



California Forumeer

American GI Forum

<http://www.agif.org>

Serving Veterans Since
1948

AGIF COMMANDER
WILLIE GALVAN

AGIF COMMANDER WILLIE GALVAN ENERGIZES REFORM AGENDA



We just returned from the Central California Region Meeting in Fresno with members from the San Joaquin Valley and Modesto Chapters attending. All concurred with our future plans for the Forum's development of infrastructure, capacity building that includes membership enhancement, among other things.

The Board and I were elected on a reformist movement with a wave of positive change. How big and broad an effect our future plans will have, will be very much a matter of how motivated we, the Chapter Commanders as well as the membership, become with our strategy to reenergize the Forum.

Up until now, we have been able to manage the decline of membership and we managed it by ignoring it and/or by doing very little or nothing about it. I'll be very insistent in my message to pursue and increase our membership as proposed in our future plans. The future is now!

W. Galvan, Commander



DAVID SIERRA WRITING INTO THE SUNSET

The date is October 15, 2006 and the sun is setting on this warm end of a summer day as E. David Sierra heads for the door of the Vida Nueva Program for one last time. He retires this day after 18 plus years of service to the successful San Jose GI Forum's Sober Living Environment (SLE) Program. His involvement with the American GI Forum and Veterans spans 42 years and though he might have chosen a more lucrative career path, he chose to stay with the people. I interviewed Mr. Sierra at his home in East San Jose where I caught a glimpse of the man and his mission. [Continued on page 2](#)

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The Forumeer is your Quarterly Newsletter, submit ideas and materials for the next issue by January 31, 2007. 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.

E-mail to: alerma@agif.org

David Sierra continued from page 1

Eliseo (David) Sierra hails from Woodlake which is located in the San Joaquin Valley of Central California. David was born in 1934 at Ontario, California with his family migrating to the Central Valley town where he was raised by his brother Jess and his sister in-law and where he attended public schools. His interest in writing and sports came early in life and he tells of being mentored by his high school journalism teacher and encouraged by a local newsman while writing stories for the local newspaper at the rate of five cents per column inch. After finishing high school he tried Los Angeles for a time working as a sheet metal apprentice and headed back to Woodlake after five years. After a year in Woodlake he and his buddy Gabe headed for Santa Clara Valley in his 1941 mercury with three dollars in his pocket and 12 watermelons in the car trunk. Gabe not able to adjust to the change, left David in the Valley of Hearts Delight and returned to Woodlake by bus.

David landed a job with Hillis Printing as a typesetter in 1960 and soon began the Social and Sports group called the San Joaquin Club. Active for about four years, the group was involved in community affairs and social activities. The American Legion post #809 voted the club the most active community organization one year. At about this time, David met his future wife Gloria at a dance and they were married seventy eight days later. Once the group members began to marry, their viability was soon over and Club San Joaquin disbanded. David with a lot of energy and desire to accomplish things soon sought out the American GI Forum and was sponsored into the organization by longtime activist Eddie Camunez.

David has been a consistent member of the San Jose Chapter since 1964. Old Number One, as the chapter is known, was a perfect fit for a young and restless go-getter. His penchant for writing led him to a fifteen year stint as the assistant editor of "El Excentrico" a who's who publication of the San Jose times. In 1968 David became editor of The Forumeer, a national publication of the American GI Forum. As a direct result of his many articles and publications, David began to receive accolades from far and wide. He captured the attention of the Kennedy Foundation, the City of San Jose, Santa Clara County and was even handed the key to El Paso, Texas during a national convention of the American GI Forum. David wrote many articles but one that stood out during this period of time was where He had written about Jim Plunkett winning the Heisman Trophy. Congressman Don Edwards honored David and the American GI Forum by placing his work on the congressional record. David went on to serve as the chairman of the San Jose AGIF Chapter for three terms. He was voted outstanding member on three separate occasions by his peers. He later would be instrumental in organizing the annual parades held in concert with the Fiestas Patrias Celebrations of Cinco De Mayo and 16th of September in downtown San Jose.

