



South Alabama Veterans Council

A coalition of Veterans, Friends and Organizations working together to Further the Cause of Veterans in the South Alabama area

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Lou Lartigue 471-4322 Council President | • | Pat Downing 751-6619 Council VP | • | Bill Atkison 649-2281 Secretary / NewsLetter | • | Tom Schwarz 649-8459 Treasurer / Chambless Fund | • | Pete Riehm 442-4349 LNO/MC |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|

CAPT IAL PIERCE, SPIRITUS AMERITUS SAVC

on the web - savg.net Facebook — [South Alabama Veterans Council](https://www.facebook.com/SouthAlabamaVeteransCouncil)

September 15 meeting will be by ZOOM

— contact loulartigue@bellsouth.net by email if you would like to join —

September is the ninth month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian calendars, the third of four months to have a length of 30 days, and the fourth of five months to have a length of less than 31 days. In the Northern Hemisphere September is the seasonal equivalent of March in the Southern Hemisphere.

In the Northern hemisphere, the beginning of the meteorological autumn is on 1 September. In the Southern hemisphere, the beginning of the meteorological spring is on 1 September. September marks the beginning of the ecclesiastical year in the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is the start of the academic year in many countries of the northern hemisphere, in which children go back to school after the summer break, sometimes on the first day of the month.

September (from Latin *septem*, "seven") was originally the seventh of ten months in the oldest known Roman calendar, the calendar of Romulus c. 750 BC, with March (Latin *Martius*) the first month of the year until perhaps as late as 451 BC. After the calendar reform that added January and February to the beginning of the year, September became the ninth month but retained its name. It had 29 days until the Julian reform, which added a day.

On September 17, 1787, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the document they had created. Our Constitution grew out of efforts to reform the Articles of Confederation, an earlier constitution which provided for a loose alliance of states with a weak central government. From May 1787 through September 1787, delegates from twelve of the thirteen states convened in Philadelphia, where they wrote a new constitution which was ratified through a series of State conventions during 1788-89. The Constitution has been amended 27 times with one amendment cancelling another. The first ten amendments, ratified by the States in 1791, are known as the Bill of Rights and detail rights and civil liberties of the People and the States. For more on the Constitution, www.usconstitution.net

other days to remember in 2020:

- September 2:** VJ Day (Japan surrendered on August 14; the surrender ceremony was held Sep 2)
- September 7:** Labor Day (first Monday)
- September 11:** 9/11 Remembrance/Patriot Day
- September 16:** American Legion Day
- September 17:** Constitution Day, Citizenship Day
- September 18:** Air Force Birthday, National POW/MIA Recognition Day (third Friday)
- September 22:** Autumnal Equinox Day
- September 27:** National Gold Star Mother's Day

The measure of man is what he does with power — Pitaeacus



September 29: National VEW Day

September 30: Ask a Stupid Question Day (last school day of month)

Statistically speaking, September consistently ranks as the most popular month of the year for birthdays in the United States.



TAPS



Raphael Alfonso Maharaj, 80, passed away on Wednesday, August 19, 2020.

Raphael attended Osmond High School in Trinidad, then went on to graduate from St. George's College in Maritime Engineering before he attended the U.S.A.-E.E.O.C. Training Institute. He arrived in the United States of America on February 18, 1962, from Trinidad, and made Mobile, Alabama his home. Raphael then registered for the draft. As a Merchant Seaman, with the endorsement "Valid for Emergency Services", he continued serving being assigned as a crew member serving with the Military Sealift Command, transporting military supplies to our Armed Forces in South Vietnam. Alabama Dry Docks & Shipbuilding Company had a huge backlog of naval vessels awaiting repairs, including the aircraft carrier "USS LEXINGTON", a nuclear submarine, and several destroyers.

