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FRA *today*

The magazine of the Fleet Reserve Association

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025 • \$3.75

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The So Lite® Scooter is easy to transport and almost impossible to tip over.

Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the So Lite® Scooter. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

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Above: The FRA Centennial Convention in November 2024.

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12 Maria A. Behm Is Moving Forward

By Dawn Klavon

New FRA President Maria A. Behm, a retired nurse and peace officer, is the second woman to become the association's president in its history. Her top priorities this year is to continue attracting new members to the organization and retain current members—to strengthen and ensure a successful future for FRA.

24 Marine Corps Force Recon Legend Major James Capers Jr.

By Bethanie Hestermann

James "Jim" Capers, a Marine, completed more than 50 classified or top-secret missions and led his reconnaissance unit heroically. Major Capers was the first Black person to earn a battlefield commission and the first African American Marine to command a Force Reconnaissance Company.



LOYALTY, PROTECTION AND SERVICE

The FRA is a congressionally chartered, nonprofit organization advocating on Capitol Hill for current and former members of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

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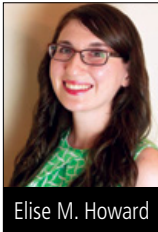
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Leading the FRA Auxiliary in 2025

Highlighting Extraordinary Shipmates

I remember raising my eyebrows with a bit of skepticism as I edited a photo caption in the November 2023 issue of *FRAtoday* that described Branch 299 member Jim Capers as a “reconnaissance legend.” Was “legend” really accurate, I wondered, or had the Shipmate who sent in the photo gotten a bit carried away? As I conducted a quick search of the internet, my eyebrows flew up further — he was indeed a legend, as stated by the Marine Corps itself! The more I read about Capers’ career in reconnaissance, the more convinced I became that we had to feature him in a future issue of *FRAtoday*, and I am delighted that you are holding that issue in your hands today.



Elise M. Howard

The longer I work with the FRA, the more amazed I am at the number of extraordinary sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen it counts among its membership. From WWII heroes to 21st-century master chief petty officers of the Coast Guard, so many former sea service members have seen the value of the community and advocacy that the Fleet Reserve Association has to offer. It has been an honor to be able to highlight so many of them in *FRAtoday*. If you know a fellow FRA member who has had a noteworthy career in the military, or who has done remarkable things for the FRA, please let us know at fratoday@fra.org. You might find a feature about them in a future issue of the magazine!

Speaking of Shipmates who have done remarkable things for the association, we are excited to bring you an in-depth profile of the FRA’s new national president this issue. Our goal each year is to help you get to know your new national president, both as a Shipmate and as a leader with a vision for the FRA’s future. I typically plan to write the new national president profile myself, but this year God blessed my family with a baby instead! I am thankful to our writer Dawn Klavon for taking on the new president profile in my stead, and to our writer Jessica Brodtkin Webb for stepping up to help edit the magazine while I am on maternity leave. Our small but mighty magazine team never ceases to impress me with their flexibility and skill. We are all lucky to have them! **FRA**

In Loyalty, Protection and Service,

Elise M. Howard
Managing Editor



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Attention Veterans: Mesothelioma Compensation Available

Veterans are our nation's heroes, having risked their lives to protect our freedom. However, many have unknowingly faced another battle due to asbestos exposure during their service.

Between the 1930s and 1980s, the military used asbestos extensively. Now, decades later, many veterans are being diagnosed with mesothelioma or lung cancer.

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Celebrating Milestones and Looking to the Future



Phillip Reid, NED

Wow! What a year 2024 was for FRA and the FRA HQ.

- 2024 was FRA's Centennial birthday and we carried out events throughout the year in celebration of this momentous occasion culminating with our National Convention in Annapolis, Maryland.
- Guest speakers at our National Convention included the Honorable Denis R. McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, MCPON James Honea.
- FRA was the lead VSO during the Veterans Day ceremony held at Arlington Cemetery on Veterans Day, November 11, 2024.
- FRA HQ moved into their new offices in Alexandria, Virginia.
- FRA leadership attended the commissioning of the USCGC Calhoun in Charleston, South Carolina.
- FRA Leadership testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on Capitol Hill.

I want to give a special thank you to the FRA Centennial Committee lead by PNP Donna Jansky for creating a truly memorable event in the lifetime of the Fleet Reserve Association.

With my front row seat, I can tell you that the amount of work put in by members of this committee goes beyond any guesses that anyone may have about what it takes to put on such an event. Bravo Zulu!

I wish you a Happy and Financially Aware New Year!

I know that this isn't the traditional New Year greeting, but the beginning of the year is the perfect time to take a closer look at how your money is going to work harder for you in 2025.

For those of you who are members of an FRA Branch, at your next meeting, review your banking and/or investment strategies. During the past year, interest rates on everyday checking and savings accounts have been going up. Are you still only getting an interest rate of .010% on your checking and/or savings accounts?

Considerations for your personal finances:

- What's your financial IQ?
- Do you have a budget?
- What are some things that may happen in 2025 that could have a financial impact on you?
- Do you have an updated will?

I want to share an acronym with you that I hope will help avoid being scammed: **N.A.V.Y.**

N – *Never* give out any personal information to someone who calls or emails you unexpectedly. *Never* be intimidated.

A – *Assume* it's a scam!

Ask the following questions:

What's your name? What's your phone number? What's your address? What's your email address?

Again, assume it's a scam, and hang up. (If the call is legitimate, they will call back) or delete the email.

V – *Verify* what you've been told with someone you trust before taking further action.

Verify with a spouse, an adult child, a trusted friend, the bank, the credit card company, the police. *Don't use the number the caller gave you to verify. Look it up.*

Y – *You* are strong. *You* are a veteran. *You've* been in tougher situations. *You* won! **FRA**

In Loyalty, Protection and Service,

Phillip Reid

National Executive Director

HAPPY
2025
NEW YEAR

ON & OFF *capitol bill*

News & Notes *from the Fleet Reserve Association's Legislative Team*



John Davis,
Director,
Legislative
Programs



PHOTO © 123RF

NewsBytes is the FRA's weekly legislative update. If you would like to subscribe, please email: NewsBytes@Fra.org. Include your name and contact information in the body of the email. If you are a member of the FRA or AFRA, please include your member number.

NDAAs Still Pending and Legislative Victories for 2024

As *FRA today* goes to press, the final FY 2025 budget has not been passed. The House has passed their version of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), while the Senate NDAA has been approved by committee but is still awaiting a full vote. Many Senate floor amendments have been filed including amendments to add the "Major Richard Star Act" (concurrent receipt reform) to the Senate NDAA. Over two-thirds of the House and Senate are co-sponsoring the "Major Richard Star Act." The FRA will continue to push for concurrent receipt expansion noting that reducing a veteran's retired pay because they are disabled is an injustice! After the Senate passes its version of the NDAA, a conference committee will soon be appointed to resolve the differences between the two bills and submit a final bill to each chamber of Congress. If approved, the final bill will be sent to President Biden to be signed or vetoed.

As the FRA Legislative Team prepares for the First Session of the 119th Congress, we would like to display our legislative victories in the second year of the 118th Congress (2024), which include the following:

- No new TRICARE fee increases in the House and Senate NDAA;
- The House Armed Services Committee approving concurrent receipt reform, the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282). The bill is pending on the House floor;
- Introduction of concurrent receipt legislation in the House and Senate (H.R. 333, H.R. 303, H.R. 1282, S. 1515, S. 344);
- Successfully blocking the Congressional Budget Office's plan to enact new TRICARE-for-Life enrollment fees;
- Introduction in the House and Senate of the "Respect for Grieving Military Families Act" (H.R. 3232/S.1588), that would stop the DFAS from taking back deceased military retiree's benefits from their spouse while their families are still in mourning;
- Increasing activity pay for junior enlisted above the Employment Cost Index (ECI) and ECI (4.5%) for others, in the Senate and House NDAA;
- Introduction of bills (H.R. 2537/S.4562) to restore BAH payments to 100% of housing cost. A provision is included in the House passed NDAA;

Continues on Page 6.

NDAAs Still Pending and Legislative Victories for 2024

Continued.

- Legislation introduced in the House and the Senate (H.R. 939/S. 334) to repeal the requirement for those retiring from military service to wait 180 days before entering the DoD civil service General Schedule (GS) positions for GS13 and below. A similar provision passed in the House NDAAs;
- The FRA is supporting the recently introduced Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2024 (H.R. 8545), to limit attorney fees and make technical corrections to the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2021.
- The House passed the HOME Act (H.R. 3848) to help lift veterans out of homelessness;
- The House passed the NDAAs, providing members of the Reserve access to the TRICARE dental program at no cost;
- The House passed the NDAAs threshold increases for the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) to 200%, up from 150% of federal poverty guidelines;
- The House passed the FRA-supported “Elizabeth Dole Home- and Community-Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act” (H.R. 542) marking the single largest expansion of long-term care services at the Veterans Administration (VA) in decades;
- The “GUARD VA Benefits Act” (H.R. 1139/S. 740), would reinstate penalties for charging veterans and survivors unauthorized fees related to claims for VA benefits;
- FRA supports bill in the House to expand access to America’s National Cemetery for veterans. As Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) is a sacred resting place nearing capacity, the “Expanding America’s National Cemetery Act” (HR 1413) would ensure another national cemetery provides full military burial honors for all eligible veterans;
- The “Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act” (H.R. 1045/S. 956) was introduced in the House and Senate to eliminate TRICARE Young Adult and allow young adults to stay on their sponsor’s form of TRICARE until age 26, consistent with federal requirements for commercial health plans;
- The “GUARD VA Benefits Act” (H.R. 1139/S. 740) was introduced in the House and Senate to reinstate penalties for charging veterans and survivors unauthorized fees related to claims for VA benefits;
- The “Pay our Coast Guard Parity Act” (H.R. 2693) was introduced to ensure that the U.S. Coast Guard is compensated during government shutdowns;
- The FRA supports making the DIC benefit equal to other federal survivor benefits and is supporting the “Caring for Survivors Act” (H.R. 1083/S. 414); and
- FRA successfully supported supplemental funding for the VA.

These legislative victories would not be possible without FRA member involvement in the legislative process. FRA provides members an online Action Center located on the website (www.fra.org), which offers a user-friendly opportunity to contact elected officials on key issues impacting FRA members. The Action Center provides pre-written messages either supporting or opposing legislation that shipmates can edit and send to their elected officials in Washington. Grassroots advocacy has a direct influence on the Association’s ability to effectively represent member concerns before Congress and the appropriate federal agencies. Legislation that was not passed during 118th Congress (2023-24) is tabled and must be re-introduced in the new 119th Congress that started in January 2025. The Action Center campaigns from last year have been deleted; new legislative campaigns will be added as legislation is introduced.

VA Checking for Link Between PFAS Chemicals and Kidney Cancer

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced that it will study whether kidney cancer is linked to exposure to chemicals used in military-grade firefighting foam and other products to determine whether veterans may be eligible for expedited benefits. If a link is found, kidney cancer could be designated as a presumptive service-connected condition for former service members who were exposed to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often referred to as “forever chemicals” due to their persistence in the environment.

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Report: Veterans Wait Too Long for Service Connection

With the enactment of the Veterans Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Act (PACT Act) in August 2022, millions of veterans now have the opportunity for expedited disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs VA. However, thousands of others exposed to environmental hazards during military service wait approximately 31 years to receive similar recognition from the VA, according to a new Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) report.

