



# The Veterans Observer

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Issue 12



## Combating loneliness and social isolation as a caregiver

*Every VA facility has a Caregiver Support Program*

*By: Joseph Burks, Director of Communications, VA Caregiver Support Program*

Taking care of a Veteran is a deeply rewarding role, yet it's not without challenges. One of the struggles that often comes with this responsibility is the sense of isolation and loneliness. As a caregiver, you may find yourself so focused on the needs of the Veteran you love that you end up feeling alone, overwhelmed or disconnected from others. This is a common experience, but the good news is there are many ways to connect and thrive in your role.

### Recognize that you're not alone

One of the first steps in dealing with feelings of loneliness is realizing you're not the only one feeling this way. Many caregivers share these same experiences. Our Caregiver Support Program (CSP) can help you find resources and support services as well as connect you with a community of other caregivers who understand what you're going through, and this can make a significant difference.

By connecting with programs like Building Better Caregivers, you may find comfort, validation and a renewed sense of community.



People in a group hug; loneliness; caregiver program.  
Photo courtesy of the VA.

### Seek out your local CSP team

By connecting with your local CSP team, you can find a safe space to share your experiences and hear from others who understand your struggles and victories. Your local VA medical center can be a great place to meet other caregivers, learn practical tips and share the ups and downs of your caregiving journey.

"As a caregiver for a Veteran, you play an invaluable role in providing care, love and support," said CSP Executive Director Dr. Colleen Richardson. "While the journey may feel isolating at times, you don't have to navigate this path alone. There's a network of support waiting for you here at CSP."

### Carve out time for self-care and personal interests

Loneliness often deepens when we lose sight of our own needs. Take time to nurture your hobbies and interests, even

if it's just a few minutes a day. Take advantage of CSP respite care initiatives to help with your well-being. Respite care is a

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### The American Legion Internet Observer

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**Still Serving America**

Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community?

Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?

Send an e-mail to [chief1921@comcast.net](mailto:chief1921@comcast.net) and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior.

In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There's a good chance the information you send us will make it into The Internet Observer.

program that pays for care for a short time when family caregivers need a break.

Respite can reinvigorate your sense of joy and purpose. If you feel guilty about setting aside time for yourself, remember that recharging is essential for you to be at your best as a caregiver.

### Consider mental health support

If loneliness and isolation become overwhelming, it may help to talk with a mental health professional. CSP provides counseling and mental health support for caregivers of Veterans through the Virtual Psychotherapy Program for Caregivers (VPPC).

VPPC provides caregivers participating in the Program of

Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) with access to various therapy options through virtual telehealth sessions. VPPC can provide tools and strategies to help you navigate the unique stresses of caregiving, offering support that's tailored to your situation.

### About the Caregiver Support Program (CSP)

CSP promotes the health and well-being of Veterans' caregivers through education, resources, support and services. Every VA facility has a CSP team that provides valuable information about resources to help caregivers stay informed and supported as they support Veterans. More information can be found on CSP's website and by contacting local CSP teams.

## Comprehensive care for chronic pain

### Columbia VA's pain program

By: Wyatt Anthony, Public Affairs Specialist, Columbia VA, VA News

Columbia VA's Outpatient Interdisciplinary Pain Program (OIPP) offers a holistic approach to managing chronic pain, addressing not only the physical aspects but also the emotional and psychological factors. This innovative program offers Veterans the tools and knowledge they need to manage their pain and improve their quality of life.

Chronic pain can have a significant impact on a Veteran's ability to function in daily life, affecting everything from work and social activities to sleep and emotional health. The OIPP provides Veterans with a comprehensive treatment plan that goes beyond pain medication to include a combination of education, therapy and support.

"We know that pain is a multifaceted issue, so we approach it from a variety of angles," said Deborah Reyes, program director. "Each component of the program is designed to help Veterans develop lifelong skills to manage their pain, improve their functioning and enhance their overall well-being."

Veterans in the program will participate in weekly group sessions and individual appointments with various specialists.

