Issue #2021-05

NEWSLETTER OF THE ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS

November 2021

ILCouncilMOAA.org

"NEVER

STOP

SERVING"

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS Never Stop Serving!!!



President's column

A couple of weeks ago Southwest, Lincoln Land, North Shore – Chicago Chapter representatives and I were at the MOAA Annual meeting and awards ceremony to receive five-star awards for our respective Chapters / Council. It was good to hear how well MOAA has weathered the pandemic in addition to hearing actions being taken to strengthen Chapters & Councils across the country.

Advocacy for America's veterans remains MOAA's guiding principle. Check out the MOAA web site for specific details on MOAA scholarships, grants, and general veteran advocacy.

Like many chapters across the country, our Illinois Chapters have been impacted by COVID restrictions and concerns. Several of us are looking at how we can best serve MOAA members residing in Illinois.

Our February Council Zoom meeting will focus on creating a way ahead for Illinois. Please be thinking about what we should, or could, do to remain a viable voice for veterans supporting them through community involvement, and state & federal legislative advocacy.

It is November. The month in which we celebrate the Marine Corps Birthday, remember all the veterans from all services and eras, and gather on Thanksgiving Day to give thanks for freedom in this land of plenty. And hopefully, along the way Congress will complete its work on the NDAA and other legislation of interest to our members.

As noted in the legislative column, our members need to be vigilant as these bills work their way on the Hill to make sure our concerns are addressed. As the holidays approach, I wish each of you a restful, healthful, and joyous holiday season!

Thanks for your continued commitment to all of veterans and your willingness to Never Stop Serving!

Semper Fi-Bob

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From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

It is hard to believe we will end 2021 in just eight weeks! Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve are just around the corner and as you know, with the holidays comes winter.

I have read or heard from hunting friends that the deer they have harvested are coming in with a layer of fat thicker than previous years.

Apparently, that may be an indicator of a longer and/or colder winter. As such, I have been storing up extra wood for the fireplace. What preparations have you made for the upcoming winter months? Below are some winterizing tips that I hope prove beneficial to you in your winter preparations.

Your vehicle:

Check the tire tread. Maintain tire pressure. Fill the washer fluid with a deicing formula. Maintain no less than half a tank of gas.

Consider having your vehicle professionally winterized. Make a winter kit to keep in your vehicle.

Below are some suggested items for your kit:

blankets or sleeping bags; waterproof mittens heavy socks hat with face coveringIt is hard to believe extra set of clothing ice scraper and snow brush flashlight with extra batteries jumper cables tow chain or rope first aid kit bottled water (with enough room for expansion, should it freeze) Multifunction tool (Leatherman, Swiss Army knife, etc.) road flares or other attention-getting device to use if you get stranded a small/collapsible shovel bag of sand to use for traction hand warmers winter boots snack food such as nuts, beef jerky, candy bars, granola bars, and other quick energy foods that will store well and not freeze

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From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator (Continued)

Your home:

Change the filters in your heating and cooling system. Perform annual maintenance on the system or hire a contractor to do it for you.

Seal leaks around windows and doors.

Check and clean your gutters and downspouts.

If applicable, clean your chimney and stock up on firewood.

Test your some and carbon monoxide detectors.

Disconnect and drain garden hoses and faucets.

If applicable, shut down the pool and winterize the sprinkler system.

Bring out the snow shovels and ensure they are in good condition. Pick up some rock salt or ice melt while it is readily available. If you do not plan to do this yourself, hire someone now that will keep your driveway and sidewalks clear of snow and ice when the time comes.

What happens if the power goes out?

Keep blankets in a convenient location and wrap in those to stay warm. Dress in loose, warm layers of clothing, such as wool or wool blend fabrics. Keep a stash of *Hot Hands warmers in your home. You can find this product just about anywhere at a reasonable price. They come in different sizes and provide warmth for 5-18 hours depending on which size/type you get. If you use a propane space heater, be very careful to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning by using proper ventilation and ensure you have functional carbon monoxide detectors in your home. If you use electricity to cook, be sure to have food in the pantry that does not require cooking prior to consumption such as canned meats, fish, vegetables, crackers, nuts, granola or energy bars, etc.

