Reserve Organization of America

Walla Walla Chapter (NW-021)

Walla Walla FORTE

2025 20th Sword & Pen Award Recipient

2024 1st Ben Franklin Journalism Award

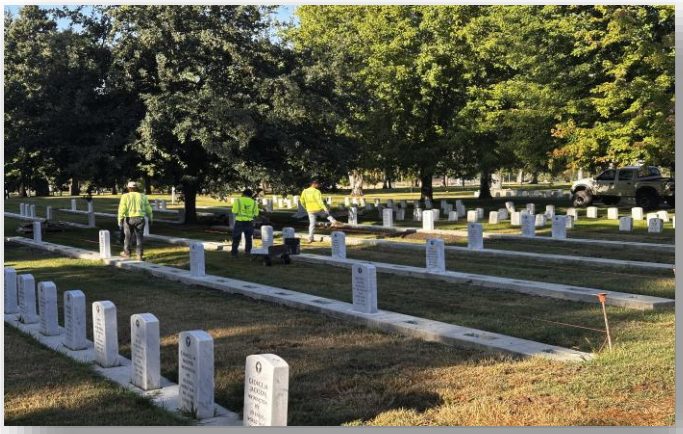
December 2025 | Volume 6 | Number 3

A message from our President, LTC Sarah Bro

We welcome the holiday season! What better way to keep cheer going than to acknowledge the veterans in our community?

We are proud to report our chapter has resourced **170 new headstones** for the World War I section of Mountain View Cemetery! With the support of the City of Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Department, these beautiful markers will show the next generation the pride we have in these veterans and thank them for their service. Come to Mountain View Cemetery to see this new section for yourself!

Mountain View Cemetery



Mountain View Cemetery

For those of you who contributed to the Wreaths Across America 2025 campaign, thank you! Sponsorships are ongoing throughout the year. You may continue donating online at https://wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/171117/Overview/?relatedId=0. Sponsorships will apply for wreaths to be laid at the December 2026 ceremony.

On December 13, we laid wreaths at the Fort Walla Walla Post Cemetery and Blue Mountain Memorial Gardens. The wreaths offer a special tribute to these veterans—one that helps us remember, honor, and teach. Please take time to visit! As you enjoy the holiday season, remember to keep all our veterans in your thoughts and prayers.

Fort Walla Walla Post Cemetery

Walla Walla Team

Walla Walla Chapter Officers

PRESIDENT
LTC Sarah Bro, USA (Ret.)

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
Vacant

SECRETARY
Capt William Howard III, USAF (Ret.)

TREASURER
CSM Terry Atchison, USA (Ret.)

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
MAJ Lonnie Mettler, USA (Ret.)

Walla Walla Chapter Committees

INVESTMENTS
LTC Allen Aplass, USA (Ret.)

MEMBERSHIP/RECRUITMENT
MAJ Lonnie Mettler, USA (Ret.)

VETERAN HEADSTONE PROJECT
LTC Allen Aplass, USA (Ret.)

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA
SSG Chad Bro, USA (Ret.)

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
PO3 Gene Gossett, USNR
SGT Ted C. Hanson, ARNG

Walla Walla Chapter Advisors

CHAPLAIN
Dr. Pamela Murray, USA, Honorary

FLAG PROGRAM
CSM Terry Atchison, USA (Ret.)

HISTORIAN
MAJ Lonnie Mettler, USA (Ret.)

LEGISLATION
Vacant

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
CSM Terry Atchison, USA (Ret.)
MAJ Lonnie Mettler, USA (Ret.)

PUBLIC OUTREACH
LTC Sarah Bro, USA (Ret.)
SSgt Scott Keller, USMC

QUILTS OF VALOR
Dr. Pamela Murray

PROGRAMS
Capt Gordon "Mick" McLean, USAFR (Ret.)

Activities Calendar

Executive Committee Meeting

Everyone is welcome to attend the Executive Committee meetings. They take place in the **Fort Walla Walla Museum Conference Room at 10:00 a.m**. See the dates below:

Jan 26, 2026	**Mar 23, 2026**
Feb 23, 2026	**Apr 20, 2026**

The luncheon takes place at noon, at the Walla Walla Country Club.