ADDSCO put out a call for experienced maritime workers to have these ships put back in service, which Raphael answered. He signed off from the Sealift Command and was employed by ADDSCO as a machinist, continuing his services repairing those naval vessels. Raphael remained at ADDSCO until the yard closed in 1989. He still wanted to serve his country, so Raphael volunteered with

Alabama State Defense Force in 1996 with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He retired on March 14, 2014, at the rank of Colonel and Commander 3rd Brigade ALSDF. Raphael served as Alabama State Commander with the rank of Brigadier General in the United States National Reserve Corps, an all-volunteer based mission prior to veterans and civilians organization, responding to natural and manmade disasters. Raphael received certification from FBI Citizens Academy, where he was one of four individuals to incorporate the Academy. He was a graduate of Mobile Police Academy, first-class, held an American Red Cross Certificate of Merit and was a training instructor, and was certified with the Civic Endeavors and Boards.

He was on the State Advisory Committee, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; retired 2nd Vice President-International Association of Official Human Rights; retired Chairman with Mobile Human Relations Commission; was a member of the South Alabama Veterans Council; Commission Member and Parade Chairman of the Mobile Area Bay Veterans Day Parade; past President and Current Board Member of Keep Mobile Beautiful; past President of Crime Stoppers of Southwest Alabama; Board Member of Mobile Historical Commission; Founding Member of Mobile International Festival; past Board Member of Habitat for Humanity; past President of Volunteer Mobile; past Board Member of the American Red Cross-Mobile Chapter; retired Executive Secretary with Local 18 I.A.M. AFL/CIO; past President of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Race Relations; past Chairman of Mobile County Public Employers Training Council; and a Founding Member and current Board Member of Mobile Medical Reserve Corps.

Raphael spent his life serving God, his country, and humanity. He was a wonderful husband and father and will be greatly missed.

Raphael was preceded in death by his brothers, Sonny Maharaj, Emmanuel Maharaj, and Daniel Maharaj; and sisters, Theresa, Elsie, and Marie. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Betty L. Maharaj; four children, ten grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and other cherished family and friends.

Raphael was buried in Pine Crest Cemetery.

If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them. - Bill Gates



This from Master Guns, Cynthia:



Tue, Sep 1 at 1:26 PM

It is with much sadness that I share the news of the passing of our friend and comrade Sgt Thomas Austin, USMC / Buffalo Soldier.

TAPS

Last week, while at a visit with his oncologist, he had to be transported to the hospital. Later he received the COVID diagnosis.



PhotoBy Bill 05/21/19

Though it seemed he was responding, this morning he passed away.

We looked at him as a former Marine (airborne) and member of the Montford Point Marine Association. But I'll admit

that he was probably best known as a member of the Buffalo Soldiers and was always part of the Mounted Color Guard.

.....find the streets all guarded by the United States Marines... Semper Fidelis

[editor's note: no further information is available at this time]

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) launched the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families in early 2019.

"Preventing Veteran suicide is our number one clinical priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This is a national problem that demands a nationwide response - the Governor's Challenge provides a roadmap to develop that national focus of effort." The goal of this collaborative is to create a national strategy to prevent veteran suicide.

Men are more likely to die by suicide, but women are more likely to attempt it. Men are also more likely to use more lethal methods than women. Women are more likely to attempt by poisoning/ overdose. Also, American Indian, Alaska Native youth and middle-aged people have the highest rate of suicide, followed by non-Hispanic White middle-aged and older males. African American children under the age of 12 have a higher rate of suicide than their White peers. There has been a significant rise in the suicide rate among youth aged 10-14, making it

the second leading cause of death for this age group.

The GoodFolk at Veterans Recovery Resources (VRR) along with Adm Davis, representatives of Alabama Department of Mental Health and Rachel Mosely, Suicide Prevention Officer at Mobile VA Clinic, will be attending a conference and devising a strategy to deal with Veteran Suicide.

VRR is very close to finalizing plans and getting money together to renovate the old school building on their property. This will give them an opportunity to expand the clinic and have in-patient care.