One last thought: With energy prices expected to increase upwards of 30% over the next several months, if you find yourself unable to pay your utility bill, just contact your utility company. Many offer extended payment options to pay down a high bill and some offer one-time grants to pay off a high bill. Communicate with your utility company beforehand so that you are prepared in the event you end up needing assistance.

For low-income families, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides federally funded assistance with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, and energy-related minor home repairs year 'round for those who are income-eligible. The Illinois contact information for LIHEAP is 217-552-2206 or 877-41109276 or via the website at <u>www.LIHEAPillinois.com</u>. The LIHEAP home weatherization web site is <u>www.weatherizationillinois.com</u>.

In closing, I would like to say thank you to our Veterans for your service and wish each of you and your family members a blessed Thanksgiving!

Chris Milchuck

100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier-11/11/2021



One of America's most iconic memorials will be celebrating its 100th anniversary on Veteran's Day 2021, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

It is visited every year by millions of visitors. The National Archives Still Pictures Branch holds photographs relating to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier depicting visitors paying their respects, wreath laying ceremonies, the Tomb itself, and the Old Guard

The Tomb is the final resting place for America's unknown soldiers of war from World War I, World War I, and Korean War. The story begins back in October of 1921 when Sgt. Edward F. Younger, U.S. Army, was chosen to select the Unknown Soldier from World War I. The selection took place at the city hall in Chalons-Champagne.

The Unknown World War I soldier laid in state at the Place de L'Hotel DeVille in Chalons-Sur-Marne, France and then traveled by train to Le Havre, France where numerous ceremonies were held, including the decoration of the Cross of the Legion of Honor by the French Minister of Pensions.

The Unknown Soldier traveled to Washington, DC aboard the USS Olympia and arrived at the Navy Yard on November 9, 1921. Upon arrival to DC, he lied in state at the US Capitol where President Warren G. Harding paid his respects.

A procession took place on Pennsylvania Ave where thousands of visitors lined up along the streets to watch the caisson pass by followed by several prominent people, including President Harding and Gen. John J. Pershing. Memorial services and internment were held at the Arlington Amphitheater.

The Old Guard is the name coined for the 3rd Infantry Regiment. Soldiers volunteer and go through training to become Tomb Guards. The duties include walking 21 steps on a black mat behind the Tomb and face east, north, and south and then switches his weapon all in 21 seconds.

Homelessness among Veterans in the United States

Being homeless, or being at risk of homelessness, is one of the most difficult problems any Veteran can face.

In its 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment <u>report</u> to Congress, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that just over 40,000 Veterans were experiencing homelessness (including those living on the street or in a shelter, temporary safe haven, or any place unfit to reside in) on a given night in January 2017.

Of those Veterans, 91 percent were men and 9 percent were women. That number stands in comparison to a total population of more than 18.5 million living Veterans.

These numbers represent a 45 percent decline in Veteran homelessness between the years 2009–2017.

VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans. The department's focus includes:

- Conducting coordinated outreach to seek out Veterans in need of assistance.
- Connecting homeless and at-risk Veterans with housing solutions, health care, community employment services, and other support.

• Collaborating with federal, state, and local agencies; employers; housing providers; faith-based and community nonprofits; and other groups to expand employment and affordable housing options for Veterans leaving homelessness.

VA's <u>National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans</u> (NCHAV), established in 2009, works to promote recovery-oriented care for Veterans who are homeless or at risk for homelessness by developing and disseminating evidence-based policies, programs, and best practices.

In 2012, NCHAV helped establish <u>Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams</u> (H-PACTs) at VA medical centers throughout the nation. H-PACT teams provide homeless Veterans with comprehensive, individualized care, including services that lead to permanent housing.

