

# SOUNDINGS

Silver Strand Chapter of Military Officers Association of America

February 2008

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### CAPT Jim Cahill, USNR, Retired

Your Silver Strand Chapter will be 37 years old on 17 February. The Chapter was chartered on this date 1971, and the dues were set at \$10.00 (they are still \$10.00!)

Medicare/TRICARE fees are still in jeopardy. Congress delayed until the end of 2007 to face the cut of 9.9% in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors scheduled for January 2008 if Congress did not change existing law. The problem was coming up with the funds. Consideration to cut payments to Medicare HMO's and other providers were an option. However, these potential groups have strong lobbyist to fight this proposal and fight they did.

The results; Congress, in their wisdom; granted Medicare and TRICARE doctors a 1 % increase, for **6 MONTHS!** If our legislators don't find the money to extend the fix in the first half of 2008 an 11% payment cut will start on July 1. Unless changed prior to July 1, a huge penalty will result in military and Medicare beneficiaries who may find their own doctors dropping out of the programs and turning them away.

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Rear Admiral Hunter earned her Bachelor of Arts and Doctor of Medicine degrees with honors in 1980 from Boston University. Following an internship, she served aboard the USS *HUNLEY* (AS-31) in Holy Loch, Scotland as Senior Medical Officer. She reported to Naval Medical Center San Diego for her residency in Internal Medicine and fellowship in Hematology/Oncology, attaining board certification in all three fields. As Executive Assistant to the Surgeon General from 1998 until 2000, she focused on defining best clinical and business practices in primary care, ensuring consistent delivery of the TRICARE benefit, and enhancing Navy Medicine's service to the fleet. In 2000, she assumed command of Naval Hospital Bremerton. While serving as Pacific Fleet Surgeon from 2003-2004, she developed the Concept of Operations for resuscitative surgery aboard small combatant ships engaged in distributed operations, which served as the prototype for today's Expeditionary Resuscitative Surgical System. She assumed command of Navy Medicine West and Naval Medical San Diego in January 2007.

**See Page 7 for more information on Chapter dinner Monday, 18 February**

# Legislative Update

## **Defense Bill Passes House (Again)**

The President unexpectedly vetoed the FY2008 Defense Authorization Act just after Christmas when White House lawyers discovered a provision that could have allowed lawsuits against the assets of Iraq for the crimes of Saddam Hussein. The veto reflected the President's belief that the current Iraq government needs all of its assets and shouldn't be held responsible for the crimes of the previous regime.

The veto effectively interrupted certain compensation improvements as of January 1, but most new initiatives are unaffected by the veto.

Some were concerned that the veto could spark a new round of political infighting that might mean even further delay enacting this important defense bill. But those fears dissipated when the House reconvened in mid January, adjusted the offending provision, and re-passed the bill by an overwhelming majority.

It's expected that the Senate also will promptly do the same when it reconvenes next week so the legislation can be signed into law and Congress can get on with its important work for 2008.

## **MOAA Outlines GI Bill Goals at Hill Hearing**

MOAA's COL Bob Norton, USA (Ret), presented the association's recommendations for upgrading the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) at a hearing before the House Veterans Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee on January 17.

Norton thanked Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AR), a member of the Subcommittee and former Chairman of the Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, for his pivotal role in winning a 10-year post-service readjustment benefit for reservists who earn MGIB benefits for service on active duty. That change will take effect later this month when the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act is signed into law.

MOAA endorsed the seven legislative proposals under consideration at the hearing, especially bills such as H.R. 2702 that would raise MGIB reimbursement rates. Such increases are MOAA's top education priority this year. The bill also would allow 15 years (vice 10) of post-service use eligibility and extend eligibility to all entering recruits, without the current \$1,200 fee. MOAA

believes strongly that GI Bill benefits should be raised to cover the average cost of a four-year public college or university. They now cover about 75% of that amount. MOAA also believes Reservists should be entitled to full active-duty MGIB benefits if they complete a cumulative 36 months on active duty. At present, that only earns them 80% of the full benefit. Norton said the principle should be "same service, same battlefield, same benefits."

Rep. John Hall (D-NY), whose district includes West Point, asked about educational incentives to retain military academy graduates. Norton noted that the Army already has lost more than half of the West Point class of 2002 and has growing shortages of mid-grade officers. He urged making service academy graduates and ROTC scholarship recipients (who are excluded on the rationale that the military funded their undergraduate degrees) eligible for the MGIB if they agree to extend their initial service commitment.

## **President Bush OKs Emergency VA Spending**

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret), participated in a White House conference call on January 17 during which the President announced he had approved the \$3.7 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations passed by Congress in the waning days of 2007.

Under the strange rules of appropriations, Congress authorized the extra money, over and above the President's budget request. But because it exceeded the budget authority, Congress designated it as "emergency" supplemental spending.

