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WIREGRASS CHAPTER MOAA NEWSLETTER

October—November 2026



**General Membership Meeting,
Saturday October 17, 2026,
St. Michael's Room, The Landing,
Fort Rucker, AL**

SCHEDULE & MENU

**Social: 6:00pm..... Invocation/Pledge
of Allegiance: 6:45pm..... Dinner:
7:00pm**

**>Mixed green salad w/assorted
dressings
>Schnitzel w/Jaeger gravy
>German red cabbage
>German potato salad
>Brotchen
>German chocolate cake
>Sweet & unsweet tea, water, &
coffee**

Cost per meal: \$25.00

Please make **Reservations by
noon Monday October 12th** to
Susanne Bailey at
(931) 237-1118.

**Cancellations must be made
by NOON Friday October 16.**

Cash or personal checks only!

Persons not canceling their reservation by
noon on Friday October 16th prior to the
Dinner Meeting will be responsible to our
Chapter Treasurer for full payment
of the reserved meals.



**Guest Speaker—
David “Mit” Kirkland
Founder, Wiregrass Black
History Channel
(See Page 4 for Resume)**



President's Message by Randy Godfrey

Volunteers enable our chapter to function, complete tasks, carry our events, and represent all our members. According to Merriam-Webster, the word volunteer functions as a noun, verb, and adjective.

- Noun: A person who performs a service freely and without financial gain.
- Verb: To offer to do something of your own free will, without being forced or asked.
- Adjective: Describing work or activities done by people who are not paid.

Volunteers give their most valuable resource, which is time. Time is a limited resource, making it one of the most valuable assets a non-profit or community organization can receive.

We want to recognize and thank three of our long time Chapter Board of Directors for their selfless service. Loel Ewart has been the Chapter Treasurer and Board Member for over 22 years. He maintained our fiscal and financial health. Due to his leadership, we successfully completed all required Fort Rucker and MOAA National audits. Othan Gilbert held multiple leadership positions for over 15 years. These include past Chapter President to current Membership Officer. Faye Swinehart represented our surviving spouses for over 10 years. She honors our families through support, guidance, and fellowship.

We also thank Team Day. Tom Day is our Vice President. Susan Day is our Programs Officer. Their efforts ensured chapter success and prosperity. We wish them a safe journey.

As a reminder, our chapter elections are this year. We are now accepting nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Life Member Representative, Public Affairs, Banquets, Legislative, Surviving Spouses, Newsletter, and Recruitment. The nominees shall be a regular member of the chapter, a widow/widower of a former member, or a spouse of a regular member in good standing. We will accept nominations at the October & December Dinner Meetings. The election and installation will be at the December Annual Meeting. Each elected officer shall serve for a term of two years or until a successor is duly elected and installed.

Please join us on 17 October for our Dinner Meeting at the Landing. Our guest speaker is Mit Kirkland, Founder, Wiregrass Black History Channel. Please see his bio listed in this newsletter.

Phone a friend, Phone a colleague, ET Phone Home. Encourage others to join our chapter. You are our organization!

Remember to start our day asking, “What are we doing for the Warfighter?”

At the end of the day, the answer is, “We provided no fail support to the Warfighter on the ground and in the air.”

MOAA Promise: Never Stop Serving.

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The Wiregrass Chapter MOAA Newsletter is the bimonthly newsletter of the Wiregrass Chapter, MOAA which is an Affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its Affiliates are nonpartisan. Wiregrass Chapter MOAA, P.O. Box 620075, Fort Rucker, Alabama 36362. Websites: <http://www.moaawiregrass.org>; <http://www.moaa.org/takeaction>.



Membership Report by *Othan Gilbert*

CW3

Thomas

Our chapter membership count currently is 105. It is noteworthy that 82 of these members are life members of MOAA National. In my recent letters to chapter life members I was dismayed to find out about the deaths of three chapter members that I had not known about previously. LTC Glenn Miller from Baytown, TX (date of death unknown); MAJ James Dayton from Dothan (died 21 Aug 2021); and

Mokrzycki from Ozark (died 14 Oct 2024).

Remember to patronize the 14 sponsors of our newsletter. We appreciate their support.