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VA's <u>Health Care for Homeless Veterans</u> program offers examinations treatment, referrals, and case management <u>services</u> to homeless Veterans at more than 135 locations.

The <u>National Call Center for Homeless Veterans</u> (1-877-4AID-VET) is staffed by trained responders providing support and resources to Veterans and their families who lack secure housing. Live chat with trained responders is available at the Veterans Crisis Line <u>website</u>.

Selected Major Accomplishments

1987: Initiated the <u>Northeast Program Evaluation Center</u> (NEPEC) to serve homeless Veterans

1991: <u>Established</u> that, in Vietnam Veterans, there does not appear to be a causal relation between homelessness and military service, including exposure to combat

2013: <u>Determined</u> there is an association between homelessness among Veterans and childhood problems such as abuse and family instability

2015: <u>Learned</u> that 30 percent of female and 9 percent of male homeless Veterans have children in their custody

2015: <u>Found</u> that Veterans who had been discharged from the military for misconduct had dramatically higher rates of homelessness than those who left under normal circumstances

2016: <u>Determined</u> that Veterans who had undergone sexual trauma while in the military were more likely to experience homelessness

2017: <u>Found</u> that Veterans' mental health and housing improved when they accessed free legal services in a VA facility.

New, Ongoing, and Published Research

As part of its efforts to reduce homelessness among Veterans, VA is developing new research and is supporting ongoing work on health conditions and risk factors that relate to homelessness.

VA research on the topic looks at the causes and risks of homelessness among Veterans and ways to prevent Veterans from becoming homeless. Researchers help develop interventions to improve homeless Veterans' health and provide resources and training to those who work with them.

Legislative Priorities for MOAA in 2021

By MOAA Government Relations Staff

Here are MOAA's priorities for advocacy as the 117th Congress begins its work. Our focus remains on all eight of the uniformed services and their service-earned entitlements.

As protecting health care and service-earned benefits continues to be a challenge, MOAA will press forward in engaging Congress to shape outcomes in these vital areas. There are steep hills before us. Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$27 trillion, and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion.

In view of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be at the ready to reach out to your legislators, and keep that engagement going as needed to make sure your voice is heard.

Our priorities may be updated, as warranted, during the next two years this Congress is in session. Together, we can succeed.

- <u>Recognize the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Landscape for Many of Our Priorities</u>
- Protect the Value of the Military Health Care Benefit
- Protect the MHS Pharmacy Benefit and Achieve Flexibility in TRICARE Pharmacy Copays
- <u>Address Barriers to Accessing Care Within the MHS, Including TRICARE Coverage Gaps and</u> Mental Health Care Access Challenges
- Achieve Concurrent Receipt of Service-Earned Retirement Pay and VA Disability Pay
- <u>Protect Family Support Programs, and Ensure Military-Provided Services (Housing, PCS, Child</u> <u>Care) Are Affordable, Readily Available, and Meet Quality Standards</u>
- <u>Reform the Presumptive Process to Support Veterans Claiming Service-Connected Disabilities</u>
 <u>for Toxic Exposures</u>
- <u>Achieve Equity of Benefits, Protections and Administrative Support for Guard/Reserve</u> <u>Members Consistent With Their Active Duty Counterparts</u>
- Sustain Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Foundational Missions and Services
- <u>Protect Arlington National Cemetery as an Option for Those Currently Eligible to Receive Full</u> <u>Military Honors, Through Expansion of Our National Cemetery</u>
- Sustain Pay Raises for Service members and COLA Raises for Retirees
- <u>Improve Survivor Benefits</u>
- Ensure the Coast Guard Receives Pay During a Government Shutdown

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Comments from the Council Chaplain

On Mon, Oct 18, 2021 at 2:54 PM Ralph Woehrmann wrote:

A few hours ago, I received an email from Major Jerry Jackson, the ever-reliable member of Heart of Illinois, telling me that I had been re added to the contact list. I had not heard from them for several months. Ch Corsaw had asked if I could attend the October meeting since she could not be there, I told her I could not and that I didn't know about the meeting but I offered to find another Chaplain. I also asked if she could forward a message to the chapter that I didn't know about the meeting. She did that. The 2 closests chaplains were Ch's Pfeffer and Terrinoni but neither were available. Ch Corsaw made some other arrangement for prayer. She is very reliable.

