

Early Days

I

The Retired Officers Association (TROA), predecessor of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), was founded in Los Angeles, California on February 23, 1929. The first leaders of the organization hoped that by joining together they could provide assistance and advice to other military officers from all branches of the uniformed services. With the commencement of WWII, TROA moved to Washington, DC and by 1944 had a membership of 2,600. TROA became MOAA on January 1, 2003, signaling its change in focus from retirement issues to the full spectrum of military life, active and retired.

Several times during the summer of 1964 a small group of retired officers met at the home of BG Thomas B. Catron to discuss the possibility of organizing a local chapter of the Retired Officers Association. Lists of retired officers in the Baltimore area were obtained from TROA. As a result of these meetings, an organizational meeting was held on 21 October 1964 at the Ft. Meade Officers Open Mess, presided over by Col Eugene J. Blakely, Jr., AUS (ret). At the meeting the Greater Baltimore Chapter of the Maryland Retired Officers Association (MROA) was established, covering the areas of Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Howard County. Of the 44 officers attending, 36 signed membership applications and became the Chapter's founding members.

WO Abraham Trattler, USCG (ret), for the Nominating Committee, presented a slate of Chapter Officers and Board of Directors, who were unanimously elated. They were:

Officers

President	BG Thomas B. Catron, II, USA (ret)
1 st Vice President	COL Eugene Blakely, Jr., AUS (ret)
2 nd Vice President	LTC John D. Slaughter, USMC (ret)
Secretary	CDR Arden E. Baughman, USN (ret)
Asst. Secretary	MAJ Eva Katowski, ANC (ret)
Treasurer	COL Leroy Brundick, AUS (ret)

Board of Directors

COL Donald McGrayne, USA (ret)

COL G. E. C. Garrett, USA (ret)

COL Donald C. Foote, USA (ret)

WO Abraham Trattler, USCG (ret)

The time and place of the next meeting was left at the call of the President.

On October 30 1964 BG Catron held an organizational Board of Directors meeting at his home. Committees were appointed and instructed on their duties. This confirmed appointments he had made at the 21 October meeting. They included Col Raymond Egner, AUS (ret), Constitution and By Laws, and COL Lloyd E. Stegner, AUS (ret), Membership. COL Stegner remained in this position at least through 1974. At the 23 February 1965 meeting BG Catron announced additional Committee Chair appointments: LTC Bernard Kuder, AUS (ret), Resolutions; and MAJ Katowski, Health and Welfare. He also announced two additional appointments to the Board of Directors: 1st VP COL Blakely and 2nd VP LTC Slaughter.

On 1 January 1965 the Chapter was granted a charter by the MROA. It was formally presented at a General Meeting and dinner at the Ft. Holabird Officers Club on 6 January 1965 by COL Alfred M. Fort, USA (ret), President of the MROA. Col Fort also formally installed the officers elected on 21 October. On 1 August 1965 a charter of affiliation was granted to the Greater Baltimore Chapter of TROA. The Certification of Charter was formally presented at the first annual membership meeting on 23 November 1965 by BG James A. Bonaville, Executive Vice President, TROA.

Changes continued in the Chapter's first year. On 27 April 1965 the geographical area was extended by the Board of Directors to include Harford and Cecil Counties. In June the President appointed an Executive Committee to facilitate the work of the Board of Directors. The Committee would have the power and authority to exercise jurisdiction over all matters not involving changes in policy.

On 14 March 1966 the Chapter was incorporated under the laws of Maryland as the greater Baltimore Chapter, Maryland Retired Officers Association, Inc. Its Constitution and Bylaws indicated that its area was still Baltimore City and County and Howard County despite the Board's action to expand it in April 1965. The Constitution stated that the Chapter's purpose "shall be to effectuate the preamble, purpose and principles of the national ...and Maryland [organizations] ... in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Howard County and such other areas as may from time to time be granted it." Membership was to be "men or women who are or have been commissioned officers and warrant officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Coast and Geodetic Survey, and Public Health Services, and of the reserve and other components of these services, as defined by TROA."

The purpose of the Maryland ROA, as outlined in 1968, was "To inculcate and stimulate love of our country and the flag; To defend the honor and supremacy of our National Government and the Constitution of the United States; To advocate military forces adequate to the defense of Our Country; To foster fraternal relations between all branches of the various services from which our members are drawn; To cooperate fully with the various active services in the dissemination of information to the Public; To oppose any influence whatsoever calculated to weaken national Security; To aid active and retired personnel of the various services from which our members are drawn, their dependents and survivors, in every proper and legitimate way."