Feb 6, 2026 – James Payne, Exec. Director FWWHM – Bataan POW Sketches

Mar 6, 2026 – Del Draper, Military Historian, Gettysburg

Apr 3, 2026 – SSgt Steven Rieff. His Story, Walla Walla Veterans Business

May 1, 2026 – Carolyn Meagher, President-Volunteers Who Love Serving Veterans

ROA Walla Walla 2025 New Chapter Members

MAJ Jeffery Michael Cortez, USAR
2ndLt. Alexa L. Williams, USAF
MAJ Jeffrey Lockwood, USA (Ret.)
Dr. Pamela Murray, USA Honorary
MAJ Garth Beavon, USA
LCDR Michael L. Thorpe, USN
Mrs. Carolyn Elworthy, USA Civilian Spouse
Mrs. Teri Lynn Elworthy, USA Civilian Spouse
CDR Heather M. Kostechi, USCG
Maj Robert LaGrange, USMCR
SGT Michael L Braden, USA
Ms. Pamela Morse, USA Civilian Spouse
COL William M. Brady, USA (Ret.)
LTC Clyde Reynolds, USA (Ret.)
Capt Jeffrey M. Weaver, USAF
Capt Verna M. Garrett, USAF (Ret.)
MAJ James Womac, USA (Ret.)
Sgt Gareth M. Clausen, USMC

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed herein are those of the editor or columnist and do not necessarily reflect those of the Walla Walla Chapter, Department of Northwest, or ROA.

Program Speakers

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

September 5, 2025
LTC Amy Roznowski, USMC (Ret.)
"Reboot of Post #992"

LTC Amy Roznowski, who has an impressive military background, serves as the Senior Vice Commander of Mathew Fazzari VFW Post #992. LTC Roznowski highlighted the remarkable journey of this historic Post and the challenges it faces in defining the needs of the veterans and the community it has proudly served for over 102 years. Recently, the Post has confronted the significant challenge of a potential closure in 2024.

With the steadfast commitment and visionary efforts of a revitalized leadership team, the Post is entering a transformative phase, positioning itself to once again become a welcoming community for all veterans.

October 3, 2025
RDML Darold Bigger, USN (Ret.)
Chaplain. "9/11 Chaplain Response"

Rear Admiral Darold Bigger, US Navy (Ret.), a distinguished former Navy chaplain, delivered a deeply moving and thought-provoking presentation that explored the vital role of chaplains in the Chaplain Response to 9/11. During this significant event, RDML Bigger showcased a Navy-produced video that illustrates the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The presentation included personal testimonials from chaplains and chaplain assistants across all military branches who served in the affected areas of New York City and the Pentagon. They shared their experiences and the essential support they provided during this challenging time.

November 7, 2025
LTC James Baker USA (Ret.)
Admiralty Law & USACE

COL James Baker captivated us with his fascinating stories from his incredible career as a claim's attorney with the US Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District. The event was a wonderful mix of humor and insightful perspectives, shedding light on the daily workings within the USACE Office of Counsel. COL Baker's anecdotes were both entertaining and enlightening, providing us with an engaging glimpse into the unique challenges and fulfilling experiences he encountered throughout his distinguished journey. It left everyone inspired and eager to learn more!

December 5, 2025
Walla Walla Chapter Business Meeting,
LTC Sarah Bro, President

Our December luncheon is more than just a gathering; it is our chapter's annual business meeting, combining camaraderie with purpose! President LTC Sarah Bro warmly opened the session by inviting everyone to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a prayer led by Rev. Pam Murray.

During the meeting, we addressed several important topics, including award presentations, a yearly financial report, and the election of our officers for the upcoming year.

This event also allowed us to reflect on our journey together and express our gratitude for the incredible achievements and goals we have accomplished over the past year.

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Chapter News

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

CPT Steven Heitzman /LTC Sarah Bro

"Elevating Aviation Dreams Together!"

