



2018 Thoughts and 2019 Aspirations

President Joe Maurer

Greetings!

I hope this newsletter finds all of you in good health and high spirits as we approach the end to another great year of operations for our Chapter. Because of your unwavering and steadfast support, we have achieved many successes in 2018.

2018 Activities

During the past year we have provided our three JROTC detachments and our NNDCC unit with unprecedented financial support, helped send more of our area vets to Washington, D.C. on Honor Flight Syracuse, assisted fellow veterans in the Rome Veterans Council, the Viet Nam Veterans Association and the Rome Marine Corps Association with their fundraisers and programs. We also have maintained a stellar record of support to our local VA Clinic by providing over 900 volunteer hours (the full-time equivalent about 23 weeks!) of service to the Outpatient Clinic at Griffiss Business Park.

A Five Star Chapter

Our chapter is a high functioning organization. MOAA will recognize this on November 1st when our Vice-President and Web Master, Greg Bertolini and his wife, Karen, represent our Chapter at the MOAA National Convention at The Arizona Grand Resort and Spa in Phoenix, AZ. At the Awards Dinner Greg will be accepting our Chapter's **Five Star Level of Excellence Award** for our work during 2017!

We earned this award by demonstrating the importance of chapter action in our community. Chapter membership is important because a chapter can make a much

more effective statement to our elected officials than MOAA as a national organization can. If you are only a member of MOAA, you're just one of 350,000 people; however, if you're also a member of a chapter, you can say to your Member of Congress "... I'm a member of MOAA and our local chapter and our members always vote for those who vote for our military. Thanks for your support". As advocates for the military, we can only be effective if we're strong. Our numbers will improve if we ask every unaffiliated MOAA member we meet to join us.

As a side note, **let's not forget to encourage all our friends and relatives to vote on Tuesday, November 6th. Ask them to consider supporting those candidates who back our military.** Sadly, we live in a time when, in some quarters of our society, it's fashionable to denigrate the contributions of our men and women in uniform. We cannot allow the dark forces to win!

The Annual Meeting and Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Dinner

We've become adept at 'just-in-time' event planning. Those who have watched our web site, www.grucmoaa.org, will know that we've had a couple date changes for our Annual Dinner. We continued our efforts and are pleased to have our Annual Dinner on the originally planned date of Sunday, December 2nd at DiCastro's Too to celebrate our record of service to our community. As we salute Our Flag, Our Country and each other, we will also pause to memorialize those we have lost during the year. We will remember Annely DiGiovanni, Bob McInerney, George Waters, and Harry Winberg – outstanding Americans and excellent examples for all of us who strive to "Never Stop Serving".

Wreaths Across America in Rome, NY

At Noon, on Saturday, December 15th, we will hold Wreaths Across America celebrations at six Rome Area cemeteries. WAA has been a tremendously well received event in Rome, and our most successful fundraiser. Our Treasurer, Bob Haley, the founder of WAA in Rome, NY, is still in full charge of this event. Because of his cycling accident in August, you haven't seen much of him. He's on the Injured Disabled List, but he's still in command of all operations. This year we're getting more organizations involved, we expect to place 1,000 to 1,200 wreaths on deceased veterans' graves and reach even more young people in this exciting patriotic celebration of our deceased veterans. WAA allows our chapter to have the financial means to invest in organizations that benefit the youth of our community. Because of our involvement with WAA, we're able to accomplish what very few other MOAA Chapters can do.

Thanks again and Happy Holidays!

Joe

Wreaths Across America in Rome on December 15, 2018

Past President Bob Haley

The Greater Rome Utica Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America continues participation in the Wreaths Across America (WAA) tribute to deceased veterans. Remembrance wreaths will be placed on veterans' graves at Rome Cemetery, St. Peter's Cemetery, St. Mary's Cemetery, St. John's Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, and Westernville Cemetery on December 15, 2018 following short ceremonies commencing at Noon.

Local participants in the ceremonies are: school choruses, students, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, JROTC cadets from RFA and Proctor High School, Civil Air Patrol Cadets, Patriot Riders, confirmation classes from St. Peter's and St. John's churches, St. John's Youth Group, business volunteers, State and Municipal elected officials, local musicians, EADS Color Guard, various veteran organization Color Guards. It is the GRUCMOAA mission to involve as many of our local youth as possible.