The report reveals that the VA's disability claims process — requiring veterans to prove that their health conditions are directly related to military service — is cumbersome for those unaware of their exposure to toxic substances or those who fail to link latent illnesses to their service. The report found that the VA takes an average of 31 years to recognize an exposure for an individual veteran after it first occurs, and it takes about 34 years to establish a presumptive service connection — a federal designation that eliminates the need to prove a military tie — for exposure-related conditions.

In response, VA officials acknowledged that veterans have waited “far too long” to receive benefits. However, the PACT Act, which extended benefits to veterans exposed to burn pits and other airborne hazards during the Global War on Terrorism, has enabled the VA to expedite claims for millions of veterans and their survivors.

“We’re currently delivering more care and more benefits to more veterans than ever before, but make no mistake — we will not rest until every veteran gets the care and benefits that they deserve. We are grateful for the feedback from our partners and will continue to work with them to fulfill our shared mission,” VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes said in a recent statement. According to the VA, the expedited presumptive conditions for 23 diseases listed in the PACT Act, along with hundreds of other associated illnesses, will benefit approximately 900,000 veterans or their survivors.

VA Grants to Research and Increase Public Engagement with Veteran Stories

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) awarded nine grants totaling more than \$2.4 million as part of the Veterans Legacy Program (VLP), a project that honors America’s veterans and service members by uncovering and sharing their stories. This year’s VLP grant announcement marks an increase from six to nine recipients and more than \$260,000 over last year’s awards. These grants provide funding to conduct research into veterans’ service, accomplishments, and their role in their communities. The educational tools generated by this research support the teaching of histories of those interred in VA national cemeteries and VA grant-funded state and Tribal Veterans’ cemeteries.

Established in 2016, VLP memorializes veterans through educational outreach, connecting students, educators, and citizens with NCA cemeteries and the histories of the veterans interred in them. Since fiscal year 2022, VA has awarded 21 grants totaling over \$6.8 million to educational organizations and engaged more than 1,600 students and teachers of all levels in Veteran research and commemoration. To learn more about the Veterans Legacy Grant Program, visit: <https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/>.

VA has Housed more than 43,000 Homeless Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that between October 2023 and August 2024, it housed 43,116 veterans experiencing homelessness, surpassing its FY 2024 goal of housing 43,000 veterans one month before the end of the fiscal year. VA has also ensured that 96.3% of the veterans housed so far during this fiscal year have not returned to homelessness and engaged 38,476 unsheltered veterans to ensure they have access to housing and other necessary services. Preventing and eliminating veteran homelessness is a top priority for VA. Between 2022 and 2023, VA permanently housed nearly 87,000 veterans. Partially as a result of these efforts, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in the U.S. has fallen by over 4% since early 2020 and by more than 52% since 2010. “No person who has served this country should ever have to experience homelessness,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “And make no mistake: we won’t rest until every veteran has a safe, stable, accessible, and affordable home to call their own.”

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01-37144-001-E27941

Bill to Help Veterans Pursue Careers as Truckers is Signed into Law

President Joe Biden signed into law bipartisan legislation, the “Veterans Improvement Commercial Driver License Act” (S.656 - Public Law 118-95). This legislation will help veterans more easily use their earned education benefits to become truckers. The bill will help bolster the trucking workforce by cutting red tape that has prevented veterans from using their GI Bill Benefits to obtain a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) through approved commercial driver education programs. This will improve veterans’ accessibility to CDL schools and help veterans pursue well-paying jobs in the trucking industry. Previously, educational programs offering CDLs were prevented from accepting GI Bill benefits for two years after opening, including existing approved schools that opened new locations. This law will now allow new branches of already approved institutions to accept GI Bill benefits immediately upon opening.

Congress Honors Those Who Died at Kabul Airport

House Speaker Mike Johnson posthumously presented Congressional Gold Medals to the 13 service members killed during the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

“Our nation owes a profound debt of gratitude to these service members and those who were with them in Kabul,” Speaker Johnson said during the ceremony. “We also owe them something deeper, an apology to the families who are here.”

On August 26, 2021, as U.S. forces worked to evacuate Afghan allies, an ISIS-linked suicide bomber detonated outside Abbey Gate, one of the entrances to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. The explosion killed the 13 service members and around 170 Afghans, injuring many more.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer urged the politicians gathered to “ensure the sacrifices of all our service members were not in vain. We must care for them and their families and defend the values of freedom and democracy they so nobly fought for.”



PHOTO © ISTOCKPHOTO

GAO Report on Navy Manpower Shortage

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report (GAO-24-106525) reveals that 63% of executive officers (second-in-command on ships) surveyed reported that insufficient manning made it “moderately to extremely difficult to complete repairs while underway.” The U.S. Navy’s manpower shortage is affecting its ability to perform repairs at sea. Navy executive officers and sailors told the GAO that there are widespread concerns about sailor training. When relying on available formal (classroom) training, 64% of executive officers said it is moderately to extremely difficult to conduct sailor-led maintenance, and 75% found it moderately to extremely difficult for sailors to complete repairs.

The U.S. Navy’s manpower shortage is affecting its ability to perform repairs at sea.

Additionally, the Navy’s maintenance guidelines are sometimes inaccurate regarding the time and personnel needed and are not written appropriately for sailors’ maintenance skills or supervisors’ experience levels.

As of late last year, the Navy was short nearly 14,000 enlisted sailors to keep its aircraft carriers, surface ships, and attack submarines properly manned, according to the GAO. This shortage forces smaller crews to take on more work, exacerbating the stress of ship life.

CFPB OSA Annual Report

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s (CFPB) Office of Servicemember Affairs (OSA) was created by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank Act). The provision establishing the OSA was successfully supported by the FRA.

Each year, the OSA issues an annual report highlighting trends in complaints submitted by service members, veterans, and military families throughout the previous calendar year. The reports also identify emerging risks in consumer finance and provide an update on the CFPB’s ongoing efforts to protect the military community from harmful financial products and practices. The 2023 annual report offers an overview of complaints about consumer financial products and services submitted to the CFPB in calendar year 2023 by members of the military community, identifying

and analyzing the unique issues faced by service members, veterans, and military families. The number of complaints filed by service members increased across all major product categories, including credit or consumer reporting, debt collection, credit cards, checking or savings accounts, and mortgages. In 2023, service members submitted approximately 84,600 complaints on a wide range of products and services. This marks a 27% increase compared to 2022 and a 98% increase compared to 2021. Complaints to the CFPB from service members, veterans, and their families have now surpassed 400,000.

Vietnam Helicopter Dust Off Crews to Receive Congressional Gold Medal

President Joe Biden has signed the “Dust-off Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal Act” (S. 2825-Public Law 118-87) into law. Long sought by advocates, this legislation recognizes the pilots, crew

chiefs, and medics who served honorably during the Vietnam War aboard helicopter air ambulances. The honor is collectively awarded to the more than 3,000 service members who flew between combat zones and field hospitals.

VA Expands Gravesite Benefit

An outer burial receptacle (OBR) is normally placed in a gravesite before a casket is lowered. This contributes to well-maintained cemeteries by preventing the sinking of headstones and the surrounding soil. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently provides OBRs for casketed burials in national cemeteries. Beginning on November 9, 2024, the VA started to provide OBRs in VA grant-funded cemeteries. Eligible beneficiaries may apply for a financial payment for OBRs that are privately purchased or provided by a grant-funded cemetery if the OBR is placed at the time of interment. **FRA**

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Maria A. Behm Is Moving Forward

FRA's new president hopes to enlist, empower and engage

By Dawn Klaron

Maria A. Behm doesn't take no for an answer — she's hoping to use that strength in her new role as the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) president.

"I've run on the perception that we have to move forward; we need to make this time count," Behm said. "The massive support I've received this year is wonderful — they want to see us go forward."

Behm, 65, handily won the association election in November of 2024 running unopposed, after serving as FRA's vice president under John Handzuk last year. Inducted during the 96th annual FRA National Convention held in Annapolis, Maryland, she is only the second woman to serve as the Fleet Reserve's president since its founding in 1924, she noted. The retired nurse and peace officer, who served as an enlisted nurse and hospital Corpsman in the Navy Reserve from 1989 to 1994, has high hopes for her year in leadership.

"We have to get out and do something," Behm said. "There's so many issues that are concerning membership across the nation for all the organizations, that we've got to find the opportunities and the tools to continue to move forward in getting people empowered."

She has certainly proven her ability to attract and retain new recruits for the organization. Behm and husband of 47 years, Robert Behm, 72, started FRA's Lake of the Ozarks Branch 32 from scratch back in 2019, and now have more than 75 members participating in the local organization.

"As president, I've got to start with our membership; I've got to be able to give training tools. A lot of them (FRA branches) don't even know how to recruit, or they don't want to — they maybe don't see the necessity of it," she said. "Most of them are members of other organizations; I'm trying to get them to understand that to me, this is the best organization."

The married mother of four boys joined FRA in 2011, after her husband had been a member for three years.



Photo by David Starry.



Maria A. Behm with Shipmate Michael Russell (Branch 32) and FRA Chaplain Robert Behm, her husband, holding the Bible and other FRA leaders as she takes the office of the national president. (Photo by David Starry)

The couple enjoyed participating together, and eventually Maria stepped in to a leadership role to become even more engaged.

“What I have found about this organization, amongst all the others,” Behm said, “is the camaraderie. It’s explosive. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard — we care about each other, we have the loyalty, the protection and the service, and that’s what we have signed on to do.”

When both Behms first joined FRA, they were based on the West Coast, in Valley Springs, California. Maria became the branch president in 2012 and later the first female regional vice president as well as president of the West Coast region, she said. On top of her nursing skills, Behm is a professional singer and entertainer, and was put in charge of the entertainment committee to plan major events.

“I’m an entertainer with a band,” she said. “That’s how I first got together with (FRA) with the Navy Ball — I performed for them.”

Behm is multitalented: besides being a wife, mother, Navy reservist, nurse and peace officer, Behm has worked as a singer and songwriter, with several albums to her credit being released over the years. Her specialty is music from the country and western genre from the 1940s, 50s and 60s, and performing covers from icons like Patsy Cline. She and her band in Gravois Mills, Missouri, have performed at hundreds of events. Due to a busy year ahead as the Fleet Reserve Association’s president, she is taking a sabbatical from her professional entertainment schedule.

Attracting New Members

Presently, Behm said FRA membership hovers around 26,000 people, indicating steadily lessening numbers. Declining membership is an issue facing numerous traditional U.S. military advocacy organizations, including

Continues on Page 16.

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Clockwise: Maria A. Behm with her husband Robert Behm (L) and Shipmate Michael Russell (R), her nephew. Behm shakes hands with outgoing National President John Handzuk, who is now immediate past president; PNP Robbins and National Executive Director Phillip Reid are also pictured. Behm and her husband Robert Behm. (Photos by David Starry)

the Fleet Reserve Association. Factors like decreasing numbers in the military, a failure to attract younger veterans, the rise of digital and social media veteran communities, perceived relevance, aging members and membership costs all play a significant role in membership decline. Behm says the average age of FRA members is around 70 in the organization's 135 or so branches.