VRR has a new program; "Veterans Helping Veterans." check it out on Facebook. The first installment features our own Rick Moritz.

"For many Veterans, the war isn't over when the shooting stops. Many struggle to return to normal life, the result of emotional wounds that never really heal.

Rick is dedicated to helping Veterans. And we are too, with a groundbreaking program by Veterans, for Veterans. Peer-to-Peer, by those who truly know and understand. And it's proven to work, one reclaimed life at a time."

The new school year "will be a real challenge for a lot of our parents," said Frank Barrow, head of the JROTC in Mobile County schools.

Some schools are going 'virtual' and others are going to a hybrid system of some virtual, some in-class teaching. Some students will be home-schooled and "we don't know how many will come back - if we come back," stated Barrow.

The younger teachers "should have no problem" with the new teaching methods during the pandemic but, "some of us older teachers" may have some difficulty with it. Some teachers may look at retirement.

Jim Jeffries said, "In Baldwin County, a lot of teachers are retiring" rather than deal with the confusion.

Our 8yo granddaughter is going into the third grade at Mertz and she already has her laptop given by the school system; our 4yo granddaughter will be in kindergarten at O'Rourke and they don't know when the laptops or tablets will be available for their students.

The 8yo is much upset that she can't go back to class; the 4yo couldn't care less. This will be a fun year! Or not ...

If you're sitting in public, and a stranger takes the seat next to you, just stare straight ahead and say, "Did you bring the money?"



Veterans Day may be a little strange this year. Steve Carey, USAF (ret) is president of the Veterans Day committee and he's campaigning for mayor of Daphne. He's in a run-off now and may well be elected in which case he will step down and Pete Riehm, currently vice-president for Parades, will assume the presidency of the committee. That's not the big problem. The problem comes from the uncertainty around what units - school bands, Veteran Service Organizations, Coast Guard, police units, etc - will be available to make a parade.



Kay Hire
photo from 'net

If things quieten down sufficiently we will still have Captain Kay Hire, US Navy (ret), former astronaut, as our Patriot of the Year. KayHire.com states "An engaging and inspiring speaker, Kay draws on her experience as a 35-year US Navy veteran, and a 30-year

NASA employee and space shuttle astronaut. She is a crusader for STEM in education and an engineer/consultant." The Veteran of the Year has not yet been determined; we should hear that selection about the middle of September.

"Planning," stated Pat Downing, "continues." Master Gunnery Sergeant Cynthia L House, USMC (ret), is in charge of the luncheon at Ft Whiting after the Veterans Day Parade and she said they are "continuing to plan" as if everything is OK. The committee has "given ourselves the date of September 15 to decide" what to do.

The POW-MIA Ceremony from the South Lawn of the Capitol Building won't be this year. It will be a virtual ceremony. Rolling Thunder Alabama Chapter 2 in Huntsville is putting it all together. The Color Guard from American Legion Post 250 made a 'film' of their portion of the Ceremony -posting of the Colors and singing the National Anthem and playing of Taps- and sent it to Huntsville. RADM Kent Davis will be the keynote speaker; Sy Lichtenfeld will also speak. After the package is fully assembled, "a media plan will be launched and we intend to get this

throughout the State on as many venues as we can," said Jim Jeffries.

This is a large undertaking and as Jim said, "A complete departure from what we've done in the past." It will be interesting. The Ceremony will go live 18 Sep. via the [Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs](http://Alabama.Department.of.Veterans.Affairs) website and then shared with multiple venues for continued viewing.

Friday, September 18, the third Friday in September, is National POW-MIA Recognition Day:

the following from the Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)...

DoD is not only responsible for accounting for service members missing from past conflicts, it also provides policy and oversight of efforts to account for and recover personnel who become separated from their units or are captured in the future. This includes the rescue, recovery, and reintegration of captured or missing personnel through diplomatic and military means. DoD works to ensure that personnel accounting policies address the challenges of accounting in modern conflicts, including properly training and accounting for the increasing numbers of DoD contractors and civilians who accompany the military force.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in **World War II**, more than 400,000 died during the war. At the end of the war, there were approximately 79,000 Americans unaccounted for. This number included those buried with honor as unknowns, officially buried at sea, lost at sea, and missing in action.