His calling was the written word and he once again accepted the position of editor for the San Jose Chapter newsletter "The Leader" whose distribution included members across the United States and many civic leaders. His tenure as editor of the popular newsletter would reach twenty two years. David went on to serve on the San Jose Board of Directors for nineteen years resigning in 1987 to accept the responsibility as Office Manager for the AGIF Vida Nueva SLE Project. Here he wore many hats including office manager, court liaison, interpreter, and any other job needing to be done at the center. Under the direction of David, the Barrio Conference was conceptualized and started. The successful conference would have a ten year run and was centered at the Elmwood Correctional Facility in Milpitas, CA. The popular yearly event drew participants from the political and business community. The venue included guest speakers and presentations aimed at changing the direction of High School Students. During the day-long event, the conference also featured live mariachi music.

During these years David and wife Gloria also often took time to travel and visit places known and unknown. He especially liked sports events and to visit Los Angeles and his favorite college team "The UCLA Bruins". His many contributions to the American GI Forum include being the first and the 1999 speaker at the San Jose Scholarship Foundation Awards Banquets, the founding of the San Joaquin Sports Club, and being the first commissioner of the United Club Council League (a Mexican American Sports League), running the Barrio Conference for ten years, and during his tenure as chairman passing motions to begin the San Jose Scholarship Foundation and starting the Vida Nueva Program. An avid golfer at one point, he served on the board of the Mexican American Golf Association. He also penned "Santa and the Sigmas" a poem which was read to the national convention of the Sigma Iota Chi Sorority.

Now fully retired from the successful AGIF SLE Program, David plans to continue his efforts to fully document a historical perspective of the AGIF and eventually publish his personal memoirs. He recently equipped his home computer with a high-speed internet connection in order to keep pace with the world from the comforts of his easy chair. California Forumeer would be privileged to receive and print an occasional byline from this dedicated member as time permits. You can write to David at 765 Story Road Ste 150 San Jose, CA 95122 or email him at davids@agif.org **A.G. Lerma**

2007 California State AGIF Conference

Modesto, California - March 22-24, 2007

Pre Conference Meeting - Thursday, General Session - Friday & Saturday, Black & White Ball - Saturday Night



**HISPANIC HERITAGE CELEBRATION
San Jose Vet Center**

Friday October 27, 2006

An afternoon gathering at the San Jose Vet Center was held to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month. The theme for the celebration was "How the Latino Culture Contributes to America's Future". The hostess for the event attended by over fifty veterans and their guests was Juanita Morales-Euresti. She greeted and thanked everyone for accepting her invitation. She also invited everyone to enjoy the wonderful food prepared for the event. Once the program got started, she read the Hispanic Heritage Proclamation issued annually by the White House staff. The proclamation is especially well received because the San Jose Vet Center is only one of many such centers across this country seeking to help all veterans in a number of ways.

The guest speaker for the event was introduced, Mr. Frank Chavez, a Vietnam veteran and business leader in San Jose. His presentation revolved around education and our children. He touched on many issues affecting the education of our children. He spoke of the challenges facing the educational community and especially the Board of Education of which he is a member in the Eastside Union High School District. He also spoke in detail on some of the issues that affect children with special emphasis on the children of Hispanic households. Two working parents, single mothers and the ensuing affect on children's educational progress were discussed at length. Societal issues were also placed before the group with much interaction from the attendees. Much of the feedback from attendees coincided with Mr. Chavez' presentation and yet others offered alternate opinions on what keeps children from obtaining a much needed education in America. The discussions were vigorous and fruitful and the Vet Center and Ms Euriste is commended for bringing this forum about.

The second presenter was Mr. Sid Duran, National Sergeant at Arms for the National American GI Forum who shared and contrasted some tragic stories regarding his family at the hands of despots during the 1930s. Though tragic he said, we can all learn from past mistakes and work together to insure that those tragedies never happen again. He went on to say that there have been advances and change however, the struggle for equity and equality is far from over. He cited the work of those involved in bringing about a better world through positive action and solutions that affect humanity. He stated that today's world offers much to young people and that we should not shirk responsibility in assuring the education of especially our children.