- **Pain management education:** Veterans learn about the physiological processes behind pain and how to take an active role in managing it.
- **Physical therapy:** Tailored exercise routines are developed to increase strength, mobility and flexibility, helping to reduce pain and improve movement.
- **Psychological support:** Cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness techniques are taught to help Veterans cope

with the emotional and psychological challenges that often accompany chronic pain.

- **Whole health approach:** The program treats the entire body with education on nutrition, sleep, medication use and body science. We utilize a variety of treatments that complement traditional approaches to address pain, such as adaptive yoga, tai chi, acupuncture and battlefield acupuncture.

### An opportunity for mutual learning in a supportive environment

Group sessions, which take place weekly, are a key part of the program. "Group settings offer peer support, where Veterans can share their experiences and offer advice to one another. It's an opportunity for mutual learning in a safe, supportive environment," Reyes said.

The program runs in six-week cycles, alternating between in-person and virtual groups with new groups starting about every three months. Veterans also have one-on-one appointments with a pain social worker throughout the program to help personalize their treatment goals.

Group sizes are kept to a small number of 6-10 Veterans, ensuring each participant receives personalized attention and care. Veterans in the program will not only engage in education and therapy but will also practice new strategies, incorporating them into their daily routines. The program encourages consistency and dedication, making it important for participants to

commit to the full six weeks.

"I didn't think I had time for a six-week program, but I'm so glad



Picture shows physical therapist Amanda Brooks, left walking with Veteran Regina McFarlan, right during the exercise portion of the program.

(Continued on Page 5 See Army Veteran)

## Time to vote for new department of Colorado leadership

My fellow Legionnaires and Friends.

Let me introduce myself. I am Charles Pat Smith. Call me Pat. I have been a member of the Legion for 57 years. I will be 83 in 2025. I have served almost every one of those years in some role as a leader, including offices at the Post, District, Department and National levels. I have immersed myself in the history of the organization. I know I have done all I can to maintain the foundation and values of the organization as envisioned by our WWI founders.

My last leadership position was as your Department Adjutant from 1991 to May of 2022. I stepped aside because it was time to turn the reins over to the younger generation. The normal process is at the annual convention where the delegates elect a new slate of officers to lead them for the next year. The Department Adjutant position has always been an appointed position by the Department Executive Committee (DEC) immediately after the election. In June of 2022, the delegates elected a young woman as commander along with other officers to serve with her. She decided, wrongly in my opinion, to assume the position of Adjutant also. As the Adjutant for over 31 years, I can tell you that was the wrong decision. As a result, she made several questionable decisions that affected the membership base and the finances of the department. At no time did she contact me as the former Adjutant about any of her decisions because I believe she believed my advice on some of those decisions did not fit her vision of the organization for the future. As a result, our national organization investigated those decisions and decided that she was not working in the best interest of the organization. Our National Executive Committee (NEC) in May of 2023 held a trial. Our Alternate NEC pleaded no contest to the charges on behalf of the department and as a result of her plea the NEC suspended our Department charter. They installed a national committee to run the organization until the Department could find new, committed leadership.

Fast forward to January 25, 2025, the date when the National Committee will hold a "special convention" to elect some new

"temporary" leaders to include Commander, Vice Commander, National Executive committeeman (NEC) and Alternate NEC. In addition, those individual members who attend and have registered for the convention will vote on a new Constitution and By-laws. This will be the first step to re-activate the charter. In May of 2025, the NEC will vote to restore the charter, or not. Those temporary officers will serve until possibly June of 2025 when the annual "normal" department convention is conducted, and a full slate of officers will be elected and appointed by the delegates to the convention.

This is where you come in. We need as many caring Legionnaires to attend this special convention and vote. It is one vote per member on a secret ballot. Your vote will count! Voting will take place during the day on Saturday January 25, 2025, time to be determined. We will email you the agenda when published.

