



# COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

5-Star Excellence Chapter



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA  
P.O. BOX 1872 VANCOUVER, WA 98668

ESTABLISHED 1970

website: [www.moaacolumbiariver.org](http://www.moaacolumbiariver.org)

September 2023

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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503-317-2273

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360-608-7789

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& Programs**

**Secretary:**

Jim Morse  
360-433-5605

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Evelyn Brady  
360-721-0865

**CRMF president:**

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360-834-2448

**Army Rep:**

Jon Frederick  
360-576-9078

**Marine Rep:**

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**Air Force Rep:**

Dave Casteel  
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**Public Health Rep:**

Chris Rubadue  
425-269-1902

**Surviving Spouse  
Liaison:**

Leah Davis  
310-491-8891

**Legislative Affairs:**

Buck Marr  
757-636-8686

**Membership Services:**

Terry Babin  
360-608-7789

**Public Affairs:**

John Donnelly  
360-721-3792

**Scholarship:**

**Chaplain:**

**Roster Manager:**

Jim Morse  
360-433-5605

I can welcome you back from our summer break with some very good news. National MOAA has again recognized our Columbia River Chapter with its Five Star Level of Excellence Award. We can be proud of our consecutive years of recognition at the top tier of MOAA chapters. The CRC is a terrific chapter with some very strong programs as you will see in the various articles in this newsletter.

However, you must know our numbers are shrinking and aging. Those hearty volunteers whose names you see on the left column of this newsletter's front page put a tremendous amount of effort to keep us on target and pressing forward. As I approach my last few months as your president, I feel the need to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the CRC board members and volunteers who made the LOE awards possible and my second round of four years as your president both fun and a success.

Having said that, we still have a lot to get done before 2024. September is a busy month. We cannot forget what happened on 9/11! The City of Vancouver and the Community Military Appreciation Committee (CMAC), of which our chapter is a partner, conducted a 9/11 Patriot Day Salute at Vancouver City Hall, 415 W 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Monday, September 11

beginning at 9:00 AM. According to CMAC Chairperson **Larry Smith**, Col, USA(Ret), this was the only 9/11 remembrance ceremony of its kind in the western US.

Another important patriotic function sponsored by CMAC will be POW/MIA Recognition Day at 11 AM on Friday September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the Armed Forces Reserve Center, 15005 NE 65th St, Vancouver, WA, just off NE Fourth Plain Blvd. National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 and features ceremonies held at the Pentagon, military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools, and veterans' facilities. CMAC sponsored a POW/MIA memorial located in front of the Vancouver AFRC where the ceremony will take place. The common purpose of all POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies is honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.



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**Sunday, Sept 17<sup>th</sup>**  
BBQ, Membership Meeting  
Scholarship Drive  
**Dave & Paige Staube's**  
Home: Washougal, WA  
1-4 pm  
See Page 13 for details

**Newsletter Highlights**

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**President's Message continued**

As part of this year's ceremony, **Mike Burton**, Lt Col, USAF (Ret), Vice Chair of CMAC and an associate with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency will provide an update on those listed as Missing In Action.

Another BIG date in September is our annual scholarship fund drive and BBQ membership meeting. So far, member RSVP response has been disappointing for the September 17th, 2023, Columbia River Chapter of MOAA membership meeting. The primary agenda is to meet, greet, and have some fun while supporting our scholarship program. I hope to see a lot of our long-term members again and many of our newer members, too. Help the chapter grow by bringing a potential member with you.

The meeting will be at the home of **Dave and Paige Stuebe** at 2480 North L St, Washougal, WA, 98671. They have a lovely place along the Washougal River. Directions are easy to Google. It will be on Sunday September 17th, 2023, from 1 to 4 PM (some may stay longer). **Dave** is making chicken tortillas and **Rod** will bring smoked brisket. You are encouraged to bring either a side dish or dessert, and/or your favorite beverages to share.