As mentioned above, the Board of Directors in April 1965 had expanded the Chapter's area to include Harford and Cecil Counties. However, the Executive Committee, theoretically subordinate to the Board

and including many of the same members, stated that the cost of soliciting members in the “distant counties” would be out of proportion to the probable increase in membership. Therefore, membership solicitation efforts would continue to be limited to Baltimore City and County and Howard County. However, a qualified person requesting membership from outside the area would be accepted. This speaks to several things; the relative lack of resources available to the Chapter at that time, limiting the scope of its endeavors; and the relative parochialism and Baltimore-centric views of its governing officers and Directors. At that time Harford and, especially, Cecil Counties were too rural and deemed too far away to have much impact on the powerful city. This despite the fact that Aberdeen Proving Grounds, with its potential strong recruiting area, was in Harford County. What’s interesting is that Howard County, also very rural at that time, was included, and that there is no mention of Anne Arundel County the site of the Chapter’s initial and most significant meetings in terms of organizing and becoming recognized at the state and national levels.

II

The officer slate for 1966, proposed in November 1965, included some new and/or renamed positions and some new officers, both old and new faces. BG Catron was replaced as President by the former 1st VP, Col Blakely. It is possible that BG Catron was in ill health because Col Blakely had represented him and run most of 1965’s meetings of the Board and General Membership. The Vice Presidents went from 2 to 3, with LTC Slaughter, former 2nd VP, as senior VP; Col Stegner, former Membership Chair, as VP for Membership; and COL Foote, member of the original Board, as VP for Programs and Publicity. Col Brundick, CDR Baughman and MAJ Katowski continued as Treasurer, Secretary and Assistant Secretary, respectively. The Board also changed. Col McGrayne and LTC Garrett remained. COL Foote and WO Trattler were replaced by MAJ W. W. Thomas, USAF (ret) and LTC Bernard Kuder, USAR (ret). In 1967 LTC Slaughter moved from Senior VP to President, replacing Col Blakely. Col Foote became Senior VP and he was replaced as VP for Programs and Publicity by Col Frank Milani, USA (ret). LTC Kuder and MAJ Thomas remained on the Board. COL McGrayne and LTC Garrett were replaced by BG Catron, surfacing again, and CDR A. E. De Pra, USCG (ret).

In February 1970 changes were proposed to the Constitution and Bylaws. The most significant was the elimination of a \$1 per member annual contribution to the MROA to assist the state in organizing and financing new chapters statewide. In 1969 TROA had initiated a program of regional representatives in each state to recruit and organize new chapters. This eliminated the need for the Chapter’s contributions. It became discretionary on the part of the Board. Since it had represented 25% of the Chapter’s anticipated annual dues income, it allowed the dues to remain at \$4.00 per year, the same amount since the Chapter’s founding. The officer titles and structure were also changed. The officers now consisted of: President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents (reverting to the original number and titles), Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Judge Advocate (subsequently Legal Officer), Custodian of Permanent records (subsequently also Historian), and Chaplain. Standing Committees were designated: Membership, Legislative, Survivor Benefits, Programs and Publicity, Reservations, Sick and Welfare, Auditing, and Nominating (to be appointed NLT 1 October each year.).

Meetings were held regularly and frequently in the early years of the Chapter. Initially, Board and/or General Meetings were held almost monthly. In February 1974 the Bylaws were amended to eliminate the January meeting due to inclement weather. In the future Chapter meetings would be held on the 4th Tuesday of March, May, September, and November.

The initial membership, on October 21, 1964, was 36, those of the 44 present who had filled out and signed membership applications. They were: CDR Arden E. Baughman, USN; COL Eugene Blakely, Jr., AUS; COL Leroy Brundick, AUS; BG Thomas B. Catron, USA; COL Daniel M. Chesterton, II, USA; Commodore Milton R. Daniels, USCG; LTC William J. Darcough., AUS; LTC James H. Davis, AUS; CDR A. E. Del Pra, USCG; LTC Albert F. Drake, ASUS; COL Raymond A. Egner, AUS; COL Donald C. Foote, USA; COL Alfred M. Fort, USA, MAJ Donald M. Hoischer, Sr., USAF; CPT Howard R. Hair, AUS; LTC Robert D. Hodge, AUS; COL George M. Hunt, AUS; COL Charles J. Jeffus, AUS; MAJ Eva Katowski, ANC; COL Donald McGrayne, USA; 1LT William J. Palm, AUS; CPT David R. Phoebus, USNR; CPT William E. Pratt, USCG; LTC Floyd A. Rice, USAF; COL Ford Richardson, USA; LTC Charles L. Ringgold, AUS; LTC Fred J. Ritter, USAR; CPT Jacob V. Safer, MC AUS; COL Lloyd E. Stegner, AUS; LCDR Daniel J. Strauss, USN; LCDR Noble L. Taber, USN; WO Abraham Trattler, USCG; and CPT Richard MacC. Walsh, Jr., USA.