In my column in the last newsletter, I mentioned that I was going to reach out to those members with chapter life membership status and ask if they would surrender their right to membership residual values (some at \$100; most at the \$170 level) of their membership to reduce the

potential liability of the chapter. I am pleased to report that I have heard from most with only 12 remaining. I am hopeful that I will be able to contact those soon. Thanks to all of you that responded; none have refused.

Our long-time Treasurer, LTC Loel Ewart, is currently in a nursing home in Ozark and unable to fulfill his duties as Treasurer. We wish him a speedy recovery. Meanwhile COL Dennis Newton has assumed the duties as Chapter Treasurer pending final confirmation at the December 2026 chapter dinner/meeting.

Retired Officer Wives Association (ROWA) by *Mary Jane Collins*

How quickly this year is passing! We are in mid September and although it has been a hot summer season, it hasn't seemed as smothering as it can be this time of year in "Sweet Home Alabama." Even with the heat, our summer events have been enjoyable and our surroundings beautiful. The hydrangeas and Crape Myrtle surrounded by a profusion of every green color the Lord above could imagine, has made the summer months a favorite time to visit with friends and family.

We in the military have come to know this time of year as a time of welcomes and farewells. We were saddened to say farewell to the Gil family but happy and honored to welcome the new first family of Fort Rucker,

MG Philip Cain Baker, wife Courtney and daughters. May God bless their tenure with peace, happiness and safety.

We are now within reach of our most cherished holidays and of course in this state and region of the country football is on the mind and in the heart of most our citizens.

As we approach the holiday season I want to remind all wives of retired officers of our monthly ROWA lunch meetings. We gather each second Tuesday of the month for lunch at Divots on Silver Wings Golf Course at 11:00. You are all welcome and encouraged to attend.



Legislative Report by *Ray Collins*

Since Congress approved a continuing resolution on September 1, that will fund the government until December 11. The resolution will insure that our military as well as some other vulnerable institutions will be able to keep the doors open and their employees paid. House Bill H.R. 6500 states all military branches must operate under FY 2026 funding levels until the

December 11 deadline. The Continuing Resolution puts the Pentagon 1.5 trillion dollar budget request for FY 2027 on hold. During continuing resolution, military organizations are not allowed to start new defense programs nor can they increase existing production which should be a point of concern considering the continuing conflict with Iran.

The Safeguard Veterans Act would reinstate civil and criminal penalties for unaccredited

individuals who charge veterans for claims assistance. The act would also strengthen VA oversight and modernizes the departments enforcement system. This Act has been introduced in the House version of the FY 2027 National Defense Authorization Act.

The addition of military spouses to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit continues to be a problem for the military coalition with its members refuting most all the arguments against such a move.

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Alabama AMVETS Post 7, and Friends of the American Legion for preparing the meal.

Rather than simply reading names, organizers invited the Purple Heart recipients around the room to introduce themselves and share the conflict in which they received their awards. The introductions reflected generations of American military service, with recipients who served in Vietnam, Afghanistan and other conflicts. Among those recognized were Michael Weaver, Robert Ramsey, Darrell Fell, Dwain Wartwick, Butch Faust, Pat Sheehan, Mary Riley, *(continued on Page 6)*

TREASURER'S REPORT by COL (Retired) Dennis Newton

I have been appointed to act as the Treasurer until the election is completed and the new officers are installed in December. We are praying for Loel as he is recovering. I have been running the day-to-day operation for the last couple of weeks and have put together a reconciliation which agrees with Loel's August report. We have \$26,968.09 available between our various accounts. We have \$7,978.60 in the checking account. We are all in this together to serve our Servicemembers and their Families.

COL (Ret) Dennis Newton, drnewton@me.com, 334-465-5079.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	MOAA WIREGRASS August 2026 Reconciliation					
2		Total Balance	Business Savings	Check Number	Business Money Market	Business Non-Profit Checking
3	Starting Balance=7/1/26	\$27,643.48	\$5.57	0.00	\$18,975.06	\$8,662.85
4	7/10/26			1012		-\$500.00
5	7/14/26			1013		-\$60.00
6	7/16/26					\$150.00
7	7/28/26			1014		-\$29.00
8	7/31/26		\$0.00		\$8.86	
9	Closing Balance	\$27,213.34	\$5.57		\$18,983.92	\$8,223.85
10						
11				Outstanding checks	Date	Amount
12				1015	7/29/26	\$245.25
13						
14	Reconciled Balance	\$26,968.09	\$5.57		\$18,983.92	\$7,978.60
15						
16	Dennis R. Newton, Treasurer	SIGNED				
17						
18						
19						

