



# MECMOAA CHAPTER NEWS



*Never Stop Serving*

## Lunch Bunch

Meetings are currently not scheduled for 2021

## 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

## Contact Information

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## Looking Back

Almost four years ago, Sarah McNany called me following the loss of Steve Sharar, and she asked me to backfill her as MECMOAA's 1st Vice President. As I knew very little about our Chapter or its members, I said I'd have to think about it. Cindie quickly reminded me, "You complain that retired officers don't step up, so you really don't have a choice." Eighteen months later, Sarah and Dave moved to Myrtle Beach, and she again passed the baton to me, this time as President.

Over the last two years, we strived to promote simple camaraderie within MECMOAA—our local "Officers Club," if you will. As I pass the baton to John Rice, my hope is that two years from now, we'll see both new and familiar faces at every gathering, and we'll continue to honor all those who have been a part of our 41 years as the Mountain Empire Chapter.

*Never Stop Serving. Mark*

## Chapter Officers Elected for 2021-2022

At our Annual Business Meeting in November, we elected our next Chapter officers for two-year terms. We are blessed the following members will accept their charges at our January 2021 meeting:

**President: John Rice**

**1st Vice President: Jack Woolley**

**2d Vice President & Webmaster: Stan Gedelman**

**Secretary: Mary Shaw Van**

**Treasurer: Tom Shafer**

**Legislative Liaison: Jim DuBose**

**Betty Matthews** was appointed by the board to continue serving as our **Surviving Spouse Liaison**. **Mark Tipton** will serve in the roles of **Immediate Past President & Membership Chair**. **Gary Rabetoy** continues to be active in the Chapter as a **Past President**.

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### Speaking of our last meeting...

**Miss Courtney Lynne Smits** shared her story and ambitions with us over brunch and mimosas. Remember that Courtney is Miss Virginia USA 2019 and a current Army Reservist specializing in Psychological Operations. Turn the page for more photos of the event.



## Member Spotlight

### Mary Shaw Van, Maj, USAF (Ret.)

There is very little that happens in MECMOAA today that doesn't involve our Secretary, Mary Shaw Van. In fact, all of our meetings, socials and events depend upon Mary to coordinate the logistics and resolve any issues that arise. She is an indispensable member of the board, and she tirelessly records board and appropriate meeting minutes while fully participating in the discussion—a challenging task, to say the least. The bottom line is that if we're doing something as a Chapter, we probably depend heavily upon Mary to help plan and execute it.

Mary Bailey graduated from Concord College in Athens, WV in 1971, with a B.S. in education. She was an Air Force spouse and civil service worker until 1979 when, newly divorced, she decided to join the Air Force. She attended Officer Training School and after being commissioned, was assigned to Chanute Technical Training Center, in Rantoul, Illinois. (This was a big disappointment as Chanute did not have airplanes, and Mary thought every Air Force Base had planes.) At Chanute, she served as a Training Evaluation Officer (evaluating the content and quality of technical training courses), Squadron Admin Officer, and finally, as the Commander of the Jet Engine Mechanic Student Squadron.



After Chanute, she was assigned to Headquarters, Air Training Command, at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas, where she served as a Training Staff Officer. She was the Headquarters representative for the command's on-the-job (OJT) training programs, and provided training evaluation guidance to the command's technical training centers.

From Randolph, Mary was assigned to Headquarters, Strategic Air Command (SAC), Offutt AFB, in Bellevue, Nebraska where she served as Deputy Chief, Training Division, and later as Chief, Training Division. This division oversaw the allocation of all SAC's TDY-to-school training quotas, SAC's OJT, and retraining programs. At SAC, she was the Personnel representative to "Rivet Workforce," a special task force implemented to develop specialties and training programs to support the new B-1 bomber. She was also SAC's liaison officer to the Air Force Academy.

Leaving SAC, she was assigned to the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC), Randolph AFB, in San Antonio, Texas. She served as Chief, Pipeline Management System, responsible for establishing requirements for the computer system used to manage the allocation of school training quotas for the Air Force. Later she became an Assignments Officer in the Support Assignments Division where she made assignments for Air Force Education and Training Officers, ROTC Officers, and OTS instructors. .

From AFMPC, Mary was sent to Headquarters, Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, in Hampton, Virginia. She was Chief, of the "Bright Flag" Training Office, whose primary responsibility was to develop requirements for a computer system to track ACC's training requirements for each specialty, particularly OJT requirements. It was at Langley that she met and married Lieutenant Colonel John Shaw Van. John was a Headquarters

staff officer in the Operations Directorate, previously a B-52 pilot. He retired in 1994. As a newlywed, Major Shaw Van became number one on the list for an unaccompanied assignment to Korea. After much soul-searching, she took an early retirement in 1995.