Last year six cemeteries participated, GRUCMOAA was able to honor 1,300 veterans with a remembrance wreath. A brochure for each cemetery was prepared identifying the military exploits of several of the veterans honored.

Raising over \$5,000, this fundraiser ensures GRUCMOAA can continue to support the JROTC scholarships given at RFA, Proctor, Notre Dame, and now at Central Valley Academy; to finance summer training at Newport, RI for JROTC cadets, and to sponsor local veterans on both Syracuse Honor Flights to Washington, D.C. GRUCMOAAs community involvement and the 5-star Level of Excellence rating from MOAA would not be possible without the WAA program. The number of current dues paid members has decreased year over year, despite our efforts to contact members via email, postal mail, and phone contact.

■ To have another successful year, we encourage members to step up and support this program again either as a volunteer during the fundraising months of June to November or to purchase wreaths when you send in your Pearl Harbor Day dinner request. Help is needed soliciting local businesses to sponsor wreaths, distributing flyers around town announcing the event, seeking individual sponsors, getting organizations and individuals to participate in the ceremonies, and by making

brochures for each cemetery. All of this is currently done by just a few members. Special thanks to our president Joe Maurer for taking over the helm this year after our Treasurer's tragic road bike accident.

- Solicitation letters on Chapter letterhead are available to anyone interested in being involved recruiting businesses or individuals. We prefer that requests are made in person. Contact GRUCMOAA Treasurer Bob Haley if you can help in any way, or have suggestions on local businesses that may be willing to participate.
- For our members still actively working, if you participate with a donation, please check with your employer. They may offer matching funds for your contribution.
- Contributions to date have been received from: Stewart's Shops (\$750), Wal-Mart Distribution Center-Marcy (\$2,000), Sears Foundation (\$450), Strong –Burns & Sprock Funeral Home (\$250), Rome Teachers Credit Union (\$150), and Cathedral Corporation (\$100).

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Bob Haley

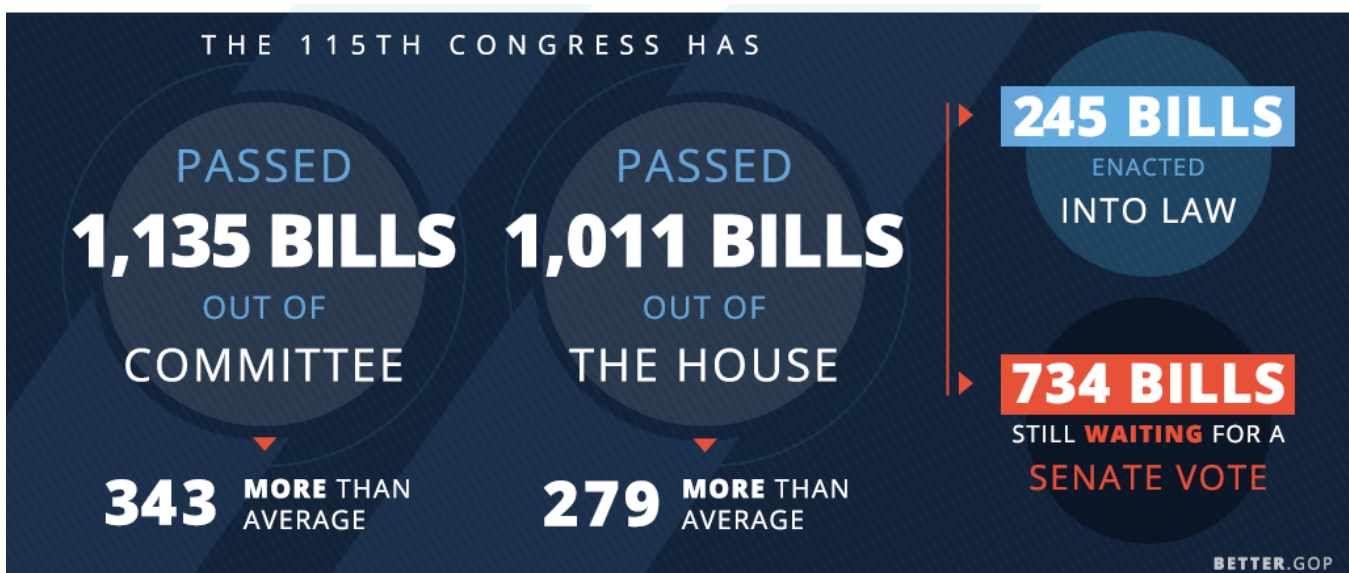
- The treasury began 2017 with \$10,231.60. Current balance on October 31, 2018 is \$7,328.01.
- The treasury balance should end 2018 in the \$10,000 range as profits from the wreath events and dues come in over the next few months.