The ROA Walla Walla Chapter, in collaboration with the Walla Walla Civil Air Patrol Twin W Composite Squadron, announces the successful acquisition of an XForce RTX Flight Simulation System. The ROA Chapter gifted this exceptional flight simulator to the Civil Air Patrol Twin W Composite Squadron (WA-005), reinforcing our commitment to supporting the next generation of aviators and fostering a passion for aviation in our community.

ROA Sword & Pen Award and Sword and Screen Award

Captain Henry Plimack, the Chair of the Marketing and Communication Committee, has an impressive background as a senior audio engineer with Disney/ABC and WABC-TV. He is a six-time Emmy Award winner and a former trustee and governor of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

During the Annual Meeting, in Washington, D.C., Capt Plimack presented this year's Sword and Pen Awards to CSM Terry R. Atchison and Lonnie E. Mettler for their outstanding achievement in advancing ROA's programs through excellence in information services and publication for the "Walla Walla Forte."

A new award for the Walla Walla Chapter was given to LTC Sarah L. Bro, who received this year's Sword and Screen Award for her outstanding contribution to advancing ROA's programs through excellence in web services and information.

Wall Walla Area Veterans Stand

SSG Chad Bro - ROA Booth

On Friday, October 3, 2025, the Walla Walla Area Veterans Stand Down & Appreciation event was held at Walla Walla Community College. This community-driven event provides essential resources and services to homeless, at-risk, and unemployed veterans. Available support includes housing assistance, legal aid, screenings, and employment resources. LTC Sarah Bro, President of the ROA Walla Walla Chapter, and SSG Chad Bro staffed a booth at the event, where SSG Bro engaged with a local veteran, sharing information about the chapter's initiatives in the area.

SFC Mark Mebes and
CSM Anthony Marrero

Quilts of Valor Honoring Our Veterans

On October 3, 2025, the Quilts of Valor event, organized by Dr. Pamela Murray from the ROA Walla Walla Chapter with assistance from fellow chapter members, celebrated the contributions of two distinguished veterans: CSM Anthony Marrero, USA (Ret.), and SFC Mark Mebes, USA (Ret.). They were presented with beautifully crafted Quilts of Valor by Mona Himmelberger and Jan Eaton, in recognition of their dedicated military service. These quilts serve as a heartfelt tribute to the sacrifices they've made in defense of our country.

This event not only honored CSM Marrero and SFC Mebes but also brought the community closer together, enhancing the appreciation for the sacrifices endured by all service members.

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Community Activities

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

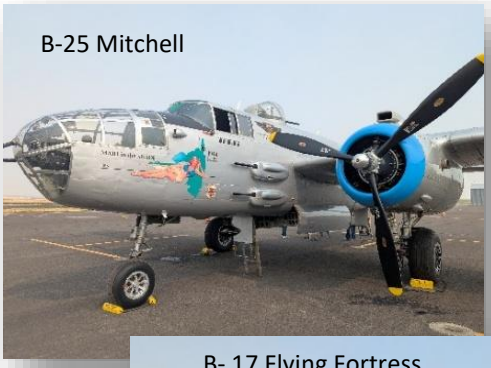
1LT Stubblefield - A proud native of Walla Walla, Karissa Stubblefield Shaw is a West Point graduate who serves as an Army 1st Lieutenant in Military Intelligence at Fort Hood, TX., and she proudly represents the Third Cavalry Regiment, demonstrating unwavering honor and dedication while carrying the flag during the Military Recognition Night at the Walla Walla Fair and Frontier Days Rodeo.

JROTC Battalion Color Guard

Walla Walla Fair Parade JROTC Battalion Color Guard

On August 30, 2025, the streets of downtown Walla Walla came alive for the 159th annual Walla Walla Fair and Frontier Days Parade, a cherished tradition that unites residents of all ages. Leading the parade was the Walla Walla High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) battalion, which showed its pride and precision in this time-honored event.

The JROTC's participation exemplifies a commitment to community service and highlights the program's inherent values. As the parade unfolded, families lined the streets, soaking in the excitement of colorful floats, lively local bands, and dedicated community groups as they marched by.