A special thank you to Ms Euriste and the staff of The San Jose Vet Center for bringing about this kind of dialog in our community. Though veterans continue to bear the burden of current and past wars, they are still citizens who want to remain in touch with the many issues affecting their families and communities. This forum was an excellent way of giving attention to community concerns that in one way or another touch upon each and everyone of us. Seeing this kind of interaction among our citizens helps in the effort to move forward and gives us much hope for the future. **A.G. Lerma**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER'S UPDATE

The National Office continues to receive telephone calls, e-mail, visits and letters from Veterans who continue to have problems with the Veterans Administration in areas of health, pay, hospital and clinic assistance and others. The National office will help whenever and wherever it can and the more difficult cases are passed on to our most able Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) Felipe Flores of California and Anibal Canales of Colorado.

The National Office and Dan Sandoval, President of the National Hispanic Coalition (NHC), of which the AGIF-US is a partner, continues its efforts in the areas of Veterans employment and related issues. Through NHC, we are pressing Federal Agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management, and their lack in using special emphasis programs to hire veterans, their family and other Hispanics. As you know the VET/Student Hire Program was given birth through the efforts of the NHC.

We continue the formidable task of coordinating the complaint process at this time and we are focusing on three separate but equally important complaints. **Dan Sandoval, National Vice Commander**

HONORING OUR VETERANS



This Veteran's Day, let us pause and reflect on our many blessings and the sacrifice of those that have worn the American uniform. We salute these Defenders of Freedom and those who are now in far away lands and we pray for their safe return. The American GI Forum conveys its heartfelt condolences to the families of Forumeers Guy Gabaldon and Manuela Nehls.

Our prayers are always with you. The American GI Forum



NATIONAL CHAIRWOMAN'S UPDATE

The women of the American GI Forum are growing stronger in the belief that you can accomplish so much when you let go of the petty fighting and work together as a unified team. We are learning every day about the power of networking and developing new contacts throughout the United States.

We still have a ways to go but are learning that when conflict does arise, there is always a positive way to approach it and deal with it so that harm does not affect anyone involved. Sometime we have to remember that we cannot do everything by ourselves. We must also realize that some of us may have a heavier burden than we can handle. This then is when the other team members will step up to the plate and take initiative. We have learned to allow each other enough space and flexibility to allow this to work in our favor.

Our next step is to improve the communication throughout the states and to start building our membership. We are working on developing fundraiser/member drives in conjunction with other activities and to utilize the strategy throughout the U.S. We are continuing with our Leadership Conference/Gala planning for next year and our fund raising efforts by selling AGIF luggage materials.

Please visit the website at www.agif.us and look at the news not only involving the women but the forum and the youth groups as well. Should you have any questions, comments or suggests please don't hesitate in contacting us.

Thank you and God Bless you all and your families. **Debbie Salazar National Chairwoman**

INCREASING THE AGIF MEMBERSHIP

Let's develop a brochure or other type of media to inform people of what the AGIF is all about, especially in California. Each Chapter can use that media as a tool to recruit NEW members, and if people are not readily convinced, then offer them incentives like Associate Membership at \$5.00 for the first year, and then full membership thereafter.

Let's offer honorary membership to all returning Veterans for one year (as already stipulated in the AGIF Constitution) and to retired military personnel, and perhaps active military personnel. Let's expand our recruitment outreach to wounded soldiers and lets look at what the AGIF could do for them.

Let's stress that membership in the AGIF is NOT expensive, and that we are advocates for their interests. We can stress that membership in our organization enables us to obtain funds that benefit our community, and that it is a very wise and cost effective investment.

Let's inform potential members that we need their NAME and moral support, we don't need much of their money, and we don't need for them to necessarily go to meetings. We will keep them informed through our newsletters and websites of issues that affect them and their community. That said, why would anyone refuse membership? These are some thoughts on increasing membership, what do you think?. **Helen Galvan**

2007 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Mid-Year Conference for the National Board of Directors and members will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada. The dates are Sunday March 12 to Tuesday 14, 2007. A contract is pending with the Alexis Suites. Room rates are \$89, single or double Sunday to Wednesday. For those members wishing to come early, a special rate of \$139 for Friday & Saturday is available. Hotel rooms are a premium on weekends. The 57th Annual National Conference will be held in Oklahoma City. The dates are Wednesday August 1 to Sunday August 5, 2007. The hotel selected is the Sheraton Oklahoma City located downtown in the heart of the city. Room rates \$110, single or double. Details will be forthcoming in the next Forumeer. **Antonio Morales**

FIESTAS PATRIAS 2006 PARADE GRAND MARSHAL Ernie Perez, Lt. Col. retired United States Air Force

The American GI Forum San Jose Chapter was honored to have Ernie Perez, retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel lead the 24th Annual Fiestas Patrias Parade on September 17, 2006.