My choices are as follows. **For Commander**, Past Department Service Office Dean Casey; **For NEC**, Doug Wooddell, Past Department Commander, Past National Vice Commander and Past aide to Past National Commander Tom Bock; **For Alternate NEC**, Past Department Commander Greg Jackson. In my opinion these three have the experience to put the Department back together again, better than before. They have shown by their past service to the organization they care deeply and have only the best interest of the organization, and you as our members, at heart.

You must register and send in your \$25.00 registration fees, which will include meals on that day. I have provided a copy of the registration form below or download from [www.coloradolegion.org](http://www.coloradolegion.org). You must pay by check, and they must receive it by January 10th. Mail it to The American Legion, 7465 E 1st Ave Ste D, Denver, CO 80230.

Let's start the New Year out right and elect new committed leadership and Make Colorado American Legion an organization to be envied by the nation. Thanks for your time.

Pat Smith Past Department Adjutant (Ret)

### DEPARTMENT CONVENTION PROGRAM Department Special Election January 23rd- 25th, 2025 Hilton Hotel, Fort Collins Colorado

Registration is open to American Legion Members of Colorado whose membership is good standing. Meaning membership paid for 2025. You will be required to present your 2025 Membership card when you check in at the Special Convention and when you receive your ballot for elections.

Registration fee is \$25.00. Make your check payable to the Department of Colorado American Legion with 2025 Special Convention written in the memo line. No credit cards will be accepted. Please mail this form with your check to: The Department of Colorado American Legion, 7465 E. 1st Ave D, Denver, CO 80230. Registration deadline January 10, 2025. We will NOT be taking registration at the Special Convention site.

District \_\_\_\_\_ Post \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_, Squadron \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

*(Army Veteran Continued from Page 3)*

I stuck with it,” said Army Veteran Juan Lanzot. “The tools I’ve learned have made a real difference in how I manage my pain day-to-day.”

**“It taught me strategies I still use every day.”**

Veterans who complete the virtual and in-person programs report a significant improvement in both their physical and emotional well-being. Army Veteran Diane Balog shared her experience: “I had been living with chronic pain for years and nothing seemed to help. This was my last hope, and I’m so glad I took the chance. I didn’t think I could find a way to deal with my pain, but this program showed me a whole new perspective. It taught me strategies that I still use every day. The psychological support in the program was life changing. It didn’t just focus on the pain. It also helped me handle the emotional side of living with chronic

pain. It was the first time in years that I felt like I was in control of my life again.”

Lanzot emphasized how the program helped him in ways he didn’t anticipate. “At first, I didn’t think I could commit to such a long program. But now that I’ve completed it, I see how worth it was. The program gave me tools that I’ll carry with me for the rest of my life.”

The program provides Veterans with a new perspective on pain management, one that doesn’t rely solely on medications but instead offers strategies for long-term coping and healing.

Veterans leave the program with improved mobility, a better understanding of their pain and a greater sense of confidence in managing it. Whether Veterans are struggling with everyday tasks, social interactions, or simply coping with the stress of living with pain, the program provides the support needed to move forward.

## Give the gift of honor

*Your year-end gift will bring a bright new year*

*From: The Legion News*

Today, many veterans are facing the new year with uncertainty. The coming year will be especially difficult for veterans and their families, who face existing financial difficulties and the pressures of life in this changing world. Your year-end contribution to The American Legion will deliver assistance where it’s needed most.

The Legion’s End of Year Donation Campaign is your opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those who have served our country with bravery and dedication. You will honor veterans and their loved ones in the year ahead with your generous contribution today.

The American Legion serves and supports the brave men and women who sacrificed so much for our country. Your contribution will make a world of difference for them and their families during the year ahead.

Your generous gift will make all the difference for veterans. Make your contribution today and make 2025 a bright new year!

[DONATE TODAY](#)



## Women Veterans Call Center



Call the Women Veterans Call Center at 1-855-VA-WOMEN to connect with pregnancy loss support and treatment and visit the Women’s Health Pregnancy Loss page for more information. Additionally, your local Women Veterans Program Manager can assist you in accessing care.