B-25 Mitchell

B- 17 Flying Fortress

Wings over Walla Walla World War II History

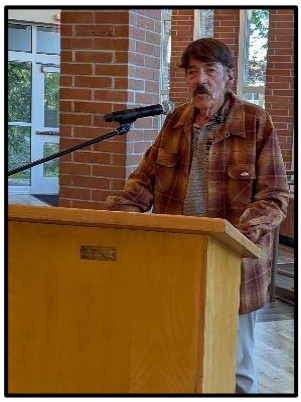
In September, history buffs and aviation enthusiasts alike immerse themselves in the rich heritage of Walla Walla during the annual Wings Over Walla Walla event, with the unique opportunity to witness two iconic World War II bombers, the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-25 Michell. Both planes played significant roles in theaters of war across Europe, the Pacific, and the Mediterranean. The event was an engaging experience as history came to life.

The Walla Walla area has a deep connection to aviation history, with over 8,600 crew members trained at the Walla Walla Air Base during World War II. This airfield, which was taken over by the US Government in 1942, was expanded to include an additional 2,164 acres for training purposes and served as the Walla Walla Army Air Base for five years.

As the community gathers to honor this rich history, the Wings Over Walla Walla event is a celebration not just of the past but of the enduring spirit of innovation and bravery that defines the field of aviation. Whether you're a seasoned enthusiast or a curious newcomer, this event offers something for everyone to appreciate and enjoy.

Community Activities Continue from Page 5

Vietnam War POW Delivers Powerful Speech



MAJ Mark Allyn Smith

On October 7, 2025, Volunteers Love Serving Veterans, in partnership with the Combat Vets International Chapter 10 and the JROTC Battalion, hosted retired U.S. Army Major Mark Allyn Smith as the keynote speaker for their POW/MIA Day event. National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday in September to honor former, POWs and the missing. The event was rescheduled to fit Smith's availability. In his speech, MAJ Smith painted a vivid picture, sharing his captor's gripping account of their harrowing experiences during the ten months spent in a desolate prison camp in Cambodia. Through his powerful storytelling, MAJ Smith highlighted not only the grit and resilience of his military service but also the broader themes of hope and redemption that can emerge from the darkest circumstances. By the end of his speech, the room was silent, with each person reflecting on the profound impact of the survival tales and the strength of the human spirit.

Honoring Our Heroes
A Reflection on Veterans Day

We paused to celebrate the profound significance of Veterans Day. Our community came together in a vibrant parade to pay homage to the courageous individuals who have selflessly defended our nation. In expressing our heartfelt gratitude for their sacrifices and unwavering service, we are reminded of the deep love and commitment that uphold our freedoms. The community honors their legacy with genuine appreciation and unwavering respect, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten.

Legislative Report

Let Us Make Our Voices

We want to ensure that all members are aware of ROA National's Calls to Action, an important initiative that empowers us to make our voices heard on critical issues. This is a valuable opportunity for chapter members to advocate for the matters that matter most to us and encourage our elected officials to take meaningful action.

Calls to Action is available at the [ROA Legislative Readiness Center] (https://www.roa.org/page/LegislativeReadinessCenter):

1. Advocate for Congress to maintain the combat readiness of the Air Force.
2. Support the Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act.
3. Support H.R.2102/S. 1032 The Major Richard Star Act
4. Persuade Congress to sustain the Air Force's combat readiness

Each Call to Action includes a "Compose Your Message" section at the bottom of the page. Here, you will find a pre-populated letter ready to be sent to your local members of Congress. This makes it easy for us to express our support and engage in the legislative process. Let's take this opportunity to make a positive impact together!

"Reviving History: The Return of the 'Department of War'"

The administration has announced that the historic name "Department of War" will be reinstated as an alternate title for the Department of Defense. The Department of War was established on August 7, 1789, and operated for 158 years until it was dissolved on September 18, 1947. This dissolution coincided with the implementation of the National Security Act of 1947, which led to the creation of the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force. Along with the Department of the Navy, these agencies formed what is known as the National Military Establishment.

Source: President Trump Executive Order/Wikipedia

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

The History of the Purple Heart

Did you know that the Purple Heart is America's oldest military award?