Legislative Report

Co-chairs Tony Kimball and Bill Gray, Jr.

- **CLAUDIA TENNEY, US REPRESENTATIVE, NEW YORK'S 22ND DISTRICT**

DID YOU KNOW?



Tenney Sends Letter to Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee, Urging the Passage of Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Legislation

September 30, 2018: Earlier this week, Tenney sent a letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee urging the consideration of [H.R. 299](#), the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act. This legislation expands benefits for Vietnam Blue Water Navy Veterans who are currently suffering from diseases they received as a result of their service. This measure has received support from various veteran's organizations including the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Fleet Reserve Association, Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc., and the Blue Water Navy Association.

On June 25, 2018, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 299 and sent the legislation to the Senate for further consideration.

The 22nd District is home to more than 55,000 veterans, and it is Tenney's top priority to ensure they receive access to high-quality care. During the Vietnam War, more than 20 million gallons of the herbicide 'Agent Orange' was sprayed to remove jungle foliage, causing health complications for Blue Water Navy Veterans. In 2002, the VA stopped giving benefits to those veterans, causing significant complications for our nation's heroes. Tenney urged the Senate to pass this key legislation, ensuring the coverage our veterans deserve is restored.

As a member of the State Assembly, Tenney sponsored a bill to allow the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) to be recognized as a benevolent order and has continued her strong advocacy for our Vietnam Veterans throughout her time in Congress.

Tenney Sends Letter to Department of Defense Asking them to Allow Veterans Access to Fitness Facilities like the Colosseum Gym

September 30, 2018: On Tuesday, Tenney sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense, James Mattis and the Secretary of the United States Air Force, Heather Wilson, urging the DoD to use its authority to examine a regulatory change to once again allow veterans access to fitness facilities like the Colosseum Gym.

Earlier this year, Tenney introduced [H.R. 5130](#), the Ensuring Access to Military Facilities Act of 2018. This legislation would fix a 2013 change in policy that excluded veterans and military retirees from fitness facilities located on civilian sites, like the Colosseum Gym in Rome at the former Griffiss Air Force Base.

The 22nd District is home to more than 55,000 veterans, and it is Tenney's top priority that we continue to support them after retirement by providing access to facilities like the Colosseum Gym. Since 2013, veterans and retired military personnel have been denied access to the fitness facility at Griffiss and unfortunately, the issue has been ignored by our federal representatives in the past. Veterans have sacrificed to serve our nation. Tenney urged Secretaries Mattis and Wilson to examine this issue, and if possible through their authority implement a regulatory fix to open the doors to our veterans once again.

Tenney's legislation was included in the House version of the NDAA as an amendment, but despite our advocacy and work in attempting to ensure its inclusion in the Senate bill, the Senate failed to include this important provision in the final version.

In July, Tenney sent a letter to Chairmen Thornberry and McCain and Ranking Members Smith and Reed as well as the members of the NDAA Conference Committee urging the committee to include her amendment in the final Senate version.

Tenney Votes for FAA Reauthorization Act, Now Headed to President's Desk

September 30, 2018: On Wednesday, Tenney voted for H.R. 302, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. This bipartisan bill is a five-year reauthorization for the Federal Aviation Administration and includes investments in airport infrastructure, promoting traveler safety, and strengthening customer service. It provides certainty and provisions to expand unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in the United States. It also includes the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA) to help communities lessen the impacts of future disasters of all types.

In April, the FAA Reauthorization Act passed the House. It was then sent to the Senate where they made changes and sent it back to the House. It is now headed to the President's desk.

The 22nd District is home to Rome Lab, Griffiss International Airport and the Greater Binghamton Airport, and this legislation will keep us at the forefront of aviation through advancements in aviation technology including measures to develop drone research. Additionally, our region has experienced unprecedented flooding and the DRRA would significantly aid our preparation and recovery efforts. It will provide greater focus on pre-disaster mitigation in order to lessen the impacts of future disasters.

