



# California Forumeer

## American GI Forum

<http://www.agif.org>

AGIF Founded in 1948

Willie Galvan Commander  
First Quarter 2009

### A SALUTE TO ABLE ACOSTA



Abelardo "Able" Acosta Dec. 8, 1930 - Sept. 10, 2008. Abelardo "Able" Acosta age 78 passed away at Memorial Medical Center in Modesto, CA. Abel was born in Loving, New Mexico. He achieved 4-year Letterman status in football and boxing at Carlsbad High School. On December 13, 1951 he and the former Bea Zuniga were married and went on to raise seven wonderful children. He served three years in the New Mexico National Guard and two years in the US Army, where he trained with the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Borne and served in the Korean War. He was honorably discharged in December of 1954.

Able, was a gregarious person and owned a successful furniture business for twenty-five years. He was a contributing member of the Modesto Chapter for eighteen years, serving as Commander for two years. He was a very friendly man who also founded the Modesto Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and served on the local Economic Development Committee.

Able was a caring individual who helped many people with limited credit to furnish their homes. He also cared about the Mexican-American community and was a vocal advocate for equality of treatment of our people. He was also a good friend who helped us rebuild the Modesto Chapter. In his last year he was always late to the chapter meetings because of his dialysis treatment but he never let us down. Able Acosta a great Forumeer, family man, community leader and friend will be missed dearly. **Francisco Alvarez**

### HONORING OUR VETERANS

The American Legion-West Valley Memory Post 99 is sponsoring an Honoring Our Veterans Ceremony, for those Allied Forces (World War Two) soldiers who served in Western Europe and North Africa, especially those who served during the Allied Forces Invasion of the Normandy Beaches (in France) on June 6, 1944. The exact location of the "Honoring Our Veterans Ceremony" will be in the vicinity of the City of Bayeaux (in France) near the Beaches of Normandy. The Ceremony will feature Allied Forces soldiers from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and France.

If you know of anyone who served in World War Two Combat Zones (in North Africa or the Western Europe) especially, on the Beaches of Normandy (France) On June 6, 1944, then please contact American Legion Post 99 Second Vice Commander: STU Lavatai via his email: [imstugatz@yahoo.com](mailto:imstugatz@yahoo.com). **Frank Chavez**

**Editors note:** Frank Chavez is the past Commander of the San Jose East Valley Chapter and the newly elected President of the United Veterans Council of Santa Clara County. In his new position Frank will be passing along some very important information affecting veterans.

**THE AMERICAN GI FORUM OF CALIFORNIA CORDIALLY INVITES YOU**

**TO THE 2009 STATE CONFERENCE**

**CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE TO VETERANS**

**June 12—13, 2009 Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Sacramento, California**

**Willie Galvan 805-714-6015**

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Willie Galvan with the late  
Dr. Hector P. Garcia

**The Forumeer** is your Quarterly Newsletter, submit ideas and materials for the next issue by May 1, 2009. Submit articles highlighting your chapter's events with the names of people who make events happen. Mail materials to: California Forumeer c/o: A. G. Lerma 765 Story Rd. Ste 150 San Jose, CA 95122 or call at 408-288-9470. email to: [alerma@agif.org](mailto:alerma@agif.org) Website: <http://www.agif.org>

### THE INAUGURATION



We arrived at Washington D. C. on Sunday January 18<sup>th</sup> and could see the ongoing concert at the Lincoln Memorial as we landed. The airport was bustling with arrivals for the inauguration. We returned to Reagan International airport the following day to collect our luggage which had been lost the previous day. Upon entering the airport we were interviewed by a reporter and television news crew. See Lupe and Rosa's 30 seconds of fame on the web-cast at: <http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0109/587006.html> That evening we attended the Latino Pre-Inauguration Ball at the Organization of American States building sponsored by several Latino organizations from the Washington D. C. area. The large gathering was addressed by Henry Cisneros former cabinet member and Mayor of San Antonio, Texas along with many other prominent Latinos.

On inauguration day, we set out with thousands of other visitors to witness the swearing in of the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. We stood in line for two hours just to get boarding tickets to the Metro. We then spent another hour exiting the Metro station in order to reach the Mall. Once there, we staked out a spot by the Washington monument. There were so many people and it was so crowded that we could hardly move around. The ceremony was taking place about one mile from where we stood.