Badge of Military Merit

The history of the Purple Heart began in 1782 with General George Washington's creation of the "Badge of Military Merit," awarded for extraordinary acts of valor, loyalty, or service. Washington's original order was discontinued after the conclusion of the war, and it wasn't until February 22, 1932—coinciding with Washington's 200th birthday—that General Douglas MacArthur reinstated the Purple Heart.

The requirements for earning the badge were a lot different from today's Purple Heart. Soldiers had to do something unusually heroic or perform some act that was essential to the success of the Continental Army. While that sounds more like something you'd have to do to earn the Medal of Honor, the badge was a cloth purple heart with the word "merit" stitched across it in white. So, in a way, both the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart came from the Badge of Military Merit. One thing that made the badge different was that it was the first award meant for enlisted troops. Before this, the only way to recognize heroism by an enlisted soldier was to promote him, or for a general to give him a battlefield commission.

No one knows for sure how many soldiers ever received the Badge of Military Merit, though. It could be as few as three. And the book in which recipients' names were recorded has been lost for more than 200 years.

The new design, crafted by Army heraldic specialist Elizabeth Will, features a profile of Washington. The medal honors meritorious service, but it also allows soldiers to be recognized for injuries sustained from enemy action.

It has evolved to honor those Veterans of the Civil War and Indian Wars, as well as the Spanish–American War, China Relief Expedition (Boxer Rebellion), and Philippine Insurrection, who also were awarded the Purple Heart. This is because the original regulations governing the award of the Purple Heart, published by the Army in 1932, provided that any soldier who had been wounded in any conflict involving U.S. Army personnel might apply for the new medal.

There were but two requirements: the applicant had to be alive at the time of application (no posthumous awards were permitted), and he had to prove that he had received a wound that necessitated treatment by a medical officer.

Subject to the approval of the Secretary of Defense, Executive Order 10409, dated 12 February 1952, revised authorizations to include the Service Secretaries. Dated 25 April 1962, Executive Order 11016 included provisions for the posthumous award of the Purple Heart. Dated 23 February 1984, Executive Order 12464 authorized the award of the Purple Heart as a result of terrorist attacks, or while serving as part of a peacekeeping force, after 28 March 1973.

Source: The U.S. Department of Defense, and Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Army Chaplain Corps

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Celebrates 250 Years of Service

This year marks a milestone as the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps celebrates its 250th birthday – after a quarter millennium of unwavering dedication to faith, service, and sacrifice. Since its founding on July 29, 1775, during the Revolutionary War, the Army Chaplain Corps has been a beacon of hope and resiliency, guiding Soldiers through triumph and tragedy. Whether standing alongside troops on the front lines or offering quiet counsel during moments of doubt, Army Chaplains have always answered the sacred call to serve God and country.

Army Chaplains have served critical roles in the Army's most defining moments. Two hundred and eighteen chaplains served in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War, chaplains provided solace to Soldiers in makeshift hospital beds, comforting the wounded amidst unimaginable suffering. During World War I, chaplains braved the trenches of Europe, conducting services under fire and bringing messages of hope to Soldiers in battle. During World War II, the "Four Chaplains" of the USAT Dorchester embodied the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives to save others as their ship sank into icy waters.

Chaplain Corner

By Rev. Dr. Pam Murray

Honoring Our Heritage Through Service

I was filled with gratitude for the heritage I've been blessed with. Participating in Wreaths Across America is more than a gesture—it's a visible act of thanks to those who have forged our democracy over the past 250 years.

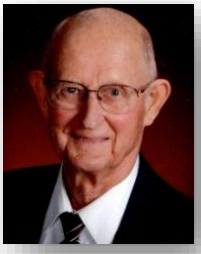
I thought of my ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War, and of my grandchildren who continue that proud tradition of service today. Our military lineage is a thread woven through generations, connecting the birth of our nation to its present and future.

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of what was once called "an experiment in self-governance," let us pause to remember all who have served—and those who will serve—to keep our democracy strong.

I invite you to give thanks with every blessing you now enjoy, whether it's a simple meal or time spent with loved ones.