RSVP by email with how many in your party to **Larry DeVries** at [larrydev1@earthlink.net](mailto:larrydev1@earthlink.net) or call at 612-743-3509. RSVPs are requested by Friday 15 September so our host can be prepared. Donations to the CRC Scholarship Fund are encouraged. In lieu of a check to the CRC Scholarship Fund, a member may now donate online using the national MOAA donations tool at the following: [Donations to Foundation \(CRMF\)](#) (Click on the link and choose: "Donate only"). Please consider attending this annual event and get your RSVP to Larry right away!

I told you September was a busy month. As we have mentioned before, our chapter is supporting the Clark County Veterans Assistance Center (CCVAC) this year with their 2023 Veterans Stand Down & Expo on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from 9 AM -3 PM. It also will be held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at 15005 NE 65th St, Vancouver, WA, just off NE Fourth Plain Blvd. We applied for and obtained a \$1,500 grant from MOAA to help the CCVAC with the cost of feeding all the veterans who participate in the Stand Down program.

Here's the hook – MOAA requires that our chapter be hands on involved in the program. We met with CCVAC leadership, and they asked us to provide a cadre of volunteers throughout the day to assist veterans who need help with mobility, accessing, and consuming the meals. Licensed food handlers will prepare and serve the meals. Please let me know if you can volunteer some time to support this effort. We need a major effort of at least 20 people from our chapter so please respond by September 18<sup>th</sup> by phone 503-317-2273 or email [rodwill50@hotmail.com](mailto:rodwill50@hotmail.com).

**Rod Williams**  
President

**CHAPTER MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN DREAM FLIGHTS**

Columbia River Chapter members **Jon Frederick** and **Dick Ionata** enjoyed the opportunity to ride in one of *Dream Flights'* Boeing Stearman Biplanes during early August.

*Dream Flights* is a non-profit organization established and dedicated to honoring military veterans by providing flights in the same aircraft used to train many military aviators in the WWII era. Several military veterans and retirees from Vancouver's Touchmark, including **Jon** and **Dick**, manned the



front position in the Stearman for a ride originating at Pearson Airfield.

What does a veteran military and retired commercial pilot with over 17,000 logged flight time hours think of this biplane hop? See the companion article on page 10 in this Newsletter: "*Dick Ionata—Over 6 Decades of Contributions to Aviation Excellence.*"



***Federal Legislative Update: by Buck Marr***

CHAOS. Any questions? Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

I am guessing neither **Rod** nor **Dave** will let me get away with this short but accurate update.

For fun, let us go a level deeper. In common usage, “chaos” means a state of disorder. OK...still accurate. A quick google search shows that chaotic systems are predictable for a while and then 'appear' to become random. Legislative chaos is in full swing, and it will become more random as we anticipate FY24. Weather patterns are an excellent example of our current legislative landscape. We usually can predict weather patterns when they are near term, but the further we look ahead, it becomes almost impossible to predict.

So, a brief summary is in order.

In the near-term **Speaker McCarthy** is proposing a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a partial government shutdown next month. **McCarthy** has indicated a stop gap measure until early December giving Congress time to work their unfinished business...which, in the House, is almost everything.

Despite the usual challenges of legislative sausage making issues like abortion, Ukraine funding, border security, disaster relief and more lack bipartisan agreement. Of course, the elephant in the room is what should be the top line FY24 funding. The Senate has completed all its committee work using the top line written into the debt limit suspension law. The House has any number of suggested top lines. The Senate and House are far apart.

So, what does all that mean for the MOAA Nation? Chaos? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** Let's stay the course and intensify our efforts. We know what our constituency needs. We know how to advocate. We just need to get a “hitch in our gitty-up” and flood our legislators with support for veteran issues lest they wind up on the ‘cutting room floor.’

Two important issues have been part of both the April MOAA Advocacy in Action Campaign and MOAA's Advocacy in Action Summer Campaign: Reversing TRICARE pharmacy network cuts and restoring the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to 100% of projected housing costs.

You may recall that because of a Defense Health Agency action to cut contract costs, with little to no coordination, they reduced the minimum number of networked pharmacies from 50K to 35K. The impact on seniors, seriously ill and rural veterans has been horrendous. Through a blanketing advocacy effort by MOAA and The Military Coalition, both the House and Senate NDAA versions require a DHA report on the impact of the cuts.