Purple Heart Recipients Honored at Ozark Luncheon

Article & Pictures by Travis Parker

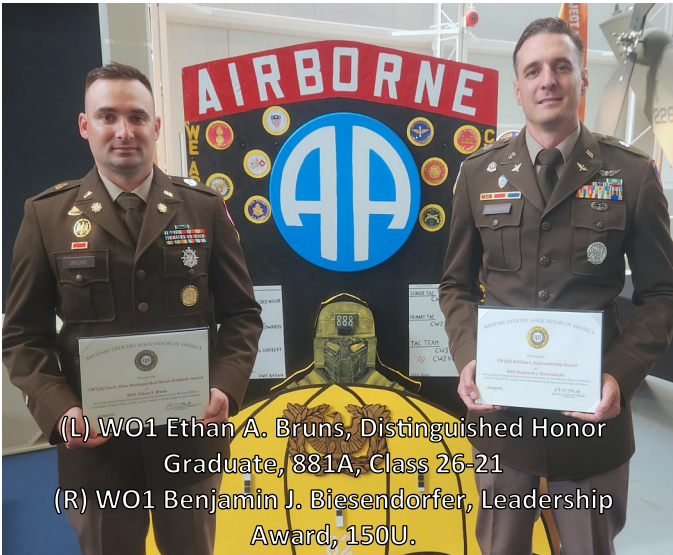
For Col. Keith Hill, the meaning of the Purple Heart did not fully sink in until he was a teenager standing at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., watching his father search the black granite wall for the name of a fellow soldier. Hill was visiting the memorial on a church youth trip in 1994 when he saw his father walk slowly along the wall, looking for a name. After several minutes, Hill said, he realized for the first time that his father had been awarded two Purple Hearts during his service in Vietnam. That memory helped frame Hill's remarks Thursday, August 6, at the Purple Heart Recognition Day Luncheon at the Holman House in Ozark.

The event brought together Purple Heart recipients, Veterans, family members and representatives of veterans' organizations for a meal, fellowship, and a ceremony honoring those wounded or killed as a result of enemy action. The program opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Skip Bearman, the Vice President of the Wiregrass Military Order of the Purple Heart. Organizers thanked the Ozark American Legion, Vets for Vets: We Got Your Six, Southeast



Purple Heart recipients are pictured with Colonel Hill on the right.

Warrant Officer & JROTC Awards



(L) WO1 Ethan A. Bruns, Distinguished Honor Graduate, 881A, Class 26-21
(R) WO1 Benjamin J. Biesendorfer, Leadership Award, 150U.



(L) WO1 Zachary G. Tackett, Distinguished Honor Graduate, 131A, Class 26-22
(R) WO1 Cameron D. Fish, Leadership Award, 153U



(L) WO1 David N. Korn, Leadership Award, 153A, Class 26-23
(R) WO1 Dylan M. Merchant, Distinguished Honor Graduate, 153A



(L) Mr. William P. Dunn, Leadership Award, 131A, Class 26-24
(R) Mr. Anthony L. Wilson, Distinguished Honor Graduate, 350F

Guest Speaker—David “Mit” Kirkland born and a lifelong resident of Dothan. His professional career began in 1973 at WDIG radio in Dothan as a radio announcer. His Television career began in 1975 at WDHN TV. He also spent time as an employee of WTVY TV4. In 1988 he became co-owner of Scenic Cable Network and Productions where he spent the rest of his career until it sold in 2023.

Mit Kirkland’s partnership with Scenic Productions has provided production services for major television networks as well as large multi-national corporations including Michelin, GE, Sony, and Georgia-Pacific. Scenic has also provided production services for The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, The Montel Williams Show, Fox News Channel, and The Food Network. Over his career, he has received numerous awards in his profession.

