

## 2d Vice President's Report, August 4, 2022 BOD Meeting

Notified scheduler at the NM Veterans Memorial Park that Albuquerque Chapter MOAA would not be using the Visitor Center Conference Room for scheduled meeting on August 4, 2022 freeing the room up for use by others.

MOAA Quarterly Social, was held Sunday, July 31, 2022 at the Veterans Memorial Park Visitor Center. There were 21 attendees. Paws and Stripes and the Veterans Integration Center representatives present provided updates on their operations and programs serving veterans and current interest and goals for the upcoming year and more. The presentations, questions, and discussions concerning support to veterans was interesting for all that attended. Allan Tate provided attendees with notice of the City of Albuquerque acquiring the sail and dive planes from the retired USS Albuquerque for display in a public venue. Site location on Albuquerque owned property for display currently is not determined. COA will solicit community input and comments.

Next Chapter board meeting (resulting from Chapter President's absence for 8-4-2022 meeting) needs to determine the organizations to receive 2022 Chapter donations and the amount of the designated and general giving fund donations to each selected organization.

Organizations discussed for donations in 2022 are:

Charitable Giving (Unspecified)	ROTC/JROTC Awards (Awarded in May - June)
Blue Star Mothers (Rio Grande & Valencia Chapters)	Veterans Integration Center (VIC)
Gold Star Mothers, Albuquerque Chapter	Chapter's Endowment Fund (ACF)
Albuquerque Fisher House	Paws and Stipes Honor
KAFB Quarterly Awards	Flight of Northern New Mexico
NM VA Medical Center	Rio Rancho Veteran Entrepreneur grant fund
NM Veterans Memorial Foundation	

## Member's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday

- MOAA-AUSA event will be **Friday, September 2, 2022** from 12:00-2:00 PM
- Scheduling date for our event deconflicted with family reunion gathering, a large family gathering to celebrate the father, grandfather, and great grandfather's birthday.
- Centenarian is event honoree
  - Inviting 90-years and 100-years old members to act as sponsors and hosts for the event (which means only showing up, setting an example, and having a good time)
  - The menu will be "take out" for sandwich and fruit platters, and cake and ice cream vice catering
  - Transport assistance will be needed to get non-driving seniors to event
  - Site: NMVMP Visitor Center
  - Advertise for local media coverage (KOAT and KOB TV)
- Couple 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday with recognition of MOAA and AUSA members over 90-years and 100-years old.
- Undertake in partnership: MOAA and AUSA as centenarian member has overlapping memberships
- Partnership with MOAA and AFA, NLNM, and MCL to include recognition of all other service and organization members over 90-years old did not materialize.

### Federal Legislation:

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, also known as the **PACT Act** passed in the Senate August 1, 2022 and will become law. Former Army officer Le Roy Torres and his wife Rosie founded the advocacy group Burn Pits 360 in 2009 to begin to raise awareness and draw national attention to the plight of troops with illnesses related to living and working near open-air waste disposal burn pits or who were exposed to radiation, herbicides and other chemicals encountered on battlefields.

The bill had already passed the Senate in June on an 84-14 vote, appearing to put it on a glide path to becoming law. But shortly after the Senate vote, House lawmakers discovered language that ran afoul of the Constitution's requirement that tax-related issues originate in the lower chamber. The problematic section would have provided a tax incentive to entice health care workers to move to rural VA facilities.

The House then passed a version of the bill without the tax language in a 342-88 vote earlier this month, kicking it back to the Senate; that vote failed.

But the third time was the charm.

"Today's passage of the PACT Act is a landmark victory for veterans of all ages, of all conflicts and their families," said Tim Borland, national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in a statement following the vote. "Too many of our veterans have suffered over the years from effects of toxic exposure, with no medical care, no recompense and no support to their loved ones."

The PACT Act will expand health care and benefits to post-9/11 veterans exposed to burn pits used in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere to incinerate trash and other environmental hazards, such as volatile organic compounds, depleted uranium and petrochemicals.

The bill designates 23 diseases as presumed to be linked to military service, paving the way for veterans to receive expedited health services and disability compensation without having to provide proof that their illness was service-related.