18 May 2023: MGEN Buck Marr USAF (ret) updated Chapter Members on Federal legislative affairs.

The BAH issue is super huge for our military families who have been getting reimbursed for housing costs at less than 100 percent since 2015. As usual, the cut was a cost saving measure on the backs of our All-Volunteer Force. The BAH Restoration Act would raise the Basic Allowance for Housing to 100% of rental and utilities costs for servicemembers. We need to keep our eye on this issue during the chaotic next few months. Money is the key issue, and this bill is expensive. The law permits the DOD to raise the allowance, but it does not have to be adjusted to 100%. In view of the government's perchance to “cost save,” we must keep the advocacy pressure on. The troops deserve 100% of what they are authorized to deal with continuing tough economic times and recruiting times.

[Continued on page 4]



**Federal Legislative Update continued**

As you consider advocating for a specific issue, remember that MOAA has been successful when our members participate. Just a few years ago, legislation enabling the VA to deal with the effects of toxic burn pit exposure seemed impossible. Today, more than 340,000 veterans and their survivors have had PACT Act claims approved. Veterans and beneficiaries have received more than \$2B in benefits. If that does not convince you to spend 30 minutes periodically advocating, I guess I just don't know what will.

But, by the same token, the Richard Star Act with overwhelming sponsorship support in both Houses is not in the FY24 National Defense Act. Despite aggressive advocacy, the \$10B price tag over 10 years kept the bill from passing. We can never stop working until we see it in law.

The [MOAA Legislative Center](#) is an excellent source of details on MOAA's priority issues. I recommend a review of the prevalent issues and while you are at that site, please send email notes to our legislators soliciting their support for our top line issues. The Legislative Center makes it easy to send ready-made electronic messages to our elected officials.

The Bottom Line: Do not let the chaos in our Congress distract you from our role as the top veteran advocacy organization in America.

Being well read and knowledgeable on the issues is not good enough anymore; we must be continually communicating with our national legislators to be effective advocates.

**Buck Marr**  
Federal Legislative Affairs





## Legislative Contacts

### MOAA Legislative Action Center

<https://moaa.quorum.us/issueareas>

**MOAA Capitol toll free hotline at 1-866-272-6622**

### White House

Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
TTY/TTD: 202-456-6213 E-mail: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

The U.S. Government's Portal: <http://www.usa.gov/>  
U.S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>  
U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>

### Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez Washington's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District

<https://gluesenkamppez.house.gov/>

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Washington, DC Office:<br>U.S. House of Representatives<br>1431 Longworth House Office<br>Building<br>Washington, DC 20515<br>Phone: (202) 225-3536  | Vancouver, WA Office:<br>1053 Officers Row<br>Vancouver, WA 98661<br>Phone: (360) 695-6292 |
| Contact Congresswoman Gluesenkamp Perez via email<br><a href="https://gluesenkamppez.house.gov/contact">https://gluesenkamppez.house.gov/contact</a> |  |



### U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell <https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/>

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| WASHINGTON, DC<br>511 Hart Senate Office Building<br>Washington, DC 20510<br>Phone: (202) 224-3441<br>Fax: (202) 228-0514<br>TDD: (202) 224-8273        | SW WASHINGTON<br>The Marshall House<br>1313 Officers Row<br>Vancouver, WA 98661<br>Phone: (360) 696-7838<br>Fax: (360) 696-7844 | SEATTLE, WASHINGTON<br>915 Second Avenue<br>Suite 3206<br>Seattle, WA 98174.<br>Phone: (206) 220-6400<br>Fax: (206) 220-6404 - FAX |
| Contact Senator Cantwell via email: <a href="https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form">https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form</a> |   |  |

### U.S. Senator Patty Murray <https://www.murray.senate.gov/>

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| WASHINGTON, DC<br>154 Russell Senate Office Building<br>Washington, D.C. 20510<br>Phone: (202) 224-2621<br>Fax: (202) 224-0238              | SW WASHINGTON<br>The Marshall House<br>1323 Officer's Row<br>Vancouver, Washington 98661<br>Phone: (360) 696-7797<br>Fax: (360) 696-7798 | SEATTLE, WASHINGTON<br>2988 Jackson Federal Building<br>915 Second Avenue<br>Seattle, WA 98174<br>Phone: (206) 553-5545<br>Toll Free: (866) 481-9186<br>Fax: (206) 553-0891 |
| Contact Senator Murray via email: <a href="https://www.murray.senate.gov/write-to-patty/">https://www.murray.senate.gov/write-to-patty/</a> |  |   |

## Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

| Legislator                            | District 49                   | District 17              | District 18                   | District 14                 | District 20              |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Senator</b>                        | Annette Cleveland<br>786-7696 | Lynda Wilson<br>786-7632 | Ann Rivers<br>786-7634        | Curtis King<br>786-7626     | John Braun<br>786-7638   |
| <b>Representative,<br/>Position 1</b> | Sharon Wylie<br>786-7924      | Keven Waters<br>786-7994 | Steph. McClintock<br>786-7850 | Chris Corry<br>786-7810     | Peter Abbamo<br>786-7896 |
| <b>Representative,<br/>Position 2</b> | Monica Stonier<br>786-7872    | Paul Harris<br>786-7976  | Greg Cheney<br>786-7812       | Gina Mosbrucker<br>786-7856 | Ed Orcutt<br>786-7990    |

Note: All phone numbers are 360 area code, except where otherwise noted. Toll free **1-800-562-6000**  
More info at [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature)

**Surviving Spouses**, by Leah Davis,  
*Surviving Spouse Liaison*

**Attention: Surviving Spouses!**

**Medicare and Tri-Care Explanation of Benefits  
(EOB) Alert!!!**

For several months I had neglected to pay extra attention to the EOB from Medicare and Tri-care.

It wasn't until I started receiving unrequested Covid testing kits and other medical devices that were being charged to my Medicare account.

When contacting Medicare, they discovered that over the last 13 months my Medicare EOB showed 15 different charges for Covid test kits. The Medicare representative told me that these were fraudulent charges and are working on correcting this widespread **SCAM**.

The week of 8/15/2023 I received another EOB where I noticed another unauthorized payment from a Medical Supply Company. It showed that my EOB was being charged over \$5,000.00 for some medical devices I never received & didn't have a medical condition for their use. It also showed that I owed over \$1,300.00 for these devices. Again, I called Medicare questioning these charges. I was told, again, that it is another **SCAM** and that I would not be responsible for these fraudulent charges.

**BE WISE!!!**

**CAREFULLY EXAMINE YOUR EOB'S AND CHARGES. THEY MAY NOT BELONG TO YOU.**

**CALL MEDICARE, 1-800-633-4227, TO NOTIFY THEM OF ANY "FRAUDULENT" CHARGES.**

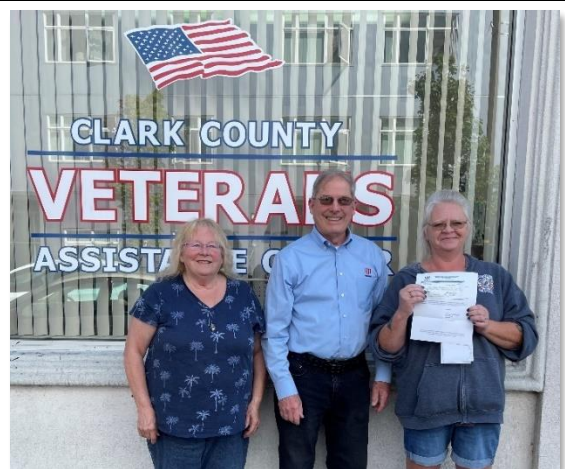
Leah Davis  
Surviving Spouse Liaison:  
310-491-8891  
leah@sanfill.com

**Columbia River MOAA Foundation  
(CRMF)** by Dave Casteel CRMF President

**WSU-V: Frank Hill** and I met with **Melissa Bassett** and **Grant Yenny** on July 17<sup>th</sup>. **Grant** is the new development director who will be handling our MOAA scholarship. We also learned more about how the Colonel Paul and Ivadell Crosby Columbia River MOAA Scholarship will be administered once it is fully endowed. Frank and I plan to meet the Veterans Resource Center supervisor after classes resume in the fall to learn of their needs that we could support.