Today, more than **72,000 Americans** remain unaccounted for from WWII.

The **Korean War** accounting effort remains a priority for the U.S. government. The Department of Defense (DoD) pursues opportunities to gain access to loss sites within North Korea and South Korea. Additionally, identifications continue to be made from remains that were returned to the U.S. using forensic and DNA technology.

More than **7,800 Americans** remain unaccounted for from the Korean War. Since 1973, the remains of more than 1,000 Americans killed in the **Vietnam War** have been identified

Do you have a story to share? An incident from your time in the military? An amusing happening in civilian life? A serious tale from a previous life? Do you want it in the next issue of this Newsletter? Friday, October 9, is the deadline - get it to me.

TRUE HUMILITY IS NOT THINKING LESS OF YOURSELF; IT IS THINKING OF YOURSELF LESS. - C.S. LEWIS



and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

For more than two decades the U.S. has conducted joint field activities with the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to recover the remains of missing Americans. Throughout these countries, field teams continue to investigate crash and burial sites, as well as interview locals to gain additional knowledge. The U.S. also continues to obtain access to historical wartime records and archives that provide information relevant to the fates of missing Americans.

Today, more than **1,500 Americans** remain unaccounted for from the conflict.

In addition to the thousands of service members who fought communist forces during wars in Korea, Vietnam, and other conflicts, many service members risked their lives off of the battlefield while collecting intelligence on the Soviet Bloc, the People's Republic of China, and North Korea during the **Cold War**. The sacrifice made by these Americans enabled the U.S. and our allies to contain the threat of communist expansion until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today, **126 service members** remain unaccounted for from the Cold War.

On Dec. 1, 2011, the responsibility to account for missing U.S. personnel in Iraq transferred from the U.S. Central Command to Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), which is now the Department of Defense (DoD). The current number of personnel missing from operations in **Iraq and the Persian Gulf** being actively pursued by DoD is five - two service members from Desert Storm, and three DoD contractors from Iraqi Freedom. DoD continues to pursue the fullest possible accounting of one serviceman lost in 1986 during **Operation El Dorado Canyon** in Libya.

Per Col Pat Downing, the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort, aka **ARLINGTON SOUTH**, is conducting about ten funerals each week. They no longer restrict the number of attendees at the funerals but they do require face covering and attempt social distancing when possible. A recent funeral had about 200 in attendance - not a lot of social distancing occurred. Distancing and masks are enforced as much as possible; Tony Ross, director of the cemetery, expressed concern that his people may become sick necessi-

tating closure of the cemetery. "If you don't have a reason to go to the cemetery, please stay away."

The grant for expansion of the cemetery was approved and that work should begin soon. Bob Horton, Assistant Commissioner, ADVA, said, "I know that the cemetery is challenged with the committal services and burials not knowing how many will attend. The cemetery has posted signs within the cemetery alerting the public that they should observe social distancing and, also, it's mandated that each person should wear a mask while attending the committal services.

Last month we learned that Jimmy Buffet had offered two aircraft to Battleship Park; a Grumman "Goose" and a Boeing Stearman. After some consideration it was determined that the Stearman could be suspended from the ceiling in the Aircraft Pavilion. "We believe we have the money in our foundation," said Downing, "to bring the two aircraft to the Park."

USS MOBILE BAY (CG 53) is slated for decommissioning in 2023. The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser, currently serving in the US Navy, was named in honor of the 1864 **Battle of Mobile Bay** during the Civil War.

"We have a great opportunity" to bring the Mobile Bay to Battleship Park said Downing. Some people "are working on that now." It will cost a little bit.

