



The Salute Extra



Monthly newsletter of the Portsmouth Area Chapter, an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America, serving Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Smithfield, Franklin, and surrounding counties, Virginia, since 1983. Dinner meetings are the Second Thursday of each month except July and August. Although **MOAA** and **PACMOAA** actively lobby legislatures for all US uniformed services members, we are nonpartisan and do not participate in political activities.

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ANNUAL JOINT BRUNCH WITH MOAA SPEAKER 17 JULY 2022

What a great way to spend part of a Sunday – delicious food, wonderful camaraderie, visiting with members from other chapters, and listening to an amazing MOAA Board Member. **37 members, spouses, and guests participated in our annual brunch at Roger Browns** – 4 from VIPMOAA (including their President, Jim Pauls), 8 from HRCMOAA (to include the VCOC President, Linc Smith), 24 from PACMOAA (including Hal Hostetler, PACMOAA 1st VP, representing President Bill Smith), and Ro Robotham, USAF. Linc Smith brought greetings from VCOC and spoke briefly to the group. Unfortunately, 6 members/spouses were not able to attend due to illness, etc. Hal Hostetler welcomed attendees.

COL Rojan Robotham, USAF visited our brunch representing MOAA. She is on the Membership Committee, Member Services Committee, and Scholarship Fund Board. Hal Hostetler greeted her for the group and reviewed her very impressive bio. She graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor’s degree in physics and a master’s in technology management from the University of Phoenix. Hal noted that many of her positions were Air Force acronyms that most of us did not understand but they were impressive!



While introducing herself to the group, COL Robotham told us to call her **Ro** since most people could not pronounce her name correctly. She brings her enthusiasm and active-duty perspective to positions with MOAA as well that of being a female officer and a Mom with 3 children! It was very interesting listening to the path she traveled to become an Air Force officer. She did not think she came from a military family and was not interested in it but competed for a scholarship to visit the Air Force Academy and shoot rockets. “Who wouldn’t want to do that”! She was in a STEM program in high school and was offered a full scholarship if she majored in physics at the Air Force Academy. After visiting the AF Academy, she decided she didn’t want to go there and finally decided to go to Georgetown.

Ro also discussed finding out that she is actually a 4th generation veteran! When her grandfather died recently, she asked her father about a picture of her grandfather in uniform in the hall stairway. They found out he has served probably in WWII and also found out her great grandfather served in WWI as well as an uncle that served.

Questions from the audience included MOAA’s priorities for the year, several questions/concerns per the downsizing of the military health care system, and concerns per the Hampton VA Medical Center. Ro listened carefully to all questions/comments and promised to take our concerns back to MOAA. She noted that many of

the issues we raised were of concern to her also at the same time, per General Atkins, MOAA President and CEO, reminding us that not all the information distributed by the media is accurate or a true reflection of what is occurring.

It was truly a pleasure to see an active officer that is a Mom being so involved in the military community. She is working hard to make sure MOAA continues to thrive by bringing in more younger members/ active duty and offering suggestions on ways to do so. Several times during her “presentation”, she reminded us that we all need to bring another person to a meeting/encourage them to join your chapter/MOAA. During the first half of the brunch time, Ro circulated sitting and talking with members at all tables as well as talking with members individually before they sat at a table to eat. Most MOAA visits are usually very interesting and factual done by retired officers, mostly males. Getting to spend so much time talking with Ro and hearing about her journey to becoming a military officer was most enjoyable. It saddened me to hear that Ro still faced some of the issues I faced when I retired from the Army over 30 years ago, like what is your husbands rank!! We all served, whether still active duty, retired or former officers, and MOAA is fighting/working diligently to maintain our benefits.



Submitted by Sherry D Ferki, MAJ., USA (Ret)
 PACMOAA 2nd VP/Membership Chair
 VCOC Surviving Spouse Liaison

July Brunch Pictures



Above: CDR Linc Smith, VCOC President
Below: LTC Paul Pratt, CAPT Rick Titi



Above: The Edge family.
Below: Kathleen Edge asking a question about local VA healthcare. Ken & Donna App to left below.





Above, MAJ Sherry Ferki USA (Ret), asking questions of Col Robotham



Above Kay Watkins and MAJ Steve Watkins USA, asking Col Robotham a question.
Below, CWO4 Doug Weller, USCG (Ret) winning the MOAA raffle.



Above: Col Robotham USAF, MOAA Board of Directors





Above Top: Jack Hilgers with our Hostess, Marie

Above bottom: The Wilsons with LT Joyce Johnson USN (Veteran), and guest Patricia Peet



Left L to R are: CAPT Bruce LaLonde, USN (Ret) with his guest, Ms. Teresa Wilfong, CDR Link Smith USNR (Ret) VCOC President, and Col Ro Robotham, USAF, MOAA BOD, our July Brunch Guest Speaker.



Above: Col Ro Robotham, USAF, MOAA BOD, being presented a PACMOAA Certificate of Appreciation from COL Hal Hostetler. Below: More importantly, COL Hal Hostetler presenting a Cherished PACMOAA Coffee Mug to Col Robotham!



Left: CDR Ken App wore the PACMOAA Logo Polo Shirt, which can be ordered. Price depends on shirt quality, logo, and, if desired, embroidered name.