**CCVAC:** Since 2018 our chapter has supported the Clark County Veterans Assistance Center (CCVAC). Last fall your CRC and CRMF boards approved supporting them annually at the bronze sponsorship level of \$750.00. This donation recognizes the herculean efforts they do directly supporting the needs of homeless veterans. Executive Director, **Judy Russel**, and CCVAC Board Chair, **Sharon Tyre**, decided that our donation was most needed for their Thanksgiving meals fund.

(This is addition to the \$1,500.00 we will receive as a Community Grant from MOAA going towards food costs at the Sept 29<sup>th</sup> Stand Down for homeless veterans that will be held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center).



(L-R) Judy Russel, Dave, and Sharon Tyre displaying our Bronze level sponsorship check (July 28, 2023)

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**CRMF Update continued**

**Vancouver VA: Fisher** House is back to pre COVID rules and eligible for 100% occupancy. As of mid-August, when this was penned, they had about 25 guests staying there.

Organizations are serving meals again and the meal train signups should be active soon, if not already. There is a group who is signed up to cook and serve a BBQ on Labor Day.

The VA has hired a new manager, **James Dorce** (Dor say). She told me he's a 20+ year US Navy veteran from Alabama who formerly worked in navy housing, but new to Fisher House. She said he has a big heart for helping others.

**VA Bldg 18 Transplant lodge** also has a new manager, **Claire Shepek**. I believe she previously worked in patient pathology at the VA.

**Fall Appeal:** You have undoubtedly read that homelessness among veterans is at an all-time high. You also know that inflation has driven up the cost of books and tuition at our universities—not to mention the cost of gas to drive to Clark College or WSU-V.

Your CRC and CRMF boards of directors have approved increasing the dollar amount of scholarships at Clark College from three \$1,000.00 scholarships to three \$1,250.00 scholarships—a \$750.00 overall increase annually.

**New this year:** This year's fall appeal will be conducted electronically using the chapter's dues and donation [link](https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx) at <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>.

Using this will save you having to write a check and the postage and time to mail it. Donations made using this MOAA link will automatically be split 50/50 between the Scholarship and Support The Troops funds. If you desire a different distribution for your donation (e.g., 75% or \$XXX.00 for Scholarships and 25% or \$XXX.00 to go to STT fund) please email **Frank** ([hillhouse2@comcast.net](mailto:hillhouse2@comcast.net)) or **me** ([shilohcamas@comcast.net](mailto:shilohcamas@comcast.net)) and we will ensure it is divided as you wish. (Note. I will be gone Sep 5-23).

If you use this web portal, please keep in mind that MOAA only forwards the proceeds to the chapter once per month. So, depending on when you make your donation, the chapter might not receive it until the following month (could be as much as 45 days later).

However, if you prefer not to use the MOAA online donation portal, you are certainly welcome to write a check and mail it to: Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) P.O. BOX 1872 Vancouver, WA 98668-1872. Please annotate your desired distribution on the memo line.

We continue to welcome those who take advantage of the tax savings that comes with a donation from their RMD using a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Simply tell your financial advisor that you want to make a QCD from your RMD to “Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF)” and mail it to the address in the preceding paragraph. It will be applied 50/50 to our Scholarship and Support the Troops funds unless you notify Frank or me as to a different distribution. If you give us a “head's up” when you execute the donation, we can be looking for it (which can take up to three weeks, depending on your institution).

The support we are able to provide to veterans in our community is made possible because of your support. YOU are the one who makes the difference. We thank you for allowing us to carry out your wishes and distribute your generosity.

If you have questions or need additional information please contact **Dave Casteel** at 360-834-2448, [shilohcamas@comcast.net](mailto:shilohcamas@comcast.net) or [CRMFpresident@comcast.net](mailto:CRMFpresident@comcast.net), or **Frank Hill** at 360-241-8252, [hillhouse2@comcast.net](mailto:hillhouse2@comcast.net).