After retirement, Mary taught Civics and Economics for five years in Pasquotank County High School in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. She and her husband moved to Piney Flats, Tennessee, in 2006, where they were both happily retired. Mary is not only a military retiree, but a surviving spouse as well.

*Mary, thanks for all you have done for our Nation, the Air Force, and MECMOAA!*

## **Legislative Update**

*Jim DuBose, CW4, USA (Ret.)*

### **Good News: SBP-DIC Offset Begins Soon**

Survivors with both SBP and DIC will receive a letter from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS, the administrator of SBP) in December explaining how the first phase of the offset elimination (2021) will affect them. The letter will provide payment amounts so survivors can see the benefit of the first offset elimination actions starting with their Feb. 1, 2021, payment. The offset elimination phase-out continues in 2022, and the offset ends in 2023.

The bottom line: The DIC offset amount in SBP will decrease, thereby allowing a survivor to collect more of his or her SBP amount. Plus, he or she will continue to receive SSIA.

For the complete MOAA article, click here:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/the-latest-on-the-sbp-dic-offset-elimination/>

### **Bad News: New TRICARE Select Fees**

New TRICARE Select enrollment fees take effect in 2021, a first for retirees who joined the military prior to 2018 and their families. These fees do not apply to TRICARE for Life or TRICARE Prime beneficiaries; they only apply to TRICARE Select retiree beneficiaries in Group A (sponsor entered service before Jan. 1, 2018).

It's imperative that we stop the increase and expansion of these fees in future years, or one of our most significant benefits as military retirees will quickly be eroded as Congress looks for funding sources. Almost without fail, Congress "robs Peter to pay Paul."

For more information on these fees, including a brief history of the respective legislation:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/tricare-costs-what-you-need-to-know-for-2021/>

### **Veteran Death Certificates and COVID-19**

We've seen a trend across the nation with COVID-related deaths and incorrect or incomplete reporting on death certificates. This is especially concerning for our veterans. When a service member passes, it's critical to ensure the death certificate lists all contributing factors, especially those that are service-connected. Correcting a death certificate can be costly, timely, and frustrating for a surviving spouse.

## Wreaths Across America

Our Chapter voted to continue our annual donation to Wreaths Across America—we sponsored 5 wreaths (\$75) for Mountain Home National Cemetery. In addition, other members personally sponsored 8 more wreaths, bring the total to at least **13 wreaths** from MECMOAA and our members!

If you'd like to assist in laying wreaths, please report to **Mountain Home National Cemetery NLT 0900 on Saturday, 19 December**. There will not be formal ceremony as before, but volunteers are still needed to assist in laying wreaths. This is a simple yet impactful way to Never Stop Serving.

As of the date this newsletter was drafted, the local effort is just under halfway toward its goal; please consider giving it a boost.



### Results

2020 SO FAR

7,583 Wreaths Sponsored

44.6% to Goal

9,417 To Go!

For more information:

<https://wreathscrossamerica.org/pages/17152/overview/?relatedId=25756,25916>

## 2021 Chapter Meetings

We'll continue our social meetings over Sunday brunch at Blackthorn Club. We typically meet on the third Sunday of every other month, beginning in January. To allow enough transit time after church services, we begin gathering at 1230 with brunch at 1300.

As you see the email notifications prior to each meeting, please RSVP by replying to the email. Note: Club policy is to bill us for each individual reservation, so if you RSVP and don't attend, we are still billed for your meal(s). The cost is \$25 for members in good standing (current on dues payment) and their guest(s), and \$30 for non-current members and their guest(s).

Note: Masks are required in common areas.

Please mark your calendars now:

**17 January**

Installation of Newly Elected Officers

**21 March**

**16 May**

**18 July**

Annual picnic, usually at Winged Deer Park

**19 September**

**21 November**

Annual Business Meeting

***We have a great speaker queued up for  
our January meeting—our very own  
Don Thompson!***

**Don serves on MOAA's National Board of Directors, and he'll share his inside perspective with us.**



Col Donald F. Thompson, USAF (Ret) retired in May 2009 after 27 years of service as a physician and flight surgeon. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in 1979 and his M.D. from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in 1986. He served in a variety of clinical and policy positions during his Air Force career, including Command Surgeon, Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan, and Special Assistant for Bio-Defense at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy).

Following his retirement from active duty, he served in the Office of the Inspector General, DoD, Washington, D.C., and is director of Global Health Outreach, Christian Medical & Dental Association. Thompson resides in Bristol, TN.

#### Career Highlights

- Served as the special assistant for Bio-Defense at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy)
- Served in the Office of the Inspector General
- Current director of Global Health Outreach, Christian Medical & Dental Association

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please send any comments or suggestions to [mecmoaa@gmail.com](mailto: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.

***Never Stop Serving.***

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