Under the budget rules, the President has the discretion to decide whether or not to spend that extra money. In this particular case, the extra \$3.7 billion to meet VA health care and other needs would only be available if the President sent a special budget notice to Congress by January 18.

VADM Ryan expressed MOAA's great appreciation both to Congress for recommending the much-needed additional VA funding and the President for agreeing to exercise the congressional authority.

## Letters to the Troops 2007

The Silver Strand Chapter MOAA sponsored the “Letters to the Troops” project for the ninth year in a row. Six Coronado schools participated this year and wrote over 870 letters that were sent to deployed Sailors and Marines from the local area. Young students from the Early Childhood Development Center also created 52 pictures for the troops. We have seen this program expand year after year as students from kindergarten to high school expressed their support and thanks to deployed uniformed service men and women. This year’s letters were particularly difficult to judge due to the quality of each one of them. As usual, board members who read and rated the letters were impressed with the ability of students at each level to express their appreciation and concern for military members who are in harm’s way. The Board selected first and second place winners from each school and awarded them \$25 book gift certificates for 1<sup>st</sup> place and \$15 for 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Coronado Middle School received a \$50 donation for writing the most letters. This was a rewarding and emotional experience for those who participated. The winners from each school are:

**Christ Church Day School: First Place, Collin; Second Place, Joseph**

**Silver Strand Elementary School: First Place, Rachel; Second Place, Melissa**

**Village Elementary School: First Place, Alexis; Second Place, Emily**

**Coronado Middle School: First Place, Caitlin; Second Place, Chris**

**Sacred Heart Parish School: First Place, Kayley; Second Place, Luz**

**Coronado High School: First Place, Samantha; Second Place, Brooke**

Each letter started with the greeting, Dear Service Member. First place letters or portions of them follow:

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I am writing this letter to you for protecting our country. I know it is very hard being away from your family. I bet you work hard to do your job right. I hope you get to see your family soon. Over and out.  
Sincerely, Collin, Christ Church Day School, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

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I just want to say thank you for fighting for our freedom. It’s probably been hard to be way from your friends and family, but that’s ok and they probably miss you. It’s probably a lot of hard work too. I think anybody that is in the military is really brave. I have friends at my school whose parents are in the military and I think they are very nice. I am also very thankful that a lot of men and women would give up a lot of things for us. I think that is really brave. ----- I think you are really brave. Well anyways, Happy Holidays! Sincerely, Rachel, Silver Strand Elementary, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

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You sacrifice your life every day out there, so I wanted to thank you for all that you do for everyone in the United States. When I hear stuff about the war on the news, I feel safe that nothing bad is going to happen because you are there with your fellow troop members. I lived in Virginia for ten years and when 9/11 came along it was so scary. I thought, “what if that happened to me and I was on one of those planes?” So, thanks for not letting that happen. I know I can count on you guys out there. I feel like that none of that kind of bad stuff will happen again. Thanks to you guys, of course. ----- I know you miss your family, but I am sure they are proud of you; so am I, and many other people. Sincerely, Alexis, Village Elementary, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

*(Letters are continued on Page 6)*

*Continued from page 1*

Watch Congress in the next few months for any movement in this legislation, call, write, e-mail, or fax your legislator at their local office and insist that they face this issue and correct the faults.

For members of USAA a USAA Certified Financial Planner will be assigned to assist the surviving spouse or an immediate family member as a free financial advisor. This free resource will help with basic probate questions, estate transfers, inheritance questions, and to answer other questions the member may have. This consultation service is also available to a member who has an immediate family member suffering from a terminal illness. For more information, call (800) 771-9960

The Commandant's Own, The USMC Drum and Bugle Corps will have a public performance on March 5 at MCAS, Miramar and March 8, MCRD.

Your Chapter continues to sponsor the "Letters To The Troops" by soliciting Coronado school children to write letters to service men and women, grading the letters, awarding first and second place winners a book coupon and arranging for all the letters to be sent to deployed military members. We received the most letters ever in our ninth year of sponsorship. Please take a look at the first place winner's letters, a thank you note from RADM Wright and a thank you note from a first grade recipient of an award on Pages three and six.

Jim Cahill

### **New Silver Strand Chapter Members**

Barbara France, LT, USN (Ret)

### **Welcome Aboard**

Holiday wreaths were placed at national cemeteries across the nation on Saturday, Dec. 15, 2007.

This is the second year the Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine, has sent holiday wreaths to VA national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries to display in a nationwide tribute to veterans, called "Wreaths Across America." It is the 16th year the company has sent holiday wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery.