Mr. Perez, a long time supporter of the American GI Forum, was joined by his son, Phil Perez, his granddaughter, Sarah Spalding, and his great grandson Jack Spalding. The American GI Forum salutes Mr. Perez for his contribution to his country and his heritage. **Letetia Rodriguez**



Francisco F. Ivarra

Mr. Francisco Ivarra is a veteran and former four-term National Commander of the American GI Forum. We asked Mr. Ivarra to share with us his activities because of his dedication and interest in education, communication, community relations and veterans affairs. He made great inroads into the Washington DC community while leading the AGIF and he continues on that path in his current endeavors. We thank Mr. Ivarra for sharing this information, applaud his accomplishments and wish him and his family well. **A.G. Lerma AGIF COM Center**



Mr. Gus Lerma:

Thank you for asking me to write and submit some information related to my personal and professional involvement with our community and my commitment to veterans affairs. First, let me thank you for the fine work you are doing in keeping the American GI Forum membership and others who support veterans and Hispanic issues well informed.

Secondly, I have been involved with many presentations, events and appointments, but I have decided to list some of the ones that related directly with our veterans community. As a retired university professor and national diversity consultant, there is an audience that continues to invite me to make presentations on issues of diversity that impact our Hispanic and minority veteran's community. I am especially rewarded when I make such presentations to middle and secondary school students.

In reference to the Veterans Administration, my advice and consultation is still requested by leaders and friends of the department and I have provided my input on several informational documents and reports that have help our minority and Hispanic veterans. As you may know, I also helped with the AGIF VSO training plans and I developed the training manual for that program.

I have also had the opportunity to work with leaders of several national veterans organizations in D.C. and have helped with the organization and establishment of the National American Indian Veterans Association and the Hispanic War Veterans of America. These organizations are recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs and are in the process of obtaining their Congressional Charter. They are national in stature, essential to their constituency and their membership is rapidly increasing. Both of these organizations also have membership and representation in the state of California.

Nationally, I continue to serve on several national boards, including the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. In my state I currently serve on the Fisher House Foundation, the Executive Leadership Board of the Veterans Administration Hospital and recently was appointed to the King County Veterans Levy Oversight Board.

I continue to travel across this great nation and to Puerto Rico in service to our veteran's community. In fact, I was recently in Washington, DC attending a VVA National Board of Directors meeting and in Chicago where I moderated a panel presentation on Hispanic veteran's issues and spent two days visiting with the most highly decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, Mr. Jorge Barretto from Puerto Rico.

After being wounded and returning from Vietnam, I made my commitment to help our Hispanic community and our fellow veterans. I realize that there is still much to be done and I know that there are some good people that are doing some great things for our Hispanic community and veterans, I only hope that the small contributions I have made to these two communities have been helpful.

May you and your family enjoy a blessed Thanksgiving.
Best of luck and best wishes to you and the American GI Forum. Francisco F. Ivarra



REFORM

The idea to increase our membership through Associate members was discussed at our Central California Region Meeting, and whether this was within the Forum's constitutional guidelines. It was agreed that if the Constitution was silent on this matter, then it is okay to proceed with Associate members.

Some may think that I, as Commander, may stray from the Constitution to achieve our plans. Well, rest assured, that there will be no rule, means, norm or traditions during my term that will be set aside to advance our future plans and goals.

However, keeping this in mind, I am not reluctant to act on the Forum's behalf and for its betterment, and as such, I/we have decided to suspend the Mr. and Miss AGIF speech contest during our 2007 State Conference. These events have not gone very smoothly at some of our State conferences, where meddling in the voting and selection procedures have caused harm to the contestants as well as the Forum as a whole. The situation extends to the National also, as the outgoing national Miss GI Forum from San Jose has not been given her scholarship award from the National Conference this year. The Lompoc Forum has never, to this date, been reimbursed for their queen's rooms and expenses from several years ago.

