the FWB Landing. Thank you to Scott Berry, Carol Baker, Dick Prater, Bob Secrest, George Colton, and Dave Parisot for tending the booth.

On Saturday, May 21st, from 11AM to 3PM we will have our booth at the **Crestview Armed Forces Day** program at the Old Spanish Trail grounds on Stillwell Blvd. Come on by and say 'thank you' to our fellow armed services people. Many of the service branches will have displays of their equipment at this event.

May 30th is **Memorial Day** with many opportunities to attend remembrance services. Please check your local newspapers for times and locations for these services. Wear your patriotic shirts and NWFMOA nametags. At the Beal Cemetery service in Fort Walton Beach, at 11AM, the names of our deceased members from the past year will be read. All members present may go to the flag pole for a salute to our deceased members.

The first weekend of June is **Billy Bowlegs** time in Fort Walton Beach. The Captain Billy LXI (61) **'torch light' parade** is on Monday, June 6th starting at 6PM. Our members who were in last year's parade for our 50th Anniversary had such a great time that we thought we would do it again. Here is another **opportunity to volunteer**. We will need 4 safety walkers in

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DOG TAG POEMS
By Chaplain Tom Azar, USAF Retired

ARMED FORCES DAY,
“I PERFECTLY UNDERSTAND”

I peered, prayed and wrestled below the deadly widow maker
 Her victims' faces were young, unwrinkled, fresh and pensive
 Behind the bloody camouflage that hid their patriotic innocence,
 there was a troupe of sisters and brothers still waiting for their
 voice

The risen hear no more orders, cheers, explosions or cries
 They only look down from above, seeing their honored absence
 no husband, son or daughter to embrace, tease or kiss again
 nor flowers for mother, watch for father or boots for her brother.

Somberly, at high noon her squadron showed the missing formation
 I watched all from the bare altar and cold marble graveside-
 an overabundance of pain and so few who fathom the waves of
 loss

If you have sand in your boots and blood on your nails
 and there is a knot in your gut and shakes in your hand-
 then you understand the timeless march of modern warriors.
 Our doctors and nurses weave their hearts and hands in one

We carry the wounded together, a silent chorus of caretakers
 We fight like archangels to save the young and valiant troops
 They give first rights, and I the last; they cut out the foreign parts,
 as I pray beneath the firm red cross between surgical high beams.

Together we steadied the living through death's unfinished gate
 “Are we robbing the young to prolong the old,” the retiring doctor said
 No! their prepaid allegiance lets the young breathe safely today
 The circle for freedom is woven with venerable novices and
 martyrs

“Mystery mystery, all is mystery” I meditate and whisper
 “Trust in the Triune till the end reveals the supreme truth
 And wait till heaven's doctor lifts and reunites us all.”

The answer, if you know, to this enduring question
 Makes one a prophet amongst unscathed politicians
 They credit us on earth as we substituted for them
 We don't stop at heaven's narrow foyer but go straight on
 Our hard pained sweat and blood was for the highest call;
 It gives a faithful comrade another chance to kiss newer life

If you scream in your dreams and jump when I touch you,
 Cringe slowly on the beach and jolt when jets fly over
 Then don't tell me without scars you 'perfectly understand'

How do caretakers sleep at night or rise to a knowless day
 Will my embraces be accepted and my silence be heard
 We know the riptide of death erodes the shores of every life
 Because we swim the brackish waters in search of peace

We are worn, torn and reborn on each new granted day
 As we try together to keep the cirrus sorrow away
 From the family constellation on the foggy faithless earth
 I cannot sleep long or breathe slowly in the night.

My heart beats irregularly and my swollen fingers shake
 We scrub scrub scrub but little changes within and without
 It's buried in my skin and between my body's stems

Must we wait till we join the corps of buried refugees
 in heaven's mansions, uncovering memories known to few?
 Alas we are carried by older warriors from Valhalla's shores

Americans are discovering that her treasure chests are living coffins
 Filled with golden blood for our future to remain richly free
 Don't invest poorly or fail to appreciate the untrampled dowry

These are the men and women who looked beyond their dreams
 They comprehend that they are free because others gave before
 Today we hold their quiet bodies close to ours and salute slowly
 They pass their batons to the next generation's aspirations

Freedom's slow vertical wave honor inexplicable selflessness
 Their arms uprooted evil, they alone perfectly understand
 A voiceless command executed for the silent in the serenity of
 life



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Surviving Spouse Corner

By **Kathy Prout**,
Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee advisor

The Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) was established in October 2008 as a first step toward eliminating the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset. SBP is an annuity purchased upon retirement to ensure the spouse will continue to receive income (up to 55 percent of the retiree's elected amount of coverage) in the event the retiree pre-deceases his or her spouse. SBP also is awarded automatically to:

- surviving spouses of retirement-eligible servicemembers (i.e. with 20-plus years of service) who died on active duty before Sept. 11, 2001; and
- surviving spouses of all servicemembers (regardless of length of service) who died on active duty after Sept. 11, 2001.