These fundamental rights and freedoms are God's reminders—not to take them for granted, but to uphold them with gratitude and resolve.

Sounding Taps



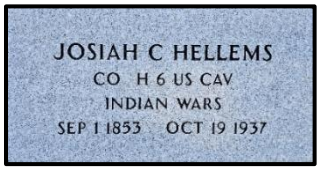
COL Emil Erich Leit

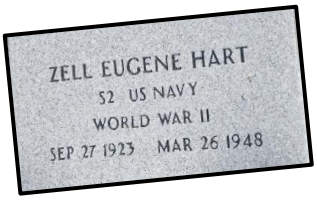
COL Emil Erich Leitz, USA (Ret.)
Passed away on March 4, 2025

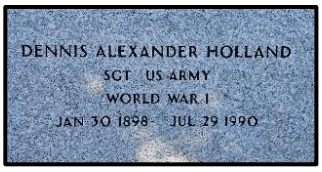
Emil Erich Leitz served as a 1st Lieutenant in a Combat Construction Battalion during his active duty, supporting the Air Force. He later joined the Army Reserves as a Corps of Engineers Officer, working on projects like the Snake River dams and supporting Benton County Emergency Services. He graduated from and taught at the Command and General Staff College. Emil retired as a Colonel in 1990 and received the Meritorious Service Award.

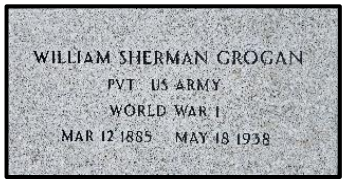
Veterans Headstone Project

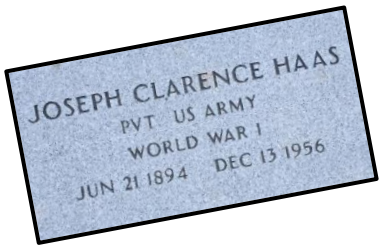
Veteran Graves Without a Headstone Marker (Update)
MAJ Lonnie E. Mettler, USA (Ret.)

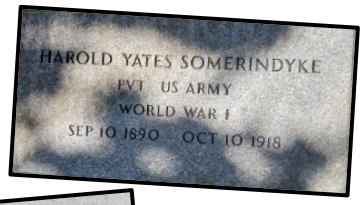


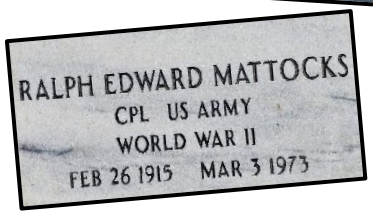












We are thrilled to announce the successful completion of Phase 2 of our initiative! In September, we installed 11 more headstones, and we now have the opportunity to fund an additional 20, markers pending the approval of the necessary names. However, we must continue our efforts with unwavering determination.

What started as a need for 40 headstones has now evolved into a noble mission to remember nearly 100 veterans. It's essential to remember that not all identified names will qualify; however, we remain steadfast in our commitment to this project. We wholeheartedly encourage you to help seek donations; every contribution, no matter the size, will have a profound impact.

How better can we, as a united organization, further preserve the legacies of those brave veterans who served so selflessly and ensure that they are forever remembered?

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS *"Serving Those Who Served"*

The following is from Rudy Lopez, Cemetery Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Lake, Washington.

"Please thank all involved in everyone's collective efforts to properly mark and maintain Veterans' graves. Your team is to be commended for your commitment to honor these individuals for their service to your nation, not just during *the holidays with a wreath, but in perpetuity with headstones." Your efforts in ensuring these individuals are not forgotten.*

Reserve Organization of America National President

By CSM Terry R. Atchison, USA (Ret.)

ROA National Convention was held in Washington, D.C. The New 84th National President of the ROA is Major General Margaret Wilmoth, USA (Ret.).

Overview of the ROA President's Speech

I am truly honored to serve as the 84th National President of ROA. As we look to the future, I would like to extend my congratulations to President Wroblewski for his dedication and service. A special thank you goes to Layne for the collaborative relationship we built this past year, where we engaged in meaningful discussions about leadership. I sincerely appreciate his generosity in sharing his insights and time. I am excited to build on the momentum he has established and to continue advancing the mission of ROA through several key areas.