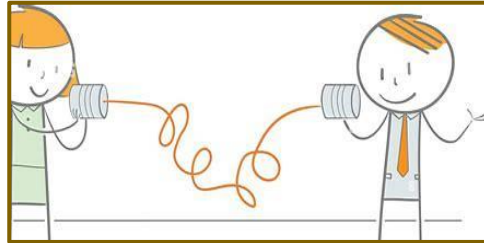
*The Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) is an IRC 501(c)3 public charity to which donations are tax deductible. Our Federal tax ID# is 47-4776049. We encourage you to consult with a tax advisor for complete information about the tax deductibility of your gift.*

## KEEPING CONNECTED

By Terry Babin

Columbia River Chapter's *Keeping Connected* Program is now in its eleventh year. We have returned to semi-annual calls in the spring and fall. The next call series is currently scheduled for October 2023.

Calls are made to Chapter members and spouses to keep in touch, update your contact information, and ask if there are any MOAA-related or welfare questions and issues that the Chapter officers might be able to provide information or assistance to you.



Calls are never made to solicit money or collect dues.

If you have not received a call (or email or voicemail) by the end of the first week of November, please let **Terry Babin** know at (360) 608-7789. Usual reasons for not receiving calls are not having a current preferred phone number for you, you have requested to be on the **Do Not Call** list, we have been unable to contact you for two or more consecutive call series (the **Unable To Contact** list), or you are not on the current Chapter roster.

A special “Thank you” to the members who provided alternate contact information last spring for when our callers are unable to contact the member/spouse. The response was terrific! You can update that information at any time. The alternate contact information is not distributed to help maintain privacy considerations with only the Chapter President, Chapter Secretary, and the Membership Services Committee Chairman having the list.

### ***Surviving Spouses***, by Leah Davis, ***Surviving Spouse Liaison***

In our Columbia River Chapter MOAA Newsletters, we have spoken often about how important it is to have the military veteran or a surviving spouse become a “PREMIUM” or “LIFE” member of the National MOAA Chapter. The process to join is on the National MOAA website ([www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)).

*(With a PREMIUM membership the spouse will have to continue to pay dues, but a LIFE membership can be transferred to the surviving spouse.)*

In 2018 a MOAA Surviving Spouse network was founded that specifically focused on surviving spouses of military veterans across the United States. This group has grown to over 800 members that meet via ZOOM on the third Tuesday of every month at 5pm EST, 2pm PST. Their mission is to problem solve and to help shape future legislation that affects surviving spouses. It is open to any surviving spouse that is a member of the National MOAA Organization.

If you are a current member, all you need to do is go to Facebook and search for “MOAA Surviving

Spouses and Friends”. Click on “JOIN”, then answer the questions. Once you are approved, they will invite you to join the Virtual meetings.

As a Surviving Spouse myself, this network has been a valuable resource tool regarding many areas of surviving spouse needs, i.e., Survivors Benefit Plan (SBP,) DIC, current & future legislation for surviving spouses and more.

I have also become a member of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). TAPS is an organization of family of care, compassion and hope. They are there for you, whether you need someone to listen, a shoulder to cry on, a connection to resources, or an opportunity to remember and honor your loved one.

TAPS offers help, hope, and healing to all who are grieving the death of a military or veteran loved one, regardless of the relationship to the service member or the circumstances or cause of death.

Both organizations offer GREAT RESOURCES to a Surviving Military Spouse.



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**COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER'S  
TRAVEL FORUM: by Terry Babin**

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**Do you know that beginning in 2024:** U.S. travelers will soon face a new administrative step in advance to visit Europe?

- What is the [European Travel Information and Authorization System](#) (ETIAS)?
- How far in advance of your trip should you register and what must you do to register?
- Is there a cost?

**Do you know that:**

- Several ocean and river cruise lines have changed their dress codes—how does this change what you might pack for the trip?
- There are ways to reduce packing those large bottles and containers (over 3.4 fluid ounces) for cosmetics, hygiene, and skin protection?
- Plane, train, and RV travel have often become more complicated in making reservations—there are ways to mitigate problems and avoid added costs?
- Many tour companies are now making it more affordable and private to travel as a single?



Even if you have finished your travel list, you may have children, other family members, and neighbors and friends interested in the “State of Travel” for 2024.