"We're going to have to get more innovative to attract new members. We've lost over 500 this year (in 2024, due to death)," Behm said, adding that in 2023, FRA saw another 500 pass away. "So that's 1,000 that we're aware of in the past two years — we've lost our older members. The hardest part is looking for ways to attract younger members; unfortunately, they don't seem to want to be a part."

Behm listed family-friendly activities FRA branches offer to draw younger veterans and families like picnics and meeting time adjustments. She noted the organization has

learned that active duty personnel transitioning to civilian life would like training to help them in their next stages, so FRA is considering how to step up and make a positive impact.

"We have a motto that we put in place this year: 'everyone get one,'" she said. "If we could just double it, we could double our membership. My goal is to empower the organization, not devour the organization."

In 2024, in an attempt to fortify its numbers, the FRA opened its membership to officers in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard. Behm noted her goals of bringing a "person" on board to improve the organization's website as well as designing intake data to determine if a new member is enlisted or an officer. Current FRA intake details don't denote this, she said. Making membership attractive and user friendly for all members is also a goal.

Continues on Page 18.

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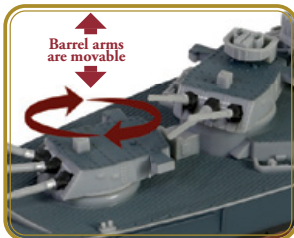
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The 2025 FRA Board of Directors and National Officers. (Photo by David Starry)

“We are trying to make it easier, not harder, for our ailing members and more conducive for those that are on social media. We’ve created some videos — 60, 30 and 15-second video ads this year,” Behm said.

In addition, Behm said efforts to attract female shipmates from the sea services should and will be increased for FRA membership.

“One of the other goals is to promote the leadership in gaining the women sea service veterans, a niche that’s out there that I think we’ve missed,” Behm said. “I look around at the numbers of our female veterans — Fleet Reserve veterans — and I know that there’s more than that; there’s much more than that, and unfortunately we’re not attracting them.”

The shift in how veterans engage with each other is influencing the structure of the Fleet Reserve Association,

but Behm sees it as a challenge she’s ready to tackle. In 2025, through a grassroots effort to add to its numbers, the Fleet Reserve will send out ‘strike teams’ to the association’s regions, assisting local branches in recruiting members and rebuilding, she said.

Advocacy Support

The new FRA president is also supremely committed to advocacy and support for current and former Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard members, particularly those who have served in the Reserve components. She noted her willingness to step up and advocate for policies that benefit military personnel and veterans, whether it be healthcare, compensation and benefits or quality of life programs.

Continues on Page 20.



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Maria A. Behm with the new National President of the FRA Ladies Auxiliary Kelly Maria Pena. (Photo by David Starry)



Maria A. Behm with John Handzuk, who is now FRA's Junior Past National President (JRPNP). (Photo by David Starry)

“We advocate — to me that is one of the biggest things we do,” she said, noting the FRA will be losing their 18-year advocate on Capitol Hill, John Davis, who is retiring. “We’ll be switching up the gears at some point, moving forward toward either a collective group advocate or hiring someone else. I think that our presence makes a big difference.”

Behm intends to visit the Veterans Administration during the year to ask what they need from the FRA.

“In order for me to go to Capitol Hill, I need to know that, right?” she said. Behm added that she will be bringing the FRA’s national vice president, PRPWC Rick Fetro along and increasing his visibility and influence. His responsibilities will include assisting in other areas like membership at the branch level as well.

A Family of Veterans

Behm came from humble beginnings: born in Logansport, Indiana, she grew up one of nine children in an economically challenged household. The mid-westerner married at age 18. In February of 1978, she gave birth to her first son, and in November of the same year, gave birth to triplet boys, two of whom survived. As a wife and mother, Behm is proud that four out of five of her family members are veterans. She served in the Navy Reserve, her husband served in Vietnam and retired from the Army National Guard, one of her sons served in both the Air Force and Army, and another son served in the Army in Iraq. Both of her sons who served in the military forces are 100% disabled veterans. Behm’s other son works in a California prison as a peace officer.

She is also an accomplished author, having penning a book called *On “Maternal Ground”* in 2006 about motherhood and marriage.

The Year Ahead

The Fleet Reserve’s new leader is eager to use her administrative gifts to better the association.

“I’m dedicated and loyal and very protective of the organization,” she said. “I want to be a part of something greater than yourself; if I can inspire and empower people, that is one of the biggest things.”

Her door is always open, and she offers a listening ear to hear from FRA members. Behm hopes to solicit feedback from branches and members to learn how to fortify the organization.

“One of the questions I ask is: what do you want your national president to do for you this year? I cannot do this by myself — no one can do it by themselves,” she said. “You have to help; you have to reach out and help do some of these things too.”

The job of FRA president holds a multitude of responsibilities, but for Behm, it’s well worth it.

“The most fulfilling part is seeing a smile on all of our veterans’ faces, knowing that they’ve accomplished something within their organization and that the organization has their backs,” she said. “We are here for them.” **FRA**



Photo courtesy of Maria A. Behm.

Maria A. Behm with other FRA leaders at the annual FRA convention in November 2024. (Photo by David Starry)



FRA Commemorated 100 Years at its Annual Convention





Jim Capers (front right) participates in a Tun Tavern Run with fellow recruits.



Marine Corps Force Recon Legend Major James Capers Jr.

*How a Sharecropper's Son Became the
Face of the Marines*

By Bethanie Hestermann

U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) reconnaissance legend Major James “Jim” Capers Jr., 87, once had a dream that he visited his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, and had a chance to speak to himself as a young boy. In the dream, he saw the Capers family sitting on the side of the neighborhood street. He approached young Jim and introduced himself. The boy looked up at the person standing in front of him and saw much more than an old man. He saw a warrior, a trailblazer, and a decorated Marine with a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars with a Combat V, and three Purple Hearts. In the dream, Major Capers told young Jim, “You’re going to be the best of the best.”

Indeed, Jim Capers did become one of the best of the best, and he didn’t get any handouts along the way. He completed over 50 classified or top-secret missions, he led



his reconnaissance unit selflessly, earning the respect of his men and his superiors alike, and he gave this country everything he had. As a young African American Marine serving in the Vietnam era, Major Capers was the first Black person to earn a battlefield commission and the first African American Marine to command a Force Reconnaissance Company.

This son of a sharecrop farmer also rose to become the face of the USMC in the 1970s. It was Major Capers’ saluting figure that became the centerpiece of one of the Marine Corps’ most successful recruiting campaigns in history. But behind that figure and behind the medals pinned to his uniform was a man who barely survived 19 holes in his body — a Marine who lost man after man in combat and then came home to an American public who called him and his fellow Vietnam veterans “baby killers.”

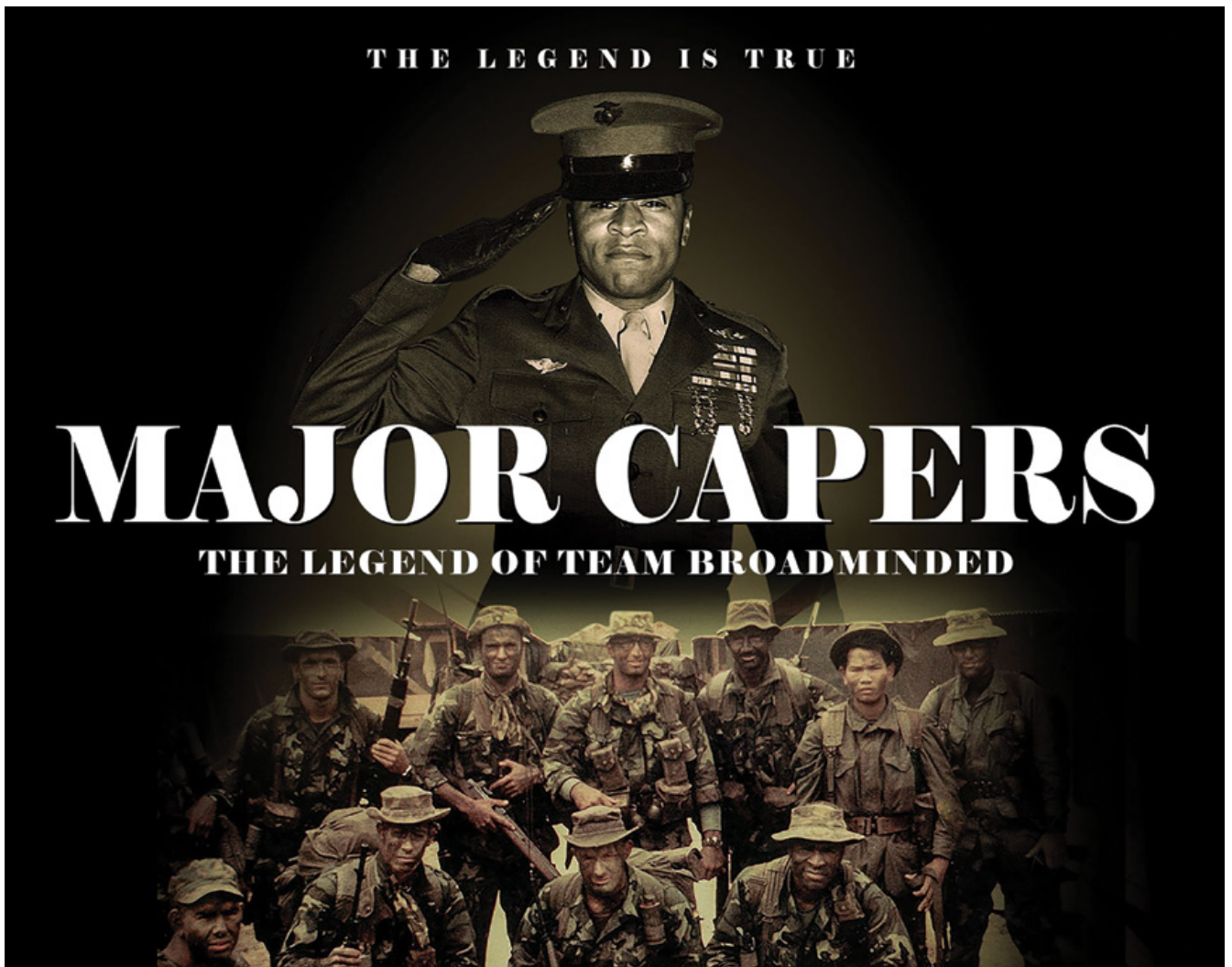
*All photos in this story are courtesy of James Capers.

As a young African American Marine serving in the Vietnam era, Major Capers was the first Black person to earn a battlefield commission and the first African American Marine to command a Force Reconnaissance Company.

The story of Major Jim Capers is a complicated one. Capers' patriotism is unwavering, and his accomplishments are inspiring, but the sacrifice he and his family made was great. One cannot celebrate the former without acknowledging the latter.

An Infamous Career

James Capers was born on August 25, 1937, in South Carolina. He enlisted in the Marines in 1956 at 18 years old. He deployed to Lebanon and made his mark there as a Corporal by leading a small group of Marines



A promotional graphic for the 2022 documentary *Major Capers: The Legend of Team Broadminded*, which features Major Jim Capers' life and career.

in a mission to thwart the advance of more than 100 insurgents. Later, during the Vietnam War, he earned a spot on the elite “Team Broadminded,” a 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company.