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP RECOGNITION DINNER June 9, 2022

It was great to meet our scholarship winner and his mother at our annual meeting honoring our scholarship winner. In the past, PACMOAA received a \$300 grant from USAA each year to help finance recognizing scholarship winners, their parents and JROTC cadets at the June meeting. Again, many thanks to USAA for their generous support for the past 5 years and to MOAA for continuing this grant program this year.

As noted earlier, our scholarship winner, his mother, and JROTC instructor were able to join us this year. Howard Link graduated from Great Bridge High School and is going to attend Virginia Military Institute. His mother, Phaedra Link, was able to join us as well as his JROTC instructor, Lt Col Christian Wendler, USAF (Ret). It was a pleasure to talk with this very accomplished student and his mother. It was also interesting to be able to talk with Lt Col Wendler again as one of his JROTC cadets, Jade Lewis, won one of the scholarships in 2021.

After being presented a certificate and beautiful PACMOAA mug, Howard addressed the group with the following statement:

Hello. My name is Howard Link. I am so thankful that I was chosen for the 2022 PACMOAA scholarship. I was born In Corpus Christi Texas in September, 2003, and moved here to Virginia in 2006. I moved through the Chesapeake School system from Kindergarten to 12th grade. During that time, I joined Boy Scout Troop 6, where I earned my Eagle Scout rank. I attend River Oak Church and have been to and volunteered at VBS in the summers. I've played a multitude of sports, but I found my niche in Tennis. During High School, I was active in the Marching band, Tennis team, Model UN, and Air Force JROTC. Even though the world shut down with covid, I still became the Senior Patrol Leader for my Scout troop, President of MUN, and Squadron Commander for my ROTC unit. I applied for the Early Decision option for the Virginia Military Institute and was accepted in November 2021. Earlier this year, my application for a 4-year NROTC Scholarship to VMI was accepted as well.

But why would I pursue military service?

I grew up in a military house. While both my mom and dad served in the navy, I remember visiting my dad's ships learning about his work. A fond memory is while I was aboard the USS Wasp, I would "squash" the little wasp roundels on the floor (I must have been 10 or 11). For the longest time, I didn't feel like military service was the career for me. I think I was the most afraid of spending long periods of time away from home, or the vigorous military lifestyle. This attitude began to change as I entered high school and AFJROTC. The instructors, Lt. Col. Wendler and SMSgt Smith taught an amazing class that encompassed the key aspects of the Air Force and the military as a whole, as well as teaching proper uniform wear and discipline. Although military service isn't mandatory for JROTC, many future servicemen and women often take the class to prepare for their future. I took it because I wanted to wear the uniform. But during the last 4 years, as I began to contemplate life after high school, I was becoming more drawn to service in the Navy. Last summer, I was my school's representative to the Boy's State program. Although a more civil government-oriented program, it still taught me great lessons on leadership, public speaking, and service in the community and nation. I also attended the Naval Academy Summer Seminar program virtually. One session, a speaker talked about a graduate who always kept the motto "If not me, then who." This stuck with me. I felt like I connected with that. I love the simple, yet gritty truth in "If not me, then who." I knew that from that moment, I was going to be a Naval Officer.

It was either from an Air Force class, the TOPGUN movies, or talking to real aviators that I found myself aspiring to become a naval aviator. While I unfortunately did not receive an appointment to the Naval Academy, I know that my path through VMI and NROTC will give me a real shot at fulfilling my aviation dreams.

But...

Unlike the Naval Academy, VMI does require tuition, which is where I extend my thanks to you. I am so grateful that I was selected to receive the PACMOAA scholarship. The ability you give young students to reach their goals is truly admirable. I thank you for your time and support, and I can't wait to share with you my future accomplishments!

The Churchland MCJROTC under the direction of Lt Col Pratt, presented the colors before we said the Pledge of Allegiance and were led in prayer by Bob Brewer, CAPT, USN (Ret). Fortunately, the JROTC cadets were able join us for dinner this year and it was great talking with them. The Churchland MCJROTC has presented colors at several other scholarship dinners. Woodrow Wilson High School AJROTC, I.C. Norcom NJROTC and Smithfield High School AJROTC have also presented colors at previous scholarship recognition dinners.

PACMOAA again offers our congratulations and best wishes for a successful college experience and military career to this outstanding student. His parents and JROTC Instructor are to be commended for facilitating the success of Howard thus far.

Submitted by: Sherry Ferki, MAJ, USA
Scholarship Committee Co-Chair



Churchland HS MCJROTC Color Guard at the Ready

Presenting the Colors



Left: PACMOAA President, COL Bill Smith welcoming Membership and introducing the JROTC Awardee, Howard Brian Link III, his mom, Phaedra Link, and Guest Speaker, Kayla Gradwell

Below: Bill, Presents Kayla with a Certificate of Appreciation AND the ESTEEMED PACMOAA Mug!!!





Above, The JROTC Awardee, Howard Brian Link III, being presented with The PACMOAA Scholarship and the Esteemed PACMOAA MUG, by MAJ Sherry Ferki and CDR Scott Dickinson, with his mother, Mrs. Phaedra Link, proudly watching.



Howard's remarks after being presented the Scholarship. (See p. 5)