



MECMOAA CHAPTER NEWS



Never Stop Serving

Lunch Bunch

Tuesday, July 14

5:00 pm

@ Bonefish Grill
1902 N. Roan St.,
Johnson City.

RSVP to
Ginny Thompson

Tuesday, August 11

11:30 @ Aubrey's
430 Pinnacle Pkwy
Bristol, TN

RSVP to
Sandee Woolley

Current Officers

President: Mark Tipton
Vice President: John Rice
Secretary: Mary Shaw Van
Treasurer: Tom Shafer
Legislative Liaison: Jim
DuBose
Surviving Spouse Liaison:
Betty Matthews

Grand Reopening

Large events across the country are being widely cancelled for the coming summer. Locally, we've seen full closures of public establishments transition to openings with limited capacity. We cancelled our last two membership gatherings as well. This has been unfortunate but warranted, as we greatly miss the camaraderie shared during our meetings but also realize the importance of protecting one another.

As it stands today, we will be able to have our **MECMOAA Annual Picnic at Winged Deer Park in Johnson City on 18 July**—our “Grand Reopening.” We will continue to discuss specifics and ensure we come together in the safest manner possible. Expect to receive much more information as we progress through June and we improve situational awareness of the local conditions.

For now, we still plan to meet in September as well.

Sunday, September 20

We'll have a special guest at brunch, courtesy of John & Janet Rice:

Courtney Lynne Smits

Miss Virginia USA 2019



Courtney Lynne Smits is a fifth generation member of the military, serving as a Psychological Operations Specialist in the U.S. Army Reserve for the fifth year. She is a student at Virginia's Marymount University, working toward her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication with a double minor in Sociology and Social Work. This 22-year-old is passionate about volunteering and serving her community, and she started her own

organization, Queens for Courage, at the age of ten. In her five years of service, Courtney has experienced suicides inspiring her to advocate for better access to mental health programs in an effort to eliminate Veteran/Service member suicides. She hopes to encourage others to volunteer in their own communities with programs that are impactful and meaningful. In 2019, she was chosen in the top 17 of the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Search.

We'll meet in the Bistro Room, so there are only 30 seats!

MECMOAA Website News

Click this link: www.mecmoaa1.org

If you haven't visited your new website, we urge you to check it out! As most of you know, Gary Rabetoy has worked tirelessly to transition our old antiquated website to a new modern version. He provided significant time and financial resources to move the process forward. Stan Gedelman became involved toward the end of the GoDaddy website development process and worked to continue the website construction. The result is a modern, functional and visually appealing website. If you have any questions and/or comments, please contact Stan, our Website Administrator/Webmaster, at mecmoaa@gmail.com.

ROTC and JROTC Support Never Stopped

Amidst widespread cancellation of graduations and other school events, Ed Champion and Jim DuBose never stopped serving our local ROTC and JROTC units. While multiple high schools did not actively continue awards presentations as in previous years, Ed and Jim stepped up to deliver our support to those who did.

Schools who asked for an award certificate and their recipients are below. If we receive further requests, we'll share those with you.

Daniel Boone High School: Gage Reno

Volunteer High School: Hunter Walker

East Tennessee State University ROTC: Conor Jessee

Note: Conor received a \$250 scholarship from MECMOAA

Herb Ladley featured in *Military Officer Magazine*

Most of you know Herb's story, and he was featured last November in our local *VIPSEEN* magazine. Well, it was icing on the cake to see Herb featured yet again, but this time in MOAA's national *Military Officer* magazine. Check out the May issue if you missed it—you can view it online (when signed in to your MOAA account) at

<https://www.qgdigitalpublishing.com/publication/?m=53666&i=656763&p=46>

Below is a screenshot of Herb's story on pages 44-45.





CAPT. HERBLADLEY, USN (Ret)

Ensign Herb Ladley was just 24 years old when he unleashed his first bomb from his F6F Hellcat in the skies over the central Pacific Ocean in 1943.

For the next year, Ladley and the aviators of the USS *Langley* air group hammered Iwo Jima, various atolls in the Pacific Ocean, and the Philippines. Ladley flew more than 100 combat missions to destroy targets with bombs and machine guns fitted to the Hellcat's wings.

"I was just a fighter pilot on an aircraft carrier," said Ladley, a retired Navy captain and veteran of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. "There were hundreds of us out there doing the same thing"

Since Hellcats could effortlessly navigate different altitudes, the aircraft was effective against high-level bombers and low-level attacks by kamikaze planes. Ladley piloted his Hellcat from the deck of USS *Langley* (CVL-27) and USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) from December 1943 to October 1945.

CLOSE CALL
On his first combat mission, Ladley was in flying formation as a wingman, fixing his eyes on the flight leader.

"All of a sudden, up out of the ocean comes this ship with a lot of anti-aircraft fire, which we dove through and bombed and strafed," he said.

One of the American pilots dropped a bomb too low and caught shrapnel. All of the other Hellcats immediately flew back to the aircraft carrier, Ladley said.

Later during the deployment, Ladley crash-landed his plane on the deck, careening into the ocean. He

was picked up by a plane guard destroyer and was transferred to *Langley* by a high line.

Langley returned to the continental U.S. in October 1944, when Ladley took advantage of the brief reprieve by picking up his fiancé Amy Reichert in Los Angeles and driving to Yuma, Ariz., to get married.

In May 1945, Ladley's squadron was called back, deploying aboard USS *Cabot* from Hawaii to the Pacific Theater. Ladley flew air strikes over Wake Island, North Korea, and Manchuria.

STRIKING A DEAL
As the war ended, *Cabot* was detoured to Okinawa on its return to the U.S. The ship was scheduled to stay there for months, but Ladley caught a break when a legal officer came looking for anyone with a bottle of whiskey.

Ladley remembered the bottle he bought when the ship sailed through the Panama Canal. He stored it in his locker for safekeeping and saw the opportunity to cash it in.

Ladley's new friend gave the whiskey to a Navy coxswain in exchange for a ride on a motor whale boat to get to USS *Amsterdam* (CL-101), which was scheduled to sail directly to the U.S.

The men pulled up to the ship as it was preparing to get underway, so they hailed sailors on the cruiser deck. The *Amsterdam* crew lowered a line for luggage and a Jacob's ladder for Ladley and his friend to climb.

Part of the whiskey deal was the coxswain was to depart immediately as the men hit the deck, making it impossible to send the hitchhikers back. The men bluffed their way into staying by telling the ship's executive officer they had verbal orders to *Amsterdam*.

The officer quarters were filled, so they slept on cots in the ship's passageway for a few days until they could be moved to the junior officer state rooms. Ladley befriended the ship's commanding officer, occasionally dining with him and swapping war stories.

While stopped in Honolulu, Ladley called his wife to tell her he would be coming home sooner than expected, aboard *Amsterdam*.




Capt. Herb Ladley, USN (Ret), flew more than 100 combat missions during WWII — and also served in Korea and Vietnam.

PHOTO LEFT FROM THE ARSICIA TEAM COURTESY OF CAPT. HERBLADLEY (ON RET);

What's in the Treasury?

As of 4/30/20:

Checking: \$3,314.35

Scholarship: \$913.96

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please send any comments or suggestions to mecmoaa@gmail.com.

If you received the newsletter in printed form and would rather receive it via email, please send us your email address and update your profile on the MOAA national website—you'll need to login to update your profile with MOAA.

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Military Officers Association of America
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