

2d VP –Report January 4, 2024, MOAA Board Meeting

Event Planning:

Albuquerque MOAA Chapter Memorial Service honoring our deceased members for 2022 and 2023 will be on Saturday, May 4, 2024 at the NM Veterans Memorial Park Patio and Conference Center from 1000 to 1200 hours.

In organizing the event and its content, I am altering the program to include a eulogy for Joe Loisel. The invited veterans and colleagues will be requested to speak not about his active-duty military career, rather speak about Joe's participation, leadership, and efforts as a committee organizer to pull together area Veteran Service Organizations, the business community, and city, state, and federal government offices to create the NM Veterans Memorial Park in Albuquerque and the NM Veterans Memorial Park Foundation.

The purpose of the eulogy is to describe his part and the role he played in recruiting, organizing, and bringing together the various VSO's and members to participate in lobbying, fund raising, and forming the Foundation to lead the land acquisition, planning the construction and landscaping, and staffing the subgroups to pull the project along to completion.

At that point in his life and retirement the eulogy will highlight his efforts to gain the support of veterans' service organizations and their members to come together and realize the value of the camaraderie and a space for veterans to interact and memorialize the service of all veterans serving, residing, or with a link to New Mexico. It also is important to point out the efforts put forth to gain the support of the city, county and state governmental departments and offices that deal with veteran affairs and memorials.

It is important also to have someone speak about the layout, planning, and development of the museum and monuments as part of Memorial Park.

I also thought that having “Lou,” the former City Treasurer, speak to provide a view from the fiscal contributors and ultimately the city government departments side of the project.

I additionally reached out to John Jones (CAPT (R), USN) of the NM Council of the Navy League to speak. He Joe worked with Joe to form the NM Council of the Navy League. In fact, Joe was the first President in that organization when it was chartered.

In summary, the eulogy is to focus on Joe’s efforts to rally and organize all service veterans and VSO’s to create a memorial grounds for veterans to honor fellow veterans and have a respectful park to gather and celebrate the service of military and uniformed veterans serving, residing, or with a link to New Mexico.

Because we will have other deceased members to honor at the Memorial Program, the eulogy for Joe and value seen in having the Veterans Memorial Park should run about 15 minutes with 4 speakers.

I am also exploring having two daughters of a deceased ABQ MOAA member provide music and vocals before and at the conclusion of the eulogy.

Veterans Day November 2024

I met and briefly discussed with the Vice President of the New Mexico Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club to work together to change the CABQ format and sponsorship for the Veterans Day event November 11, 2024. The effort is to have a Veterans Day program that honors military veterans and present a program that describes the valor, character, and mission performance of U.S. military forces that have a New Mexico connection.

The first instance U.S. military forces that served in the New Mexico Territory were the 1st Infantry Dragoons Regiment followed thereafter by the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments – the Buffalo Soldiers. In changing the format of the traditional event program, we will propose to the CABQ that the program, speakers, and presentations relate to the “first U.S. Military veterans” to serve in New Mexico and highlight their contributions to the settlement, development, and transitioning the southwest U.S. territories into states of the Union.

Together we will be researching and attempting to locate records of an event sponsored by the NM Veterans Memorial Foundation in the 2010 timeframe that highlighted the stationing of Troops of Buffalo Soldiers in New Mexico, their contributions both to settlers, miners, and the relocated Indian tribes.

This is an antithesis to the cookie-cutter program for the CABQ sponsored Veterans Day events (and Memorial Day) highlighted by state and city politicians, who actually show-up, describing what they believe they have done that may or may not benefit veterans residing in New Mexico.

Events Concluded:

Albuquerque MOAA Participation in Wreaths Across America Honoring Veterans Interred at the New Mexico Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery

The Albuquerque MOAA Chapter was represented and participated in honoring veterans by placing fir wreaths at their gravestones and markers at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. Deceased veterans across America were honored by Wreaths Across America and local sponsors and volunteers at veterans and designated public cemeteries on December 16, 2023. Wreaths were placed on gravesites at more than 4,100 cemeteries across the nation.

On that Saturday morning, interred services' veterans were honored at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. Sponsored seasonal fir wreaths and boughs were placed at headstones and grave markers of over 5,000 of the 67,000 cemetery grave sites. Interred veterans in the old boundary sections of the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery were honored this year.

I would like to thank the MOAA members, surviving spouses, family members who came out to participate and lay wreaths on an overcast 24-degree mid-morning at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. Despite 15 inches of overnight snow at Ski Santa Fe and the wake-up temperature in Santa Fe of 21 degrees and feeling like 8°F / (-14°C) with the northwest wind chill, there was an enthusiastic crowd of volunteers, families, and youth groups prepared to honor those veterans interred at the cemetery.

The 5,000 sponsored wreaths were laid at partially snow-covered cemetery grave sites in less than three hours following the ceremony. There were 1,000 additional personal reserved wreaths placed throughout the cemetery at grave sites by families and friends of veterans. The actual wreath count delivered to the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery was 6048.

If you were a Wreaths Across America donor to the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery or other U.S. Veterans National Cemetery this year, thank you. If you were not a donor this year, please consider honoring and remembering a deceased veteran at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery or at any other Veterans National Cemetery next year. Also, please join us next year in laying wreaths to honor veterans at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. In doing so, you may well recognize and honor a former member of the Albuquerque MOAA Chapter.

Michael Houck, LTC (Ret) USA, 2nd VP



The chapter completed **annual meeting** 15 Oct 2023 with 57 members attending. We presented charitable gifts to Veteran's Integration Center (VIC), BSM Rio Grande, BSM Valencia County, Fisher House, and Paws & Stripes. Paws and Stripes also received a 3-year PTSD and suicide prevention research grant from the VA in 2023. With the grant they were able to hire additional mental health counselors, a social worker, and a dog trainer. They expanded their client intake capacity and have attained it with 20 veterans/dogs for the Class of 2023.

On 15 Sep 2023 the Albuquerque Chapter had its **100th birthday member recognition** activities. The meeting was attended by one 100-year-old WW II Pacific Theater Veteran and one 98-year-old Europe-France-Belgium-Netherlands-Battle of the Bulge Veteran.

Our Chapter's 15 Sep 2023 recognition activities included **National POW/MIA Day** by recognizing a Korean War and Viet Nam War veteran who were former POWs. The New Mexico POW/MIA Veterans Council of The National League of POW/MIA Families had not met in Albuquerque since the COVID lockdowns. Albuquerque MOAA conducted the 15 Sep 2023 POW/MIA Day recognition ceremony at the NM Veterans Memorial Park and included the Missing Man Table tribute in remembrance and in honor of all POW/MIAs.

The final agenda item for the Albuquerque MOAA member recognition activity on 15 Sept 2023 was the **presentation of the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC) and Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal to Al Baye** (CWO4 (R) USA; WWII Army vet Pacific) for his direct participation at Eniwetok Atoll Test Site in 1948 Operation Sandstone Nuclear Weapons Tests. Then SSG Al Baye, US Army, was a member of the Sandia-Los Alamos team and the weapon assembly, handling, and arming technician for "Shot: X-Ray", a 37-kiloton bomb placed on a 200-foot testing tower on Enjebi Island on April 14, 1948, that was activated, fired, dropped, and successfully detonated. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA, Fort Belvoir, VA) is the DOD Agency that maintains the personnel, military participating units, radiation exposure, and testing records for the conducted Atomic atmospheric and underground nuclear weapons tests. DTRA approved the Al Baye and Albuquerque MOAA filed application and returned the Nuclear Veterans DOD Commendation Medal and Certificate for CWO4 Al Baye to Albuquerque MOAA for individual presentation. BG (R) C. Robert Kemble, Albuquerque MOAA member and Europe-France-Belgium-Netherlands-Battle of the Bulge Veteran presented the Nuclear Veterans DOD Commendation Medal and Certificate for CWO4 Al Baye.

Albuquerque MOAA also participated in City of Albuquerque 11 **November Veterans Day parade and NM Veterans Memorial Park activities**. A goal for Albuquerque MOAA and the United Veterans Council of Greater Albuquerque is to influence the City of Albuquerque leaders to have a more veteran centric celebration rather than repeatedly having politicians speak about what they proposed or sponsored with others politically. Over the last two years, the only veterans recognized service at the city sponsored Veterans' Day events have been the retiring Air Force canines from Kirtland AFB.

The Albuquerque Chapter MOAA will hold its annual members Memorial Service on 4 May 2024 for our recently deceased veterans with

Buglers, Color Guard, Chorus, and a speaker. Joe Loisel (COL (R) USA) passed away this year. We hope to have a cohort or two speak to Joe's post-retirement contributions to veterans and Veterans Service Organizations in New Mexico. These would include the 2001 founding, fund raising, land acquisition, site planning, development and construction of the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park and Museum in Albuquerque; the organization of the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park Foundation to manage the Park and Museum; the naming of the Virginia class nuclear missile submarine as U.S.S. New Mexico (SSN 779). Construction awarded on August 2003, Construction began January 2004, keel laid down on April 2008, and commissioned in 2010; and the founding of the NM Council of the Navy League of which he became the President; and working with the Albuquerque and Bernalillo County business community to create a Veteran of the Year Award from the New Mexico Business Coalition (NMBC). The eulogies from those that worked with him will honor his leadership for all Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) in the greater Albuquerque area that serve and advocate for the NM veteran community.

In total, the **New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park and Museum** and conference room **services and facility is used** by national and New Mexico VSO's, the U.S. Veterans Administration, State of New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, Sandia National Laboratory, active-duty units assigned to Kirtland Air Force Base, NM National Guard, University of New Mexico, Central New Mexico College, the City of Albuquerque departments and offices, and Bernalillo County government departments and offices. The costs savings to the VSO's using the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park and Museum conference facility is in the \$100,000 of dollars yearly of facility service, use, and rental fees that are returned as charitable contributions and professional service fees to assist veterans and provide direct assistance to veterans and their families for shelter, clothing, subsistence, and health care in New Mexico communities. VSOs in turn provide volunteer services to the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park and Museum and to other VSO's sponsoring support services and direct assistance to veterans and their families.