The wreaths are made and decorated by Worcester Wreath Company employees. Company President Morrill Worcester said he wanted to recognize veterans, active duty military and their families, and - through these ceremonies - remind the public to honor veterans for their service and teach children the value of freedom.

*photo by James Varhegyi*

**TAPS**

**John Barrons, CAPT, USN (Ret)**

## Silver Strand Chapter MOAA Dinner December 2007

BG Wayne Hoffmann, AUS (Ret) address the Silver Strand Chapter at the Coronado Yacht Club on December 4. General Hoffmann serves on the MOAA Board of Directors as National Chaplain and Chair, Educational Assistance Committee/MOAA Scholarship Fund Board. He discussed the MOAA Scholarship program and the quality scholarships offered to military dependents. The American Patriot Scholarship is offered to children of active-duty, reserve, National Guard whose military parent either died on active service or became severely disabled and received a purple heart. The amount of this award is dependent upon donations but will be at least \$2,500. In the 2007-2008 school year, 70 students received grants of \$5,000. Each student is eligible to receive the scholarship for five years of undergraduate work. The Base/Post Scholarship is offered to dependent sons and daughters of active duty officers and enlisted military personnel. This scholarship is a one-time \$1,000 scholarship grant to 25 students. MOAA also offers interest free loans and other grants to military dependents.



General Hoffmann also discussed MOAA's Strategic Plan and the four goals: Achieve and sustain maximum influence in shaping relevant government policy; Increase MOAA membership as the professional association for all officers; Provide relevant information and services, per the "Military Life Planner" and Maintain a vigorous nationwide council and chapter network.



The 2008 Silver Strand Chapter Board of Directors installed at the December meeting are (from left): CAPT Tom Johnson, USN (Ret) Chaplain; Col Jim Strickland, USAF (Ret) Secretary; MajGen Bob Butcher, USMC (Ret) Second Vice President; CAPT Nancy Owen, USN (Ret) First Vice President; CAPT Jim Cahill, USNR (Ret) President; BG Don Mayhue, ARNG (Ret) Army Representative; and CAPT Tom Bernitt, USN (Ret) Treasurer. BG Wayne Hoffmann presided as Installation Officer.

## Health Care Town Hall Meeting



**RADM Christine Hunter, MC, USN, Commander, Naval Medical Center San Diego**

**Cordially invites all Military Personnel, Ombudsmen, and TRICARE beneficiaries from the San Diego area**

**The Admiral invites your direct questions & feedback regarding your health care services at NMCSD & clinics**

**Wednesday, February 27, 2008, Naval Medical Center San Diego, Building 5 Auditorium**

**Direct questions to Andrea L. Graves, Head, Patient Relations, (619) 532-6418**

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**MOAA Silver Strand Chapter: [www.cal-moaa-silverstrand.org](http://www.cal-moaa-silverstrand.org)**

*(Letters to the Troops 2007 Continued)*

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I just wanted to say thank you for serving our country and keeping it safe. I know you are away from your family, and must feel lonely sometimes. Perhaps knowing that at least one Eighth Grader is very thankful that you are fighting for us will help the days pass more swiftly. Although you are far away, you should also know that all of America is very grateful for what you do every day. If it was not for you, we may not be able to live the way we do today. Because of you, I can get up every morning feeling safe in my home. I know you are fighting for the Iraqi children so they can feel safe in their homes too. Because of you I can put on warm clothes and school to get an education, and so can the other children in the United States. We have so many wonderful freedoms here because of people like you willing to serve in the military. I am sure that you do not hear the words "thank you" near enough. I wanted to make sure that you heard them at least once today, Please close your eyes and listen carefully and you can hear me saying "thank you so much for preserving our freedoms." Your friend and grateful fellow American, Caitlin, Coronado Middle School, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

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I just wanted to thank you for all the wonderful things you do for me. Not just me personally, but for America on the whole. You are the image of freedom and safety. Wherever you are, you are fighting for the freedom that our founding forefathers fought for so long ago. It is it is an American legacy that every single person has the power to continue. And you are doing that more than the average person ever could. It takes courage and character, and that lacks in many people. I believe that only the best have these, and the best are our service members. I really can't know what it's like leaving your family for long periods of time, but I can imagine the heartbreak. ---- I don't know when the world will be warless, but I know our country will lead the world in peace. I know this because we have military men and women every where trying to help people in need. Wherever you go, remember that we are praying for you and your safe return. Even if there aren't wars on American soil, we are still fighting in them. You are an American hero, and that is really special. We owe it to you for our lives. Thank You. Your Friend, Kayley, Sacred Heart, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

