

INFORMATION SHEET for SURVIVING SPOUSES,
COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER, MOAA

Why the Following Information Is Important:

The loss of a loved one and life partner can create difficult challenges for the surviving spouse. The process of settling personal affairs is complicated by the additional decisions and paperwork involved in the case of the death of a member of the uniformed services. The Columbia River Chapter, MOAA, can usually provide information and assistance to help in your transition to a new phase of your life.

What You Need to Do When a MOAA Member Spouse Dies:

Chapter assistance should be requested as soon as possible after the death of a MOAA member. You, or a family or legal representative, should contact either the Chairman, Membership Services Committee (MSC), or the Chapter's Surviving Spouse Representative. The phone numbers are listed on the front page of the Chapter's Newsletter, and also provided on the Chapter's web site (www.moacolumbiariver.org).

The funeral director usually makes the arrangements for any military honors and internment (including at government-operated cemeteries). You may, however, contact the Chapter's MSC Chairman if you have questions about your government-furnished options before making a decision.

The Chapter web site includes a checklist for survivors about time-sensitive actions which need to be done following the death of a member. A Personal Affairs representative from the MSC can help you or your family representative complete the actions listed on the checklist—particularly those actions which require completion of government benefits' forms and coordination with government agencies.

Who Is a Surviving Spouse:

A "surviving spouse" is the widow or widower of an active MOAA member. There is no distinction made between spouses who were married during the MOAA members active or reserve service, and those spouses who married the service member after release from active duty or retirement. All surviving spouses are welcomed, and encouraged to participate in the Chapter's operations and activities.

The Chapter's Surviving Spouse Representative:

The Chapter's Surviving Spouse Representative is your key "go to" person. The Representative will help connect you with other Chapter officers and supporting resources. The Representative is also a voting member of the Chapter's Executive Board in order to ensure that surviving spouses' interests and concerns are addressed in a timely manner.

Some surviving spouses have not previously been active in the Chapter. The Surviving Spouse Representative is your personal advisor and friend to help introduce you to other members, and make it easy to participate to the extent you are able.

MOAA and You:

MOAA has long-recognized that survivors of active, reserve, retired, and veterans of the uniformed Services may be entitled to certain benefits and privileges earned by the service member's service and sacrifices. MOAA is dedicated to preserving and improving the legislation governing those benefits and privileges, and helping those eligible receive their full entitlement. Our local Chapter can also be part of your social and support community.

The National Headquarters of MOAA (1-(800)-234-6622) should be notified by you or your legal representative as soon as possible after the death of a MOAA spouse. The member's membership number can be found on the address label of MOAA's *Military Officer* magazine. If the deceased member was a national MOAA "Life Member," that membership transfers to you as the surviving spouse upon notification of the death. If not a Life Member, instructions can be provided for continuing national MOAA membership. This is important because Chapter members must also be national members.

Within the Columbia River Chapter, surviving spouses have full membership rights including the right to vote, hold office, and participate in all activities and events. There are no annual Chapter dues; however, you are encouraged when able to be involved in the scholarship and charitable activities of the Chapter's tax-exempt *Columbia River MOAA Fund*.

Chapter Resources to Support Survivors:

The Chapter's award-winning Newsletter, which is published about 6 times per year, is a compilation of a variety of news and information of interest to military members and spouses as well as the schedule and instructions for participating in upcoming Chapter functions. You can receive the Newsletter either via e-mail or postal service by communicating your preference to the Chapter Secretary directly, or also through the Surviving Spouse Representative, or Chairman of the MSC. You will find additional information about the Chapter on the Chapter's web site.

Semi-annually you will receive a phone call from a Chapter representative as part of the Chapter's "*Keeping Connected*" program. This call is made to ensure that you are receiving the Newsletter, ask if there are any questions or issues that need Chapter officers' assistance, say "hello—we are thinking of you," and update your contact information. When possible, you will have the same person calling you each time. The calls will not be made for the purpose of any solicitation. Please notify the Chairman of the MSC if you have not received a call by each June and November, or you do not want to be called.

The Chapter activities offer you an opportunity to get out and socialize with others who might share some of your interests, and have common experiences. Chapter meetings and events, except the Annual Meeting each January, are focused programs and social engagement rather than the conduct of Chapter business. Chapter business is conducted at the Executive Board meetings usually held the second Thursday of each month (except July and August). Surviving spouses may attend the Board meetings, but do not have a vote in these proceedings.

Your Obligations as a MOAA Surviving Spouse:

1. Maintain your national MOAA membership.
2. Keep us informed about any changes to your mailing and e-mail addresses, and phone number(s).
3. Participate in Chapter functions to the extent you are able and comfortable.