The recon unit embarked on several dangerous and clandestine missions in Vietnam, including amphibious assaults in the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ, the recovery of a B-57 rumored to have a nuclear bomb, and a harrowing POW rescue attempt that resulted in Capers’ first Purple Heart. Then, in 1967, Capers and his recon unit were trapped and surrounded by enemy forces in Phu Loc, and every single man was injured in combat. Capers called for an air strike, which ultimately saved their lives. A helicopter crew managed to extract the entire injured recon unit, lifting them up one man at a time. Capers insisted he stay on the ground until every last injured Marine was safely lifted into the helicopter.

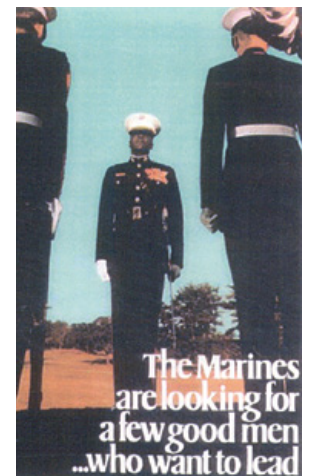
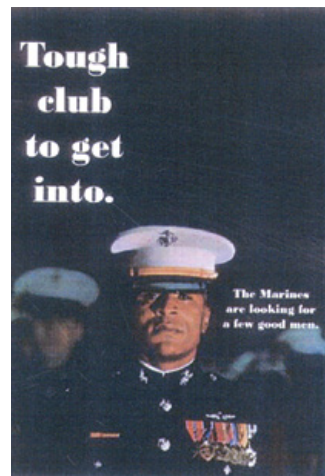
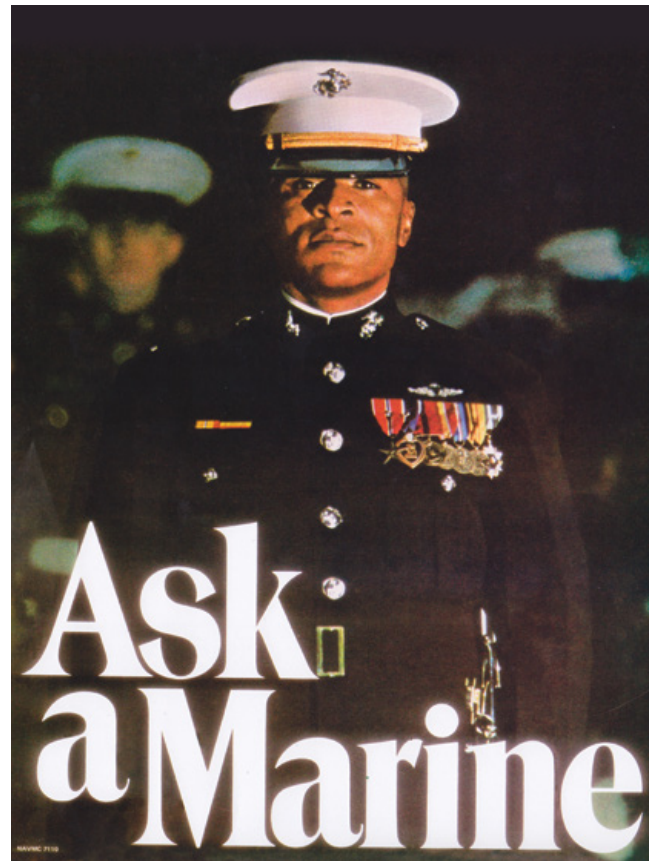
The Phu Loc incident forced a near-fatal end to Capers’ deployment in Vietnam. He suffered over a dozen puncture wounds and had two broken legs. In the aftermath, he had to relearn how to walk. Despite his injuries and the fact that he and his fellow Vietnam veterans weren’t treated like American heroes upon return, Capers’ dedication to the U.S. flag never wavered. He described coming home as “a bright light,” and he remains confident to this day that he had nothing left to give when he left the war.

“I had 19 holes that I bled from, and both my legs had been broken. I weighed 122 pounds,” he says. “I gave everything I had to this country — everything I had. I didn’t hold anything back.”

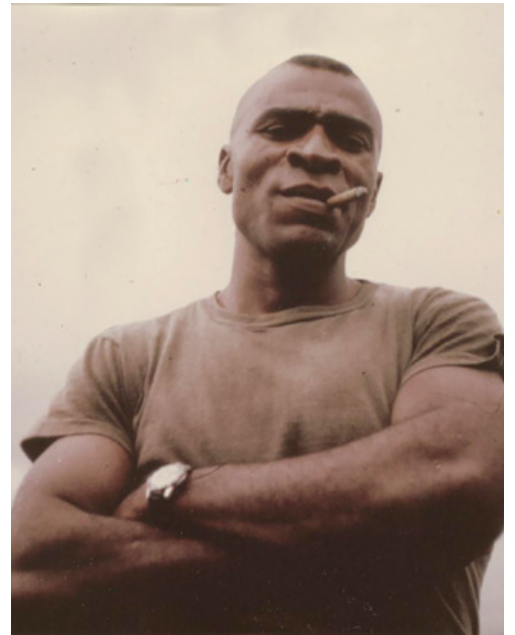
In the post-Vietnam era of his career, Capers continued to serve his country as a field agent in classified Cold War operations in Africa and Eastern Europe. He retired from the Marines as a Major in 1978. In addition to the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Hearts, Major Capers also earned a Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, a Combat Action Ribbon, three Good Conduct Ribbons, several Battle Stars, a Navy Commendation Medal, a Navy Achievement Medal, a Coast Guard Certificate of Merit, and multiple letters of Merit, Appreciation, and Commendation.

A Family Man

Major Jim Capers was many things to the Marine Corps and to the United States, but he was also a husband and a father. Capers met the love of his life, Dottie, as a teenager, and the couple eventually married and had one son, Gary. Young Gary was blind and had other special needs that required particular care from his dedicated mother. He died



Jim Capers became the face of the successful Ask a Marine recruitment campaign for the USMC in the 1970s. Pictured are posters from the campaign.



Clockwise: Major Capers and a group of Marines in dive gear. Jim Capers poses with a cigar in his mouth. Capers stands with a boa around his neck in front of a 3rd Force Recon Co. sign. Capers (bottom row, far right) and the team charged with a top-secret mission to bust American prisoners of war from a Viet Cong camp — an operation that was code named “Doubletalk.”

in his father’s arms in 2003. Dottie Capers passed away from cancer in 2009.

Capers loved his wife of 50 years and their only son dearly, and their loss left a tremendous hole in his life. However, he doesn’t have regrets about his time serving in two wars. Capers says his service to this nation was Dottie’s and Gary’s willing sacrifice, too. In fact, he says the decision to serve his country in Vietnam was a

family one. Together, he and his wife made the choice for him to go on deployment.

“The Marine Corps said, ‘You don’t have to go. You have a blind son at home. You can stay,’” Capers recalls. “But then I talked to my wife [...] and she said, no, you go, and God will protect you. So, I went to Vietnam.”

Continues on Page 30.



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Left: Jim Capers and his wife, Dottie.

Capers is forthright about his struggle with “survivor’s guilt,” not only because he outlived his wife and son but also because he survived time and time again in combat when so many of his comrades didn’t. Now, as an 87-year-old man, Major Capers wonders why he’s still around. Perhaps it’s because he’s still inspiring his fellow Marines, countrymen, and countrywomen. He’s still making the nation a better place, even though he’s been retired from active service for decades.

The Documentary

In 2022, a documentary called *Major Capers: The Legend of Team Broadminded* shed some never-before-seen light on Major Capers’ military career. The film walks through Capers’ life and some of his most notable force recon missions. It includes excerpts of letters Capers wrote to his wife while



Above: Members of the 3rd Force Recon unit pose with a large boa.

Jim Capers broke down barriers for Black Marines and saved countless lives through his brave and selfless actions in combat, and during his dozens of secret missions.

deployed, testimonials from others who served with Capers, and extensive interviews with Capers himself. Though the documentary was a difficult project for him on a personal level, Capers says he felt it was important to see it through to completion.

“I went through some very dark periods to try to give [producers] an honest portrayal of what it was like to be in combat. It’s what I did for over 20 years,” he says. “So, the documentary was somewhat of a relief in a way, but then again, the demons came home, and they sat on my shoulder.”

At times, reliving his experiences in Vietnam felt overwhelming. Capers says he had nightmares during the making of the film; he dwelled on what he’d seen and lost, and he admits there were moments when he wanted to throw in the towel. In the end, though, he says his faith in God helped him get through. He says: “I wanted to give them an honest portrayal of who Jim Capers was.”

Viewers walk away from the film with an immense respect not only for Capers but also for all the people who volunteered to serve in Vietnam. “I hope the folks who see the documentary will realize that these were heroes, these men who served our country [in Vietnam] and left their families,” Capers says.

A Legendary Marine

Jim Capers broke down barriers for Black Marines and saved countless lives through his brave and selfless actions in combat, and during his dozens of secret missions. In recent years, he’s helped cement his legacy by writing a memoir called *Faith Through the Storm: Memoirs of Major James Capers, Jr.* Other people continue to celebrate him as well.



Major James Capers Jr. (pictured) has a sitting nomination for the Congressional Medal of Honor. He is the first African American Marine Corps officer to receive such a nomination.

There’s a conference room named after him at the Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) headquarters, and, late last year, Major Capers was selected as the Grand Marshal for the 2024 Veterans Day Parade in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Recalling the dream he had when he came face to face with a younger version of himself, Capers says he told the younger Jim what he’d need to do to earn a legacy fit for a warrior. He told the boy he’d need to trust in God, be honest, and believe in this country. “It won’t be automatic,” he told his younger self. “It won’t be easy.”

And easy it wasn’t. Jim Capers sacrificed nearly everything for the country he loves — everything but his life. He says God has kept him alive through all the injuries, the trauma, and the heartache.

Even though Capers is now living comfortably at home in North Carolina—a far cry from the jungles of Vietnam — he’s still on a mission of sorts. Capers continues to inspire faith in the flag. He continues to lead by example, and he continues to represent the USMC as a Marine the American people can be proud of, just as he did decades ago in the recruitment campaign.

Major Jim Capers also has a sitting nomination for the Congressional Medal of Honor. He is the first African American Marine Corps officer to receive such a nomination. For his sacrifice, for his bravery, and for the paths he helped clear for those who have followed after him, many generations of Americans will know this great man’s name. They’ll know that when duty called, Jim Capers answered. And he answered in a big way. **FRA**

FRA Celebrates Its Award Winners

Membership and National Retention Awards

AWARDS FOR 2023–2024

Frank J. McPherson Memorial Award

This award is competitively awarded by the National Convention Membership and Retention Committee to one shipmate who exemplifies the three Cardinal Principles of the Fleet Reserve Association, especially in membership endeavors. The shipmate selected must have expended extensive effort towards the overall growth of the Fleet Reserve Association. The selectee need not necessarily be a top recruiter, but an individual who has maintained a positive public attitude as it affects the membership and retention of members of the Association. Names of qualified nominees for this award, accompanied by an affidavit supporting the nomination, were submitted by branches to the respective Regional Chairman, Membership and Retention Committee by June 30, 2024. Regional Presidents forwarded their nominee, along with supporting documents, to the Chairman, National Committee on Membership and Retention on or before October 15, 2024, which was more than 7 days prior to the convening of the national convention. The Committee voted in October to award Shipmate Kurt Baker, North Central Milwaukee Branch 13 as recipient for the 2023–2024 membership term.