In 2011, the **Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs** closed 17 County Service Offices due to budget constraints. Bob Horton announced that "by the end of this year we hope to reopen ten of those offices." So far, as of September 1st, seven offices have reopened.

There have been a few cases of COVID-19 in the **State Veterans Homes** but the situation is controlled and there have been no deaths in the Homes from the virus. Horton said, "Some of the residents require off-site medical treatment at times and with the staff in and out of the facilities daily there's always a risk of the virus making its way into the Home." A recent assessment by the federal VA shows HMR, the healthcare contractor for the Homes, is following proper procedure and doing a good job in the Homes.

Williams Blackstock Architects in Birmingham has been selected to do the design work for the Veterans Home in Enterprise, AL. Hopefully, in three years, the residents can start occupying the Home.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present. - Bill Keane





Operation Deep Dive is a community-based military veteran suicide prevention study taking place in 14 states across the country. This four-year

study is a partnership between America's Warrior Partnership and researchers from the University of Alabama that is funded by a grant from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation.

The goal of Operation Deep Dive is to identify community factors that can develop an up-stream approach to enhancing programs that improve veterans' quality of life and reduce risk factors associated with veteran suicide and non-natural deaths."

A project of America's Warrior Partnership, Operation Deep Dive is represented in Lower Alabama by Nick Fadoir in the Psychology Department at University of South Alabama. "The only way to know about suicide in our area is to talk with the people who have lost loved ones."

The University of Alabama, and Drs. Phillip N. Smith of USA and Eric Caine of the University of Rochester Medical Center have partnered on a four-year research study that will examine the individual, organizational, and community risk factors that lead to suicide within veteran communities and help guide the development of programs to prevent and reduce self-harm among veterans. Funded by a \$2.9 million grant from Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, as well as additional investment from America's Warrior Partnership and other in-kind supporters, "Operation Deep Dive" will use unique methodologies that have never before been applied to the research of veteran suicides.

Rachel Mosley is the Suicide Prevention Coordinator in the Mobile Outpatient Clinic. 251-219-3900

The Navy christened its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship (LCS), USS Savannah (LCS 28), during a 10 a.m. CDT ceremony Saturday, Aug. 29, in Mobile, Alabama.

"Today we christened the sixth USS Savannah following an outstanding record of service named for a great American city. In so doing we move one step closer to welcoming a new ship to Naval service and transitioning the platform from a mere hull number to a ship with a name and spirit," said Secretary of the Navy Kenneth J. Braithwaite. "There is no doubt

future sailors aboard this ship will carry on the same values of honor, courage and commitment upheld by crews from earlier vessels that bore this name."

LCS 28 is the 14th Independence-variant LCS and 28th in class. It is the sixth ship named in honor of the city of Savannah.

SHOCK AND AWE — FIRE AND FURY

Army Navy and Marines
Forward at battle scenes
Tomahawk missile and ICBM
Just a taste await them
Air Force mission day and night
Is ground support and dog fight
Strategic and tactical airstrike
Destroy target with great might
Armor Artillery and Infantry
Naval forces of the Seven Seas
Bomber, fighter, transport, refuel
Drone, smart bomb a Warrior Tool

JoMac - America in Action
Joe McCormack, Poet Laureate of the SAVC

There has been a problem at Oaklawn Cemetery with people coming into the cemetery at night and leaving their household trash. There have been many instances of drug use and several cars were (probably) stolen and burned inside the cemetery in an attempt to destroy the evidence. In an attempt to curtail -or stop- this activity a gate was fabricated and installed at the Cemetery Lane entrance leaving only one entrance open all the time. SAVC made a generous donation to help finance the gate.

You only live once but if you do it right, once is enough — Mae West



VMRT • hard at work cleaning Oaklawn Memorial Cemetery we need volunteers to mow grass, cut trees, pick up trash.



VETERAN OF THE YEAR - 2021 - It's PETE !