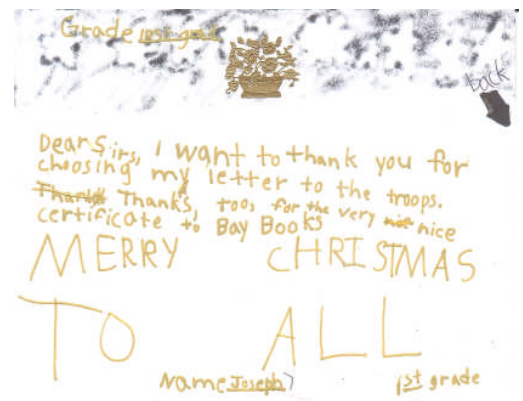
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I just wanted to say thanks for who you are and what you are doing. It takes a lot of strength, courage and determination to accomplish your actions, and that is something extremely admirable! I imagine that it must be very hard and difficult to succeed in your job and to be far away from home. Yet, believe me; your actions are thanked for! I truly hope that you are safe, stable, and happy, and most importantly healthy! Furthermore, I wish you a beautiful Thanksgiving, full of cheer and delicious food. Hopefully you will celebrate with your friends and peers, and have a great time. I also wish happiness for your family. I imagine that they will miss you and remember you during the holiday. However, hopefully you will be able to contact them. Once again, thank you so very much for what you do and who you are. You are one of those people who make our nation better each day by keeping us safe and fighting for well-being. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Have a wonderful thanksgiving and all the holidays to come! Sincerely, Samantha, Coronado High School, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

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*Silver Strand Board, Thanks for taking the lead on this important project. The children's letters to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines truly deliver a little piece of home to everyone who receives them. I can't tell you the number of these kind of letters are kept in pockets and in wallets, posted in tents and on bulletin boards, and shared by hand and email. They achieve a magical effect here in theater, and are much coveted by all who are lucky enough to receive them. Please pass along my great appreciation to your entire team. Your thoughtfulness is much appreciated.*

*Warmest wishes and all the best,  
RDML Gar Wright, USN  
Deputy Commander, Task Force-134*



**Joint Silver Strand Chapter MOAA Dinner Meeting**

Date: Monday, February 18, 2008

**Rear Admiral Christine S. Hunter, Commander, Navy Medicine West**  
**Naval Medical Center San Diego**

Where: Coronado Yacht Club, 1631 Strand Way

When: 1800: Social Time

1900: Dinner

1945: Program

*Slow Roasted Prime Rib w/ Peppercorn Au Jus & Creamy Horseradish, or  
Bacon Wrapped Fresh Salmon w/ Fresh Mango Salsa, Apple Cider Reduction  
Pre-Set Spring Salad, rice, vegetables, desert, rolls, coffee, tea; \$30 per person*

Use the coupon below for:

- February 18 Dinner Meeting Reservation
- Pay 2008 Dues
- Donate to NJROTC & Naval Sea Cadets
- Donate to MOAA Scholarship Fund

**Chapter Meeting Monday, February 18, 2007**

Mail to: Silver Strand Chapter MOAA  
P.O. Box 180043  
Coronado, CA 92178-0043

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Reservations must reach our PO Box by **Noon, Friday, 15 February (Firm)**

Indicate your choice (s) of entrée \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending dinner \_\_\_\_ X \$30 = \$\_\_\_\_\_

**2008 Dues (\$10 for members, \$5 for Auxiliary)** \$\_\_\_\_\_

Donation to NJROTC (Coronado and Mar Vista High Schools) \$\_\_\_\_\_

Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Coronado Battalion \$\_\_\_\_\_

MOAA Scholarship Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$\_\_\_\_\_



**Silver Strand Chapter Board of Directors**

|                   |                                  |          |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| President         | Jim Cahill, CAPT, USNR (Ret)     | 435-8077 |
| First Vice        | Nancy Owen, CAPT, USN (Ret)      | 437-0542 |
| Second Vice       | Bob Butcher, MajGen, USMC, (Ret) | 435-6979 |
| Secretary         | Jim Strickland, Col, USAF (Ret)  | 435-6608 |
| Treasurer         | Tom Bernitt, CAPT, USN (Ret)     | 424-6365 |
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| Personal Affairs  | Carl Jennings, COL, AUS (Ret)    | 435-1015 |
| Chaplain          | Tom Johnson, CAPT, USN (Ret)     | 435-3408 |
| TOPS              | Tom Bauer, CAPT, USN (Ret)       | 437-6689 |
| Past President    | Wayne Hoffmann, BG, AUS (Ret)    | 522-0031 |

**Dates to Remember  
2008**

**Chapter Meetings**

**February 18  
April 21  
June 16  
August 18  
October 22  
December 2**

**Board Meetings**

**March 18  
May 20  
July 15  
September 16  
November 18**

**SOUNDINGS**

Silver Strand Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
P. O. Box 180043  
Coronado, CA 92178-0043

Return Service Requested

**TIME DATED MATERIAL**