[Tenney Participates in Service Academy Night at OCC](#)

September 30, 2018: On Thursday, Tenney's office joined Senator Gillibrand and Representatives Katko and Stefanik's office at Onondaga Community College to host Service Academy Night. Students from across the 22nd District attended this great event. As the mother of a 2013 Naval Academy graduate, Tenney knows how life changing and fulfilling attending a service academy can be. Our region has a long tradition of service to our great nation and the service academies provide a unique opportunity for those looking to continue this important legacy. Applications for high school seniors wishing to apply to the Service Academies are due to our New Hartford office by October 17 at 4:00 p.m. Please call our New Hartford office at 315-732-0713 if you are a senior and you have not yet requested an application.

■ MOAA UPDATES

[The Largest Military Pay Raise in a Decade Could Come in 2020](#)

A key indicator shows 2019's bigger boost was just the beginning.

[VA Implements Mandatory Overtime to Reduce Huge GI Bill Delay](#)

Many veterans have yet to receive any part of their housing allowance or book stipend.

[2019 Retirement Pay Dates Announced](#)

The check won't always come on the first of the month. Get the updated list here.

[Free Flu Shots for Veterans and Military Families](#)

Flu season is coming. Know your vaccination options.

[President Trump Signs Defense Spending Bill](#)

See how the legislation stacks up with MOAA's top priorities.

[House OKs Big Retirement Gains for Guard, Reserve](#)

Will the Senate act before the 116th Congress takes power?

■ COMMISSARY CONNECTION

Commissaries worldwide are offering a special holiday value, while supplies last!

We're offering limited weekly quantities of select frozen turkeys at steep discounts, such as:

Honeysuckle White: up to 50% savings per pound!

Shady Brook Farms: up to 38% savings per pound!

Weekly quantities on hand will increase as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday. This promotion will be valid through November 15, 2018.

Promotion effective for CONUS & OCONUS stores. Check with Your Commissary for brand availability. Prices determined locally.

Coming October 2018: Your New Commissary Portal



The online customer portal is a new shopping experience that's:

- Convenient
- Easy
- Mobile

[Read the Commissary Connection blog post to learn more](#)



UPDATES FROM MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Director Bill Hamelin

Our membership is 68 with 28 current paid members, 3 paid auxiliary members, 18 life members, 3 auxiliary life members, 3 honorary members, 4 “new” members for 2018, with 8 overdue members and 1 overdue auxiliary member. Bill will be sending out periodic reminders for those still overdue for 2018. The 2019 membership form is enclosed. Please complete the 2019 membership form and mail to our Treasurer, Bob Haley, using the address listed on the form. You can also visit the GRUCMOAA web page:

http://grucmoaa.org/html/join_gruc.html to join online and use a credit card for payment.

If you aren't a National MOAA member, it's highly recommended that you become a member, please go to the MOAA website at:

https://ebiz.moaa.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Default.aspx?TabId=153&utm_source=h&utm_medium=header&utm_campaign=Join

Any questions regarding GRUC MOAA membership, please contact Bill for assistance, 315-725-3362.

VA CLINIC ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Director Bill Hamelin

In the past year we increased our Rome VA Clinic volunteer force from 2 to 3 chapter members. Together, we have made a big impact at the clinic which regularly serves over 7,000 veterans. Our team enrolls veterans in various on-line programs designed to give them personal control over their health care. Our Chapter's success in this effort has been so outstanding that we are the only volunteer clinic team, among the 7 in the Syracuse, NY VA Hospital Area, authorized to enroll veterans in “Veler”, a program that allows electronic exchange of veterans' health data between the VA and private providers.

■ [VA and DOD Senior Leaders Commit to Aligned Electronic Health Records System Rollout](#)

■ **VA and DOD Senior Leaders Commit to Aligned Electronic Health Records System Rollout**

The U.S. Secretaries of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DOD) signed a joint statement Sept. 26 pledging that their two departments will align their plans, strategies and structures as they roll out a new electronic health records (EHR) system that will allow VA and DOD to share patient data seamlessly.