The continuance of the Mr. and Miss AGIF of California contest will be up for discussion at our December 2nd Board Meeting in Santa Maria.

Should we decide to discontinue the contests, then the Chapter queen fees of \$100.00 and the \$15.00 queen gift will be abolished to the benefit of those chapters struggling to pay the fees. **Willie Galvan, Commander**

LETTERS

Commander Galvan

I believe that the Legacy of the AGIF is one that has had an impact on me personally and professionally. We continue in our commitment to those in need, with a very special emphasis on our Veterans and Veteran's Children. Most recently we raised funds to provide scholarships to three college students. We are also planning to provide five farm worker families with funds to help themselves with everyday living expenses. We recently participated in the Fresno County Fair where we disseminated over 50 chapter membership applications. **Gilbert S. Molina Commander, American GI Forum San Joaquin Valley Chapter**

Commander Galvan

You are certainly moving in the best interests of the AGIF and concurrently in the right direction. We support your innovative and aggressive approach to making the Forum an organization that WILL have a positive impact on our community and particularly in support of our Hispanic veterans, which in turn will help all other veterans of this country.

Looking forward to our Board of Directors meeting on Dec. 1. **Fred Rodriguez**

Commander Galvan

Reflecting on the Central Valley meeting, I concur and the Modesto Chapter concurs with the push to elevate the AGIF's standing. We pledge here and now to support the effort and to do all in our power to make these positive changes happen.

Francisco Alvarez

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**American GI Forum of California
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

- Articulate a set of future plans/reforms in a more purposeful manner than we've done in the past;
- Enhance membership through Associate Members;
- Establish a State Forum Central office in Sacramento;
- Revamp and upgrade our California website;
- Purchase new technology equipment and software for use by our Forumeer Editor and for the central office;
- Heighten the visibility and augment the VOP/VSO services through increased funding
- Obtain email addresses for all Forum membership for quicker and better communication;
- Distribute a monthly news bulletin as well as the quarterly newsletter;
- Organize the Forum Chapters into regions;
- Be more consistent and committed to advocating for Veterans' rights and issues;
- Renew commitment to Civil Rights involvement, as well as keep abreast of legislation dealing with issues that are detrimental to Veterans, the community and education;
- Form a Legislative Committee that involves many political and controversial issues and that provides positive public relations, strategies, and carries out our agreed-upon plans;
- Form a Veterans Small Business Advocacy Committee to advocate for Veterans in business and other small business owners, protecting them from frivolous lawsuits, taxes, fees, and unnecessary regulatory rules.

VA HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT

For most veterans, entry into the VA health care system begins by applying for enrollment. To apply, complete VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, which may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Once enrolled, veterans can receive services at VA facilities anywhere in the country.



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VICS**

A Commitment to Service
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Tony Gallegos, President and CEO - Fred S. Rodriguez, Chairman

General Membership Application

Qualifications to join: Any honorably discharged veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States is eligible for membership, as is any person who is approved by the membership. Chapters hold monthly meetings. The Mid-Year Conference is held during the first quarter of year. The State Conference is held during the second quarter of the year and the National Conference is held in August.

DUES (Dues are \$30.00 for most chapters)

Annual membership dues includes local, state and national dues. Members receive a subscription to The Forumeer, the official AGIF Newsletter, and discounts to the AGIF's conferences and events. Mail application and dues to: AGIF State Treasurer Daniel Morales, P. O. Box 52617, Riverside, CA 92517. You may also send application to your nearest AGIF chapter.

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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AGIF-CALIFORNIA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

Saturday, December 2, 2006
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

American GI Forum Center/Marian Clinic
117 West Bunny Avenue
Santa Maria, CA

Continental breakfast from 9:00 to 10:00 AM

Santa Maria Style Tri-tip Lunch will be served

All Board of Directors, Chapter Commanders, Appointed Persons
and Members are invited and urged to attend

Call Willie for more information:
805-714-6015 or 805-928-2274 (evenings)
or email: wgalvan@verizon.net

THE TRUJILLO TEAM

Call on them for advice and assistance in your Real Estate needs: Ramona and Ernie at: (408) 799-1867 / 1872 or office (408) 445-4109 / 4110 Email: etrujillo@century21champion.com

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