

SOUNDINGS

Silver Strand Chapter of Military Officers Association of America

October 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CAPT Jim Cahill, USNR, Retired

Congratulations are in order again this year. For the fourth year in a row, The Silver Strand Chapter has been awarded the MOAA "5 STAR LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE" for exceptional performance in 2007.

The 5 Star Level is only the very, very best chapters, based on a standard set of rating criteria. In order to qualify, a chapter must accumulate at least 220 of a possible 240 points for the "5" Star chapter. These 240 criteria points include publication of a news letter, a legislative "pro-active" program, activity in recruiting and retention, a Personal Affairs program, support of a local NJROTC or Sea Cadet program, scholarship programs, and local community activities.

Thanks to the membership support and the leadership of your chapter, the Silver Strand Chapter ranks among the top chapters of MOAA.

Continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2** Legislative Update
- 3** Retired Seminar, Veterans Day Parade, Chapter Award
- 4** President's Message (cont), New Members, Gen Helland
- 5** Military Women's Luncheon
- 6** CHS NJROTC Training, SBP "Paid Up" Status
- 7** October 22 Dinner Reservation Form



RADM Leendert "Len" Hering, Sr., Commander, Navy Region Southwest, was commissioned through the NROTC Scholarship Program from State University of New York Maritime College in 1977. His initial sea assignment was aboard USS SANTA BARBARA (AE 28), where he served as 1st and 2nd Division Officer and Assistant First Lieutenant. He had command of USS ARIES (PHM 5) from January 1989 to January 1991 and USS DOYLE (FFG 39) from July 1995 to March 1997. His assignments ashore include duty as operations and plans officer to Commander, Destroyer Squadron TWELVE; aide and administrative assistant to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Naval Warfare; Action Officer, Pacific Command Branch J-33, Joint Operations Directorate, Joint Staff; 1st Battalion Officer and Ethics Instructor, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland; Commanding Officer of Naval Base San Diego and Commander, Naval Surface Group Pacific Northwest.

See Page 7 for more information on Chapter dinner Wednesday, 22 October

Legislative Update

Congress OKs Short-Cut Funding Bill Congress is supposed to pass 13 separate funding bills for the various federal departments by Oct 1. But that almost never happens, and it sure wasn't going to happen in a presidential election year, let alone in the shadow of a looming national financial crisis.

Under national pressure to turn its attention to the financial bailout, Congress took a flurry of short cuts to ensure the government wouldn't shut down for lack of funds at the start of the fiscal year.

House and Senate leaders finished work on the FY2009 Defense Appropriations Act to ensure Pentagon needs are fully funded. In an unusual move, the bill also includes language that would require paying an extra \$500 per month to servicemembers who are involuntarily extended past their service commitments by service "stop-loss" policies, starting Oct. 1, 2009. Legislators also agreed to plus up VA and Homeland Security appropriations to meet the new fiscal year needs. Then they wrapped all three of those initiatives with a broader "continuing resolution" (H.R. 2638) that would keep the rest of the government operating at FY2008 funding levels until next March, when Congress envisions working with the new president to address funding needs for the rest of FY2009.

President Bush previously said he'd veto a continuing resolution that extended past the end of his term in January. So there may yet be another political showdown or two on the horizon.

The bad news: Congress' desire for rapid action on the defense bill killed the chance for any further progress on concurrent receipt for FY2009, and allowed only a very modest compensation improvement for certain military widows. MOAA will push for broader fixes next year.

Most Medicare Premiums Frozen **The good news:** Medicare announced this week that the January 2009 Part B premiums and annual deductible (\$135) will remain at the current 2008 rates. This one-time relief from annual premium increases was possible because of an accounting change that shifted a piece of the

Medicare budget from Part B (doctor visits) to Part A (hospital treatment).

The mixed news: Income thresholds for imposing higher, means-tested premiums will rise about 3.7% (from \$82,000 to \$85,000 for an individual). That will ease the impact of the continuing phase-in of means-tested premium increases for certain higher-income Medicare-eligibles. But individuals with adjusted gross incomes above \$85,000 (\$170,000 for a married couple) will still see a Part B premium increase in 2009.