The amazing thing is that with about two million people assembled in that mall, there were no arrests or major incidents reported. The ambiance seemed magical and you could almost feel the love in people's hearts. The day was beautiful with Americans coming together in a peaceful and yet electrifying way. Though we did not see the ceremony up close and personal, it was a personal experience of a lifetime just being there with two million other souls and a promise of a better tomorrow. Leaving the Mall was another of many challenges where it took us four hours to reach our hotel.

The next day we toured Washington taking in the Capitol building, the White House, Union Station and other monuments. We also stopped by the American GI Forum headquarters which is located about two blocks from the White House. The building is very nice and the American GI Forum office is also very nice. Tony Morales, George Autobee and J.R. Gonzalez were there and graciously gave us a great tour of the facilities.

On Thursday we drove to Baltimore, Maryland and spent our last day sightseeing. All in all, we were pleased with our trip and will be telling our adventure and the Inauguration of president Barack Obama for years to come.

**Lupe Aguilar and Rosa Campos**

### SAN JOSE'S VIDA NUEVA PROGRAM MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

The American GI Forum San Jose Chapter is *Celebrating Vida Nueva's 30 Years in Service*, March 31, 2009 at the San Jose Moose Lodge, 1825 Mt. Pleasant Road, San Jose CA, 95127. Vida Nueva a program component of AGIF San Jose Chapter; is a sober living residential facility, helping men return to a healthy life, their families, and to society.

We are proud of the service that Vida Nueva, SLE has provided to the City of San Jose and the County of Santa Clara. Services that are provided include 90 to 120 day residential SLE program, Narcotics/ Alcohol Anonymous meetings; as well as spiritual and peer-to-peer support groups. Also, Vida Nueva's bi-lingual staff directs residents through the legal process.

The event will include a tribute segment to honor Sid Haro, retired director. Sid served as Vida Nueva's program director for over 25 years. Eliseo David Sierra, long-time staff member of Vida Nueva has also served as assistant to the director and many other job responsibilities at the facility. In addition, David has been a long time AGIF member, and has served on AGIF local, state and national Board of Directors. Sid Haro and Eliseo David Sierra have been instrumental in the implementation, growth and longevity of Vida Nueva. The American GI Forum San Jose Chapter Salutes them for their dedication and service to Vida Nueva. **Letefia Rodriguez**

Left to right:

Sid Haro, Director

Vida Nueva SLE Program Facilities,

E. David Sierra, Assistant Director





**“ A CLASS APART” DOCUMENTARY TOUCHES PEOPLE**

A most engaging discussion followed the previewing of the new documentary “ A Class Apart”. The preview was held at National Hispanic University and the panel discussion was led by Esmeralda Barriga and included panelists; Karl Soltero, Adrian Vargas, Jesse Rizzo and Charlie Lostaunau. Though the documentary was only about 45 minutes in length, it provoked plenty of commentary and emotion from the panelists and attendees.

The story centers around a Mexican individual charged with murdering his employer in a café within the town of Edna, Texas. While the actual and serious crime was to have an inescapable ending, lawyers saw an opportunity to challenge the systematic meting out of unequal justice to the Mexican population. This all happened in the early 1950s at a time when discrimination against the Mexican population ran rampant. The central figures argued that this Mexican person could not get a fair trial because he would be tried by an all white jury. It was customary at this time that all white juries decided the fate of the accused.

The argument was made and appealed all the way to the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren. Prevailing, the ruling was a landmark decision establishing that Mexicans could not get a fair and impartial jury of their peers under the Texas system of justice and thereby validated the “Class Apart” argument. This story like so many others was another historical and significant part of the Mexican people’s struggle for equality and justice.

The panel discussion that followed clearly made a case for a need for awareness and the necessary actions to unearth and tell these type of stories that lay just beneath the social fabric. Other examples of similar episodes were brought forth and discussed including; the Westminster Los Angeles area districting case, and the more recent WWII documentary where 500,000 Latino soldiers who participated in WWII were made nonexistent by the works of the highly acclaimed Ken Burns. The “A Class Apart” documentary will air on PBS on the 23rd of February and is also scheduled to be featured at the 2009 California State AGIF Conference. **Augie Lerma**

**SAFE DRIVING INITIATIVE**

Recent VA studies have shown that our veterans returning from deployment in combat theaters have an increase risk of being involved in motor vehicle accidents in the first few years after they have returned from overseas. In the general population, MVA are the foremost cause of death among the age groups between 15-44 yrs of age. Over 50% of our returning combat veteran population is between 20-29 years of age.

VHA has launched a National Safe Driving Initiative in collaboration with the Dept of Transportation to reduce the death rates of MVA in our returning veterans. VA LB has already launched several proposals to educate our veterans, as well as, our community of the increase death rate and education on safe driving behaviors.

