**After Action Report**

2018 Annual Meeting

Military Writers Society of America

1. The 2018 annual meeting was held 8-10 November 2018 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Mount Pleasant, S.C.

2. Nearly twenty five members attended the conference and awards banquet, several with spouses. The event was promoted in three issues of Dispatches and in multiple blast emails. Registration kits at the conference were furnished by the Chamber of Commerce. The MWSA registration desk was staffed by the wife of the conference chair.

3. Despite the low attendance, the conference was financially a success as sufficient funds were received as part of the registration process to cover all costs. The Conference Chair’s excellent rapport with the hotel along with their cooperative attitude resulted in the hotel adjusting downward the overall cost for meeting space and set up. Conference registration fees were kept at the 2017 rate of $195 for early bird registration (period to 1 May) and $215 afterward.

Guest fees were kept at the same rate as 2017.

4. The conference opened with an 'ice breaker' reception on Thursday evening at 6pm. On Friday morning, the color guard from Joint Base Charleston presented the colors, and we played video of the Military academies joint glee clubs singing the Star Spangled Banner. Navy Captain Kelvin Bryne. deputy commander at Joint Base Charleston, welcomed the attendees to Charleston and presented an overview of the military capabilities under his command. The remainder of the day was devoted to professional development. After a general membership meeting Saturday morning, we continued with panels or presentations focused on professional development. At the end of the day John Cathcart walked the group through the new scoring system used in reviewing books for an award. At least one of the attendees of the VA workshop was at the Saturday session. The conference culminated with our Awards banquet that was deemed an overall success.

5. The Meeting room was more than adequate and the hotel provided a/v equipment at no costs to the MWSA. The staff at the hotel was responsive to our needs and set everything up for the conference well before the start times.

6. We were not able to secure sponsorship for the conference. Dog Ear publishing expressed an interest, but was unable to participate. In future years, a local committee of members should begin working early in the year to secure sponsors. Suggest targeting publishers who specialize in Military issues

7. Lessons learned:

 a. It pays big dividends for the conference chair to conduct physical inspections of hotels in the city and seek competitive bids. This year, he was able to get the best prices for rooms and meals, yet keep the quality of services high. This search should start at least one year, possible two years in advance of the meeting.

 b. Asking for topics a year before the conference can get us better speakers.

 c. Having a local tie-in helps. It added to the conference by having the Deputy Commander welcome the group and the public affairs offices from the Air Force and Navy on the program agenda. We would have had the army represented but a death in the family the night before prevented him from coming.