Mit Kirkland was awarded the 2014 Small Business Person of the Year by the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce and he has been featured in the Alabama News Center as one of Alabama’s Bright Lights in 2015. Mit’s commitment to improving the Dothan community is solidified over the years with his work on the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Wiregrass Area Food Bank Board, Dothan Botanical Gardens President of the Board, the George Washington Carver Museum Board, the Dubois Institute (Aunt Katie’s Community Garden) Board, Southeast Alabama Community Foundation Board, and Vice-Chairman of Dothan Downtown Redevelopment Authority. In April of 2022 Mit was inducted into the Dothan Business Hall of Fame.

After retiring in 2024 he created and founded The Wiregrass Black Channel on YouTube which features true stories of the people and places that help shape the Wiregrass area as well as impacting the world.

Photos from August 15, 2026 Dinner



Photos from August 15, 2026 Dinner (continued)



(Purple Heart from Page 3) Jason Gerstner, Bruce Carter, Paul Cartmill, Robert Green, Frank Estes, Matthew Stockton, and Cindy Junger. Several Vietnam Veterans spoke of service in the 1960s and early 1970s, while Cartmill represented a later generation of Veterans with a Purple Heart from Afghanistan.

The Purple Heart traces its history to Aug. 7, 1782, when Gen. George Washington established the Badge of Military Merit during the Revolutionary War. The award eventually fell into disuse before being revived on Feb. 22, 1932, the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth. Today, the Purple Heart is awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who are wounded or killed as a result of enemy action. Unlike many military decorations, it is not awarded simply for valor. Instead, it symbolizes personal sacrifice and the physical cost of military service.

Hill, an Army aviator since 2001, shared his own connection to the award. He is qualified in the OH-58D, MH-47 and CH-47 and has more than 4 1/2 years of combat deployments with the 1st Infantry Division and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Fort Campbell. He has held leadership positions ranging from platoon leader to brigade commander.

Hill told the gathering that his teenage experience at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial changed his understanding of what his father and other Veterans had sacrificed. He encouraged those gathered to remember that behind every Purple Heart is a story of service, sacrifice, family, and survival. Following Hill's remarks, DAV Commander Bob Ammons presented Challenge Coins to the Purple Heart recipients. American Legion Commander Travis Parker presented each recipient with a Certificate of Appreciation.

The ceremony also included a moment of remembrance for the approximately 1,100 Alabama service members still listed as missing in action. Attendees paused to remember those service members and their families. The luncheon concluded with fellowship and an opportunity for Veterans and supporters to visit with one another.

For those gathered at the Holman House, National Purple Heart Day was more than a date on the calendar. It was an opportunity to look across the room at men and women who carried the visible and invisible reminders of war — and simply say, "Thank you."

Church Humor—A Sunday school class was studying the Ten Commandments. They were ready to discuss the last one. The teacher asked if anyone could tell her what it was. Susie raised her hand, stood tall, and quoted, "Thou shall not take the covers off thy neighbor's wife."

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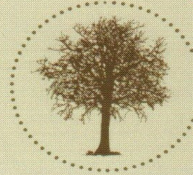
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Important 2026 Dates for MOAA Wiregrass Chapter		
Board of Directors' Meeting	Newsletter Input Suspense	Bi-Monthly Meeting
10/12/2026		10/17/2026
11/9/2026	11/18/2026	
12/14/2026		12/19/2026
Dinners will be on Saturdays at 1800.		

MOAA Membership Application Wiregrass Chapter



Wiregrass Chapter
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
PO Box 620075
Fort Rucker, AL 36362-0075

Enclosed is my check, in accordance with the schedule below, for membership in the Wiregrass Chapter of the *Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)*.

Individual joining: 1 Dec – 28 Feb \$12.00; 1 Mar – 31 May \$9.00; 1 Jun – 31 August \$6.00;
 Membership 1 Sep – 30 Nov \$3.00.

NAME: _____ RANK: _____
 BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____ ADDRESS: _____
 CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
 DATE OF BIRTH: _____ PHONE: _____
 SPOUSE'S NAME: _____
 E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

NATIONAL MOAA MEMBERSHIP # _____ National Life Member? _____

Membership in the National MOAA is required for membership in our local Chapter. If you are a member of National and do not know your membership number so indicate and we will obtain it from National.

Make checks payable to Wiregrass Chapter MOAA. Thank you for your support!
Webaddress: www.MOAAWIREGRASS.org.