I am requesting your assistance in your assigned areas on ensuring that you have the attached brochures available in your area, as well as, have the attached flyer posted in your office. Please also include teaching education on safe driving behaviors when you meet with a returning combat veteran in your area or with your general veteran population (particularly those with medical conditions that can affect their driving-those with poly-pharmacy, psychotropic meds, diabetes, etc).

There is also a national link that you can refer your patients and/or their families too as well: <http://www.safedriving.va.gov/> The site also has good education materials that you can discuss and print for your patients under “driving resources” and “clinical resources”. At the site, you will see that there are other posters available; the attached is the one we thought best to be the most appropriate to post throughout our medical center. The attached brochure is also posted on our VA Intranet Website on the Patient Education Tab-Patient Ed Resource: <http://vaww.long-beach.med.va.gov/Education/PatientEd.cfm?letter=S#content>

Should you have any questions, you may call me directly at 562-826-5316 or Lynette Fox, RN our Patient Safety Manager. Thank for your time and support on this very important initiative.

June L. Callasan, RN, BSN, CCM , Program Manager, OEF/OIF Care Management Service  
VA Long Beach Healthcare System - Veterans Transition Center  
Office: 562-826-8000, x3285 - Fax: 562-826-5626 - [june.callasan@va.gov](mailto:june.callasan@va.gov)

**NATIONAL AGIF MID-YEAR CONFERENCE  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO  
March 18-21, 2009  
Info: 505-247-4910**

**NATIONAL AGIF ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS  
August 4-9, 2009  
Info: 303-458-1700**

**MIGRANT AFFAIRS**

I was appointed by Commander Willie Galvan to be the coordinator for Migrant Affairs for Southern California. For the last four years I participated in the Marcha Migrante I, II, III and this year Marcha Migrante IV. This year we will be on the March (actually a caravan) from February 2, through February 22, 2009. We place crosses in the unmarked graves of over 500 Mexicanos/Latinos that have died trying to cross the border. No one knows who they are.

Beginning at Holtville we go to Yuma and stay in the Catholic Church in Somerton, Arizona through the auspices of the local Migrant Group. From Yuma we embark on the trip to Homestead Florida through the auspices of The Farm Worker Association of Florida. On Friday, we will have a mass with various Migrant groups in Miami, Florida. On Saturday we will have a rally in Imokalee, Florida. On Sunday, we will head north to New York and to Washington D.C., where we will be lobbying the Congressional Legislators to assure that a Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill is passed within President Obama's first 100 days. These activities are a part of and contribute to the AGIF's civil rights mission. To view day to day activities you can log on to [www.borderangels.org](http://www.borderangels.org) **Danny Morales**

**THE SONS OF GUADALUPE**

During the Vietnam era, the small town of Guadalupe, on Highway 1, Central Coast of California, had a population of approximately 2,500 people. Yet, an astounding number, 215 young men from Guadalupe, were sent to the war in Vietnam; a number and percent considerably above the national average of the eligible draft-age young men at that time. These young men were largely from one of the substantial segments composed of Filipino, Japanese and Mexican residents that made up this diverse community. A closely-knit community; nevertheless, not without the controversies that came to light in the 60s and 70s.

Michael Ornelas, Professor and Chair of the Chicano Studies Department at Mesa College, San Diego, has written a book: "The Sons of Guadalupe: Voices of the Vietnam Generation and Their Journey Home". Ornelas grew up in Guadalupe, attended UC Santa Barbara, and regularly visits family and friends in Guadalupe. This work documents the early history of Guadalupe and its diverse ethnic groups as a preview to the stories of these Veterans and their early years growing up. He has written this book as a tribute to the City of Guadalupe and to these heroic men, writing about their experiences in Vietnam during the war and their personal struggles to adjust to life after the ravages of war. The book recounts the experiences of 27 of Guadalupe's Vietnam era veterans. Of the 215 veterans, 111 of them were related, 51 sets of brothers among them. The Sanchez family sent five sons to the Vietnam war; the Deleons sent four relatives. From 30 homes on Birch Street, there were 16 sons serving in Vietnam.

All proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Sons of Guadalupe Committee of the Central Coast Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Funds collected through the sale of this book, as well as donations from supporters, will help fund scholarships and college book funds for the relatives of the Sons of Guadalupe, mounting health costs for the veterans and programs that support the efforts of the Guadalupe veterans.