## Legion calls for Congress to include Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Amendment in 2025 NDAA

From: The Legion Legislative News

**A** amendment critical to standardizing additional vetting in the pathway to legal permanent status for eligible Afghans who were relocated to the United States due to the U.S. military withdrawal.

On Nov. 12, The American Legion joined with other veteran service organizations and advocates in urging congressional leadership to include the Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025.

The amendment is critical to standardizing additional vetting in the pathway to legal permanent status for eligible Afghans who were relocated to the United States due to the U.S. military withdrawal.



Photo courtesy of The American Legion.

“As veterans organizations serving veterans across the country, including those of the Global War on Terrorism, we know

firsthand the moral and national security imperative of keeping our promises to the Afghan nationals who supported the U.S. mission and were admitted to the United States under emergency circumstances,” the leader reads. “By requiring applicants to undergo a rigorous, gold-standard vetting process, and placing those who pass and are eligible on a pathway to legal permanent status, passing the Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Amendment would help alleviate any remaining security concerns about the Afghan humanitarian parole recipients in the United States.”

Read the entire letter [here](#).

## Prison inmate, accomplice allegedly swindle VA ICU patients

By: Ken Olsen, Legion Veterans Healthcare, News

**P**air targeted seriously ill veterans, stealing about \$8,000 from their bank accounts.

An ex-servicemember and his accomplice allegedly stole thousands of dollars from patients in VA medical center intensive care units while he was behind bars, according to the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington.

Darryl Lamont Young, 46, and Aqueelah Ngiesha Williams, 27, are accused of making thousands of phone calls to VA medical centers between December 2021 and October 2024 and defrauding patients with the promise of “stimulus” payments. Young was incarcerated in the King County Jail and the Monroe (Washington) Correctional Complex for much of that time. With the assistance of Williams – who was not behind bars – the pair was able to steal about \$8,000 from the hospitalized veterans’ bank accounts.

“The conduct in this case is truly shocking,” U.S. Attorney Tessa M. Gorman says. “While they did not get a huge amount of money

with this scheme, the harm they caused to those already suffering a health crisis is deserving of federal prosecution.”

It’s also a grim reminder to never share personal information over the phone or in emails. This includes bank account numbers, PINs, passwords or even confirming your Social Security number, according to the Consumer Federation of America.



Photo courtesy of The American Legion.

The pair was indicted Oct. 2 on six federal charges, including wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft. Young was being held in the King County (Washington) Jail on a \$50,000 bond pending trial on separate burglary and assault charges at the time the federal charges were issued. He

remains in jail. Williams entered a not-guilty plea Oct. 4 and is free on a personal recognizance bond.

Telephone scheme Young served in the Army and was somewhat familiar with VA benefits, prosecutors say. He used the jail phone system to call VA facilities and then asked to be transferred to the intensive care unit. Because the call was transferred, ICU staff

wouldn't have heard the initial warning that the call was coming from a prison inmate, says Emily Langlie, communications director for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Seattle. Once connected to the ICU, Young pretended to be a VA employee who needed information for "bed checks or some administrative reason," including patients' phone numbers and the phone numbers of their emergency contacts.

In some cases, Young then called veterans in the VA ICUs directly, according to the federal indictment. In other cases, he called Williams, and she placed a three-way call to the veteran or their emergency contact to conceal the fact that the call was coming from an inmate. In both situations, Young allegedly pretended to be a VA employee who needed personal information in order to deposit fictitious "veteran's stimulus" payments in the patient's bank account. He was able to obtain account numbers, debit card numbers and security codes from several veterans. Williams then accessed the victims' accounts and withdrew or transferred funds to their accounts, according to the indictment.

Young and Williams contacted about 30 hospitals, most run by VA, and spoke with about 60 victims in Tampa Bay and Bay Pines, Fla., and Reno, Nev., among other cities. All the people targeted

were seriously ill veterans. Overall, Young and Williams attempted 130 fraudulent bank transactions. The scam came to the attention of investigators when one of the victims complained, Langlie says.