Commander Peter A.J. "Pete" Riehm retired in Mobile, AL in 2005, after a distinguished twenty-one-year career in the United States Navy. In 1985, he was assigned to the USS Dahlgren (DDG43) as Assistant Navigator, Missile Officer and Damage Control Officer. In 1989 he deployed to the Caribbean for counter drug operations.

In 1991, Commander Riehm deployed to Saudi Arabia assigned to Navy Central Command for OPERATION DESERT STORM. In 1991 and 1992 Pete was assigned to the USS Flatley as the Combat Systems Officer.

From 1993 to 1995, Pete served with Destroyer Squadron Two Four as the Operations Officer in Mayport, FL. With that organization he deployed to the Caribbean for the Haitian Embargo and the Haitian Invasion.

In 1995 and 1996, Commander Riehm attended the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS where he earned a Master's Degree in National Security.

In 1996 he served with NATO Command South in Naples, Italy as an Intelligence Officer and in 1997 he deployed to Bosnia with the NATO Stabilization Force.

In 1999 Pete was assigned to Sixth Fleet in Gaeta, Italy as an Exercise Planner and while there he participated in the Kosovo Intervention.

From 2000 to 2001, he served aboard the USS Iwo Jima as Damage Control Assistant. From the Iwo Jima, he was assigned to Mobile, AL as the Commanding Officer, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve Center. He served in that capacity until his retirement from the Navy in 2005.

After Pete's retirement from the US Navy he began a long and illustrious career of service to the veteran community of South Alabama. Between 2008 and 2011, Pete was the Chief Planner and Coordinator for Honor Flight South Alabama. As the head of that organization, Pete planned nine flights to Washington, DC, where almost a thousand World War II veterans were able to visit their World War II Memorial. Each Honor Flight from Mobile to Washington DC cost close to \$100,000, and with Pete's fundraising abilities along with his other team members they raised almost a million dollars for Honor Flight. In all of Pete's work with and for veterans his leadership of Honor Flight Alabama was one of his crowning achievements.

As a member of the Navy Homeport Committee, handling port operations, he invites and hosts visiting Navy and Coast Guard ships. Recently he brought the USS Fort McHenry and the USS Farragut to the Port of Mobile. In this same capacity he also works with a project to support Navy ship crewman who come to man and equip the ships being built by AUSTAL, serving and assisting hundreds of sailors on temporary duty in Mobile.

For the past ten years Pete has been the principal organizer for the State of Alabama's Blue Star Salute conducted at USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park on Armed Forces Day. In spring, 2016, he organized the Blue Star Salute which featured the traveling Vietnam Veterans Wall of Honor. The program and wall were visited by several thousand people and was a high point in veteran programs in Mobile.

For the past twenty years he has organized and led the Memorial Day Program in Mobile and since 2012, he has also organized and led the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Alabama Sate Veterans Cemetery at Spanish Fort, with both programs involving hundreds of people honoring our Alabama Veterans.

Pete Riehm had a key role in the commissioning of the USS Montgomery, LCS 8, which was commissioned in September 2016. LCS 8, named after our State Capital, will represent Montgomery and Alabama for decades to come throughout the world and will be a great source of pride to Montgomery, Alabama and Mobile, where it was built. Pete Riehm was the point person for this historic event. For the past sixteen years, Pete has been the organizer and producer of the Mobile Veterans Day Parade. The parade has gotten larger every year and last year with almost seventy marching and rolling units, the parade route had to be extended. This is Mobile's only Veterans Day Parade and thousands come out to see the military exhibits, veteran parade units, marching bands and many other colorful parade units. Pete Riehm and his team who plans the event, puts it all together and makes the Veterans Day Parade work for the enjoyment of so many.

Pete and His wife Debra have been married for fourteen years. Love of family, love of country, love of community and love for his fellow veterans have been Pete's watchwords for more than forty years and he continues to live for these every day of his life.

thanks to Col Pat Downing