The bill also contains provisions for veterans who served in previous conflicts. It would expand benefits for Vietnam-era veterans who have developed hypertension as a result of Agent Orange exposure; would allow veterans and family members sickened by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to file lawsuits; and expand coverage for veterans exposed to radiation during hazardous cleanups in the 1960s and 1970s.

## **OTHER EVENTS ON THE CALENDAR:**

Sunday, **October 16, 2022** Albuquerque Chapter MOAA Annual Members Meeting, at the NM Veterans Memorial Park Visitor Center from 1300 to 1600 hours.

Saturday, **December 17, 2022** at 10:00 AM ceremony and laying of wreaths at grave stones and markers in the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery as part of the national Wreaths Across America event across the U.S.

## **OTHER EVENTS**

### **NM State Land Office to Hold Public Meeting Regarding Land for Proposed Rio Rancho National Cemetery**

The New Mexico State Land Office hosted a public meeting on **August 2** in Rio Rancho to provide information and take public comments regarding a VA proposal to buy 340 acres of state trust land and build a national cemetery on the northwest edge of the city.

The meeting was from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Rio Rancho City Hall, at 3200 Civic Center Circle NE.

The VA is looking for a solution to deal with projections that the Santa Fe National Cemetery (right photo) will reach full capacity for casket and in-ground cremains burials by 2030...and capacity for columbarium wall niches by 2035. VA will be required to bid in a public auction, one that could feature other entities looking to also buy the land. The public bidding could take place this fall.

## **Volunteers Needed for Next Cleanup at the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery**

DVS and the Albuquerque Historic Fairview Cemetery are looking for volunteers to help with the next cleanup of the cemetery grounds on Saturday, August 6, from 9am-noon. The cemetery is located just north of the Yale Blvd. SE/Caesar Chavez Blvd. SE intersection. DVS has joined a volunteer effort to restore the 17.5-acre cemetery, which has been maintained by a volunteer nonprofit organization since closing for burials in 2012.

Nearly 500 veterans—from as far back as the Civil War—are buried in gravesites that, along with the rest of cemetery's 12,000 plots, have eroded to the point of needing major repairs. Volunteers are encouraged to bring shovels/rakes/hoes, weed whackers, wheelbarrows, water, a hat, sturdy work gloves, sunglasses or goggles/protective eyewear, and sunscreen. Pickup trucks and towed utility trailers would also be appreciated.

For more information, please contact Gail Rubin at (505) 363-7514.

## **Construction Set to Begin for a New State Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences**

The Governor and DVS held a ground breaking event on July 26 for new residences at the New Mexico State Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences. The updated residences will consist of six new homes that will include 12 private suites where each resident will have a private room with a bedroom, personal living area, a fully accessible bathroom, living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, and other common indoor and outdoor spaces. The first three new homes will be completed in fall of 2023, which will allow all residents currently living in the main building to relocate. The other three homes will be finished in early 2024.

## **New Mexico Military Museum Now Featuring Unique D-Day Exhibit**

The New Mexico Military Museum has added a new exhibit, *In The Presence of Heroes*, by David Scheinbaum, the former director/chair of the photography department and the Marion Center for Photographic Arts at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design, and former professor emeritus at the College of Santa Fe.

The archive contains Scheinbaum's work and documentation during his journey to the 50th Anniversary of D-day in 1994--accompanying his parents to La-Haye-du-Puits, France, a town that his father Louis helped to liberate during WW2. Through written essays and photographs, David Scheinbaum documents his journey to the beachheads and towns of Normandy, where he discovered the gratitude and reverence for Allied liberators are still so powerfully held in the hearts of the children and grandchildren of the townsfolk liberated by his father Louis. The New Mexico Military Museum is located near downtown Santa Fe at 1050 Old Pecos Trail

## **Navajo Code Talker Samuel Sandoval Passes Away**

Samuel Sandoval, one of the last remaining Navajo Code Talkers who transmitted messages in World War II using a code based on their native language, passed away on July 29 in Shiprock. He was 98. With his passing, only three Navajo Code Talkers are alive today.

## **Last Surviving WWII Medal of Honor Recipient Passes Away**

Hershel "Woody" Williams passed away on June 29 at the age of 98 in his hometown of Huntington, WV. Mr. Williams was our nation's last surviving World War II Medal of Honor Recipient. He served with the 1st Battalion, 21st Marines, and was awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest combat award, by President Harry S. Truman on October 5, 1945.