Copies of the book at \$35.00 each, which includes all shipping and handling costs, will be available in early March. Please include your mailing address and mail your checks to: The Sons of Guadalupe, 2555 North Trail Ct. Chula Vista, CA 91914-4153 For further information, you may contact the author at: 619-267-7464

**JOE CARDENAS MEMORIAL BLACK & WHITE BALL - MODESTO CENTRE PLAZA - MODESTO, CALIFORNIA  
SATURDAY APRIL 4, 2009 - DINNER DANCE \$50.00 /PERSON - INFO: 209-581-1157**

**SAN JOSE CHAPTER CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY****SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, JUNE 6<sup>TH</sup>, 2009****THE SAN JOSE GI FORUM WILL HOLD  
A DINNER DANCE GALA TO CELEBRATE OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY****CHAPTERS WILL BE RECEIVING FORMAL INVITATIONS TO THE GALA  
SAN JOSE GI FORUM WAS FOUNDED JUNE 27, 1959  
ANTONIO CHAVEZ, EVENT CHAIR 408-288-9471**



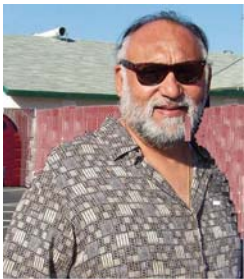
**VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING UPDATE**

Members of the American GI Forum who expressed interest in becoming Veteran Service Representatives were invited to attend seminars on how to become Veteran Service Officers. These individuals were informed as to the dedication and tedious work it would take to become a Veteran Service Officer. National Director, Felipe Flores arranged a three phase program intended to prepare potential Veteran Service Officers. Director Flores directed and instructed Assistant National Director Frank Gonzales on the class preparation and location of training.

The trainees were taught how to prepare a claim packet, the most common forms to use, how to research critical information, and how to submit a claim. Additionally, the four steps of claim processing, the basic development process, check lists, review of application/claim and submission of forms were taught. All potential Veteran Service Officers were informed that continual on the job training would be given for the first year by a certified Veteran Service Officer. Current yearly training is required by the Department of Veteran Affairs to maintain up to date knowledge of changes to title 38.

There has been a total of fourteen training sessions conducted to date. Eleven individual applied for certification. Exams given to those eleven applicants produced scores of from 89 percent to 100 percent. Director Flores has made it known to all within the American GI Forum, that if they wish to become Veteran Service Officers, they should contact him or Mr. Frank Gonzales. California AGIF Commander Willie Galvan has promoted and supported this program and would like to see as many committed and serious members apply to become Veteran Service Officers. **Felipe Flores, National Director**

**THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CHAPTER (SVC), PROVIDING COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE**



Our chapter sponsored and adopted Lincoln Elementary. Lincoln was recognized as a title one school (70% Latino) and was looking for some help in the area of providing support to children who had failed the over all state exams. Lincoln Elementary has miraculously improved in their overall exams, 37% increase in the state exam, and a 7% increase in comprehension. The School has recognized our chapter and has thanked us for our help. We furnished Lincoln elementary with a \$500.00 support fund. This fund provides the children with ice cream, candy, and soda pop; many of these children do not receive this at home, and the Principal and her staff have thanked us and continue to recognize AGIF-SVC. The support fund money was donated to Lincoln elementary, and most importantly by one of our returning Iraq veterans, Sergeant Anthony Vallez who donated \$300 dollars from his seed money when he returned from Iraq. He selflessly donated these funds back to AGIF-SVC. Sergeant Vallez and his troops received care packages from us while stationed in Iraq. In addition our Associate member Sandra K Molina donated \$200.00 to this fund. For a grand total of \$500.00 for our community children.

We also continue to collaborate with two other non-profit organizations. Most recently one of our members, Suzanne Moreno, published her first book as it relates to the Latino community. The book is titled "The Latino's guide to Parenting " and a recent book signing included the AGIF-SVC Commander Gilbert S. Molina. An excellent example how we can work together in providing education to the Latino community. We have invited the author, Suzanne Moreno to speak and we will have the book for sale at our Mid-Year conference. Suzanne's web site is [www.evpe.net](http://www.evpe.net)

AGIF-SVC joined "El Concilio" de Fresno, a non-profit organization that provides resources for the community. Most of its members are local Fresno educators and agency heads. Currently we are promoting and involved in recruiting employees for the 2010 Census Bureau . The AGIF-SVC commander participates in El Concilio's monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. **Gil Molina**