Our **October Chapter** meeting will have a live Travel Forum as the meeting’s program. The October luncheon and Forum are open to not only all members and spouses, but also your extended family and friends who have an interest in early travel tips and advice for 2024. Plus, a part of the program will be dedicated to advice and lessons learned by women travelers.

There are many post-pandemic changes in the travel world. Moreover, the surge in travelers has made it even more important that you plan and make essential reservations far in advance than what you might have previously experienced. This also a chance for you experienced travelers to offer advice and recommendations to the rest of us.

Looking forward to updates for and from all.



## Dick Ionata—Over 6 Decades of Contributions to Aviation “Excellence”

“*Awesome!*” “*Fun!*” These were the two words Columbia River Chapter member **Dick Ionata** emphatically stated to describe the experience of flying in *Dream Flights’* 85-year-old Boeing Stearman Biplane on August 8<sup>th</sup> at Pearson Field. High praise from a veteran aviator with over 6 decades and 17,000 flight hours experience. Yet, very interesting that Dick’s initial career path was not aviation. Flashback to 1957.

What do you do in 1957 as a new liberal arts degree-holder from a prestigious Ivy League university? You go to the Big Apple for art/design job interviews. Dick received three job offers from that trip—paying just enough to be a *starving Greenwich Village artist*. Maybe “flying” would be a better-paying and interesting option.

Brown University did not have a ROTC program; so, **Dick** had to go cold turkey into the U.S. Air Force. Ironically, his flight on a commercial aircraft from Rhode Island to San Antonio, Texas for aviation cadet training was his very first airplane ride.



As **Dick** transitioned from one airfield, aircraft, and training phase to the next, he proved to be an artist in the cockpit. He loved to “go fast” and had that “touch.” Fighters were the aircraft he wanted to fly. The problem was that his height made him too tall to fit in a fighter cockpit. Solution: scrunch down during the flight physical—really, really scrunch down. Success achieved as **Dick** passed the physical. He would subsequently not only qualify as an F-86 pilot but would later be kept on as an instructor.

In 1959 **Dick** recorded three significant milestones: (1) Most important, he married his forever sweetheart “**Gert**,” (2) He broke the sound barrier; and (3) He transitioned to B-52s since the F-86s were being retired. Again, **Dick** proved he was born to fly with his 1964 status as the youngest aircraft commander in his B-52 squadron and holder of five (5) instructor ratings. Within a year **Dick** would be flying sorties as a lead crew, including the first combat sortie in June 1965 from Guam to South Vietnam to strike the Ho Chi Minh trail.



By 1966 **Dick** faced another career choice. He had over 2,000 hours flying combat aircraft. He could remain in the Air Force, especially with his recent selection for the SR-71 reconnaissance *Blackbird* program or he could be released from active duty to transition to commercial aircraft. **Dick** chose to make the move to the commercial world and United Airlines (UA). He had both turbine and piston flight engineer ratings in the DC-6 and DC-7s. By 1966 he was flying co-pilot for UA [For perspective: His beginning UA monthly pay was about equal to what it now costs to fully fuel the Boeing Stearman in which he rode for his August 2023 **Dream Flight**.].



Dick would spend over 30 years with UA—interrupted in the early years by a mechanics’ strike that would find **Dick** alternatively supporting his family by being a Private Investigator certified to handle capital punishment cases (that is another story in itself). His time with UA also included setting three U.S. and world speed records in the Boeing 767 during 1995.



**Dick** and **Gert** would make the transition from United Airlines to landed gentry by moving to the Pacific Northwest to have acreage with cattle and horses (including racehorses). Of course, there had to be a “Cessna” too. **Dick** would also continue his contributions to aviation including certifying 123 world records as a 28-year member, and the current Vice-Chairman, of the National Aeronautics Association’s Contests and Records Board. **Dick** furthered his aviation experiences by flying the space shuttle simulator with a successful landing, and similar successful simulator experiences for the F-15 and F-22 in recent years. He still has that touch.

The foregoing only catches a few of the many aviation experiences and achievements that Dick has accomplished. Yet, no summary of **Dick’s** achievements is complete without noting that in 2017 **Dick** received the prestigious *Paul Tissandier Diploma*.