■ Compare 2019 FEDVIP Dental, Vision Plans Ahead of Open Season

Oct. 4, 2018

In 2019, dental and vision insurance plans for retirees and their families will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). If you're eligible, the first opportunity to enroll in a plan is during the Federal Benefits Open Season. This will take place from Nov. 12 to Dec. 10. Prepare for Federal Benefits Open Season now by reviewing the 2019 FEDVIP plan options and rates.

Read the [full article here](#).

■ TRICARE First Open Season begins Monday, November 12, 2018

Oct. 10, 2018

Beginning Nov. 12, TRICARE will kick off its first annual TRICARE Open Season. Read the [full article here](#).

Sign up for TRICARE email updates at www.tricare.mil/subscriptions.

WEBLINKS THAT MAY INTEREST OUR MEMBERS

■ The newest edition of Army Echoes is now available.

Download your preferred version by clicking on the link below or by using your Army Echoes app (iOS and Android):

Full Color: <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/echoes/latest.pdf>

Black and White: <http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement/echoes/latest-pf.pdf>

Army Echoes is the Army's official newsletter for Retired Soldiers and surviving spouses. It updates the retired Army community about changes to laws, policies, programs, and

benefits that affect them. All Retired Soldiers and surviving spouses with active myPay accounts now receive Army Echoes electronically at their email address in myPay. Update your email address in myPay by visiting <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>.

■ Do You Wear Glasses? Need a new set of frames & lenses?

...do you get your glasses from the VA? They should provide them for you at (normally) no cost. Stop at the Rome clinic to find out if you are eligible through the VA. Also, Ft. Drum Medical will provide hearing aids to retirees and spouse at COST.

Link to Ft. Drum:

<http://www.drum.amedd.army.mil/ContactUs/SitePages/Contact%20Us.aspx>

The Navy also has a program where they will provide you with one free pair of glasses each year. Here's the site for that process below. It does not matter what Military Service a person served in either.

Link to Navy Optical:

<https://www.med.navy.mil/SITES/NOSTRA/ORDER/Pages/Retiree.aspx>

WEBSITE LINKS TO JROTC/NNDCC BY SCHOOL **Webmaster Greg Bertolini**

Rome Free Academy AFJROTC website:

http://www.rfa.romecsd.org/academics/j_r_o_t_c

Proctor NJROTC website: <https://sites.google.com/view/proctornjrotc>

Notre Dame NJROTC website: <http://www.notredameutica.org/high-school-academics/njrotc>

Notre Dame NJROTC student website: <https://notredamenjrotc.org/>

Central Valley Academy Navy National Defense Corps of Cadets (NNDCC):

<https://www.cvalleycsd.org/smooth-start-navy-corps-program/>

2019 Calendar of Events

VP/Webmaster Greg Bertolini

- April 3, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Vescio's Franklin Hotel.
- May 1, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Aqua Vino.
- May 27, 2019: Memorial Day.
- June 5, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Ancora!
- June 14, 2019: Flag Day ceremony at Peter Gansevoort Elementary School, Rome, NY.
- June 19, 2019: 1730-1930 hrs. Burger Burn with AFRL ACE Students, Hampton Inn - Floyd Ave, Rome, NY.
- July 4, 2019: Celebrate 243 years of Independence.
- July 18, 2019 (Thurs): 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Lake Delta Yacht Club.
- August 2019: Annual GRUC Picnic. Date and Location TBD.
- September 4, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Aquino's.
- October 2, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Casa Too Mucha.
- November 6, 2019: 1700-2045 hrs. Member / Guest dinner at Ancora!
- November 11, 2019: Veteran's Day
- December 7, 2019 (Sat): Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Dinner at TBD.

December 2, 2018 Pearl Harbor Remembrance

This year we're at a familiar spot, although in a different location, DiCastro's Too at 738 Erie Boulevard West, Rome, NY 13440.

A buffet dinner will be served which will include:

- *Homemade Pasta in Sauce*
- *Roasted Chicken*
- *Sausage, Peppers, & Onions*
- *Fresh Garden Salad*
- *House Italian or Ranch Dressing*
- *Vegetable*
- *Homemade Bread and Butter*
- *Non-alcoholic Beverages*
- *Coffee or Tea*
- *White Cake with Strawberry and Cannoli Filling*
- *Cash Bar*

Military member dress is Mess Dress, Class 'A' or business formal, guest dress is business formal. Cost is \$33.00 per person (\$25.00 Active Duty), and guests are welcome. The dinner will also be open to the public. Note: price includes buffet meal, taxes, and gratuity.