It was good to hear from Heart of Illinois and the ROA members who jointly make up that chapter but I was saddened to read of the death of MG Stanley R Thompson on 21 August in Bloomington. I first met him when he was assuming Command of the 1/123 based in Bloomington. He was a Major and was then promoted to LTC so as to be of equal rank with other Bn Commanders.

I remember three things about him. His writing style was direct and very clear. " I expect ..." began many of his sentences. He would tell you directly what he thought of you in the hope of you doing better. He once told me he preferred another Chaplain since he didn't feel I was performing up to par. I had to agree with him because I was going through a difficult time on the civilian side and I hadn't kept him informed of my whereabouts. I did better and we got along better. The other thing which I think many of my colleagues in those days will recall with me was a habit of his. My chaplain assistant and I or another Chaplain and I would be returning from making a sick or death visit and it could be pitch-black outside but in the distance one could see a small flame. It was LTC Thompson's pipe and behind that pipe was the smile which said " good job "

Now he rests from his labors.

I am not aware of his faith. Of immediate concern is that he be honored as befitting a fine officer that he was. The Chaplain school taught us to make use of the Military Ceremony at which attendance was required and the Military Service at which attendance was voluntary. At the former one would hear the deceased' accomplishments as a soldier or whatever. The latter would include such thoughts but would also include mention of his/faith. A proper grave side service would follow if possible. A mark of a civilized society is how well it honors its dead. All in charge should insure a dignified ceremony. Also of immediate concern is the welfare of the family, making sure that all temporal affairs are taken care of as well as making occasional visits to the family as they struggle to deal with a new way of living apart from their loved ones, That too is a mark of a civilized society.

May we as good American military, active or retired, receive high marks for both.

Ralph Woehrmann

CH (MAJOR) USA RET

Illinois Council of Chapter Presidents, Chaplain.

Stanley R. "Cork" Thompson

Dec. 19, 1942 - Aug. 24, 2021

BLOOMINGTON - Stanley R. "Cork" Thompson, 78 of Bloomington, passed away on Tuesday, August 24, 2021 at 6:03 a.m., at Carle BroMenn Medical Center, Normal after a 3.5 year battle with cancer.

His service was be held on Friday, August 27, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at Calvert & Metzler Memorial Home, Bloomington with Pastor Chad Sparks officiating. Following the service burial was held at the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Stanford with military honors conducted by the active-duty Army funeral honors detail. Visitation was held on Thursday, August 26, 2021 from 2:00-8:00 p.m. at the funeral home with Masonic Rites conducted at 8:00 p.m.

Stanley was born on December 19, 1942 in Bloomington, IL to William Stanley and Doris Irene (Bess) Thompson. He married Bonnie Kelly on April 28, 1963 in Covell, IL.

He is survived by his wife Bonnie; their three children: Tom (Jane) Thompson, Danvers, Todd (Becky) Thompson, Bloomington, and Trisha (Chad) Tattini, Lexington; along with their nine grandchildren: Josh (Shasta) Thompson, Jordan (Courtney) Thompson, Katie Thompson, Taylor (Jayden) Salisbury, Jaden Thompson and Raegen Thompson, Tanner (Mili) Tattini, Madison Tattini, Trey Tattini; four greatgrandchildren: Walker Thompson, Blake Thompson, Theo Tattini and Everly Salisbury; also surviving is his brother, Don (Marilyn) Thompson, Danvers; and his cousin Connie (Wes) Becker, Shirley; and many other relatives.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a daughter, Tiffany Thompson.

Stanley served as a career officer in the Illinois Army National Guard, enlisting at the age of 17 and retiring after 40 years at the rank of Major General on June 22, 2000. During his long-distinguished career, he received many awards and accolades.

Stanley retired from Nussbaum Trucking Company, Normal, IL after a long career, joining the company in September of 1979.

He is a graduate of Stanford High School and the US Army War College. He is a member of Covell Community Church, the Wade Barney Masonic Lodge 512, Bloomington Shrine Club and Tin Lizzy's.

He was President of Dale Township Fire Department and a lifelong member of the American Legion Post 56, founding member of the Illinois National Guard Historical Society and an Alumni of US Army War College.

Stanley was a loving son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather and a hero and legend to many. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Levels of Excellence Award Presentation-Council Of Chapters



MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (ret.) and MOAA Chairman Gen. Walter "Skip" Sharp, USA (ret.) present Col. Robert R. Tyler, USMC (ret.) from the Illinois Council of Chapters with a Levels of Excellence Award during the MOAA Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Va. on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Mike Morones/ MOAA)

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE COUNCIL!!!

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Levels of Excellence Award Presentation-LincolnLand Chapter



MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (ret.) and MOAA Chairman Gen. Walter "Skip" Sharp, USA (ret.) present Col. Eugene Bian, USAR (ret.) from the Lincolnland Chapter with a Levels of Excellence Award during the MOAA Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Va. on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Mike Morones/ MOAA)

CONGRATULATIONS TO LINCOLNLAND CHAPTER!!!

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Levels of Excellence Award Presentation-Southwest Chapter



MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (ret.) and MOAA Chairman Gen. Walter "Skip" Sharp, USA (ret.) present Col. Robert Norman, USAF (ret.) from the Southwest Illinois Chapter with a Levels of Excellence Award during the MOAA Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Va. on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Mike Morones/ MOAA)

CONGRATULATIONS TO SOUTHWEST CHAPTER!!!

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Levels of Excellence Award Presentation-North Shore and Chicago Chapter



MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (ret.) and MOAA Chairman Gen. Walter "Skip" Sharp, USA (ret.) present Col. Michael Peck, USA (ret.) from the North Shore and Chicago Chapter with a Levels of Excellence Award during the MOAA Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Va. on Friday, Oct. 15, 2021. (Mike Morones/MOAA)

CONGRATULATIONS TO NORTH SHORE AND CHICAGO CHAPTER!!!

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Ask Your Lawmaker to Delay DoD's Planned Medical Billet Cuts

By: Karen Ruedisueli

As the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) moves toward conference, where the House and Senate will reconcile differences between their versions of the bill, MOAA remains focused on supporting a key provision to ensure continued beneficiary access to quality health care. Section 721 of the House bill – which has already passed its chamber – would halt DoD's plan to cut medical billets for a year following the enactment of the FY 2022 NDAA. It also would require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the analyses used to support billet cut plans, including an evaluation of medical manpower requirements and the effect of billet cuts on local health care networks. The Senate NDAA, while still subject to floor amendments and debate, does not include this language at present. Keeping the House section in the final bill will be critical to preventing planned cuts from corroding your earned health care benefit. A recently released DoD report to Congress gave us the first glimpse at how medical billet cuts might impact individual military treatment facilities (MTFs) but offers few details on specific positions to be cut or mitigation plans for impacted beneficiaries. It also raises the following concerns:

- Most eliminated billets will be replaced either with civilian hires or contract personnel, or absorbed by remaining MTF staff. However, the report does not indicate what, if any, analysis has been done to assess the feasibility of hiring civilian replacement personnel or the ability of current staff to absorb additional workload.
- Medical billet cuts have been reduced from 17,005 in the original proposal to 12,801 a move driven primarily by the Army, which accounted for 95% of the adjustment. The medical billet cuts proposed by the Navy and Air Force appear to remain almost unchanged, and MOAA remains concerned lessons learned regarding Military Health System surge capacity requirements and limits to civilian provider availability have not been fully considered in the Navy and Air Force plans.

Although many of the cuts are for administrative or other nonclinical positions, there are still a substantial number of medical provider billets proposed for elimination, including 779 physicians and 1,081 nurses. MOAA also is concerned about significant cuts planned for pediatrics and mental health billets – areas already are under strain in the civilian health care system.

DFAS Resumes Debt Collection: What You Need to Know

By: Kevin Lilley

Military retirees and others who owe money to DoD no longer benefit from a COVID-related pause in some collection efforts, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) announced recently.

DFAS paused notifications and collections of new, out-of-service debts in March 2020. It also paused referrals of existing debts to other agencies (including private collection agencies) for recoupment. Both of those delays ended Oct. 1. Those who owe money to DoD – often to correct overpayments, or related to education or travel costs – and had their debt on a temporary hold will receive notification via mail from DFAS explaining the status change. Debts covered under the pause did not accrue interest or additional penalties/fees during the hold.

Individuals who wish to challenge the debt can do so through a variety of agencies, but generally not through DFAS itself. The agency offers suggestions and resources for various types of military debts, many of which, if issued in error, require corrections at the service level.DFAS offers lump-sum and other repayment plan options. Debtors may also file a Reduced Installment Payment Request if facing financial hardship.

More information on debts covered by the COVID-related pause can be found on this DFAS frequently asked questions page. Get more information – including phone numbers, mailing addresses, and office hours – at this link. (<u>https://www.dfas.mil/</u> <u>debtandclaims/contactus/</u>)

Council of Chapters

New Website

The Council has a new website. Address is http://www.ilcouncilmoaa.org

If you have any items or input for the website, contact MAJ (USAF, Ret) Dave Knieriem at the following email address: <u>dknieriem@casscomm.com</u>

MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization.

While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby—and does so actively—its status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Stated briefly: the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties. This newsletter follows the policies of MOAA National.





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ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS OFFICERS

President

Col Bob Tyler, USMC (Ret) 324 Greenway Lane Decatur, IL 62521-2529 H: 217.422.2983 C: 703.963.0471 robttyler@msn.com rtyler@richland.edu Carol Treasurer

Col Robert Norman, USAF (Ret) 1021 Woodleaf Drive O'Fallon, IL 62269-3149 H: 618.624.0449 C: 618.960.8854

cvclemaniac76@att.net

Nancy

Membership

LT Chet Klodnicki, USN (Ret) 14 Cottage Green Ottawa, IL 61350-9044 815.557.4322 C Klodnicki@msn.com Margie Chaplain

2115 East Lake Shore Drive Taylorville, IL 62568-8932 217.494.4369 ralphwoehrmann@gmail.com Cindy Special Advisor to the Council LTC John DeReu, USA (Ret) 406 Juniper Parkway Libertyville, IL 60048-3529 847.680.8775 idereu@aol.com Ginny

1st Vice President

COL Darrell Roll, USA (Ret) 826 Poplar Drive Petersburg, IL 62675-9578 H: 217.632.0198 C: 254.319.3251 Darrell.roll@sbcglobal.net

Polly

Secretary

Lt Col Jim Forman, USAF (Ret) 1807 Emerson Drive Champaign, IL 61821-5702 H: 217.239.2844 C: 217.493.0780 iformanmoaa@comcast.net Carol

Immediate Past President/Dir of Legislation

Col Richard V. Smith, USAF (Ret) 1065 Edgewood Drive O'Fallon, IL 62269-2860 H: 618.624.6113 C: 618.407.6368

smithrv75@gmail.com

Starla

Director of Communications

MAJ (Ch) Ralph <u>Woehrmann</u>, USA (Ret) LTC Dave Miller, USA (Ret) 61 Laconwood Drive Springfield, IL 62712-8727 H: 217.529.8014 C: 217.415.2837 miller42@aol.com Debra

Webmaster

Maj Dave Knieriem, USAF (Ret) 633 W Elm St; PO Box 95 Mason City, IL 62664-0095

217.899.5526

dknieriem@casscomm.com Bonnie

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The Greatest Casualty is

Being Forgotten!