The *Paul Tissandier Diploma* is the prestigious international award given annually by the Fédération Aéronautique International persons who have served worldwide aviation by their exceptional and exemplary work, initiative, devotion, and other supporting efforts. In 2017 the U.S. was allotted 7 nominees to compete for the award. The U.S. chose to make a single unanimous nomination that year—**Dick Ionata**.



*Postscript*



**Dick** made his first flight in a Boeing Stearman in 1993. The 2023 flight 30 years later would still be just as wonderful. **Dick** would, of course, inquire if the most recent Stearman flight could include some acrobatics—just what you would expect from someone 87-years-young still enjoying the airborne sensation. Turns out **Dick** might not have been too old for acrobatics, but the 85-year-old biplane was.

Another year of soaring in the clouds with the eagles—Well Done **Dick!**

***Dick and Gert Ionata after Dick’s “Honor Flight” in the Stearman’s front seat at Pearson Field August 8, 2023***





### **Chapter ~ Membership Eligibility**

Chapter membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the following uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Surviving spouses of deceased officers are also eligible to join.



### **Columbia River Chapter ~ Affiliate**

Our chapter is an affiliate of the more than 350,000 member national MOAA which is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. MOAA and the chapter are nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter is an IRC 501(c)19 war veterans organization.

### **Newsletter Editor**

Our Chapter Secretary, **Jim Morse**, coordinates calendar inputs and newsletter distribution. You can contact him at 360-433-5605 or email him at [jlmorse77@gmail.com](mailto:jlmorse77@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: **Rich Wersinger**. You can contact him at 360-901-1915 or e-mail him at [editor@moaacolumbiariver.org](mailto:editor@moaacolumbiariver.org).



### **Newsletter Distribution**

We continue to distribute our newsletter by e-mail. If you are receiving this via postal service and would prefer e-mail please notify **Jim Morse**, our Chapter Secretary at 360-433-5605 or [jlmorse77@gmail.com](mailto:jlmorse77@gmail.com).



## Columbia River Chapter Membership 2023 Calendar Events

| Date                                 | Event              | Program/Speaker  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| September 17 <sup>th</sup><br>Sunday | Membership Meeting | Annual Fall Scholarship Social and Fundraiser BBQ<br>1 – 4 PM at home of Dave Stuebe,<br>2480 N. L St Washougal WA |
| October                              | Membership Meeting | Program Includes: Travel Forum   |

So far, member RSVP response has been disappointing for the September 17th, 2023, Columbia River Chapter of MOAA membership meeting.

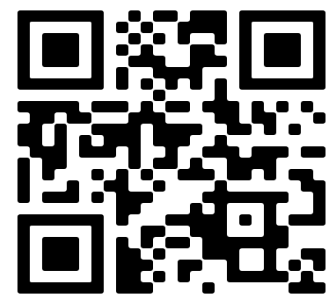
The primary agenda is to meet, greet, and have some fun while supporting our scholarship program.

I hope to see a lot of our long-term members again and many of our newer members, too. Help the chapter grow by bringing a potential member with you.



- **Where:** Dave and Paige Stuebe’s lovely place along the Washougal River. at 2480 North L St, Washougal, WA, 98671
- **When:** Sunday September 17th, 2023, from 1 to 4 PM (some may stay longer)
- **Price:** No cost. **Dave** is making chicken tortillas and **Rod** will bring smoked brisket. You are encouraged to bring either a side dish or dessert, and/or your favorite beverages to share.
- **RSVPs** are requested by **Friday 15 September** so our host can be prepared.
- Donations to the CRC Scholarship Fund are encouraged
- **RSVP: email how many in your party to Larry DeVries at [larrydev1@earthlink.net](mailto:larrydev1@earthlink.net) or call at 612-743-3509.**

| CRC Newsletter Schedule |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| First week of month     |          |
| February                | November |
| April                   | December |
| June                    |          |
| September               |          |



Jump to Our Chapter Website





# 9/11 PATRIOT DAY SALUTE

*Please invite family and friends to join us at Vancouver City Hall in honoring those who sacrificed their lives on September 11, 2001.*



Vancouver City Hall  
415 W 6th St



Monday, September 11  
9:00 AM

## EVENT PRESENTERS:

