

Albuquerque MOAA Chapter year 2022 was completed and Chapter year 2023 began with the Annual Members Meeting and election of officers on Sunday, October 16, 2022, at the NM Veterans Memorial Park and Museum Visitor Center.

The Officers elected to serve the Albuquerque MOAA Chapter were:

President: Stacey Goldstein-Dwyer (CPT (R) USA)

1st Vice President: Regner Rider (BG (R) USAF)

2nd Vice President: Michael Houck (LTC (R) USA)

Treasurer: Mark Dwyer (Spousal Member)

Each proposed candidate for an elected position is a Regular or Spousal member of the Chapter.

The Albuquerque MOAA Chapter Officers are elected biennially by the membership at the annual meeting in even-numbered years. Each elected officer takes office at the first regular or special meetings in the calendar year following the election and serves a two-year term. Elected officers, the Secretary, appointed functional directors, and social club coordinators serve no more than two consecutive two-year terms unless a suitable replacement cannot be selected and installed.

Honoring Organizations and Charitable Giving

The Albuquerque MOAA Chapter has a long history of recognizing, contributing, and supporting various national and New Mexico military and veteran support organizations. At the 2022 Annual Members Meeting we honored representatives from these organizations and the work their organizations perform to benefit retired veterans; veterans in need of assistance; active duty and National Guard families; and active-duty soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

In 2022 Albuquerque MOAA Chapter's charitable giving was directed to the Blue Star Mothers Rio Grande Chapter; Blue Star Mothers of Valencia County; the NM Veterans Integration Center (VIC); Paws & Stripes, Inc. (service dog and veteran matching, training, and mental health counseling); and the VA Fisher House Albuquerque. Additionally, Albuquerque MOAA Chapter donated awards recognizing the scholarship

and leadership of USA, USN_MC, and USAF ascending 2024 senior ROTC cadets at the University of New Mexico.

The Honor Flight of Northern of New Mexico (HFNNM)

Beginning in 2013 and conducting annual trips in June to Washington D.C. to visit the national and military service memorials, HFNNM now believes that it has substantially completed recognizing WWII New Mexico service veterans with these cost-free trips. Currently, top priority is given to any remaining World War II veterans medically able to travel and who have not previously traveled with HFNNM. Going forward HFNNM priority shifts to Korean War Veterans and Veterans of other conflicts who may be terminally ill, and Vietnam War Veterans will be added as seats are made available.

Albuquerque MOAA surviving World War II veteran members have traveled to Washington D.C. to visit the national and military service Memorials with HFNNM. The Chapter announced, provided information, and offered assistance in applying to members at its social events, Breakfast Club, Ski and Tours Club, and a Newsletter article asking Korean War Veterans to identify themselves and apply for a seat on the wait list for no costs travel with the Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico to Washington D.C. HFNNM priority for Korean War veterans travel will move those members who wish and are able to travel, ahead of Viet Nam and War on Terror veterans on the HFNNM current three year waiting list.

Albuquerque MOAA also solicited members to volunteer to be Guardians. On each trip, each veteran is paired with a guardian who makes sure all their needs are met. Guardians can be family members, friends, or complete strangers who have volunteered their time toward the effort. Guardians pay their own way. A portion of their \$1,250 donation is tax deductible and covers all costs associated with the trip. Albuquerque MOAA members on the 2023 volunteer Guardian list attended trip training for memorial visits, medical and disability awareness and assistance, and lodging and travel mode assistance and orientation for the scheduled 2023 trip.

HFNNM next honor flight in June 2024.

Wreaths Across America Presentation

On November 16, 2022, 2nd Vice President Albuquerque MOAA was requested by the Retired Officer Wives Club to present a history and discussion of Wreaths Across America and its presence in New Mexico at veterans' and private cemeteries. Albuquerque MOAA Chapter over the last six years has participated in the local observance and wreath decoration of grave markers, headstones, and columbaria at the Santa Fe Veterans National Cemetery. The presentation covered the history of Wreaths Across America recognition of veterans originally in the New England states, the nationwide expansion following sponsorship and grave wreath decoration at Arlington National Cemetery, local non-profit organization sponsorship at the Santa Fe Veterans National Cemetery, cemeteries at U.S. National Park military forts in New Mexico, and State of New Mexico designated veteran and war memorial cemeteries. In the presentation it was explained and discussed that resident New Mexico members are not limited only to ordering and laying a Remembrance Wreath at a grave marker or headstone at the Santa Fe Veterans National Cemetery. A New Mexico resident may "Sponsor a Wreath" to any National Veterans or Military Service cemetery in the U.S., at U.S. war cemeteries in foreign countries, and participating U.S. Navy ships at sea. There, also, are private cemeteries in the U.S. near National Veterans or Military Service cemeteries in the U.S that can be supplied by the local delivery route to the larger National Veterans or Military Service cemeteries.

There were several spouses and families of deceased veteran members of Albuquerque MOAA that traveled to Santa Fe Veterans National Cemetery on the bitterly cold December morning to decorate grave sites with generally sponsored wreaths and to specifically decorate the grave site of their husbands and fathers interred and inurned at the Santa Fe Veterans National Cemetery.

Renewed Membership and Participation with Other Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Torrence, and Valencia County Veteran Service Organizations in the United Veterans Council of Greater Albuquerque

Entering 2023, Albuquerque Chapter MOAA rejoined to actively participate in and with the United Veterans Council (UVC). The UVC changed leadership, audited, and balanced its finances and financial statements, filed back tax forms and non-profit confirmation with the IRS and the State of New Mexico, refiled an amended certificate of incorporation, changed the organizations corporate title to United Veterans Council of Greater Albuquerque (UVCGA), and wrote new amended by-laws for the corporation. Sum total of Veterans Service Organization members under the UVCGA umbrella beginning 2023 was 38.

The UVCGA has the capacity to lead, organize, and undertake separate veterans support and recognition projects on its own, however it functions best as an information sharing and coordination venue for the 37 member VSO's to advertise their veteran events, combine the efforts of multiple organization members' events and fund raisers, and work together in the community to assist veterans, families, and serving spouses.

Active exchanges and cross organizational support of veteran activities and events paid off in Albuquerque MOAA integrating Albuquerque POW/MIA Day recognition into our 100th Birthday celebration event. Ex-POW's were located through VSO UVCGA contacts and participated in remembrance of those MIA's who have not come home, yet.

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. Veterans across America were honored by Wreaths Across America and local sponsors and volunteers at veterans and designated public cemeteries on December 17, 2022. On that Saturday morning, interred services' veterans were honored at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. By placing sponsored

seasonal fir wreaths and boughs at headstones and markers over 4,200 interred veterans were honored from the over 67,000 grave sites within the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. I would like to thank the MOAA members, surviving spouses, family members who came out to participate and lay wreaths on a sunny, 24-degree mid-morning at the Santa Fe National Veterans Cemetery. With the 15 mph wind from the northwest the wind chill temperature felt by the body was 11°F (-11°C or 262K). Despite the wake-up temperature in Santa Fe of 17 degrees and feeling like 2°F (-16°C or 257K) with the wind chill, there was an enthusiastic crowd of volunteers, families, and youth groups prepared to honor those veterans interred at the cemetery. The 4,200 wreaths were laid at the cemetery grave sites in less than an hour following the ceremony.

If you were a Wreaths Across America donor/sponsor 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.

La Vida Llena (LVL) Life Plan Retirement Community

December 2022 meeting with Linda Givens and LVL operations director for planning 105th Birthday Celebration for Faye Adams (COL (R), MD, USA) in June 2023 at the LVL Carter Hall, their main community room that hosts entertainment and presentations, with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment along with a full-scale stage setup that will accommodate chorale entertainment. LVL food service will assist in setting up Carter Hall for buffet dining and the telling of the career story of COL Faye Adams, MD.

Event planning ceased in January 2023 as COL Faye Adams passed away in her room on the assisted living wing of the LVL facility.

Albuquerque Chapter Social Meeting for 1st Qtr 2023 (Jan-Feb-March)

First Quarter MOAA Members Social was held on March 19th. Speakers of interest were invited to speak to members regarding their non-profit organizations and the contributions they make to the veteran community in the Albuquerque area and New Mexico. This event with the Veteran Service Organizations speakers also provided insight to members and the Board of Directors regarding Albuquerque Chapter MOAA charitable giving in 2023. Presentations were provided by Honor Flight of Northern New Mexico, VP Shirley Johnson, the New Mexico Veterans Integration Center (VIC), CEO Brock Wolff, and Folds of Honor, which provides member educational scholarships to disabled veterans and to deceased veteran family members, President Jim Quick, also an Albuquerque Chapter MOAA member.

Vendors also were invited to the event to present information on their products and services directed toward veterans. This included Bath Fitters and information for walk-in bathtub conversions and available VA grants to cover a portion of the cost of installation; veteran service organization contractor who installs home access ramps for disabled veterans to gain entry to their home; medical Medicare Advantage programs offered in the Albuquerque area; and security and personal self defense items and warning apparatuses particularly for females.

Potluck items, salads and desserts were provided by members. Several alternative entrée meat items were provided by the Board of Directors for sampling and to gauge interest for the main course entrée for the Albuquerque Chapter MOAA Members Annual Meeting.

Expansion of the USMC Memorial Monument to the Combined Action Platoons (CAP) at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park

On March 29th, *National Vietnam War Veterans Day*, I attended and participated as an US Army and Army Security Agency intelligence officer representative at the monument expansion presentation to the USMC Memorial Monument to the Combined Action Platoons (CAP) and squads at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park. Teams were organized and integrated into the local Vietnamese militia platoons and squads and provided a confidence builder while training and protecting villages and

towns, the Army Security Agency Field Station at Phu Bai, and the U.S. airfields in the I Corps sector of Viet Nam. I appreciated the attendance of several MOAA Chapter retired officers and surviving spouse members at the event and their assistance provided to the Blue Star Mothers Rio Grande and Memorial Park Foundation volunteers at the social and refreshments following the expansion dedication ceremony.

March 29 is National Vietnam War Veterans Day in the United States and honors the U.S. military members who served during the Vietnam War (1955-1975). The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 establishes the day as a national observance. However, it is not an official holiday in any part of the United States.

The conflict began during the 1950s when the struggle between the country's communist northern part and the anti-communist south escalated. The United States began its military involvement in an effort to back the South's effort to quell the communist onslaught, which, at the height of the Cold War, was feared to promote the spread of communist ideology and influence worldwide. During the war, about 500,000 US troops were dispatched to Southeast Asia, about 58,000 of whom were killed.

The conflict ended in 1975 with the fall of Saigon and the victory of North Vietnam.

Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit

On April 7th the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit van and trailer was set-up at the NM Veterans Memorial Park and provided exhibits, instructional programs to park visitors and organized school groups on field trips to the Veterans' Park Amphitheater.

The Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit brings to heart the true purpose of why they do what they do - bring local communities and our military together to share stories of patriotism and love of country, to help TEACH the next generation about service and sacrifice, and to HONOR and REMEMBER those veterans who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, but also to bridge the gap between active-duty service members, veterans and civilians.

Notifications and invitations to explore and learn from the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit also were provided to Albuquerque Public and Private Schools, Albuquerque area veterans and Veteran Service Organizations, e.g., local VFW's and American Legions, and Military service organizations, and like SAR and DAR Chapters.

The goal of the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit is to bring local communities and our military together with education, stories, and interactive connections.

The 48-foot exhibit is equipped with a 24-person screening room that showcases the different aspects of the WAA mission through video. To the front of the exhibit there are three interactive computers to showcase locations, trucking supporters, and general wreath sponsorship questions. Also, in the front is an educational wall of information on the different areas of WAA and where the mission will be going in years to come.

The purpose of the Mobile Education Exhibit is to not only teach the next generation about service and sacrifice, but to share stories of patriotism and love of country to communities around the United States.

Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve. Teach the next generation the value of freedom.

NM National Guard

April 8th the NM National Guard hosted a commemoration of the 81st Anniversary of the fall of Bataan in the Philippines at the Bataan Memorial, 407 Galisteo in Santa Fe. The commemoration walk of the Bataan Death March at White Sands Test Range was completed March 19, 2023.

The Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC) and Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal

Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), the Department of Defense (DoD) executive Agent for the Nuclear Test Personnel Review (NTPR) Program, opened the application process for awarding Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal and the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC) to veterans who participated in U.S. atmospheric and underground nuclear tests.

Veterans eligible for the medal and certificate are those who, performed official military duties during the period of July 1, 1945, to October 1, 1992:

1. **Directly participated** in the detonation of an atomic weapon or device.
2. **Directly participated** in the clean-up of radioactive material resulting from any such atmospheric detonation.
3. **Directly participated** in the cleanup of radioactive material resulting from an accident associated with an atomic weapon.
4. Were exposed to ionizing radiation resulting from the operational use of atomic weapons during World War II.

Albuquerque Chapter MOAA has two veteran members eligible to apply for the **Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC) and Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal**. Chapter 2nd Vice President researched Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) test reports to identify military members and unit participation. Albuquerque Chapter was able to identify one member as a direct nuclear test participant in the detonation of an atomic weapon or device.

Albuquerque Chapter MOAA completed the Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal application as the requestor of the certificate and medal on behalf of the participant, Albert Baye, CWO4 (R), USA. As the requestor, Albuquerque Chapter MOAA received the approved individual medals and certificates and awarded them to Albert Baye, CWO4 (R) and World War II U.S. Army combatant in the Pacific Theater. The award was presented by C. Robert Kemble, BG (R) USA, a World War II combatant in the European Theater at our Awards Ceremony September 15th in conjunction with the 100th Birthday Party recognition which included 101-year old Al Baye and 98-year old Bob Kemble.