Shipmate Kurt Baker, North Central Milwaukee Branch 13, receives the Frank J. McPherson Memorial Award.

Gold Lapel Button Award

Any member of the Fleet Reserve Association or Auxiliary who recruits ten new or reinstated members is eligible to receive the Gold Lapel Pin, a Gold Membership Card, and a Letter of Commendation signed by the National President on a onetime basis.

The Gold Lapel Button Award was presented to the following members during the 2023–2024 membership year:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Branch</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Region</i>
Nathaniel Smith	Branch 115	Lehigh Valley, Pa.	NE/NENG
George Shannon	Branch 24	Annapolis, Md.	EC

The Charles E. Lofgren Awards

The Charles E. Lofgren Awards for excellence in FRA membership recruiting is to perpetuate and honor the memory of our late National Secretary Charles E. Lofgren.

The Charles E. Lofgren Awards are awarded to individual recruiters and branches in each of the association's five membership Groups I-V. The individual will receive an award. The branch will receive a ships bell. The recipients are selected based on the number and percentage of recruited members during the membership year. The 2023–2024 awardees were as follows:

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>% Gain</i>	<i>Number of Members Gained</i>
Group I: NA	NA	0	0
Group II: NA	NA	0	0
Group III: 101	Santa Clara, Calif.	39.47%	45
Group IV: 183	Interlachen, Fla.	10.45%	7
Group V: 274	Reno, Nev.	26.92%	7



Our sincerest congratulations were extended to the hardworking and deserving Charles E. Lofgren Award recipients. Their individual and collective endeavors in membership promotion and retention are deeply appreciated.

Awards for Recruiting 24 Members

An awards program was established in 2005 to provide an incentive to FRA members who worked hard to recruit 32 new or reinstated members. Last year the Membership and Retention Committee updated the award for the centennial to recognize members who recruited 24 new or reinstated members. The awards offered to members who participated in this recruiting effort were a 5-year extension on their membership or a gift of a 5-year extension to another person. During the 2023–24 membership year the following members received these awards:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Branch</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Members Recruited</i>
Joseph A. Berizzie, III	Branch 24	Annapolis, Md.	EC	116 Members
Richart K. Fetro	Branch 101	Santa Clara, Calif.	WC	48 Members
Thomas O. Webb	Branch 24	Annapolis, Md.	EC	30 Members
Selina Sandoval	Branch 61	Chula Vista, Calif.	SW	29 Members
George M. Shannon	Branch 24	Annapolis, Md.	EC	26 Members

The Abraham M. Rosenberg Membership Award

From the branches winning the Charles E. Lofgren Award, one branch is selected for its achievements in outstanding membership promotion. Shipmate Abraham M. Rosenberg served as National President in 1934–35. Santa Clara Valley Branch 101 in Santa Clara, California, was selected as the Abraham M. Rosenberg Award recipient with an overall recruiting gain of 39.47% (45 members). Congratulations to the leadership and members of Branch 101 for their exemplary manner in promoting membership.

Silver Anchor Squadron Award

Any member of the Fleet Reserve Association or Auxiliary who recruits 50 new or reinstated members subsequent to September 13, 1974, shall be presented with a Silver Anchor Squadron Award Pin, Silver Anchor Squadron Certificate and a Letter of Commendation signed by the National President. The recipients for this year's award were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Branch</i>	<i>Location</i>
David Herndon	364	Houston, Mo.
John Casper	29	Bremerton, Wash.
Michael Huffman	103	Yokosuka, Japan
Richard Fetro	101	Santa Clara, Calif.



FRA Gold Ribbon Membership Award

Previously referred to as the FRA 100% Gold Ribbon Award, the Membership and Retention Committee wishes to recognize all 41 branches that increased or retained an equal number of members. Each branch which maintains the same membership total or increases their branch membership by one or more members between April 1 through March 31 is recognized.

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Branch Location</i>	<i>Members in 4/1/2023</i>	<i>Members 3/31/2024</i>	<i>% GAIN</i>
07	EC	Portsmouth, Va.	27	27	0.00%
172	EC	Yorktown, Va.	115	119	3.48%
219	EC	Richmond, Va.	38	39	2.63%
299	EC	Wilmington, N.C.	41	44	7.32%
309	EC	Newark, Del.	41	41	0.00%
32	NC	Gravois Mills, Mo.	51	58	13.73%
105	NC	Owensboro, Ky.	82	82	0.00%
161	NC	Kansas City, Kan.	235	238	1.28%
216	NC	Cedar Rapids, Iowa	51	53	3.92%
242	NC	Davenport, Iowa	18	18	0.00%
276	NC	Omaha, Neb.	157	163	3.82%
364	NC	Houston, Mo.	26	31	19.23%
87	NE/NENG	Bedford, Pa.	30	34	13.33%
115	NE/NENG	Lehigh Valley, Pa.	181	211	16.57%

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Branch Location</i>	<i>Members in 4/1/2023</i>	<i>Members 3/31/2024</i>	<i>% GAIN</i>
214	NE/NENG	Schenectady, N.Y.	40	41	2.50%
29	NW	Bremerton, Wash.	343	376	9.62%
38	NW	Spokane, Wash.	60	63	5.00%
50	NW	Honolulu, Hawaii	42	43	2.38%
103	NW	Yokosuka, Japan	150	164	9.33%
104	NW	Puyallup, Wash.	78	81	3.85%
154	NW	Baguio City, Philippines	42	48	14.29%
247	NW	Dagupan City, Philippines	31	37	19.35%
98	SC	Shreveport, La.	19	23	21.05%
162	SC	New Orleans, La.	182	182	0.00%
15	SE	Walhalla, S.C.	39	39	0.00%
112	SE	Birmingham, Ala.	64	68	6.25%
183	SE	Interlachen, Fla.	67	74	10.45%
188	SE	Tampa, Fla.	51	51	0.00%
263	SE	Cocoa, Fla.	69	69	0.00%
335	SE	Port Orange, Fla.	16	17	6.25%
346	SE	Panama City Beach, Fla.	138	140	1.45%
62	SW	San Diego, Calif.	40	43	7.50%
101	WC	Santa Clara, Calif.	114	159	39.47%
137	WC	Minden, Nev.	66	72	9.09%
185	WC	Ogden, Utah	32	34	6.25%
192	WC	Fallon, Nev.	60	61	1.67%
197	WC	Modesto, Calif.	77	80	3.90%
244	WC	Grand Junction, Colo.	32	35	9.38%
274	WC	Reno, Nev.	26	33	26.92%
287	WC	Livermore, Calif.	20	22	10.00%

2024 FRA National Award Winners

The FRA congratulates the following branches and Shipmates, who were selected for the FRA's 2024 national awards by the national committees on youth activities; Americanism-patriotism; veterans service; hospitals, welfare and rehabilitation; and public relations. These Shipmates and branches live out the cardinal principles of loyalty, protection and service as they engage their communities with thoughtful events and meaningful service.

Branches are considered for awards within a group of similarly sized branches. Branches in Group I have 413 members or more, branches in Group II consist of 213-412 members, branches in Group III contain 113-212 members, branches in Group IV consist of 63-112 members, and branches in Group V have 10-62 members.

Americanism & Patriotism

First Place

Group I: Low Country Branch 269, SE
Group II: Mo-Kan Branch 161, NC
Group III: Santa Clara Valley Branch 101, WC
Group IV: Milwaukee Branch 14, NC
Group V: Lake of the Ozarks Branch 32, NC

Second Place

Group I: Annapolis Branch 24, EC
Group II: Kempsville Branch 99, EC
Group III: West Jacksonville Branch 126, SE
Group IV: Modesto Branch 197, WC
Group V: Shreveport-Bossier Branch 98, SC

Third Place

Group I: N/A
Group II: Pensacola Branch 22, SE
Group III: Whidbey Island Branch 97, NW
Group IV: Elizabeth City Branch 293, EC
Group V: Golden Spike Ogden Branch 185, WC

**The Walter C. "Step" Roswell Award:
Mo-Kan Branch 161**

**The Leonard D. "Swede" Nelson Award:
Shipmate of the Year Laurie Bailey Low
Country Branch 269**

**Robert E. Doherty Award:
Batucal City of Carson Branch 203**

Youth Activities

First Place

Group I: Low Country Branch 269, SE
Group II: Mo-Kan Branch 161, NC
Group III: Valley of the Sun Branch 163, SW
Group IV: Lakehurst, Branch 124, NE/NEng
Group V: Crossville Tennessee Branch 294, SE

Second Place

Group I: Imperial Beach Branch 289, SW
Group II: Lemoore Branch 261, WC
Group III: Chesapeake Branch 40, EC
Group IV: Triangle Branch 82, EC
Group V: Portsmouth Branch 37, EC

Third Place

Group I: N/A
Group II: Carson Branch 302, SW
Group III: Whidbey Island Branch 91, NW
Group IV: Cleveland Branch 17, NC
Group V: North Shore Branch 31, NE/NEng

**Shipmate of the Year: David Sheets
(Branch 17, NC)**

Veterans Service Officer (VSO)

First Place

Group I: Low Country Branch 269, SE
Group II: Mo-Kan Branch 161, NC
Group III: RAP Branch 172, EC
Group IV: Buffalo Branch 23, NE/NEng
Group V: High Sierra Reno Branch 274, NC

Second Place

Group I: Annapolis Branch 24, EC
Group II: Kempsville Branch 99, EC
Group III: Lehigh Valley Branch 115, NE/NEng
Group IV: USS Oklahoma Branch 286, NC
Group V: Diamond State Branch 309, EC

Third Place

Group I: N/A
Group II: N/A
Group III: N/A
Group IV: Modesto Branch 197, WC
Group V: Leland Alexander Memorial Golden Corner Branch 15, SE

**Shipmate of the Year: James Turner
(Lehigh Valley Branch 115, NE/NEng)**

Hospital, Welfare and Rehabilitation

First Place

Group I: Imperial Branch 289, SW
 Group II: Kempsville Branch 99, EC
 Group III: Valley of the Sun Branch 163, SW
 Group IV: Elizabeth City Branch 293, EC
 Group V: Shreveport Branch 98, SC

Second Place

Group I: First Coast Branch 91, SE
 Group II: Viking Branch 136, NC
 Group III: Whidbey Island Branch 97, NW
 Group IV: Modesto Branch 197, WC
 Group V: Lake of the Ozarks Branch 32, NC

Third Place

Group I: Annapolis Branch 24, EC
 Group II: Carson City Branch 302, SW
 Group III: Chesapeake Branch 40, EC
 Group IV: Wolverine Branch 298, NC
 Group V: San Diego Branch 62, SW

**Shipmate of the Year: Arthur Cranston
 (Birmingham Branch 112, SE)**

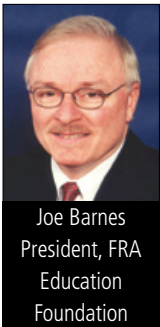


Making a Difference

By Joe Barnes

2025 SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE IS APRIL 15

The Association's 100th Anniversary is a significant milestone and the result of tremendous commitment to our cardinal principles of loyalty, protection and service. The establishment of the Foundation in 2009 to expand



Joe Barnes
President, FRA
Education
Foundation

the scope of the scholarship program is an example of this dedication. The foundation is an outgrowth of the FRA Scholarship Program, which dates back several decades. FRA initially participated in the Navy's Scholarship Program. In the 1980s, BUPERS published a booklet listing scholarships available from service-related organizations, including FRA. Those interested in applying would request forms from BUPERS, fill them out and return them. BUPERS then forwarded completed

applications to various organizations who reviewed them and selected scholarship recipients.