If the servicemember's death was caused by a service-connected illness, then the surviving spouse also is eligible for DIC from the VA in the amount of \$1,254 per month. DIC is deducted from SBP dollar-for-dollar, up to the full amount of SBP. Congress agreed this offset was wrong but was unable to come up with the funding to fully eliminate the offset. They instead created SSIA. It was a 10-year allowance, which started at \$50 a month, is currently \$275 a month, and will increase to \$310 by 2017. The problem is current statutory authority to pay SSIA is set to expire Oct. 1, 2017.

It is important for SSIA to be extended and increased in this year's (would it be this year's or the 2017) Defense Authorization Bill if the funds to eliminate the SBP/DIC offset are not found. Otherwise, 63,000 surviving spouses affected by the SBP/DIC offset will see a \$3,720 reduction in compensation in 2017.

Two bills, H.R. 4519 and H.R. 4493, were introduced by Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) in the House of Representatives to increase and extend SSIA as follows:

- H.R. 4519 would increase SSIA over five years: \$400 in 2018; \$475 in 2019; \$600 in 2020; \$700 in 2021; and \$800 in 2022.
- H.R. 4493 would increase SSIA to \$400 a month for one year in 2018. This bill is a backup bill to H.R. 4519 in case funding for the five-year bill cannot be found. SSIA then would end in 2019 and again have to be addressed if the offset was not eliminated.

If monies to eliminate the SBP/DIC offset cannot be found, it is imperative SSIA not only be extended but also increased. Pursuing SSIA increases does not remove the goal to eliminate the SBP/DIC offset completely. SSIA's principal purpose is twofold: 1) to provide at least partial, immediate reimbursement to SBP/DIC survivors until full repeal of the offset can be achieved, and 2) provide an additional option to attain repeal of the offset through a phased-in approach, with steady increases to the annual SSIA amounts.

Please support the elimination of the SBP/DIC offset by asking your congressional representatives to cosponsor H.R. 1594 in the House and S. 979 in the Senate. Also, seek support for H.R. 4519. Use the toll-free Capitol Hill line (866) 272-MOAA (6622) to call your congressional representatives today.

For additional information regarding the SBP/DIC offset, visit the Survivor Advocacy Issues section of MOAA's Web base.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Defender is a monthly publication of the Northwest Florida Military Officers Association. The purpose of this publication is to communicate with, inform, and educate chapter members. The national MOAA, this local chapter, and this publication are totally nonpartisan.

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Scholarship Fund

By Dave Parisot, Chairman

Please join us at the NWFMOA luncheon on May 5th at the Fort Walton Yacht Club when we will present our 2016 scholarships to JROTC cadets graduating from local high schools. The following cadets have been selected for at least a \$1,500 scholarship with their colleges of choice in parentheses: Baker High School—Cadet Cole Briggs (Purdue) and Cadet Isaac Kimbrell (UWF); Choctawhatchee High School—Natthakan “James” Welaha (Univ. of South FL); Niceville High School—Cadet Jacob Barnes (UWF). One of these cadets will be presented a 2-year scholarship of \$3,000 which will be announced at our May luncheon. These cadets will be our luncheon guests.

The scholarship checks get sent directly to the student’s college after we receive confirmation of both their college enrollment and in the college’s ROTC program. The ROTC requirement is in keeping with our motto of “Helping to build future officers and leaders”.

Our NWFMOA Chapter also assists our national MOAA in awarding the MOAA Medal and ribbon to a junior-year cadet from each high school in Okaloosa County with the JROTC Program. This year’s MOAA Medal selectees are Cadet Christopher Epperson (Baker H.S.), Cadet Thep Theppahalangsy (Choctawhatchee H.S.), Cadet Cynamon Robbins (Crestview H.S.), Cadet Kristal Melendez (Fort Walton Beach H.S.), and Cadet Liska Ace (Niceville H.S.). Congratulations to all for this achievement.

I want to thank this year’s Scholarship Committee for their time and assistance with the selection process and in presenting the scholarships and MOAA Medals at each high school’s JROTC Awards program. This year’s Committee is Earnestine Carswell (Chair), George Colton, Les Matheson, Fred Westfall, and Dave Parisot.

The winner of the 50/50 drawing at our April luncheon was Don Litke who graciously donated his winnings of \$60 to the Scholarship Fund. I want to thank all who made donations to the Scholarship Fund in memory of my wife, Chong Cha Parisot, who died peacefully at home on March 28th.

Here’s the complete list of Century Club members for the most previous 12 months of 2015/2016 along with our Business Donors.