The VA Office of the Inspector General, which is investigating the case along with the Secret Service, declined to say whether there have been similar attempts to defraud VA medical center patients, citing the ongoing investigation.


Next steps Young and Williams face up to 20 years in prison on each of the conspiracy to commit wire fraud and the wire fraud charges. Aggravated identify theft carries a two-year prison sentence that is served after any other sentence imposed in the case, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A December trial date in U.S. District Court in Seattle is likely to be postponed because Young faced charges of second degree burglary, harassment, second degree assault with a deadly weapon, attempted car theft and other alleged offenses prior to being indicted in the federal fraud case.

The dates of his military service and his discharge status were not available from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

| <b>Department of Veterans Affairs</b><br><b>Eastern Colorado Health Care System</b><br><b>1700 N Wheeling St</b><br><b>Aurora, Colorado 80243</b><br><b>303-399-8020</b> |                      |                    |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Departments  | Scheduling Questions | Clinical Questions |
| Cardio-Thoracic  | 720-723-6392         | 720-857-2710       |
| Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)   | 720-857-5404         | 720-857-5571       |
| Bariatrics   | 720-723-6363         | 720-723-4782       |
| Urology  | 720-723-4775         | 720-857-5829       |
| OBGYN  | 720-857-5701         | 720-857-5377       |
| Vascular   | 720-723-6392         | 720-723-4780       |
| Plastics   | 720-723-3271         | 720-857-4782       |
| Breast   | 720-723-6363         | 720-857-4780       |
| Orthopedics  | 720-723-6683         | 720-857-5580       |
| Podiatry   | 720-857-5406         | 720-857-5577       |
| Colorado Springs   | 719-227-4690         | 719-227-4432       |
| Neurosurgery   | 720-723-6684         | 720-723-4782       |
| General Surgery  | 720-723-6363         | 720-857-5816       |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>For other concerns: Dial 303-399-8020 then</b><br><br>Press 1 for Pharmacy<br>Press 2 to make or change an appointment.<br>Press 3 to speak to a Nurse.<br>Press 4 for Eligibility and Registration<br>Press 5 for Billing Questions<br>Press 6 for Community Care and Mission Act information.<br>Press 7 for Veterans Crisis Line |  <p>KITCHEN &amp; HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, IDEAS, &amp; REVIEWS</p> <p><a href="mailto:KITCHENTIPS@2TWR.COM">KITCHENTIPS@2TWR.COM</a><br/> <a href="mailto:doug@2twr.com">doug@2twr.com</a><br/> <a href="mailto:Patty@2TWR.com">Patty@2TWR.com</a></p> |
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## Stories of the National Guard

*From: VA Library & Museum News*

The service branch is older than the United States.

Dec. 13 is the birthday of the National Guard. According to Military.com, “In a move that would create the first militia on the North American continent, the Massachusetts General Court in Salem issued an order on Dec. 13, 1636, requiring all able-bodied men between 16 and 60 years old to create a standing Army for protection.”

Today, the Army National Guard (and Air National Guard, created after World War II) are active across the country and around the world. A number of prominent Americans served in one of these; here are a few of their stories.

Tom Selleck: the actor served in the California Army National Guard for six years, attaining the rank of sergeant, and later appeared on recruitment posters for the California Guard and the California Military Academy.

Dr. James Naismith: Naismith, born



Dr. James Naismith with a basket and a specially designed ball. (Photo via Wikimedia Commons)

in Canada and credited as the inventor of the game of basketball, became a chaplain in the Kansas Army National Guard and took part in Pershing's Pancho Villa expedition in 1916. He also spent 19 months in France during World War I for the Y.M.C.A., where he taught soldiers on the front lines against venereal diseases, vice and substance use.

John Amos: the actor served in the New Jersey National Guard, as well as being named an honorary master chief of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Jerry Mathers: the child star served in the California Air National Guard from 1966 to 1969 as a colonel's aide.