Membership quickly grew. At the January Board meeting membership had increased in 2 ½ months to 75. On 26 January Col Wellington B. Searless was recognized as the 100th member. At the end of February, it had risen to 139; by March to 148 and by April to 153.

In April 1967 the Board extended associate membership in the Chapter to wives and widows of current members. A women's auxiliary had been considered and rejected. TROA was requested to recognize the associates. However, regardless of the outcome of the request, the Chapter would proceed to "take the ladies in." As previously noted, full membership was open to female officers and warrants. The associates' dues were set at \$1.00, while the full members' dues remained at \$4.00. Both rates remained the same through 1987.

Membership increased to over 300 in the early 1970s with an annual ratio of 2 to 1 officer members to associate wives/widows. As the seventies progressed membership began to decline slightly and the Chapter was dealing with regular nonpayment of dues. A policy was established and enforced that nonpayment would result in being dropped from the roles. This happened regularly on an annual basis. However, later in the decade, membership rebounded, and by March 1976 the Chapter had over 400 officer and associate members.

Despite their apparent strong membership, the leadership was concerned about finding new members and asked for assistance in doing so at a General Meeting in January 1974. They were concerned because TROA was no longer providing lists of new retirees in the Chapter's area. This omission was eventually rectified. As a sign of General Meeting costs, after 23 years at one price, in 1987 annual dues were increased to \$6.00 for officer members and \$3.00 for associates. They remained at this level at least through October 1994.

Membership started to fall again in the 1980s with 140 officer members and 130 associates in 1989. The decline accelerated and was attributed to an aging membership with increased mortality, and a lessening of interest among younger military retirees who were still in the workforce. By 31 August 1994 strength was down to 100 members and 92 associates. A decade later, in 2004, total membership stood at 89, officer, associate, and honorary members. As indicative of the overall diminution of the Chapter, for 1994-1995 there were 12 officer positions and 9 Board members. For 2004 there were 5 officer positions and 3 Board members.

Although obviously much lower than previously, 2004 represented a resurgence for the Chapter. After the original 14 March 1966 charter had lapsed, the Chapter reincorporated in 2002. On 27 September 2002 the Chapter was reincorporated as the Baltimore area Military Officers Association (BMOA). When TROA changed its name to MOAA, a new charter was granted on January 1, 2003. This was followed on 6 January 2003 by the IRS issuance of a letter of exemption for the Chapter as a 501(a) nonprofit, exempt from federal income taxes.

III

Initially Chapter meetings were held at either Ft. Meade or Ft. Holabird, primarily at the latter until the issue of its potential closing in the early 1970s. Between September 1971 and May 1972, the meetings were held in one of two restaurants in the then Towson Plaza. In November 1972 they moved to Martin's Eudowood. The Chapter's long association with Libertini's Parkville Gardens began in September 1976.

Attendance at general meetings, including a reception, dinner, chapter meeting and guest speaker, grew to a consistent figure in the 90s. However, by the early/mid 1970s attendance had begun to flag. In January 1974 the outgoing President, MAJ Rudolph Senn, USAF (ret), asked for an all-out effort to boost general meeting attendance. The Chapter had to have at least 90 present to maintain the \$6.75 per person cost. The Chapter was currently making up the difference between the actual cost and what members were being charged. One suggestion was to establish a hospitality committee to be run by the wives. In March 1974 concrete steps were taken to decrease the Chapter's expense and to make the meetings/dinners more welcoming. The actual cost of dinner was determined to be \$6.86 per person, so the individual charge was raised from \$6.75 to \$7.00. The head table was reduced to the President, guest speaker, their wives, and one or two more. Board members would be spread throughout the room to interact with current members and become better acquainted with new ones. Membership had been broadened to include anyone who had been in one of the seven uniformed services. The commissioned or warrant officers did not have to be retired or drawing retirement pay to join. This elicited some response, because the attendance at the March 1974 meeting was 94. However, it quickly faded. By the November 1974 General Meeting and dinner there were only 75 reservations. That year's Christmas party was canceled due to lack of interest. A small group party was organized on 15 December.

In early 1971 the Chapter began procuring vouchers from United Buying Service for W. Bell & Co. Members could use them to purchase jewelry and silver at discounted prices at the store. This was quickly expanded and additional vouchers and catalogs were purchased for several companies that came

under the United Buying Services. As a regular activity in the 1970s, representatives of the Chapter participated at flag presentation and wreath laying ceremonies at the U. S. Public Health (USPH) Services Hospital and the George Washington Monument in Mount Vernon. They joined Baltimore's American Legion and 30 other organizations in these activities.

In March 1973 the design of the Chapter's Newsletter was approved and its first edition was published. LTC John G. Volz was Program and Publicity Editor and Mrs. Lloyd E. Stegner was assistant Editor for Associate Members. LTC Harold S. Wulfort succeeded LTC Volz as Program Chairman in 1982 and as the Publicity Bulletin Chairman in 1984. He continued in those positions until at least 1984.