BG Frank Glunn Century Club: April 2015: John Feldman; Eileen Arpke; Larry Bush. May 2015: Samuel Lombardo. July 2015: Beryl Brenner.

Memorial Day (cont.)

Continued from page 3

tradition in subsequent years; by 1890 each one had made Decoration Day an official state holiday. Many Southern states, on the other hand, continued to honor their dead on separate days until after World War I.

Evolution of Memorial Day

Memorial Day, as Decoration Day gradually came to be known, originally honored only those lost while fighting in the Civil War. But during World War I the United States found itself embroiled in another major conflict, and the holiday evolved to commemorate American military personnel who died in all wars.

For decades, Memorial Day continued to be observed on May 30, the date Logan had selected for the first Decoration Day. But in 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which established Memorial Day as the last Monday in May in order to create a three-day weekend for federal employees; the change went into effect in 1971. The same law also declared Memorial Day a federal holiday.

Memorial Day Traditions

Cities and towns across the United States host Memorial Day parades each year, often incorporating military personnel and members of veterans’ organizations. Some of the largest parades take place in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. Americans also observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries and memorials. On a less somber note, many people throw parties and barbecues on the holiday, perhaps because it unofficially marks the beginning of summer.



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Scholarship Fund (cont.)

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August 2015: Dr. Howard Fisher; Tom Churan. October 2015: Frederick Rall. November 2015: Dick Prater. December 2015: Carol Baker; Karl Eschmann. January 2016: Clyde Locke (Renewal); Dan Brown (Renewal). February 2016: Mel Bryant (Renewal); Charlie Brown; John Holt; Bill Ryan. March 2016: Fred Westfall (Renewal); William Colgan; Dave Parisot (Renewal).

2015 Business Platinum Donor (\$750 minimum donation):
April/November 2015: Eglin Federal Credit Union

2015 Business Gold Donors (\$500 minimum donation):
April 2015: ZT Motors of Fort Walton Beach; Resort Quest Vacation Rentals; Michles & Booth Law Firm. May 2015: Wild Willy's Adventure Zone (In-kind).

2015 Business Silver Donor (\$250 - \$499): April 2015: Holiday Inn Resort (In-kind); November 2015: Marriott Town Place Suites (In-kind); May/December 2015:

SCHOLARSHIP DONATION FORM

Please accept this gift of \$_____ to support the NWFMOA Scholarship Fund (Donations of \$100 or more will be recognized in the B/Gen Frank Glunn Century Club).

Donor Information (if not printed on check):

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Gift is tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

This gift is a memorial in honor of: _____

Please inform the following of this gift:

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City, ST ZIP _____

Make payable to: **NWFMOA Scholarship Fund**, and mail to: David Parisot, President; 56th 11th St, Shalimar, FL 32579

NWFMOA Scholarship Fund, Inc is a 501c(3) corporation. Donations are tax exempt as provided by law. Registration # CH20374. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the FL Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services by calling toll free (800) 435-7352 within the State of Florida or via their website of www.800helpfla.com. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

Shalimar Pointe Golf Club (In-kind); December 2015: Indian Bayou Golf & Country Club (In-kind).

2015 Business Bronze Donor (\$100 - \$249): November 2015: Merrill Lynch Wealth Management; May/December 2015: Tommy Mattonie's Coastal Café (In-kind); Tammy's Journeys (In-kind); Mary's Kitchen (In-kind).

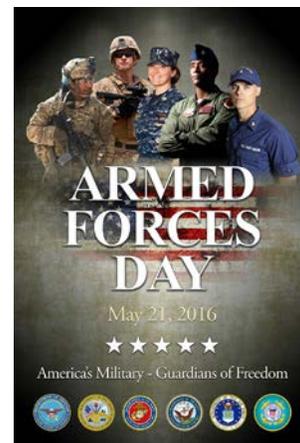
Please support our local businesses that have contributed to our scholarship program.

NWFMOA Scholarship Fund, Inc.: "Helping to build future military officers and leaders."

Armed Forces Day Saturday, 21 May 2016

President Harry S. Truman led the effort to establish a single holiday for citizens to come together and thank our military members for their patriotic service in support of our country.

On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an Armed Forces Day to replace separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force Days. The single day celebration stemmed from the unification of the Armed Forces under the Department of Defense.



Community Outreach (cont.)

Continued from page 3

the parade and 4 of our member veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf Wars to ride on our float and toss candy to the thousands of children along the parade route. Dave Parisot will provide the float and George Colton the tow vehicle. We will do the final decorating in the staging area prior to the parade at 5PM. To volunteer and more detailed info, contact Dave at dparisot@cox.net or by phone at 850-613-6545.

SUPPORT MOAA

Do what you can to support our national organization. To learn what's going on and to find out what you can do go to: <http://www.moaa.org/takeaction/> We all will benefit from your efforts.