At some point, BUPERS ended its program and FRA continued offering scholarships to its members and their families. And since the establishment of the foundation, we were able to participate in the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Combined Federal Campaign. The Foundation was also a member of the Military Support Groups of America, and as a member was designated as one of America's Best Charities. (Information in the above two paragraphs is from a September 2014 *FRAtoday* article by Lauren Armstrong, the magazine's editor at that time.)

Since 2000, a total of almost \$2.4 million has been distributed in scholarships by the FRA and the FRA Education Foundation. This has been possible through the generosity and strong commitment of the FRA, individual branches, estate donations, corporate contributions and donations by individual Shipmates.

In 2024, we awarded 24 scholarships totaling \$88,000. Awards ranged from \$1,000 (2) to \$5,000 (13). Our scholarships enabled qualified students to pursue their educational goals at colleges and universities, and in recent years technical schools and community colleges. Regarding this change, it's important to help expand awareness that the Foundation awards scholarships to students attending technical school and community colleges each year.

Members of the FRA and their spouses, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren qualify for the

majority of annual awards — several of which are funded through legacy donations with specific instructions regarding the award amount and recipients. In addition, all current and former members of the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps, as well as their spouses and dependent children are eligible to apply for scholarships.

Scholarship Application Deadline

The deadline for applications is April 15. Go to fra.org/foundation for detailed instructions and qualification specifics for various awards. And, note that it's necessary to submit complete packages, since incomplete submissions will not be reviewed by the application review committee. The panel considers need, academic proficiency, character and leadership. In 2024, we only received 11 incomplete applications from a total of 117 total submissions. This is down significantly from recent years.

As is customary, recipients of our 2024 scholarships are announced in the September/October 2024 issue of *FRAtoday*.

Applications are available at fra.org/foundation and include detailed information about who qualifies for each award and application requirements — to include a variety of documents including transcripts, recommendations and an essay. As noted above, submitting a complete application package is essential for review by the application review committee.

Help Spread the Word

We're receiving fewer applications than in the past — although this year's total was slightly more than in 2023. There are a number of factors driving this decline, which include fewer students going off to trade school or college, the cost of higher education and perhaps a lack of awareness of financial aid and scholarships such as the awards the Foundation presents each year.

Our FRA National Convention Report includes recommendations that include asking FRA leadership to speak about the Foundation during travels throughout their respective regions. This includes speaking about our work and annual awards at Regional Conventions. This will help expand awareness and hopefully increase the number of applicants.

As always, your continuing support is appreciated. Congratulations on achieving the one century mark and best wishes to all Shipmates and members of the Auxiliary. **FRA**

Joe Barnes is president of the FRA Education Foundation.



Visit www.fra.org/foundation for scholarship applications and rules or to donate.

Who needs money for college or trade school?

FRA's Education Foundation awards approximately \$90,000 in scholarship funds each year to recipients based on financial need, academic standing, character and leadership qualities. Our scholarship program is open to anyone who has an affiliation with the USN, USMC or USCG, through their own service or that of a spouse, parent or grandparent.

To learn more about the FRA Education Foundation and our scholarships, visit www.fra.org/foundation where you will find descriptions of each scholarship program, lists of past winners and, starting in September of each year, applications for the following year's programs. We encourage all eligible scholars to apply for our scholarships and to share information about them with others.

Questions? E-mail us at scholars@fra.org.

**Educating our service members,
veterans and their families.**



800-FRA-1924 • 703-683-1400
scholars@fra.org

In Memoriam

Name, Rating, Branch

Andres, Florencio S., MSC(SS), USN, 101
 Arnold, Robert B., AFCM, USN, 022
 Arnold, Jimmy Y., CUCM, USN, 000
 Askey, John P., ATC, USN, 034
 Barker, Billy R., EOCS, USN, 274
 Bauer, Stanlee T., AE1, USN, 222
Berry, Joseph W., AE1, USN, 126
 Black, Palmer, CWO, USN, 000
 Black, James T., HM1, USN, 112
 Bland, William A., CPL, USMC, 163
Blohm, Robert W., AEC, USN, 000
 Blomberg, Gerald A., AMH1, USN, 070
 Boren, Alton R., HMC, USN, 251
 Brodrick, William R., SO2, USN, 072
 Brooks, George E., CWO3, USN, 181
Bruch, Earl E., CSC/SS, USN, 000
 Byrd, Robert E., HMC, USN, 118
 Cain, Lawrence D., AGC, USN, 091
 Carter, Roscoe, MM1, USN, 000
 Cleary, Bernard R., PHC, USN, 162
 Clements, Robert A., OSCM, USN, 269
 Coakley, Paul S., ISMC, USN, 181
 Collins, Michael J., CAPT, USMC, 024
 Colvin, William H., ATCS, USN, 156
 Conwell, Terrence F., MMCS(SS), USN, 000
 Cook, John E., GMG1, USN, 041
 Coradazzi, Daniel A., ETCM(SS), USN, 041
 Cortez, Altimore M., YNC, USN, 070
Crist, Howard R., LCDR, USN, 000
 Cruz, Viviano M., YN1, USN, 171
 Cutright, Jerry L., POC, USN, 000
 Davies, Zachary M., LTJG, USN, 000
Davis, Tudor F., TMC(SS), USN, 020
Davis, Gerald D., BMCM, USN, 000
 Dellapenna, Alan J., AFCM, USN, 298
 Duran, Juan, QMCM(SS), USN, 000
 Emerson, Peter C., RMCM(SS), USN, 000
Ewing, William L., DPCS, USN, 000
 Fajarit, Ricarte F., SKC, USN, 084
 Fansler, Keith E., CPO, USN, 061

Name, Rating, Branch

Feezel, Lawrence G., BTCS, USN, 163
 Fiedler, Henry J., MOMM1, USN, 024
Field, David S., CAPT, USN, 024
 Gall, Joseph, PNC, USN, 117
 Gephart, Cletus E., POCM, USN, 000
 Gillett, Robert J., ADC, USN, 000
 Glass, Charles D., AWCS, USN, 146
 Greenwood, Richard J., OSCM, USN, 290
 Grigsby, Jimmy, CMCS, USN, 000
 Gutman, Mathias F., BMC, USN, 115
Hagerty, Patrick E., YNC, USN, 000
 Halliday, Thomas O., AK1, USN, 000
 Handley, Patricia E., PN1, USN, 000
Hardy, William S., ATC, USN, 000
 Hazlett, Rex E., HTCS, USN, 099
 PNO, Hill, Frederick A., SH1, USN, 290
 Hodges, Thomas, CEC, USN, 000
Hollis, James F., CAPT, USMC, 000
 House, Gail B., SK1, USN, 000
 Hughes, Olen R., PO1, USN, 000
Hummel, James E., JO1, USN, 101
 Jacobson, Herbert R., ATC, USN, 097
 Jaehnig, James, CDR, USN, 000
 James, Autrey B., 000
 Jones, Franklin D., AKC, USN, 268
Jossendal, William R., BTC, USN, 307
 Kelso, Olga P., YNC, USN, 000
 Kingswell, Michael J., EWCS, USN, 023
 Koron, Harvey K., PNCS, USN, 008
 Lambert, David A., EMCM, USN, 263
 Layne, Steven W., CTOCS, USN, 382
PNP, Leisher, Thomas L., PNCM, USN, 166
 Lyles, Marion E., CWO4, USN, 015
Madeod, Malcolm E., ETCM(SS), USN, 020
 Martin, Anthony, BTCS, USN, 014
Maulden, Jack C., AE1, USN, 022
 McAlister, Robert R., EMCS, USN, 000
 McAnelly, Robert L., MACM, USN, 061
Melski, Paul J., MSGT, USMC, 208
 Moeller, Herman R., DTMC, USN, 000

Name, Rating, Branch

Moore, Charles W., USN, 307
 Morris, Garold A., ENCS(SS), USN, 015
 Parsley, Donald D., CS1, USN, 089
Parson, Ross E., MSGT, USMC, 130
Patterson, James C., PO1, USN, 346
 Patton, John L., ADRC, USN, 091
 Peeples, Arlin E., YNC, USN, 040
 Perryman, Dalton D., AEC, USN, 201
 Poisson, Jean-Paul E., PNC, USN, 163
 Popp, Kurt L., EMCS, USN, 000
 Poteete, William L., HMCS, USN, 161
 Pritchett, Dale E., EMC, USN, 029
 Pullen, Donald L., TMCS, USN, 000
 Ramage, Rubel H., 1STSGT, USMC, 000
 Ravensbergen, Hans K., SKCS, USN, 000
 Reynolds, Rodney, BUC, USN, 170
 Rose, Kenneth W., AKCM(AW), USNR, 124
Sailers, John W., YNC/TAR, USNR, 089
 Scott, Jackie L., AFCM, USN, 261
Shahan, William E., DK1, USN, 156
Shirley, William W., GYSGT, USMC, 000
 Sjurset, Gene M., HTCS, USN, 020
 Smith, Joseph B., ATC, USN, 089
 St. Angelo, James, YN1, USN, 000
Stefchak, Stephen M., RMCS, USN, 000
 Stephens, Billy F., TMC, USN, 022
 Sullenger, James D., RM1, USN, 073
 Tarlton, Wm (Pete) H., LT, USN, 000
 Taylor, Robert C., MMCS, USN, 367
 Therrell, William C., OS1, USN, 126
 Turner, Gerald W., SKC, USN, 185
 Wagoner, William Lee, MMC, USN, 000
 Westerfield, Robert, MM1, USN, 264
 Wicks, Richard Harry, CWO4, USN, 172
 Wiehl, Joseph P., ETCS, USN, 269
 Williams, Willie, PO1, USN, 219
 Windsor, David E., HTC/DV, USN, 000
 Winter, Robert A., ADCS, USN, 000
 Younts, Marshall L., ADR1, USN, 022

Names in **red** indicate 50-year continuous members. Any names in **bold** indicate past national officers. To report a Shipmate death, email mserfra@fra.org or call 703-683-1400, ext. 1.



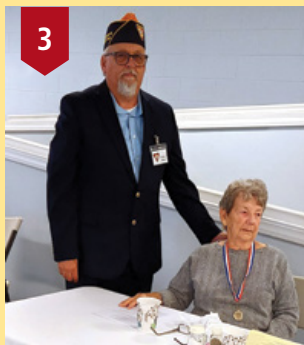
1. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

On December 14, 2024, in recognition of 50 years of continuous membership, FRA Branch 15 announced that Earle Echols, a member of the FRA Branch 15, was awarded a 50-year membership pin. Participants listed are Branch 015 President Larry Jones and Shipmates Earle Echols and Jimmy Hall.



2. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

Two-Bell Ceremony by Branch 15 performed on November 16, 2024, in honor of Shipmate Marion Lyles. Shipmate Gerard Morris was also honored at the ceremony.



FRA officers (L to R) are Larry Jones, President, Doug Olsen, Hospital Welfare, and Harvey Spencer, Membership Officer ringing the bell.

3. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

Larry Jones, Branch 15 President with Mrs. Raynell Lyles (seated), widow of Marion Lyles. Mrs. Lyles was also presented with a widow's medallion.



4. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

The images are from an honor ceremony performed in September 2024 in honor of a WWII veteran who is now deceased. Participants included members of Branch 15. Veterans Last Patrol is a nonprofit organization whose mission is Befriending, Honoring and Supporting Veterans in Hospice Care. Last Patrol connects veteran volunteers with veterans in hospice. Shipmates pictured (L to R) are Larry Jones, Joyce Jones, Jim Jones, Harvey Spencer, Jimmy Hall and Jim Bright.



5. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

Larry Jones, president of Branch 15, at the Liberty, SC, Veterans Day parade.



6. BRANCH 15, WALHALLA, SC

Pictured (L to R) are Branch 15 President Larry Jones, and members Joyce Jones and Jim Jones FRA of Branch 015, Walhalla, SC, at the Veterans Day Parade in Seneca, SC.

7. BRANCH 17, CLEVELAND, OH

RPNC Edward Blind presents electronic drumsticks to Branch 17 member Don Miccl for his birthday. Don Miccl was born in 1928 and has been a drummer since the age of twelve.

8. BRANCH 59, CHEYENNE, WY

November 11, 2024, marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Fleet Reserve Association. To commemorate this event, Mayor of Cheyenne Patrick Collins signed a proclamation recognizing that day as Fleet Reserve Association Day. Representing Branch 59 at the ceremony were (L to R) Shipmates Secretary Terry Allison, President Mike Archer, Mayor Patrick Collins and Public Affairs Chairman Phil Galloway. The governor also signed a proclamation naming the week as Fleet Reserve Association Week.

9. BRANCH 89, DOUGLASVILLE, GA

Atlanta Branch 89 celebrated the 249th USMC Birthday at its November meeting with cake and fellowship. Shipmates (L to R): Thomas L. Lee, Ed Poole, Carl Davis, Ted Rambo Sergeant Major, USMC Retired (seated) Howard Hayes, Bill Chambers, Ernie Rose and Loren Emery. The meeting was held at American Legion Post 160.

10. BRANCH 89, DOUGLASVILLE, GA

Shipmates celebrate the U. S. Navy's 249th Birthday at the October meeting held at American Legion Post 160 in Smyrna, GA.

11. BRANCH 89, DOUGLASVILLE, GA

Branch 89 celebrated its annual Christmas Party at Williamson Bros. BBQ Restaurant. Joe Farquhar (94) was our oldest shipmate present, along with his wife Frankie and our youngest future shipmate present, along with our youngest future shipmate, Ava (7 mo.). All shipmates brought gifts for the Toys for Tots program. Cheer and goodwill were had by all.





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12. BRANCH 98, BARKSDALE AFB, LA

Branch 98 helped place wreaths at the North West Louisiana Veterans Cemetery. Pictured are (L to R) PRPSC Emmett Smith, Branch Secretary Lee Jeter, Branch President Larry Lewis, S/M Franklin Monroe and Branch Vice President Jon Novak.



13



13. BRANCH 115, BETHLEHEM, PA

Jody McMullen, Retired Colonel, USAF attended the October Branch 115 monthly meeting and related to our shipmates his colorful, fascinating 30-year history as an Air Force pilot on active duty and as a reservist. While attached to the USAF reserves, he also took a job with American Airlines flying several different types of multi-engine passenger planes. His American Airlines career lasted for 33 years. This gentleman spent a lot of time at the stick! During his presentation he showed several slides related to his career and the types of planes he flew in the Air Force and for American Airlines. We also saw video of in-air refueling as well as air-dropping supplies and Seal Team members in support of troops on the ground. Also pictured is Nate Smith, Branch 115 President giving Colonel McMullen tokens of our appreciation.



14

14. BRANCH 115, BETHLEHEM, PA

At the Branch 115 October meeting, two members of Quilts of Valor, Maria Fehnel and Kathy Gold were our guests. They explained the 22-year old organization that produces and presents these hand-made quilts to deserving active military people and veterans. The recipients are determined to need comfort and healing as a result of their experience in the service. Since its inception, the organization has distributed over 360,000 quilts to members of all military branches.



15

15. BRANCH 115, BETHLEHEM, PA

Branch 115 celebrated the U.S. Navy's 249th birthday at our October meeting. The cake was not only beautiful, but it was also delicious! An awesome lunch was graciously provided by our local Allentown, PA Mission Barbecue. They are a big supporter of our branch activities.

16. BRANCH 136, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Branch 136 Shipmates (L to R) Ray Kroll, Leroy Stanislawski and Cathy McCormack manned a recruiting (information) table at Ridgedale shopping center in Minnetonka, Minnesota on November 9, 2024.

17. BRANCH 136, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Shipmate Eugene Baltes is an FRA Life Member and a member of Viking Branch 136, Minneapolis. He celebrated his 110th Birthday in Chicago and is the oldest living WWII Veteran and is the oldest living male in the United States. Shipmate PRPNC Marcia Cunningham, President Milwaukee Branch 14 and Branch 14 Shipmate PRPNC Marty Posekany attended the celebration and passed on to Shipmate Eugene congratulations from FRA National President John Handzuk.

18. BRANCH 162, GRETNA, LA

Branch 162 President Earl C. Boswell Jr. greets MCPON James M Honea at the FRA 100th Anniversary celebration in Annapolis, MD.

19. BRANCH 162, GRETNA, LA

On October 18, 2024, SC Regional President Emmett Smith (R) presented a letter of Proclamation to Branch 162 President Earl C. Boswell Jr (L) from Jeff Landry, Governor of Louisiana declaring November 11, 2024, as Fleet Reserve Association Day in the State of Louisiana.

20. BRANCH 166, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Shipmates Victor Sanchez Jr. Branch 166 (L) and RPEC Robert Oliveira (R), Branch 293 getting the information out at the 2024 Fleet Fest Naval Station Norfolk.





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21. BRANCH 170, EVERETT, WA

In September at our Branch meeting, we presented Shipmate Robert Jinneman with his 50th Year Continuous Membership pin and certificate. Pictured below are Branch President Pat Guyot and Shipmates George Kirk, Steve Osterman, Mark Hegeberg, Daniel Hall, Danny Wolf and (seated) Shipmate Robert Jinneman.



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22. BRANCH 170, EVERETT, WA

Branch 170, Everett, WA, was awarded the 2024 Monte Cristo Award for Rejuvenation and Transformation from the City of Everett, WA. The Monte Cristo Awards were created in 1994 to recognize neighbors and businesses who take pride in their property. Pictured (L to R) are City of Everett Council President Don Schwab, Shipmate Treasurer John Billen, Shipmate Secretary Mark Hegeberg and City of Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin.

23. BRANCH 185, NORTH OGDEN, UT

Pictured is the Ogden City Mayor Ben Nadolski presenting a proclamation to FRA Branch 185 declaring November 11, 2024 as Fleet Reserve Association Day in Ogden City, UT. Pictured (L to R) are S/M's Don McCoach, Secretary/Treasurer Jim Towery, Vyrion Dowdle, Ogden Mayor Ben Nadolski, President Robert Porter, Mark Hutchins and Auxiliary Member Linda Hutchins.



23



24. BRANCH 208, CAMP LEJEUNE, JACKSONVILLE, NC

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 208, Camp Lejeune held their Annual Holiday Dinner on December 10, 2024. The dinner was held at the Golden Corral, Jacksonville, NC. Shipmates brought plenty of toys for the Toys for Tots program and food items for donations to local charities.



25. BRANCH 208, CAMP LEJEUNE, JACKSONVILLE, NC

Marine members from Fleet Reserve Association Camp Lejeune Branch 208 celebrated the 249th Birthday of the United States Marine Corps at the monthly meeting held on November 12, 2024. Pictured (L to R) are Shipmates Tim Manchester, Paul Levesque, Sonny Bell, John Caskey, Lou Alers, Steve Tracy, John Rooney, Mike Maddox, Mike Rooney, Alex "Gunner" Nevglowski Sr., Al Farrell.



26. BRANCH 208, CAMP LEJEUNE, JACKSONVILLE, NC

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 208, Camp Lejeune donated turkeys to the USO aboard Camp Lejeune, NC on Friday, November 22, 2024. Many volunteers were on hand to put together the 3,500 food packages and 1,815 turkeys that were given out by the USO this year. This year we also had Gold Star Father Tim Standfest come all the way from Florida to assist in the distribution of food.



27. BRANCH 226, STATEN ISLAND, NY

Attached is a photo of seventh-grader Jason Ajello who won first place in the 2024 National Essay contest. Jason is congratulated by Branch 226 President James Brown and Mrs. Tara Hynes, Principle of Our Lady of Good Counsel school on Staten Island, NY.

28. BRANCH 263, CAPE CANAVERAL, FL

FRA Branch 263 participated in placing wreaths from Wreaths Across America on gravesites of deceased veterans interred at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Florida. The solemn ceremony was held December 14, 2024. Participants, pictured below (L to R) are Shipmate Wayne Barron and his wife Joyce and Shipmate Doug Douget.





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29. BRANCH 263, CAPE CANAVERAL, FL

Shipmate Barry Kennedy (L) is awarded a pin for having completed 45 years of continuous membership in the FRA. The pin was presented by Branch President Bill Casey.

30. BRANCH 269, GOOSE CREEK, SC

Major General James Livingston (Medal of Honor Recipient) was the guest speaker at the Southeast Regional Convention in Charleston, SC in September. As an honorarium, General Livingston was awarded a lifetime membership in the Fleet Reserve Association. General Livingston was recognized by PNP Don Muecheck at the November Branch 269 meeting.



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31. BRANCH 294, CROSSVILLE, TN.

Branch President Matt Gellman presents a check to Jennifer King, Recreation Director for Lake Tansi Village Resort for their Halloween Trunk or Treat. This is one of the many Youth Activities programs that Branch 294 supports. Pictured (L to R) are Shipmate Ed Koch, Shipmate Karl Mellert, President Matt Gellman, Jennifer King, Shipmate Jack Fogel, Shipmate John Harris, and Shipmate Tim Grimes.



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32. BRANCH 299, WILMINGTON, NC

Pictured (L to R) are Dave Ecchavaria, president of the Wilmington Council US Navy League, Frank Roberts, secretary of FRA Branch 299, Bruce Parsons of FRA Branch 299 and father of award recipient. PO1 Tonya Mulhern, FRA 299 and USNL Award recipient for USCG Sector NC outstanding member award and Art Davis, FRA 299. PO1 Mulhern was recognized for her service by deploying to the Island of Maui after its wildfire to assist in recovery and varied needs.



33. BRANCH 316, SPRINGFIELD, MO

The Ozark Empire branch participated in the Willard Veterans Day Parade on November 2, 2024. Secretary Chuck Ewy drove riders Chaplain Don Brunk, President Robert Turner, Treasurer Frank Parker, Vice President Virginia Swayne and Member Belinda Brown.



34. 2024 RETIREE SUMMIT

Shipmates (L to R, front) PRPEC Sha'ron D. Martin (BR166) and PRPEC Gabriel Falu (BR099) with RPEC Robert Oliveira (rear) of Branch 293 getting the information out at the 2024 Retiree Summit Naval Base in Little Creek, VA. **FRA**



Submit a photo by email as a high-quality attachment in jpeg format to FRAtoday@fra.org. Please include a brief description and include the names of those pictured.

