

# CAPITAL DISTRICT CHAPTER, NEW YORK MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Volume 10, Issue 6

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2019

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5-Star Chapter – **2017, 2018**



New York State Capital District Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
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*The NYS Capital District Chapter and the Military Officers Association of America are non-partisan member organizations that honor, assist, and advocate for all who serve and have served honorably in the uniformed services of the United States of America.*

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## NYS COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS CONVENTION

by Al Memole, editor

**The 47th Annual NYS Council of Chapters Convention is now history.** MOAA members from seven upstate chapters, including our own, gathered at the Ramada Inn in Fishkill from Monday September 23 through Thursday September 26.

Following a protocol adopted for the past two conventions, officers from the Council of Chapters took the lead for organizing the convention, aided by the local chapter (Mid-Hudson). It was tough to find a suitable venue at a reasonable price in this high-cost area, but the Council managed, although it was inferior to previous convention facilities. Let's just say that the accommodations and fare were good, but nothing to write home about. Nevertheless, attendees made the best of it and had a wonderful time. Highlights:



Let's just say that the accommodations and fare were good, but nothing to write home about. Nevertheless, attendees made the best of it and had a wonderful time. Highlights:

- **COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING** (the main reason for these conventions). The Council was honored to host **Captain Jim Carman, USN (Ret)**, MOAA's Vice President for Council/Chapter and Member Support, who gave an informative run-down on the status of MOAA: our successes protecting military benefits, the association's fiscal health (excellent), and chapter/member issues (recruiting and retention). Other than delivery of the annual Council and individual Chapter reports,

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Council business was light: There were no proposed changes to by-laws, only a belated call for candidates for Council office. (From our Chapter, Skip Bebernitz has stepped up to be Council Vice President; Chris Costigan is offering his services as one of the two Regional VPs.) In 2020, Council reps will be Storming the Hill on the last weekend of March. The Council mid-year meeting will take place in April either before or after Easter, and next year's convention is tentatively slated for mid to late September at a venue to be determined later.

- **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.** Attendees gathered every evening in the small but well-stocked hospitality room to relax and socialize.

On Tuesday, attendees toured the **US Military Academy at West Point**. Following a scenic bus ride over the mountain to the academy, the group toured the main Cadet Chapel, and then held the annual memorial service at the cemetery chapel for chapter members who died since the last convention. The group toured the cemetery where many famous Americans are buried, then visited The Plain (main parade field) and beautiful Trophy Point overlooking the majestic Hudson River. Last stop was an elegant buffet lunch in the MacArthur Room, Thayer Hotel.



**Images of West Point** (clockwise from upper left): *Cadet Chapel entrance; Cadet Chapel interior; "Stormin' Norman's" grave; view up the Hudson from Trophy Point; the MacArthur Room, Thayer Hotel; The Plain; Civil War battle monument at Trophy Point*

After lunch, the tour bus then took the group back across the Hudson and north to the **Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Park Site at Hyde Park**. The park museum featured an awesome D-day/WWII commemorative exhibit with many declassified historical documents and photos on display. Some group members also toured the Roosevelt home.



*The Memole's hobnob with the Roosevelts at Hyde Park*



Wednesday afternoon, following the annual business meeting, was free time. A number of people returned to West Point to see the museum and other sites missed during the tour. Others toured the impressive **Vanderbilt Mansion** (at left) or strolled across the “**Walkway Over The Hudson**” (at right), an old railroad bridge converted for recreational use by hikers and cyclists.



The **annual banquet** on Wednesday evening featured traditional toasts, a remembrance of POWs/MIAs, and a keynote address by Captain Carman, who also presented MOAA Chapter awards.



From left: Captain Carman delivers the keynote address; MOAA Council and Chapter Award recipients – Norma Weissend (Council and Genesee Valley Chapter), Terry Bales (Southern Tier Chapter), Tim Vaughan (Genesee Valley Chapter), our own Chris Costigan, Joe Maurer (Greater Rome Utica Chapter), Stan Lichwala (Western NY Chapter); CAPT Carman presents the 5-star Level of Excellence award for our Chapter to Chris.

## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

**ANNUAL CHAPTER BUSINESS MEETING/LUNCHEON and CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY PARTY – Sunday, December 8, 1300 - 1600 hours, Edison Club, Rexford, NY**



**REMINDER:** If you plan to attend our luncheon meeting, please get your reservation and, preferably, your payment to AL MEMOLE NOT LATER THAN **Friday November 29th**. The Edison Club needs a final count one week in advance of our meeting. If you plan to pay “at the door,” please at least send Al your reservation by the due date. The club now charges us for meals ordered, not only for those served. [The luncheon reservation form is on page 7.]

**Jan 14** is the deadline for submitting news articles, photos, bio’s, or stories for the *next* issue. Please e-mail your input to newsletter editor Al Memole at [ammmemole@gmail.com](mailto:ammmemole@gmail.com) or [amemole1@nycap.rr.com](mailto:amemole1@nycap.rr.com)

## HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY for this issue → TOYS FOR TOTS

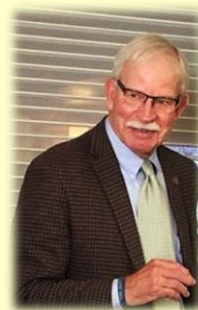
The **Capital Region Toys for Tots** Campaign is under way for 2019. This long-running program, sponsored by the US Marine Corps Reserve, collects new toys from the public during October, November and December and distributes them as Christmas gifts for needy children in Albany, Broome, Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Fulton, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Washington and Warren counties. Distribution is handled exclusively through bona fide social service agencies. Last year, the Capital Region TFT program, which distributed 232,467 toys to 161,235 children, was named the 2018 USMC TFT National Campaign of the Year, and both Marine Coordinators were selected as the National Marine Coordinators of the Year!



**Our Chapter invites all who will be attending our annual meeting to bring a new, unwrapped toy or gift appropriate for children up to early teens.** Appropriate gifts for pre-teens/teens would include sporting equipment/bags/balls, books, backpacks, cosmetics, purses, watch/wallet gift sets, bath gift sets, board games, radio control cars/trucks, hand-held electronics, skateboards/helmets, curling irons, hair straighteners, and hair dryers. Do not give realistic looking weapons or gifts with food; such items will NOT be distributed. We hope to have one of the USMC Coordinators attend our meeting. For more information about the local program visit: <https://albany-ny.toysfortots.org/local-coordinator-sites/lco-sites/default.aspx?nPageID=300&nPreviewInd=400>

## Chapter News and other items of interest

- AT OUR OCTOBER LUNCHEON, our guest speaker, **retired Army Brigadier General James "Jim" O'Toole** (*photo at right*), regaled members with a short history of "America's Fort", Fort Ticonderoga, and its place in the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars. He also reviewed its post-war fate and restoration. BG O'Toole is an enthusiastic "ambassador" for the fort, extolling its fascinating history and impact. He interacts with the public to encourage visits, memberships, volunteers, and donations. (*See "Upcoming Events at Fort Ticonderoga" on page 5.*)
- REMINDER: WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA™.



If you haven't done so yet, please consider sponsoring one or more wreaths through our Chapter (group code **NY0087P**). The last issue of this newsletter has a sponsor form as well as instructions for sponsoring wreaths online. Our goal this year is **100 wreaths**, but as of November 2, only 15 had been sponsored through our Chapter.

**We are all invited to attend the wreath laying event at the Gerald B. Solomon National Cemetery in Schuylerville will be held on December 14.** The event kicks off at 1200 hrs around the main flagpole with a wreath-laying ceremony for each of the Armed Services and the Merchant Marine. Following this tribute to all deceased veterans, attendees are invited to lay wreaths on the graves of individual veterans.

- LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT. The last issue contained a summary of the committee's visit to Representative Tonko's office on August 22. Here are summaries of the other visits made in August:
  - On August 14, Skip Bebernitz and Chris Costigan met with Ms. Bianca Hotte of **Congressman Delgado's office**. Discussion focused on two issues: HR 533 (Full Concurrent Receipt for Disabled Military Retirees--"Widow's Tax") and the Defense Health Agency's (DHA) proposal to eliminate approximately 16,000 medical billets throughout three services (Army, Navy, AF), which MOAA warned needs a more intense and analytical Congressional review before

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implementation due to potential harm to combat casualty care, care of family members/retirees at Military Treatment Facilities, and recruitment/retention of active duty medical professionals. Ms. Hotte was interested and took extensive notes for the Congressman to discuss with his Veterans Advisory staff.

- On August 28, Skip Bebernitz, Kathy Gates, and Chris Costigan met with Mr. Michael Ostrander of **Congresswoman Stefanik's office**. This discussion also focused on the widow's tax and the proposed medical billets cut. Mr. Ostrander asked several pertinent questions, took copious notes, and indicated a clear understanding of MOAA's position on these issues.

Chapter members can and should support the efforts of our Legislative Committee by visiting [takeaction.moaa.org](http://takeaction.moaa.org) on the MOAA website to find outlines of MOAA's positions. (Enter your ZIP code and emails will be delivered right to your senators and representatives, or call 866-272-MOAA [6622], MOAA's toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard, to be connected with your legislators' offices.)

- **WEST POINT BAND CONCERT SCHEDULE**. The US Military Academy cancelled its annual Holiday Show because they are renovating the Eisenhower Hall Theatre. However, the Concert Band will hold a performance at the beautiful Cadet Chapel (refer to the photo on page 2) on **January 18, 2020, at 7:00 PM**. Remember, Band events are free and open to the public, but you must RSVP and reserve free tickets through Eventbrite.

## CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As the weather grows increasingly cold and wet and 2019 draws to a close, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all Chapter members for their continuing engagement and support for the MOAA mission both nationally and at the Chapter level. This year has been one of numerous challenges and a great deal of success with some significant issues remaining unresolved. MOAA's tireless advocacy efforts nationally and at the Chapter level have resulted in a proposed National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would include a 3.1% military pay raise, extends bonus and incentive pays, provisions for quality of life programs for military families, and funding for military construction and acquisition programs. *However, MOAA supported issues such as preventing the elimination of 18,000 medical billets, elimination of the "widow's tax", comprehensive military housing reform, preventing planned consolidation of the military commissary and exchange systems, and funding necessary improvements to military spouse employment and education resources are in peril if Congress elects to introduce and pass a "skinny" National Defense Authorization Act.* I would encourage all to ask our lawmakers to back MOAA's NDAA priorities through the "Take Action" link on the MOAA website or by writing them. On the Chapter level, your support for our service projects for Books For Troops, STRIDE Wounded Warrior Snowfest, Guardian House Program for homeless female veterans, Wreaths Across America, and this month's Toys For Tots is greatly appreciated. For those of us who are retired military, when we were active duty it was always about the mission and taking care of our people; **now taking care of our people is the mission**. Happy Holidays to all, and for our snowbirds, I wish you (somewhat jealously) safe travel and fun in the sun. Looking forward to a great 2020. *Chris Costigan*

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT FORT TICONDEROGA

In addition to daily programs, and tours, Fort Ticonderoga hosts a "Winter Quarters Campaign" of special events for the public. You can find details on the Fort's website at <https://www.fortticonderoga.org/calendar/>. Upcoming special events include:

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**December 7** (Saturday), 10 am to 4 pm: LIVING HISTORY EVENT: THE NOBLE TRAIN BEGINS. (Tickets - \$12 per person) The program portrays the daily life of December 1775, soldiers working as carpenters to maintain the fort, the moving, testing, and loading cannon destined for the siege of Boston, the science of gunnery, and the lives and labor of women at the fort.

**January 12** (Sunday), 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm: FORT FEVER SERIES. (Tickets - \$10 per person) Director of Collections Miranda Peters will highlight the incredible work underway by museum staff to document, preserve, and make accessible Ticonderoga's Museum Collections, including recent discoveries in storage, transformative rehousing, and the many ways to access these collections. Original objects will be on display just for this presentation—some for the first time ever!

**January 18** (Saturday), 10 am to 4 pm: LIVING HISTORY EVENT: 1777 PREPARING FOR THE COMING CAMPAIGN. (Tickets - \$12 per person) Program includes guided tours, weapons demonstrations, a tasting of colonial chocolate and its importance in the lives of American soldiers and camp followers



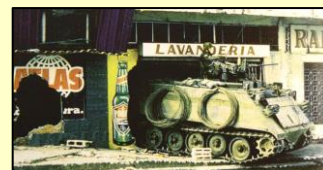
**January 26 & 27** (Saturday & Sunday), 9 am to 5 pm: WINTER WORKSHOP SERIES: 1777 BRITISH CANADA ARMY COATS. (Cost - \$385) Pre-registration is required. A two-day workshop on British enlisted regimental coat construction and modification by the British Army in Canada in February 1777. Saratoga National Battlefield Historian & author, Eric Schnitzer will present his research on Captain Fraser's Company of Rangers in 1777. Coat cloth, lining, lace and buttons are available for Burgoyne campaign regiments including the 9th, 20th, 21st, 33rd, 47th, 53rd. The workshop includes lunch each day, a cut-out kit for your coat, and sewing materials.

## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY – OPERATION JUST CAUSE

by Al Memole, editor and Just Cause veteran

Over the past three decades, large-scale US military operations have been the norm. We've been fighting in Afghanistan and the Middle East since 2001. Before 9/11, we had deployments or engagements in Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf (Operations Desert Shield and Storm), amid numerous humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. From the end of the Vietnam War in 1973 to December 1989, however, significant US Military operations/incidents were rare and small-scale – the Mayagüez incident, the Iran hostage rescue attempt, the Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, and the invasion of Grenada. Operation Just Cause seems to have ended the US Government's aversion to using its military power, probably because it was highly successful and total US *and* Panamanian deaths numbered less than 700, sadly, *not* the norm.

President George H.W. Bush greenlighted the invasion to collapse the Panamanian government and seize its dictator, Noriega, after Noriega declared a "state of war" on December 15, 1989, followed by the shooting and killing of a US Marine, 1<sup>st</sup> LT, Robert Paz, the next day. Robbie was a colleague of mine on Southern Command's Counter-narcotics staff. The US attack began after midnight on December 20. Almost 26,000 combat forces from all US services took down 27 strategic targets in 5 days and forced Noriega to surrender on January 3, 1990. The operation ended by January 11, and the US rapidly reestablished a viable Panamanian government: not perfect, but Joint Ops done well!



**KEEP THE TOP HALF OF THIS PAGE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

2020 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON MEETING DATES and GUEST SPEAKERS

Feb 9 - Local author Dr. Daniel Way returns

Apr 19 (Patriots Day) - Dr. Dennis McKenna, CEO, Albany Medical Center

Jun 14 (Flag Day/US Army Birthday) - Ms. Ellen Keegan, Director and founder of Books for Troops

Oct 4 - TBD

Dec 13 - Christmas/Holiday Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting

*Because the Edison Club is planning renovations for 2020, the Program Committee will identify the venue for these meetings, and we will announce them in the newsletters and on the Chapter website.*

2020 Board of Directors Meetings

Jan 25 - 1000 hrs, NYS Military Heritage Museum, Saratoga Springs

August - Date TBD; Scheiber's home on Lake George, Bolton Landing (tentative)

Nov 7 - 1000 hrs, NYS Military Heritage Museum, Saratoga Springs

**LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM**

Date: **DECEMBER 8, 2019**

Location: **Edison Club, Rexford, NY**

Time: 1:00PM - Social Hour  
2:00PM - Dinner

**Menu Choices:**    *FLAT IRON STEAK*    *CHICKEN ALEXANDER*    *PECAN-ENCRUSTED SALMON*

**Price:**        **\$30.00** per person (Please make checks payable to: NYS-CDC.)

To pay Chapter dues for **2020**, please add **\$30.00** to your total.

Send reservation form and check to:    **Al Memole** (cell phone: 518-641-8664)  
8 Rose Lane  
Rensselaer, NY 12144

*Please make your reservation **Not Later Than Friday, Nov 29***

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Choices:

Number of persons attending: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Qty</u>	<u>Menu Item</u>
_____	Flat Iron Steak
_____	Chicken Alexander
_____	Pecan-Encrusted Salmon

*Bring a new unwrapped toy for Toys For Tots!*