The bad news: The Part A (hospital care) annual deductible will be \$1,068, an increase of \$44. That covers beneficiaries' costs for the first 60 days of a Medicare-covered hospital stay, with patients facing daily co-pays beyond that point.

More \$22 Drugs On September 17, a DoD pharmacy panel proposed moving certain blood glucose test strips and overactive bladder medications to the third tier, or \$22 copay level.

Those include 24 name-brand blood glucose test strips, including One Touch, True Track, Accu-Check Comfort Curve and a number of private label strips. But Accu-check Aviva, Ascencia Contour, Freestyle Lite, and Precision Xtra, which account for about 75% of users, will still be available at the lower copay. DoD is working with the manufacturers to provide new matching meters at no cost for beneficiaries who need to switch.

Overactive bladder medications Detrol and Tropicium IR will be moved to the higher \$22 copay. Enablex, Ditropan, Ditropan XL, Oxytrol, Vesicare, Detrol LA, and Sanctura XR will continue to be available at the normal copays.

In addition, the antidepressant drug Pristiq will move to the third tier, along with Sular Geomatrix, used to treat hypertension. These medications were only recently introduced, so relatively few beneficiaries are taking them.

The recommendations will be submitted to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) for final decision.

Retired Military Personnel Seminar & Resource Fair

Keynote Speaker: RADM Leendert R. Hering, Sr. Commander Navy Region Southwest

Saturday, November 1, 8:00 – 1:30

Historic Liberty Station, The Rock Academy, 2277 Rosecrans Street

Plan to attend this informative seminar for retirees, future retirees and their families from all branches of the uniformed services. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) will participate with the Services in this seminar and provide a forum for updating retirees and annuitants on pay matters. Over 30 booths will be available to assist retirees with various areas of interest to them. Seminar topics will include:

TRICARE for Life BUPERS Legal assistance Veterans Affairs
Survivor Benefit Plan DECA/Commissary Legislative matters
Estate planning Social Security/Medicare

For more information contact Navy Region Southwest Retired Activities Office: 619.556.8987



The San Diego United Veterans Association will host the 22nd Annual San Diego County Veterans Day Parade on Tuesday, November 11, 2008. This year's theme is "The Forgotten War-Korea". The parade will start promptly at 11 a.m. The route is approximately 1 mile and runs south down Pacific Highway from Grape Street to Harbor Drive. For more information go to: www.sdVetParade.org

Silver Strand Chapter Selected for 5 Star Levels of Excellence Award for 2007

The Silver Strand Chapter has been recognized as being one of the very best chapters in the country for the third year in a row. VADM Norbert Ryan, President MOAA, presented the "Streamer" to CAPT Jim Cahill at the Annual Joint Chapter Luncheon in September.



Continued from page 1

Your local schools need your help: the elementary schools have identified improving reading comprehension as its most important priority. Having the students read one on one with a caring, trained adult is a contribution to that effort. No prior background or experience in education or working with kids is necessary for volunteers and the level of time commitment can be a minimal as desired. Just one hour a week will make a positive difference in the lives of the students by helping them strengthen literacy skills. For more information, contact Ellen Vernia: 619-522-8934 (X4801), or: evernia@coronado.k12.ca.us

A Retired Military Personnel Seminar and Resources Fair will be held at historic Liberty Station on Saturday, November 1 from 8 AM-1:30 PM. The address is The Rock Academy, 2277 Rosecrans Street, San Diego. Topics will range from Tricare for Life, Legal Assistance, Veterans Affairs, Legislative matters, Survivor Benefit Plan, and more. Please see Page 3 for more information.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering a new online service, "My HealtheVet," which is a gateway to veteran health benefits and services. It provides access to: trusted health information: links to federal and VA benefits and resources: and online VA prescription refill service. You will also be able to view appointments, co-pay balances, and key portions of your VA medical records online. To visit My HealtheVet site, go to: www.myhealth.va.gov/.

"No man's life, liberty or property is safe while the legislature is in session." Mark Twain 1886
Jim Cahill

New Silver Strand Chapter Members

Jim Jamison, Col, USMC
Ronald Bixler, CAPT, USN (Ret)

Welcome Aboard

LtGen Helland Addresses Joint Silver Strand Chapter/Navy League Dinner



LtGen Helland, Commanding General I MEF; Commander, Marine Corps Forces Central Command, spoke in clear terms about the military situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and other areas in Central Command where Marines are engaged. General Helland said the quality and morale of Marines today is exceptional and he could not be more proud of them. He discussed the plans to increase the size of the Marine Corps by several thousand and the need to fund new



weapon systems. He answered many questions from the floor with candor and good humor. It was an exciting and gratifying discussion by a senior military leader.

The 19th Annual

MILITARY WOMEN'S LUNCHEON



Guest Speaker

Brigadier General Angela (Angie) Salinas

Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot/Western Recruiting Region

Date: **Saturday, November 1, 2008**

Time: 1100-Social Hour/No host bar, 1200-Luncheon, 1300-Program

Place: Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar Officer's Club

Deadline for reservations: **Monday, October 20, 2008. No walk-ins will be accepted.**

For additional information contact: Toni Lopez (619) 462-6081

_____ (detach and mail) _____

Name(s) _____ Branch of Service _____

World War II Veteran _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

No. of reservations _____ @ \$25.00 per person= Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Military Women's Luncheon

Mail to: Toni Lopez, 4950 Treasure Drive, La Mesa, CA 91941

Coronado High School NJROTC Cadets Attend Leadership Training

In late August CAPT Pontis brought the leadership of Islander Company to the River Valley Ranch, owned and operated by Martha and George Kiss, Coronado natives, for an afternoon of leadership training that involved working with mini horses. This is a program that many corporations and other organizations are using to train leaders.



Participants work with horses in a structured setting to learn more about themselves and their relationships with others. The program fosters a deeper awareness of thoughts, feeling, behaviors and patters in their personal and professional lives.

Horses posses a natural sensitivity that allows them to reflect and respond to human emotions with astonishing clarity. This heightened intuition allows

horses to excel as facilitators and co-therapists in the process of self-discovery.

In this case mini horses were used for a very condensed course rather than the full sized horses in the multi-day training.



SBP 'Paid Up' Status begins Oct 1st Law Grants Special Allowance To Certain Survivors

October 1, 2008, marks a major milestone in the history of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). On that date, retirees who have paid at least 360 SBP (or Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan) premiums **and** who are at least 70 years old will be considered "paid-up" and will stop paying premiums.

Note: Since your retired paycheck is pay for the previous month you won't see the change until your November check.

You do not need to take any action to stop your SBP payment. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) will stop it automatically. Retirees whose SBP premiums will stop effective October 1, 2008, or soon after should have received a notice from DFAS in May. All other retirees will be notified of your "paid-up" status (that is, how many payments you've made) in your December Retiree Account Statement.

The paid-up provision was added to the SBP program by the 1999 National Defense Authorization Act, with an effective date about ten years after the law. Even if you reached age 70 or made 360 payments before October 1, 2008, the paid-up provision is **not** retroactive.

Joint Silver Strand Chapter MOAA /Coronado Navy League Dinner Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 22, 2008

RADM Leendert “Len” Hering, Sr., Commander, Navy Region Southwest

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:

- October 22 Dinner Meeting Reservation
- Pay 2008 Dues
- Donate to NJROTC & Naval Sea Cadets
- Donate to MOAA Scholarship Fund

Chapter Meeting Wednesday, October 22, 2008

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

Name _____
Phone _____

Reservations must reach our PO Box by **Noon, Monday, 20 October (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
Air Force Rep.	John Stihl, Maj Gen, USAF, (Ret)	435-4155
Army Rep.	Don Mayhue, BG, ARNG (Ret)	435-7400
Marine Rep.	Fred Allega, Col, USMC (Ret)	429-4282
Navy Rep.	Lee Pontes, CAPT, USN (Ret)	435-2658
Legislative Chair	Tom Bernitt, CAPT, USN (Ret)	424-6365
Newsletter Editor	Jim Strickland, Col, USAF (Ret)	435-6608
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
Auxiliary Liaison	Kathleen Prout	435-6623

**Dates to Remember
2008**

Chapter Meetings

October 22
December 2

Board Meetings

November 18

2009

Chapter Meetings

February 16
April 20
June 15

Board Meetings

January 20
March 17
May 19

SOUNDINGS

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

Return Service Requested

TIME DATED MATERIAL