James Garner: the actor spent seven months in the California National Guard between stints in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II (12 months) and the U.S. Army during the Korean War (14 months). During the latter, he received two Purple Hearts.

## VA funds first study on psychedelic-assisted therapy for veterans

*From: VA Veterans Healthcare News*

New research would assess the potential benefit of psychedelics for treating PTSD and alcohol use disorder in veterans.

Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will fund a study on

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine-assisted, or MDMA-assisted, therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorder among veterans. This is the first VA-funded study for psychedelic-assisted therapy since the 1960s.

VA researchers affiliated with Brown University and Yale University will evaluate the potential of MDMA-assisted therapy as a treatment option for veterans with both PTSD and AUD. Participants will receive psychotherapy sessions enhanced by MDMA, a psychedelic compound believed to increase emotional openness, reduce fear, and promote introspection during therapy. Some participants will be randomly chosen to receive an active placebo, which will be a lower dose of MDMA.

The study is scheduled to take place at the Providence VA Medical Center in Rhode Island and the West Haven VA Medical Center in Connecticut and is anticipated to begin enrollment in fiscal year 2025. The grant award is approximately \$1.5 million over five years.

As with all VA studies, treatments will be conducted in a clinical setting with strict safety protocols and following all appropriate



Photo courtesy of the VA.

federal guidelines for conducting studies with controlled substances. Pharmaceutical-grade MDMA will be used, and participants will be closely monitored to ensure their well-being throughout the study.

This funding is a part of VA's broader effort announced in January to gather definitive scientific evidence on the potential efficacy and safety of psychedelic compounds such as MDMA and psilocybin when used in conjunction with psychotherapy to treat veterans with PTSD, depression, and other related conditions.

"VA is on the cutting edge of clinical research for veteran health, including in the investigation of psychedelics for mental health," said Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "This study will give us better insight into the potential of MDMA-assisted therapy as a treatment for veterans."

Psychedelic drugs are a class of substances that alter consciousness or awareness and can be organically or synthetically produced. To

prevent serious self-injury or harm, VA strongly discourages self-medicating with psychedelics or any other unprescribed substances. Veterans should always consult their health-care providers before making any treatment decisions.

The American Legion has long advocated for expanded clinical research into alternative treatments for mental health conditions like PTSD, particularly those that do not rely on traditional prescription drugs.

If you are a veteran struggling with a mental health or substance-use disorder, [VA has available resources](#). Learn more about [participating in VA research](#).

## Women Veterans Call Center



Call the Women Veterans Call Center at 1-855-VA-WOMEN to connect with pregnancy loss support and treatment and visit the Women's Health Pregnancy Loss page for more information. Additionally, your local Women Veterans Program Manager can assist you in accessing care.

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Help Our Nation's Veterans

# AMERICAN LEGION



# The American Legion

## Rocky Mountain Boys State

### A Week that will shape a Lifetime



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*-Ronald Reagan*

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**[www.CoLegionBoysState.org](http://www.CoLegionBoysState.org)**

## New Aurora VA Clinic Coming Early 2025



COMING EARLY 2025

# NEW AURORA VA CLINIC

Named After Tuskegee Airmen Lt. Col. John Mosley

The Aurora VA Clinic at  
13701 E. Mississippi Avenue  
will be moving to 21825 E.  
Quincy Avenue in early 2025.

When the new location opens, all existing staff and patient appointments will relocate to the new location.

### Who was Lt. Col. John W. Mosley?

Lieutenant Colonel John W. Mosley was the first Black football player at Colorado State University, a decorated Tuskegee Airman, and life-long civil rights leader. After college, he joined the Army and was eventually sent to Tuskegee for pilot training. He graduated from the 7th twin engine class in August 1944 (TE-44-G) and joined the 477th Bombardment Group. After WW2, he joined the Air Corps Reserves and was called back to active duty for Korea. He also participated in missions during Vietnam. He retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1970.



LIEUTENANT  
COLONEL  
**JOHN  
MOSLEY**

Born: 21 June 1921 in Denver  
Died: 22 May 2015 in Denver