In May 1974 the President, LTC Edward Starr, III, AUS (ret) was asked by CPT Bishop, Chairman of the Board of the MROA, to organize a "get together" of the MROA Chapters. It was to be centered around the Chapter's tenth anniversary party on 24 September. It became the MROA's first state-wide convention. Guests representing Chapters from Southern Maryland, Upper Eastern Shore, Prince George's County and Susquehanna-Aberdeen arrived by 110 for a buffet lunch. This was followed by sightseeing at the U.S. Frigate Constellation and Ft. McHenry. The convention goes then joined Chapter members for cocktails and dinner at Marin's Eudowood. Dinner and cocktails were \$7.00 per person. The complete package of lunch, tour, reception, cocktails and gala banquet was \$15.00.

From its inception in the mid-1960s, guest speakers were, and continued to be, a central part of the General Meetings/dinners. This has continued up until the present day. In 1965 they were: Charles E. Maylan, Baltimore States Attorney; BG Frederick O. Hartel, Chief of Staff, Second Army and former Berlin Brigade Commander; and Hyman Pressman, Comptroller of Baltimore. Others over the years included: Frank Hennessy, Director of Community Relations National Brewing Company, Honorary Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay and skipper of the "Chester-Peake"; Arthur R. Watson, Baltimore Zoo Director; Harry D. Kaufman, former police magistrate, Asst. Attorney General, Jail Board member, and Chairman of the MD Commission of Physical Fitness; Albert M. Capp, VP Charles Center and Inner Harbor Management; CPT Donald F. Stewart, director of the U. S. Frigate Constellation; COL (ret) and Mayor of Baltimore William Donald Schaeffer; Dennis S. Hill, Police Department Director of Public Information; Jean Hofmeister, President of the Star Bangled Banner Flag House; and CPT Joseph McLaughlin, Baltimore Fire Department. Entertainment and recreational activities included: performances by choral and musical groups as well as live theater; boat rides and bus trips. By the late 1980s average meeting attendance was about 35% of membership. By the mid 1990d this percentage had increased to 45%, although possibly of a smaller base.

From its inception the Chapter has been concerned with and involved in legislative and governmental issues that would impact on its members, as well as past, present and future members of the uniformed armed services. As an example, when the Army Reserve and National Guard units merged it appeared that some Army Reserve Officers would not be given the opportunity to have continued training and earn credits for promotion and retirement. The Chapter raised the issue with TROA and helped to ensure that the affected officers could continue their careers.

Veterans' issues continued to lead the list of concerns. In the early 1970s these included: available space for veterans' burials in Maryland National Cemeteries; establishment of a state operated "Old Soldiers' Home"; opposition to any survivor's legislation that would in any way decrease social security benefits; the initiation of survivor benefits; and opposition to amnesty for draft resisters and evaders.

At one of the earliest Chapter meetings, 23 March 1965, TROA matters issues of interest were presented. They included: Recomputation of Retired pay; Opposition to the Closing of U. S. Public Health Hospitals and turning them over to the VA; and additional space for burials in National Cemeteries. These continued to be the focus of the Chapter's interest for the next several decades. Despite the efforts of ROA members at the local, state and national levels, the U.S.P.H. Hospitals, including the one in Baltimore, were closed in 1974 and the patients were distributed to other hospitals. They all had more success with pay recomputation.

Retired pay equalization, or recomputation, was TROA's principal legislative objective well prior to the Chapter's founding in the fall of 1964. The basic concern was that under existing law there were multiple pay rates for retired military personnel, depending on when they retired. By the 1970s this disparity had grown so that there were eleven different pay rates for retired military personnel with the same rank and length of service. It all depended on when they had retired. Sen. Hartke (Dem., IN), after repeated attempts, was eventually able to win support for retired pay equalization in the mid-1970s.

In the Chapter's Newsletter in December 1974 a description was given of its activities and interests. The Chapter supported ROTC units in three colleges and JROTC units in three high schools in the greater Baltimore area by presenting awards to meritorious cadets, thus assisting in promoting a spirit of achievement in the respective cadet corps and inspiring cadets to pursue careers in the U. S. Armed Services. The Chapter, through meetings and newsletters, kept members abreast of local, state and federal legislative developments, as well as developments in military scientific, medical innovations, and business affairs. It worked with the Maryland Council and TROA in their legislative lobbying efforts. It supported TROA's scholarship fund and morale building measures for overseas personnel.

With some organizational name changes, this could be used as the Chapter's statement of purpose and description of activities today, forty years later. While the membership has ebbed and flowed, the core values of the organization and its people, what it and they are about, has remained essentially the same. Military people interested in, and working to take care of, military people.