

CAPITAL DISTRICT CHAPTER, NEW YORK MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Volume 12, Issue 1, January-February 2021



Visit us at cdnymoaa.org



4-Star Chapter – 2019
5-Star 2017 & 2018



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- CHAPTER HAPPENINGS, pp. 1-5
- A CHAPTER MEMBER'S DEPLOYMENT REPORT by Lt Col Merle Schreckengost, USAF, pp. 6-7
- INTERESTING MOAA, US ARMY WEBINARS, p. 7
- OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS, p. 8

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.

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON MEETING PLANNED FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, IS CANCELED.

This is to be expected given the limitations maintained on the area's public and private dining venues as part of the effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. But we are not giving up hope for the next scheduled luncheons. *Potential* venues identified for our gatherings include:

- [Knights of Columbus](#), Saratoga
- [Mama Mia's](#), Saratoga
- [Ravenswood Pub](#), Clifton Park
- [Holiday Inn Express](#), Latham
- [Jackson's Old Chatham House](#), Chatham

Check them out for yourself!
Click on the venue name to open its website.

We are still searching for other suitable venues. *This is a great opportunity for all members to let our Chapter Officers or Board your thoughts and ideas for Chapter meetings.* We look forward to hearing from everyone.

DATES FOR UPCOMING 2021 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON MEETINGS

Apr 11

Jun 13

Oct 3

Dec 12

HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY for this issue → STRIDE ADAPTIVE SPORTS – WOUNDED WARRIOR SNOWFEST (WWS)

STRIDE still plans to host their annual Wounded Warrior Snowfest, March 5 – 7, 2021. The plan this year is to honor 10 alumni regional veterans and their families. These veterans have participated in a past WWS, and are currently active in STRIDE programs. As always, STRIDE is challenging them with a weekend of confidence-building outdoor winter activities, including a day of skiing or snow riding at Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort in Hancock, MA, and participation in the Winter Carnival on Crooked Lake, featuring activities such as ice fishing, skating, hockey, snowshoeing, and ice wagon rides.

CELEBRATING 16 YEARS!!!

Please Join us in Recognizing our Region's Heroes

**STRIDE WOUNDED WARRIOR SNOWFEST
WELCOME CEREMONY**

To be held online virtually...
SAVE THE DATE - Friday, March 5, 2021!!!

Tickets will be available online at:
<https://www.stride.org/snowfestix>

\$10 per person to attend virtually
and listen to top speakers and Warrior stories!!!

Questions? Contact Patrick Hayslett

One of the major fundraising events for the WWS is the **Welcome Ceremony**. This year's event will take place on **Friday, March 5th, 2021**, but it will have a different format due to COVID concerns. In place of the usual gala dinner and ceremony at the Hilton Garden Inn, **this year's ceremony will be virtual, available online via Zoom so that everyone can "attend" from home**. At the Zoom broadcast, each honored veteran will be introduced, followed by short pre-recorded videos that will highlight some of the veterans, telling their stories and showing the difference STRIDE has made in their lives.

Our Chapter and individual Chapter members have been supporting this worthy cause for many years, and will continue to do so. If you have been unable to attend past WWS welcome

ceremonies, here is a great and convenient opportunity to "attend". You will see first-hand how this event has helped our wounded veterans to heal (it's very moving), and also help fund the event. REGISTER ONLINE at <https://www.stride.org>. Virtual registration "tickets" cost only **\$10.00**. On March 5, the day of the event, STRIDE will send you an email with the link to "attend" online via Zoom.

Chapter News and other items of interest

WELCOME NEW CHAPTER MEMBER – BG John Andonie, USA!

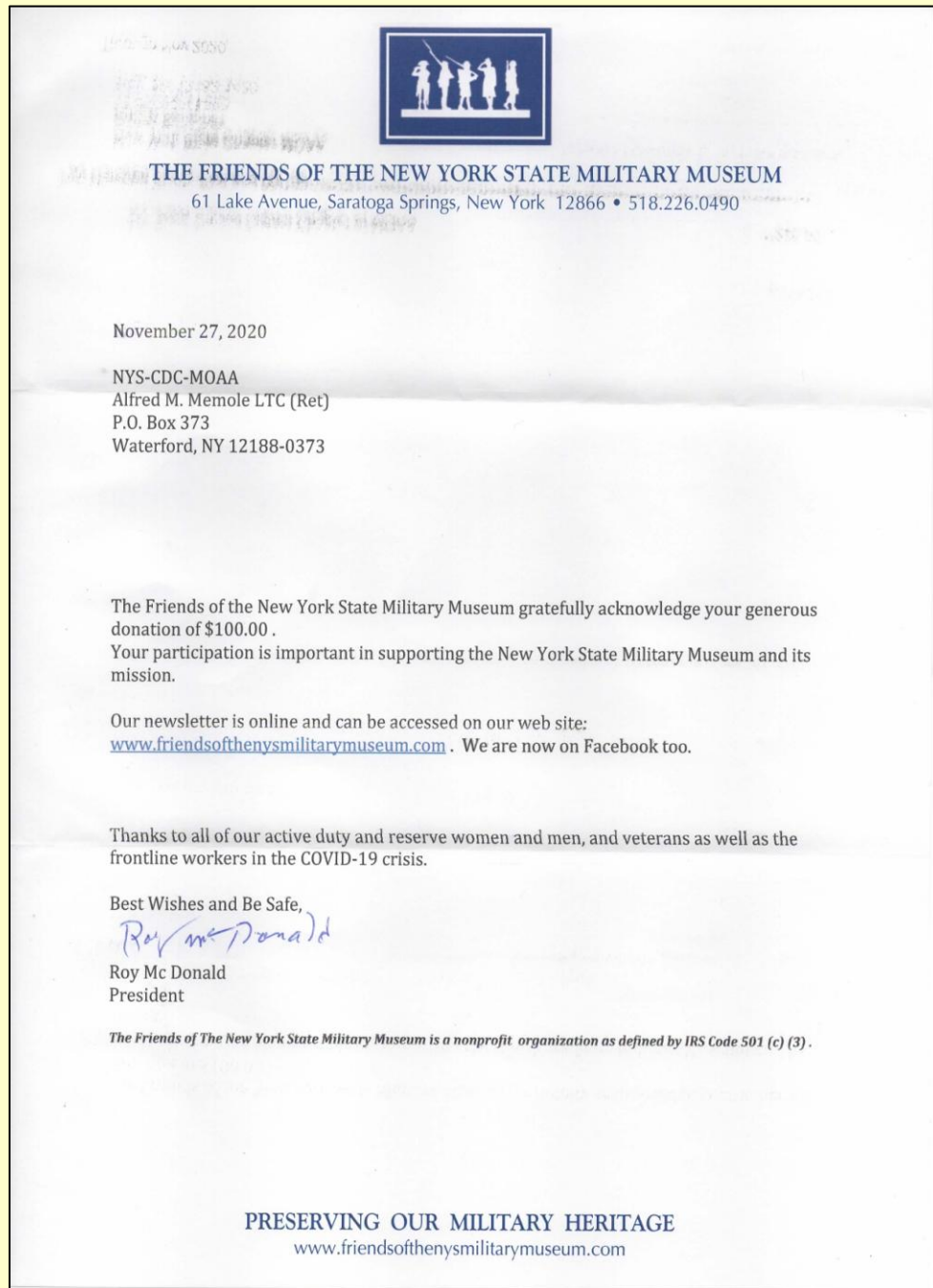
- **CAPITAL REGION TOYS FOR TOTS CAMPAIGN**. Capital Region TFT reported distributing 363,133 toys to 206,128 children last month. That represents a 5% increase over 2019 in the number of children served, but an astounding **62% increase in the number of toys distributed!** COVID-19 caused much harm and many casualties last year, but, thankfully, generosity was NOT one of them. Thanks to all Chapter members who contributed.

- **WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA™ (WAA).** *We had a record total of **129** wreaths sponsored through our Chapter!* THANKS, MEMBERS, for your efforts. We have already received \$525 from WAA in return for our contribution. The Gerald B. Solomon National Cemetery in Saratoga received more than enough wreaths to cover *all* veteran graves. The cemetery is looking for volunteers on Saturday, **March 6** to remove the wreaths. Anyone planning to attend should bring a rake as it is much easier to stack and carry multiple wreaths on the handle than on your arms.
- **CHAPTER OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** The Board held its first meeting of 2021 online through Cisco WebEx on Saturday, January 23, from 1000-1145 hrs. Here are the highlights:
 - MEETING VENUES: Chapter President Chris Costigan has identified five potential venues for our Chapter luncheon meetings. (See page 1, this issue.) Some have minimum attendance requirements and/or rental hall fees. None has yet confirmed for in-person group dining. Although there is a chance we might be able to meet in April, June is more likely. The search continues.
 - CHAPTER NEWSLETTER: We will look into including a MOAA-approved advertisement for Mercer Life/Health/Personal insurance in an upcoming issue. The ad could generate revenue for the Chapter. *The Board also passed a motion to cease printing and mailing the Chapter newsletter, and offer it only in electronic format.* The primary objective is to reduce annual expenditures to help the Chapter weather any revenue shortfalls, handle any other potential expenses (hall rental, for example), and hold Chapter dues steady at the current \$30 into the foreseeable future. Newsletter printing and mailing is the Chapter's largest annual expense at over \$1,000.
 - LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: *See the LAC Report below.*
 - BUDGET: The Board postponed approval of a proposed budget for 2021 until the next Board meeting in August. Too many uncertainties around luncheon meetings and other program obligations make it difficult to project revenue and expenses accurately at this time, so we will track actual income and expenditures against the proposed budget and adjust it as we learn more. The Board also approved a \$300 donation from Chapter funds to support the STRIDE Wounded Warrior Snowfest, as we did last year.
- **LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT.** *(submitted by Pat Piccirilli)*
 - The FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) cleared its final hurdle in the closing hours of the 116th Congress, with an 81-13 vote in the Senate on Jan. 1, completing the veto-override process. The House voted to override the veto 322-87 on Dec. 28. The enrolled legislation runs nearly 1,500 pages. We've been advised that MOAA will be following up in the coming weeks with greater detail on the MOAA-supported measures it contains, to include:
 - A 3% military pay raise, in line with the administration's request and with the Employment Cost Index (ECI), as well as a raise in Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay (HDIP) from \$250 to \$275 per month and expanded HDIP parity between those in the active and reserve components.

(Continued on page 4)

- A halt to military medical billet cuts and plans to reorganize (and reduce retiree access to) dozens of military treatment facilities (MTFs) for 180 days after the bill's passage. DoD must submit additional reporting and/or assurances to Congress before taking either action.
 - The addition of bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism to the list of conditions linked to Agent Orange exposure. Well-earned benefits will be available to 34,000 Vietnam veterans.
 - A range of good news for military families, including greater access to child care, better spouse employment programs, expanded military housing protections, and long-sought improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and TRICARE's Extended Health Care Option (ECHO).
- A list of pertinent benefits achieved in accordance with the FY21 NDAA can be found at this link: <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2021-news-articles/advocacy/heres-what-the-flurry-of-2020-veterans-legislation-means-to-you/>. The chapter legislative committee, and chapter members who utilized the Legislative Action Center and partook in Storming the Hill (virtual and otherwise) should be proud of their efforts in accomplishing many of MOAA's goals many of which are listed in the linked article. **Last minute note:** An omnibus appropriations bill was signed by the President on December 27 after having cleared the House and Senate.
- On November 24, 2020, Legislative Committee members Skip Bebernitz, Kathy Gates, and Pat Piccirilli held their first-ever virtual meeting with Congressman Tonko, 20th Congressional District and his District Director, Colleen Williams. The Committee had forwarded a packet containing MOAA's priorities for FY 2021 to Ms. Williams a few days prior to the meeting. The primary objective was to ensure that the FY21 National Defense Authorization Agreement (NDAA) was passed and that it incorporated MOAA's priorities. The Committee reps thanked Congressman Tonko for voting for the NDAA during the House vote. Since the budget process was in a Conference Committee, our reps hoped that Congressman Tonko could intercede with Democratic caucus members to ensure that the NDAA would include several MOAA priorities: (1) stop the reorganization of the Military Health System; (2) pass the 3% raise for active military members; (3) list bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinsonism, and hypertension as maladies presumed to be caused by exposure to herbicides; and (4) pass a budget rather than continuing to fund our military by Continuing Resolutions (CR). Our reps also presented the Congressman with a list of several FY 21 priorities for consideration, including concurrent receipt of pension and disability pay for those who are medically retired with less than 20 years service or retired with less than a 50% VA rating. The Congressman asked how many additional veterans would be covered if the VA rating was decreased to 40%. Pat Piccirilli got the answer in a few days from MOAA's Mark Belinsky and provided it to Ms. Williams. The Committee believes the meeting accomplished all their main objectives.
- **MOAA's annual engagement with Congress** to inform legislators about key military and veteran issues, known as "Storming the Hill" is planned for April 19-22.

- **CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES.** Thus far, 14 members paid dues for 2021. Normally, we would be collecting dues payments with mailed-in luncheon reservation forms and at the luncheon. With the cancelation of our February luncheon, we ask that you please mail your dues for 2021 either directly to Treasurer, Al Memole, at 8 Rose Lane, Rensselaer, NY 12144, or to our Chapter PO Box in Waterford. Annual Chapter dues are **\$30**. **Please make checks payable to NYS CDC MOAA.**
- **ADVANCING THE MOAA MISSION.** Dues not only cover Chapter operating costs, they enable us as a unit to promote MOAA's mission serving the troops, veterans, and their families, and preserving our nation's and our state's military heritage, as this thank-you note, below, attests:



A CHAPTER MEMBER'S DEPLOYMENT REPORT

By **Merle N. Schreckengost**, Lt Col, USAF, 914th OSS/IN, Senior Intelligence Officer

I would like to share my experience through this summary of my recent deployment to Al Udeid Airbase Qatar. It is the home of U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND. There are several different missions based out of Al Udeid from Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance or ISR, Fighter Aircraft, Electronic Attack Aircraft, Tankers and various other platforms to deter adversary intentions and protect our forces on the ground, in the air or in the Persian Gulf. We also have all of our Coalition Partners there and the knowledge and experience they bring to the table.

Al Udeid Airbase is located just outside Doha, Qatar and the base houses thousands of troops either stationed there or transiting to other points within the CENTCOM AOR. The weather was hot and humid with some days getting to 116 degrees and nights at 100 plus.



An incoming sandstorm



Billeting

Although we were restricted to base the moral was good and we found things to do like the gym, pool and BX which was a nice size and had most anything from basics to Weber grills and big screen TVs. Food was adequate but varied and we had Taco Tuesday and Wing Wednesday each week. For lodging we had regular hardened billeting like an open air hotel with big halls and individual showers shared by adjoining rooms. For those of you who like to read there were books residents left out in the halls of each building and people would go to each building and try to read as many as they could before leaving and there were quite a few.

My AFSC is 14N (Intelligence) and I was assigned as the OIC to the 28th and 50th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron (EARS) intelligence section. I briefed aircrews on threats to our aircraft and on current intelligence in the AOR. I submitted Mission Reports (MISREPS) after every mission and depending if the encountered anything unusual like Lazing or GPS jamming we submitted other reports. We refueled every airframe in Iraq and Afghanistan from fighters to special operations aircraft. Our mission was to keep our assets in the air for extended periods of time so they could complete their missions without interruption. It was great to see so many aircraft and what we bring to the fight. We also had a U.S. flag flying mission that is not official but we did each flight and



*Intel crew from the 914th ARW
(Merle, center)*

(Continued on page 6)

we made up certificates that were signed by the aircrew and were nice enough to be framed. When the aircrew took pictures we would put the actual aircraft they refueled on the certificate along with unclassified flight information.

This was my 5th deployment and each time it has been different and with the change from C-130H3 to the KC-135R Tanker I got a different perspective of what we all do to move the mission forward and be successful.

Take care and I hope you enjoyed reading my article.

Merle Schreckengost

NEVER STOP SERVING



Merle with both of his Squadrons: the Bandits (28th EARS), McConnell AFB, Kansas (left) and the Red Devils (50th EARS), MacDill AFB, Florida (right)

March 20 is the deadline for submitting **news articles, photos, bio's, book reviews, or stories** for the *next* issue. If you know of a military or veteran event in our area, have a "war story" to tell, a "shout-out" for a volunteer helping veterans, or a review praising or panning a military-themed movie or book, please e-mail your input to newsletter editor Al Memole at ammemole@gmail.com. THANKS!



**TIRED OF BEING COOPED UP INDOORS
WATCHING THE SAME OLD BORING TV SHOWS?**



Well, check out the online **informational webinars** discussing **military/veteran benefits** and career transition, posted on **MOAA's website**:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/benefits-and-discounts/transition-and-careers/webinar-archive/>

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) also posts interesting webinars. Take a look at **Thought Leaders**: <https://www.ausa.org/events/thought-leaders>

- On **Feb 4**, Ty Seidule is Professor Emeritus of History at West Point will discuss his book Robert E Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause

and the **Noon Report** series: <https://www.ausa.org/events/noon-reports>

- On **Feb 3**, GEN Christopher G. Cavoli, Commanding General of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, will discuss the newly consolidated command and DEFENDER-Europe 21.

The National Museum of the US Army (<https://www.thenmusa.org/>) hosts **Virtual History Tours**. Tour the site of the March 1781 Battle of Guilford Courthouse, on **Feb 2**, 7-8 pm, or **Feb 9**, 12-1 pm.

CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAPTER OFFICE	INCUMBENT	E-MAIL
President	Christopher J. Costigan, CDR USN, RET	pres@cdnymoaa.org
1 st Vice President	VACANT	1vp@cdnymoaa.org
2 nd Vice President	VACANT	2vp@cdnymoaa.org
Secretary	Ralph Folger, LCDR USNR, RET	secr@cdnymoaa.org
Treasurer	Alfred M. Memole, LTC USA, RET	treas@cdnymoaa.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rocco D. Acquilano, CDR, USNR, RET	Ernest "Skip" Bebernitz*, MAJ USA, RET
Anthony J. Ficara**, COL USA, RET	Kathy E. Gates, COL USA, RET
VACANT	Martin Leukhardt**, RADM USNR, RET
VACANT	Edmund M. Scheiber, Jr.***, Lt Col USAF, RET

** Immediate Past-President ** Former President*

2021 Board of Directors Meetings (times & locations TBD)

Aug TBD Nov 13

Due to COVID restrictions, we are not sure if we will be able meet in person and might have to continue to meet online via WebEx.