Schedule: **1300-1400 Attitude Adjustment**
 1400-1500 Ceremonies/Guest Speaker
 1500-1700 Dinner & Entertainment

Since we expect a large turnout, please, **PAID reservations** are requested as soon as possible and on or before **Wednesday, November 28th**, to ensure seating. When completing the reservation form in this newsletter, specify the total number of people in your party. We will use 'Sign-Up Guru' for headcount purposes, but we do request submission of paid reservations via USPS mail.

Bring Family & Friends

Our members and especially new members are encouraged to bring family and friends to our fun gathering. It's an excellent time to introduce new members and their families. This is our premier event of the year and you should share it with those closest to you. Please sign them up. The more the merrier!

JROTC Color Guard Presents the Colors

The Color Guard from one of the JROTC programs will open our formal ceremonies. This is another opportunity for you to see firsthand what these cadets learn in the JROTC program. As GRUC-MOAA members, and as sponsors of these programs, you have the right to be proud of these cadets.

Recognizing Veterans

Of course, we are indebted to veterans of all of our wars. However, we especially want to recognize our members who are WW II and Korean War veterans. As the years pass, we want to let them know that their efforts were not in vain and that we will always remember their service and their sacrifice. Join us in our special salute to several WWII and Korean War soldiers who will be attending the dinner.

Gifts for Needy Children

Keep up the spirit of a GRUC-MOAA tradition by bringing a wrapped gift for a needy child or making a monetary donation to the House of Good Shepherd to be placed under the Christmas tree at the dinner. You can also include the donation along with your dinner reservation. Any member who is unable to attend the Annual Dinner, who wishes to donate a gift, please send it along with your annual dues. Last year over \$400 along with some gifts were donated to The House of the Good Shepherd that brought great joy to the recipients. Please remember the young children trying to adapt to the challenges this world puts before them.



***Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Dinner Reservation
Sunday, December 2, 2018***

***RSVP via Signup Genius, with payment via USPS mail. Please ensure we receive your
payment NLT November 28, 2018.***

Please return your dinner reservation check, dues payment check, House of Good Shepherd donation check, all payable to GRUC – MOAA. Wreaths Across America donation checks should be made payable to Wreath Across America. Send forms and checks to: **Bob Haley, GRUC-MOAA Treasurer, P.O. Box 36, Rome, New York 13442-0036**

Name: _____

Number of Guests: _____

Guest Names: _____

Total Dinners: _____ @ \$ 33.00 per person* = \$ _____

*\$25.00 per person for **Active Duty Military**

Holiday Wreaths for a Veteran Gravesite @ \$15 each = \$ _____

Note: Make wreaths checks payable to Wreaths Across America.

2019 DUES STATEMENT

Please renew your 2019 membership by November 28, 2018 by sending your check, payable to **GRUC – MOAA, to Treasurer Bob Haley at P.O. Box 36, Rome, New York 13442-0036**

***Indicates required information**

* Name: _____ *Rank: _____

*Address: _____

Occupation: _____ Service Branch: _____

*Primary Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Spouse First Name: _____

Spouse Last Name (if different): _____

*Your Email: _____

*Dues Enclosed: _____ Life Member ***MUST provide Birth Date:*** _____

_____ \$20.00 Regular member

_____ \$10.00 Active Duty/Guard/Reserve

_____ \$10.00 Auxiliary Member

Widow/Widower of a member or qualifying individual

_____ \$5.00 Auxiliary Member

Non-Attendee (Non-Attendee Status is for our homebound, nursing home members, or members living more than 50 miles away).

*2019 Dues Enclosed: \$ _____ Life Membership Dues: \$ _____

Prior Year Dues Enclosed: \$ _____

*Total Dues Enclosed: \$ _____ *Check Number: _____

GRUCMOAA CHAPTER LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEE STRUCTURE:

| Age (in 2019) | Membership Fee |
|---------------|----------------|
| 50 and under: | \$300 |
| 51 to 55: | \$282 |
| 56 to 60: | \$265 |
| 61 to 65: | \$242 |
| 66 to 70: | \$213 |
| 71 to 75: | \$184 |
| 76 to 80: | \$153 |
| 81 to 85: | \$118 |
| 86 and over: | FREE! |