In attendance for the September 15, 2023, event were the out of state daughters and sons-in-law of both Al Baye and Bob Kemble. The family's pride in being present and participating in this event was an extra highlight for the event.

100th birthday member recognition and National POW/MIA Day

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 veterans 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 U.S. 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.

National POW/MIA Day, September 15th

Albuquerque Chapter MOAA incorporated into our Chapter 100th Birthday and Atomic Veterans Commemorative Service Medal **presentation** event, the recognition of armed services veterans living in the Albuquerque metropolitan area who had been held as POW's. With the assistance of VSO members of the United Veterans Council of Greater Albuquerque, one ex-POW attending was an U.S. Army artilleryman who was captured and held during the Korean War and a second ex-POW attending was a co-pilot of a B-52 that was downed over Hanoi. As part of the National POW/MIA Day event in New Mexico, the missing soldier table and chair was displayed as a remembrance with the "Soldiers Prayer" for those veterans still missing and not yet returned to the U.S.A. and their families.

Veterans Day – 2023

Albuquerque MOAA also participated in City of Albuquerque 11 **November Veterans Day parade and NM Veterans Memorial Park activities**. A new 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. The Veterans Day event is to honor discharged, retired, and serving members of the U.S. military and commissioned service department members. It is not to honor elected members of political parties and councils in state and local government. Over the last two years, the only veterans recognized for service at the City sponsored Veterans' Day events have been the retiring Air Force canines from Kirtland AFB.

Meal Train supporting services at the Fisher House on Thanksgiving

Albuquerque Chapter MOAA provided **Meal Train supporting services** by preparing **Thanksgiving dinner** for veterans' family members and care givers staying at **the Albuquerque Fisher House on Thanksgiving** and over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. 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, kale-apple salad, and pumpkin pie *a la mode* to the appreciative guest families at the Fisher House through the weekend.

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, I 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 organizations were 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, family members, VSO supporters, 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 combat vehicles for the war effort. Many of the companies owned by General Motors retooled and worked to help the war effort. Buick Motor tackled the manufacture of ammunition, churning out 75,000 casings per month for the duration of the war production. 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. Speaking to those assembled at the Blue Star Mothers event provided an opportunity to describe how the people of Flint, Grand Blanc, Lansing, Saginaw, Midland, Pontiac, and Bay City contributed to the war machines and parts manufacturing. 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 service’s 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 Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes to Gary, Indiana, Saginaw, Bay City, and Detroit, Michigan, and to Erie, Pennsylvania to off load and supply 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 engineer, manufacture and 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. My family, their friends, and residents of mid-Michigan's manufacturing centers also were the organizers and contributors to the founding of the Blue Star Mothers and Blue Star Families. These war product laborers joined to recognize the service of family son's serving in Europe, North Africa, Philippines, and the Pacific war theaters of operation, and at sea in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and the South and North Pacific Ocean. Founded originally by a newspaper reporter, the reporting about Blue Star Mothers and Blue Star Family support functions in mid-Michigan spread across the nation. The organization was honored by the U.S. Congress. As a result of news media reporting Blue Star groups began spreading across the country. Regional and National Conferences brought city, county, state, and regional groups together at national conferences to review the war effort and how to provide local support to those deployed soldiers and sailors serving across the globe and to the families of veterans serving at home in their local communities.

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 "saying their name" and placing holiday 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. The 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 eastern 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 on the mountain 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 this year was 6048.

If you were a Wreaths Across America donor/sponsor 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.



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 in Albuquerque 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 Veteran 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 history and 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 additionally reached out to John Jones (CAPT (R), USN) of the NM Council of the Navy League to speak. He 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. The key activity that brought them together was advocating for the naming of a Virginia class nuclear missile submarine as U.S.S. New Mexico (SSN 779). Construction for the boat was 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.

Additionally, they worked together 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, regional, and state of 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. The facility services, use, and rental fees that are returned as charitable contributions and professional service fees are used 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.

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 U.S. military forces veterans and presents 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 sponsor 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 local 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 and their contributions, both, to settlers, miners, ranchers, 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. The invited VIPs for the event will be the elected officers from the area and state Veteran Services Organizations (VSOs). State and local politicians who wish to attend will register with the CABQ Protocol Office and be given a seat in the VIP section. Merely by showing they will demonstrate their respect for U.S. Veterans and honor a veteran’s service by participating on their own volition, but they will not be an event speaker unless they have New Mexico military event history, New Mexico military unit or individual service member related event history germane to the yearly time period or combat theater.

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.