**The San Jose Vet Center Presents**  
**The 4th Annual Veteran & Family Resource Fair**  
**Saturday April 18th, 2009 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**  
**National Guard Armory 251 W. Heading Street San Jose, CA 95110**  
**Welcome all Military and Families. Veteran Resources, Food, Music, Door prizes,**  
**Silent Auction, Children's Arts & Crafts, Parking**  
**Information: 408-993-0829**



### A PORTRAIT OF COURAGE Alvaro Alvarado



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[wgalvan@verizon.net](mailto:wgalvan@verizon.net)

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[delrio@vicsinc.org](mailto:delrio@vicsinc.org)

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Gil Molina, Sergeant at Arms  
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[Gilmolina@aol.com](mailto:Gilmolina@aol.com)

Francisco Alvarez, Parliamentarian  
209-579-2366  
[francisco.alvarez@mail.standa.org](mailto:francisco.alvarez@mail.standa.org)

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Angie Magana, Historian  
760-757-6276  
[rmagana@cox.net](mailto:rmagana@cox.net)

Judy Pena, Sgt. @ Arms  
209-533-8349

Alvaro Alvarado is from the little town of Alpine, Texas where the primary economic enterprise is ranching. It's a part of America where a 10,000 acre ranch is considered to be small and a 200,000 acre ranch is considered to be normal. He was born on October 4, 1924. Alvaro was a normal, typical, working-class American who worked on his grandfather's ranch as a young boy. As time moved on he became a truck driver hauling building material for a contractor and for a short period of time worked as a gas station attendant.

Alvaro was drafted into the US Army on June 9, 1943. He was 18 and trained as a Surgical Technician. He was assigned to the 505<sup>th</sup> Port Medical Battalion as a Combat Medic. He served in England and France where he put his life on the line to save fallen soldiers. He remembers leaving New York on a British transport ship that took 29 days to cross the Atlantic with the destination of Liverpool, England. The ship had to zigzag its course across the Atlantic as to avoid enemy German submarines. The British transport ship was heavily protected by an armada of American destroyers as to assure its safety. He recalls the food on board to be quite bland; morning breakfast consisted of boiled rice and dinners consisted of fish. In Alvaro's terms; "puro fish sin sabor".

The transport ship arrived in England, and the battalion, with many other units, staged its assault for June 6, 1944, D-Day. Alvaro's unit was ordered to land two days after D-Day onto the shores of Omaha Beach, Normandy with orders to save American lives. Armed only with his God and medical equipment, his recollection of that moment in history was one that many soldiers live with; soldiers who entered the perils of hell and experienced the horrors of war. In a soft somber voice, Alvaro recalled the Normandy waters of Omaha Beach, red with blood and engulfed with bodies floating side by side, tumbling beneath the waves. Facing the cliffs, with gunfire a blaze, many were killed exiting the amphibious assault landing crafts and many laid on the beach dead from battle or in desperate need of medical care. Alvaro spent three weeks on the shores of Normandy providing medical care and saving comrades' lives, the price of freedom only Alvaro knows.

His unit was issued the CMB (Combat Medical Badge) and two Bronze Stars for their heroic actions under extreme conditions in Northern and Southern France. The CMB is one of the most coveted awards a "Soldier Medic" can earn, and certainly has been and always will be the ultimate "Portrait of Courage". His contribution to the liberation of France is commended and will be forever etched in history. Alvarado was honorably discharged on March 2, 1946. Subjected to the worst conditions in combat, "Greater love has no man or woman than to lay down their life" (John 15:13). We are honored to have Alvaro Alvarado as our WW II Veteran member of our organization, The American GI Forum, San José Chapter "Old #1". **Michael Salas**

#### **MODESTO CHAPTER ON THE MOVE!!**



The Modesto Chapter was named Outstanding GI Forum Chapter of the U. S. for 2008. Our Honor Guard continues to serve at funerals, burials and parades under the leadership of 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Eric Flores. In fact, our Honor Guard took 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Modesto's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. Our 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Car show was a success with 148 Volkswagens on display. Commander Frank Alvarez organized and served as Chairman of the Veterans Day Parade. Our Chapter also participated in the Wreaths Across America Program where Korean War Veteran, Valentine Perez placed a wreath at the POW/MIA monument at Santa Nella National Cemetery. Our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tamale sale was a success and we continue to grow with our goal being, to reach 200 members this year.





## California Forumeer

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Tele: (408) 288-9470  
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**Mariachi “Chula Vista” performing at the 2009 California Mid-Year Conference**

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