Albuquerque Chapter MOAA provided **Meal Train supporting services** by preparing **Thanksgiving dinner** for veterans' family members and care givers staying at **the Fisher House on Thanksgiving** and over the Thanksgiving holiday. A veteran's family members and/or care givers staying at the Fisher House are there because the military veteran is a hospitalized inpatient at the VA Medical Center. Two families staying at the

Fisher House, both, had their veteran grandfathers pass away early morning on Thanksgiving Day. We supported and provided Thanksgiving meals of tamales, pinto beans, Mexican Corn, and kale-apple salad to the appreciative guest families at the Fisher House through the weekend.

Trend for **Albuquerque Chapter MOAA membership** is down with 165 regular members and 243 total members with surviving spouses, Associates, and Ski Club members factored in November 2023. Members in July 2023 were 179 regular members and 269 total members with surviving spouses, Associates, and Ski Club members factored in July 2023. Members in May 2023 were 176 regular members and 272 total members with surviving spouses, Associates, and Ski Club members factored in May 2023.

Charitable Giving

ABQ Chapter MOAA charitable giving was extended beyond the presentations to the Veterans Integration Center (VIC), the Rio Grande Valley Blue Star Mothers, and 100 Club at the Annual Meeting. The Chapter 2nd Vice President attended a staff interaction at Paws & Stripes on November 15th and presented them with the ABQ Chapter MOAA charitable donation for 2023.

The Chapter 2nd Vice President also attended the Valencia County Blue Star Mothers Annual end of the year social and member recognition. I was born and raised in Flint, Michigan where the Blue Star Mothers and Blue Star Families organization was founded on January 22, 1942, and know and attended events at the Durant Hotel, which was the sight for Blue Star Mothers and Blue Star Families annual conferences for many years during and following World War II and the Korean Conflict. I had the opportunity to speak to the Valencia County Blue Star Mothers group and those attending about the World War II contributions made by William C Durant and General Motors, and the American industrial workers in Flint, Michigan, and central Michigan in general. William C Durant was the founder of General Motors. General Motors became one of the biggest producers of vehicles for the war effort. Many of the companies owned by General Motors worked to help the war effort. Buick tackled the manufacture of ammunition, churning out 75,000 casings per month for the duration. By the war's end, the division had supplied more than 12.5 million

casings. Buick also retooled to meet the demands of making engines for the B-24 bomber. At first, they manufactured about 500 engines a month, but the government doubled its order by the time Buick had its tooling in place. In February 1942, Fisher Body completely stopped making auto bodies and began assembling the famous M-4 "Sherman" tank in its No. 1 plant in Flint. The operation eventually moved to Grand Blanc and would turn out 11,358 tanks by 1945. GM did not produce automobiles from 1942 until 1946. My grandparents were a Blue Star family, and my grandfather and father were Buick and Chevrolet machinists with General Motors and part of the work force in Flint, Michigan, that produced war equipment for all four military services needs. My father was deaf and did not serve in the military service. However, he first joined on as a seaman aboard iron-ore ships carrying raw mined ore from Michigan's upper peninsula across the Great Lakes to Gary, Indiana, Saginaw and Detroit, Michigan, and to Erie, Pennsylvania to foundries turning ore into steel. He subsequently joined GM and Buick Motor as a skilled tradesman.

When World War II erupted in Europe, and Germany began using tanks in its *Blitzkrieg* offensives, the United States did not have a tank production program. By mid-1940, the U.S. realized it needed an armored force separate from its infantry. In response to this need, the Detroit Tank Arsenal Plant sprang up seemingly overnight in the winter of 1940-'41, on 113 acres of farmland located north of downtown Detroit. Chrysler Motors and the Detroit Arsenal were the initial manufacturers of Army M-3 Sherman Tanks and artillery casings. During World War II, the Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant built a quarter of the 89,568 tanks built by the U.S. overall. Its production closely matched tank production of either Great Britain or Germany. During the Korean War, the plant was modified to build the new battle tank, the M47 Patton. In all, Chrysler built 3,443 M47 Patton tanks between 1952 and 1954. During the '60s, the plant produced 500 of the superior M60A2 tanks, which had a novel turret mounted on an M60 chassis and featured a 152-mm gun launcher that fired both conventional rounds and a guided missile. In response to the 1973 Arab Israeli war, the plant was producing a record five tanks per day.

Living in and growing up in mid-central Michigan, I appreciate the story of how the American auto industry came together to supply our forces with the weapons needed to win World War II. I also appreciated

the stories told by my grandmother, aunts, and mother-in-law who joined the GM work force to make assemblies for integration into major land, sea, and air force combat machines and assembly parts.

Congratulations.

R. Tom Dawe, our ABQ MOAA Chapter Breakfast for Lunch Coordinator, upon being nominated and elected as the new President of the United Veterans Council of Greater Albuquerque. His two-year term of office formally begins January 2024.

Ski trips upcoming are to Wolf Creek on January 9th and to Telluride January 21st.