Commitment to Relevance: ROA will actively ensure its relevance by reaching out to potential new members, employers, and corporate partners, while also engaging individuals outside our current membership. This proactive approach will not only expand our network but will also enrich the diverse perspectives within our organization.

Collaborative Engagement with Department Presidents: I look forward to our quarterly meetings with Department Presidents, where we can collaborate and share effective strategies to strengthen our connections with serving Reservists and their families. These discussions will foster a sense of unity and shared purpose, empowering us to make a greater impact in our communities.

Dynamic Membership Committee Initiatives: Our Membership Committee is prepared to demonstrate the significant value of ROA to various communities and stakeholders. By focusing on attracting younger members and developing engaging programs that encourage active participation, we will create a vibrant and inclusive environment that resonates with a broader audience.

Expanding International Programs: We will broaden our international initiatives, building on existing programs to effectively demonstrate ROA's commitment to and value in serving Reservists, particularly in regions outside the continental United States. This expansion will not only enhance our global presence but also strengthen our ties with international partners and communities.

Strategic Resource Development: I am pleased to announce the appointment of an energetic chair for our Resource Development Committee, who will lead our efforts to forge partnerships and secure resources that align with ROA's mission and objectives. Together, we will explore new opportunities for growth and sustainability, ensuring that we have the tools we need to excel.

Optimizing Operations for Impact: We will enhance our workflows and business practices at headquarters through the implementation of advanced digital solutions. This will ensure our Vision 29 strategy is clearly communicated and backed by measurable benchmarks that facilitate our success. By optimizing our operations, we will empower our team to work more efficiently and effectively toward our shared goals.

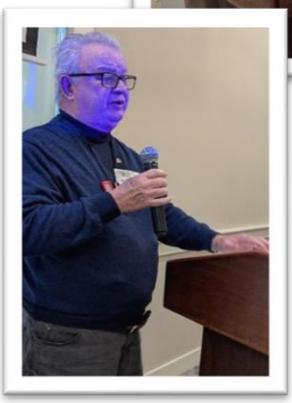
Thank You

Chapter Annual Business Meeting Continued from Page 3

President, LTC Sarah Bro presided over the annual business

Major Mettler delivered an overview of our remarkable achievements with the Veterans Headstones project, highlighting the successful acquisition of matching funds for headstones at Mountain View Cemetery. He underscored our commitment to Wreaths Across America, an event poised to honor our veterans on

President LTC Sarah Bro announced the members of the ROA Walla Walla Chapter have chosen the following individuals to take leadership positions on the Executive Committee – President, LTC Sarah Bro; Vice President, Capt William Howard III; SSG Chad Bro, Secretary; and CSM Terry Atchison, Treasurer. MAJ Lonnie Mettler, past President, officially installed the 2026 Executive Committee.



Capt. McLean provided an overview of the speakers for the 2026 luncheons, highlighting several key presenters and their insights. Each speaker is expected to cover relevant topics aligned with our mission and inspire the attendees. Next year's luncheon promises to be an engaging and thought-provoking experience

MAJ Mettler was honored with a certificate and a commemorative coin in recognition of his outstanding service as a past Chapter President. This acknowledgment reflects his dedication and leadership during his tenure, which contributed significantly to the chapter's success and growth.

Captain Howard was presented with a certificate and a commemorative coin to honor his eight years of service as the Chapter Secretary. This recognition highlights his commitment and leadership throughout his tenure, which played a vital role in the chapter's success and development.

Chapter News – Continue from Page 4

The Reserve Organization of America, Walla Walla Chapter, Wreaths Across America Program

Hosting the Wreaths Across America ceremony and its wreath-laying at Fort Walla Walla Post Cemetery and Blue Mountain Memorial Gardens on December 13, 2025. Approximately 30 dedicated volunteers came together to ensure the ceremony was both meaningful and memorable. As part of our ongoing mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach, we recognize the importance of acknowledging our veterans.