Military Health Expert Clarifies ‘No Pain, No Gain’ Workout Myths

By Military Health System Communications and Public Affairs

Department of Defense active-duty service members require medical treatment for injuries almost 5 million times each year for around 1.5 million individual injuries. Injuries cost millions of lost duty and training days, and billions of dollars each year.

“Some injuries are caused by acute trauma, such as from falling or a vehicle accident, but the majority of military injuries are cumulative micro-traumatic injuries, often referred to as overuse injuries,” said U.S. Army Capt. Regis Pearson, a physiologist and chief of the Injury Prevention Branch of the Defense Centers for Public Health — Aberdeen.

A recent report by DCPH – Aberdeen showed that over 75% of all injuries to active-duty service members in 2018 were due to cumulative microtrauma.

“Most of these overuse injuries usually involve the musculoskeletal, or MSK, system which includes bones, muscles, tendons, as well as ligaments and other joint tissues,” said Pearson. “A doctor may use a medical code for ‘pain’ in a specific body area if a more identifiable injury diagnosis is not determined. Because the pain is a result of damage to tissues in that body area, the diagnosis is still categorized as an injury.”

In a 2019 study of three years of soldier medical data, the Army Public Health Center found that almost a quarter of all the service members’ initial injury visits were for a diagnosis of MSK “pain” to a body part.

“The back, especially the lower back, is a particularly common body area associated with injury pain codes,” said Pearson. “The knee, ankle, and shoulder are the next most frequent body areas linked to pain diagnoses. Though somewhat less common, hip pain is also a problem, especially among female service members.”

Pearson said the common physiological factor of these pain codes is that they usually are associated with the complex tissues of a joint, which is not the same as delayed muscle soreness.

“There are two types of muscle pain,” he said. “Acute or immediate pain in a muscle felt during an activity is [an] indication of a strain or tear that needs medical attention. Muscle soreness that develops a day or two

after an exercise is typically referred to as delayed onset muscle soreness, or DOMS.”

Like other forms of MSK pain, DOMS is a form of tissue damage that the body responds to by increasing inflammation, said Pearson.

“Unlike joint or bone damage, however, the body is often able to repair the microscopic muscle damage that is associated with DOMS in two to three days,” said Pearson. “This is what inspired the phrase ‘no pain, no

gain.’ Unfortunately, misunderstanding the ‘no pain, no gain’ concept can lead to more serious or even chronic injury-related conditions.”

Injuries are the leading reason for military medical visits each year.



PHOTO © ISTOCKPHOTO

'No Pain, No Gain' Myths

Pearson reminds everyone that the phrase “no pain, no gain” doesn't apply to joints — such as the spinal area, knee, ankle, shoulder or hip — and corrects some common misconceptions, including the following:

Myth: Sudden, sharp pain during an exercise just means you are pushing your body to improve.

Fact: Feeling sharp, sudden pain during an activity may mean an acute injury. Immediately stop that activity to rest the body area and consider medical evaluation.

Myth: A body will adapt to muscle soreness, so it is a necessary part of training. Not feeling any pain means you are not working hard enough.

Fact: Delayed onset muscle soreness is the body's protective response to new or excessive exercise; it is not an indication of training effectiveness. Severe DOMS can even hinder a person's ability to recover efficiently if the muscle is too damaged.

Myth: Delayed onset muscle soreness is a type of pain that the body will repair and recover from on its own.

Fact: In severe cases of DOMS, the body's repair mechanism may be overwhelmed, especially if high-exertion activity is continued. In many cases of DOMS, it is generally advised to continue using the muscles through low-exertion activity for at least a day or two to allow time for the body to recover.

Myth: MSK pain will go away over time.

Fact: Continued pain, especially near joints, is a sign that the body is trying to repair some form of MSK tissue which, if ignored, may worsen the severity of the condition. This can lead to longer recovery periods or even long-term pain conditions, such as chronic back pain or arthritis.

What Can You Do?

Pearson said that though the long-term conditions that result from MSK pain are common and often unavoidable, their severity can be reduced.

First, reduce your chances of injury by addressing leading risk factors of injury:

- Maintain a healthy body weight and keep body fat percentage within the DOD limits. Evidence shows that personnel with excessive body weight and high body fat are at a higher risk for MSK injury. In addition, service members who are underweight are also more likely to get injured.

- Maintain a regular exercise routine to achieve healthy fitness levels. Those who don't regularly maintain high levels of fitness are more likely to get injured. Exercise should include a balance of activities like aerobic conditioning and anaerobic training, such as strength, power and balance activities. Service members can enhance their fitness through individual physical training but should balance the amount and types of exercise with unit training activities.
- Stop smoking or using tobacco products. In addition to increasing risk of MSK injury, tobacco is a leading risk factor for heart and lung disease and cancer. Tobacco use has been found to increase the chances of hospitalizations, missed workdays and impaired vision. Cessation services are available to service members through TRICARE.
- Eat a healthy diet in addition to maintaining a balanced exercise regimen. The military is making it easier for service members to find high-quality foods and drinks to boost fitness, strength and health as part of the Go for Green® initiative. Information and good food choices at dining facilities and galleys help service members make smart choices.

Second, seek medical evaluation for problematic MSK pain early on, and follow medical guidance for recovery time and restricted duties or activities. Otherwise, you may develop chronic pain.

Chronic pain, which is pain that lasts longer than six months, can impact your mood and make it difficult to work and participate in everyday activities. Some examples of chronic MSK pain are back pain, arthritis and other joint problems.

Pearson said that maintaining a healthy body weight and fitness levels can increase your resilience against injury. It is also critical to stay in tune with your body's feelings of pain.

“Trying to ‘tough it out’ can make things worse in some situations,” he said. “It is important to differentiate between mild DOMS and a more serious pain. Stop activity for more serious conditions and follow your provider's recovery guidance.”

Additional information sources:

- Uniformed Services University's Rehab, Refit Return to Duty guide: rx3.usuhs.edu.
- Department of Veterans Affairs information regarding musculoskeletal conditions and chronic pain in women: womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/musculoskeletal-conditions-and-pain.asp. **FRA**

This article was provided by Military Health System Communications and Public Affairs.

Reunions

USS Beale (DD/DDE-471)

3/31/2025 – 4/2/2025

Location: St. Augustine, Florida

Contact: Valarie Altman

Telephone: 352-212-1525

Email: valtman_2000@yahoo.com

USS Sam Rayburn (SSBN 635)

5/4/2025 – 5/9/2025

Location: Kerrville, Texas

Contact: Ken & Jackie Dallman

Telephone: 612-819-2345

Email: jbdallman50@gmail.com

Website: www.innofthehills.com

USS SCAMP (SSN 588)

6/1/2025 – 6/7/2025

Location: Punta Gorda, Florida

Contact: USN (RET) David Aiken

Telephone: 860-303-9851

Email: davidaiken@hotmail.com

USS Bainbridge DLGN/CGN-25

6/18/2025 – 6/22/2025

Location: Schertz

(San Antonio area), Texas

Contact: Charles Gilbert

Telephone: 412-609-1035

Email: charlesgilbert63@gmail.com

UB1: N6SS SEAWOLF (SSN 575)

10/6/2025 – 10/9/2025

Location: Henderson, Nevada

Contact: Scott Jaklin

Telephone: 262-818-3400

Email: sjaklin@icloud.com

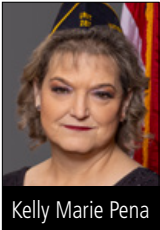
Website: www.sunsetstation.com



PHOTO © ADOBE STOCK

A list of reunions is available online at www.fra.org/Reunions. Looking For/Reunions must be submitted via email to reunions@fra.org, or in writing to FRA Looking For/Reunions at 1600 Duke Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Leading the FRA Auxiliary in 2025



Kelly Marie Pena

The holidays have come and gone, and I hope that everyone had a very joyous season.

It is truly an honor beyond measure to serve as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association for the 2024-2025 term. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this privilege. I will strive to represent and make this a productive year for the Auxiliary. A huge shout out to the Fleet Reserve Association and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association National Convention-Centennial Committee members for their commitment of countless hours and work to make a successful event! Thank you also to all the attendees this year and to the members who have stepped up to a leadership position for the first time.

Congratulations to the members who will be serving the Auxiliary as national officers and appointees for the 2024-25 term. Our regional presidents are Nicholas Luz, Northeast/New England; Loretta Jorden, East Coast; PNP Carolyn Whitaker, Southeast; Donna Lickteig, North Central; John Neal, South Central; Tina Pedersen, West Coast and Myrna Sales, Southwest.

I truly believe how I conduct myself as the National President will determine my success as a leader. All national, regional and unit officers along with committee chairpersons and unit members are leaders by example and dedication to our veterans. Our catchline for 2024-2025 will be leadership. Together, we will accomplish great things as we work together, cooperate with each other, and give credit where it is due. Enthusiasm will make the energy flow.

This year I have chosen Paws for Purple Hearts as the National President Project for 2024-2025. Their mission is to improve the lives of America's warriors facing mobility challenges and trauma-related conditions such as PTSD and TBI by providing the highest quality assistance dogs and canine-assisted therapy programs; and by building public awareness about the important role dogs play in helping warriors along the road to recovery.

Through its unique mission to advance human-canine studies, it produces some of the best service dog trainers and highest quality assistance dogs. As a witness to the facility dogs in action with veteran inpatients at the veteran hospital, this nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is close to my heart.

There are two ways to donate to this organization. You could mail a check to LA FRA National Financial Secretary at P.O. BOX 706, Goose Creek, SC 29445 and note on the memo line "2024-2025 NP Project" or click on www.pawsforpurplehearts.org and click on DONATE. In the "how did you hear about us field", type in **LA FRA 2024-2025 National President Project**.

In Loyalty, Protection & Service

Kelly Marie Pena

LA FRA National President

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Warriors – giving
back to those who
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We've Found the Most Beautiful Endangered Species

Theirs sold at auction for \$226,000.

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To art nouveau jewelers at the turn of the last century, nothing was more beautiful than the dragonfly. In the dragonfly's long body and outstretched wings, jewelers found the perfect setting for valuable stones. These jewelers' dragonfly designs have become timeless statements of style; a dragonfly pendant designed by French jeweler René Lalique recently sold at auction for \$226,000. Inspired by his stunning artistry, we've crafted our Dragonfly Nouvelle Collection, an elegant jewelry set for JUST \$29!

True artisanship in Austrian crystal and yellow gold. This necklace and earring set features gorgeous multicolored enamel paired with Austrian crystals and a yellow gold finish. Ask any jeweler and they'll tell you it takes true artisanship to properly blend the blues and purples found in this enamel. While art nouveau dragonflies are hard to come by, we're helping to repopulate their numbers with this artfully stylized depiction of some of nature's smallest wonders!

Buy the pendant, get the earrings FREE. If Stauer were a normal company, we'd sell the necklace and earrings for \$199 each, but because we engage the world's best artisans and cut out the middlemen to sell directly to you, we're offering the necklace for JUST \$29! Even better: If you buy within the next few days, we'll throw in the earrings for FREE! That's a nearly \$400 value for JUST \$29!

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Jewelry Specifications:

- Enamel with Austrian crystal. Yellow gold finish
- Pendant: 1 1/2" W x 1 1/4" H, Chain: 18" + 2", lobster clasp, Earrings: 1 1/4" L, french wire

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