



# The SAL-ute

The Newsletter of the Detachment of New Jersey

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## Detachment Officers

Volume 51 Issue 1

December 2013

## Commander's Message



Commander Amel Balega  
Detachment of New Jersey

To all my fellow comrades in the Sons of the American Legion, My wife and I would like to wish you and your family a happy and healthy Holiday season.

We may have had a slow start this year but things are going now.

In November, I along with Lenny Free had the pleasure to participate with The Detachment of Pennsylvania on the honor flight. The honor flight consisted of 175 veterans were treated to a trip to Washington. It was incredible to see all this come together in just 9 weeks. The planning, scheduling and organization was an excellent example of teamwork.

We embarked to Philadelphia with 2 local vets from Passaic County. We were later joined by 2 more from Mercer County, 1 from Camden County and 1 from Monmouth County. Several more veterans from New Jersey also participated through the Honor Flight Program itself. I would like to thank Vice Commander Robert Bascou and Chaplin Bob Phillips Jr. for escorting the Camden County veteran out.

By Commander Amel Balega  
Detachment of New Jersey Historian

This event was truly an event I will never forget! To see the joy on the faces of so many veterans when we returned back from Washington was incredible. Rt. 95 was closed by Troopers and the streets were lined with people, as we were escorted by over 160 motorcycles. Every overpass had fire apparatus with American Flags draped from ladders.

Over 300 plus people gathered at a dinner welcome home and thanking the veterans for their service. Active and former military were there to greet these men and women home, as children waved flags. The Manhattan Dolls preformed for the crowd.

New Jersey and Pennsylvania will work together in this vital endeavor again.

I cannot thank Commander George Flasiński and Americanism Chairman Tom Showers enough for this opportunity for Lenny, myself, and all the Veterans that attended from New Jersey.

## Homeland Security Update

By Jim Noble PNVC  
Homeland Security Chairman

Winter storms can range from a moderate snow over a few hours to a blizzard with blinding, wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Some winter storms are large enough to affect several states, while others affect only a single community. Many winter storms are accompanied by dangerously low temperatures and sometimes by strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain.

Regardless of the severity of a winter storm, you should be prepared in order to remain safe during these events.

### Know the Difference

#### Winter Storm Outlook -

Winter storm conditions are possible in the next 2 to 5 days.

#### Winter Weather Advisory -

Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.

#### Winter Storm Watch -

Winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36 to 48 hours. People in a watch area should review their winter storm plans and stay informed about weather conditions.

**Winter Storm Warning -** Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. People in a warning area should take precautions immediately.

### To prepare for a winter storm you should do the following:

Before winter approaches, add the following supplies to your emergency kit:

Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways.

Sand to improve traction.

Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.

Sufficient heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.

Adequate clothing and blankets

to keep you warm.

Make a Family Communications Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency. Listen to a National Weather Radio or other local news channels for critical information from the National Weather Service. Be alert to changing weather conditions.

Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle.

Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

A simple check list, would be a great way to know that you have all the items needed to survive Winter Storms.

### Commander:

- Amel Balega

### Vice Commanders:

- Bob Bascou
- Edward Downs
- Donald Early
- Carl Kline
- Andy Malson

### Adjutant:

- Jeff Hicks

### Judge Advocate:

- Tom Marsden

### Chaplain:

- Bob Philips Jr

### Historian:

- Lenny Free

### Sgt-at-Arms:

- Tony Clappsy
- Jackson Coles
- Mark Dodds

### Asst. Sgt-at-Arms:

- Dan Dominick
- Jim Newby Jr
- Matthew Thalasinios

### NEC

- Gary Nelson

### ANEC

- Joe Korba

### SAL Chairman

- Norm Marlin

## Honor Flight Experience

By Lenny Free PDC  
Detachment of New Jersey Historian

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 640 WWII veterans die each day. Honor Flight Network is dedicated to Transport America's veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit those memorials dedicated to honor their service and sacrifices.

Since America felt it was important to build a memorial to the service and the ultimate sacrifice of her veterans, the Honor Flight Network believes it is equally important that they actually get to visit and experience THEIR memorial. Top priority is given to America's most senior heroes — survivors of World War II and any veteran with a terminal illness who wishes to visit THEIR memorial

Commander Amel Balega and PDC Lenny Free had the honor of escorting 2 such heroes to the WWII memorial wall on November 2, 2013. Our journey began in Totowa, NJ at 6 am, where we joined up with Huey Verelli, a small business owner from Woodland park that served the army during the Battle of the Bulge, and Jack Bandebian, a merchant marine from West Milford who served in WWII and is a cancer patient who is still receiving Chemo. First, we traveled the lengthy trip to the Courtyard Marriott in Philadelphia. Once there we boarded 7 buses, each filled with veterans and guardians, for the next leg of our adventure to Washington DC.

The first stop was the Arlington Cemetery

to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where they witnessed the changing of the guard. Over the next 2 days we saw the sites of our nation's capital, listened to old war stories and bonded with these two men. The way our veterans had been treated and received was an emotional and heartwarming experience that cannot be described easily. At one point I had noticed red blotches on their faces and feared they were having an allergic reaction to something. Later we learned it was lipstick from the kisses they had received.

During the return trip, our 7 buses were escorted up the highway by 160 motorcycles. Each overpass held a pair of fire trucks with crossed ladders and a service man honoring our heroes with flags held high. Our veterans could hardly believe all this was done for them. All participants received a T-shirt, cap, jacket, and other mementos provided by the Honor Flight Network. We ended our trip in Philadelphia where they received a red carpet welcome complete with crowds of grateful citizens, an honor guard, dinner and a USO style performance from the Manhattan Dolls

In another 5-7 years almost all of our World War II veterans will be gone. This tour is their "last hurrah" - the last time they will

be recognized as the conquering victors that collectively and literally saved the world. The average cost to make this dream a reality is \$225 per veteran and is provided directly through donations and contributions to the Honor flight program. The experience is priceless.



Our veterans were given a heroes welcome. Active and former military were there to greet these men and women home, as children waved flags.



Commander Amel Balega and PDC Lenny free accompanied veterans Huey Verelli and Jack Bandebian to Washington DC.



Many of our WW2 veterans have not had the opportunity to see the memorial built in their honor. Honor Flight makes it possible for them to do so.



USO Style entertainment performed by the Manhattan Dolls. A Swing and Jazz style female vocal trio.



160 American Veterans gathered at the World War 2 memorial along with their guardians during the Honor Flight from Pennsylvania, including 2 vets from Passaic County 2 from Mercer County, 1 from Camden County and 1 from Monmouth County this past November.

## mySAL.org launches with tools to assist Squadrons



**New mySAL website offers access to membership tools.**

The SAL is entering a new age of technology.

This Fall National Headquarters has developed the "NEW" **mySAL.org** website to mimic **myLegion.org**, which assists posts, district and county officers with membership needs.

The **mySAL.org** website is a secure internet site linked to the membership data base for the Sons of the American Legion. The portal site

provides officers with access to membership data and member - management tools.

Squadron adjutants or a designated representative can view and edit member information for his squadron.

This includes making changes to names, addresses, and date of birth. The adjutant can create reports available in CSV file format which will allow users to work with data in Microsoft Excel and Access. These programs can be used to generate mailing labels and delists for paid and unpaid members. If used properly, this can be a great and powerful membership tool and can greatly assist in membership renewals.

To get started, just go to [www.legion.org/sons](http://www.legion.org/sons) and CLICK on the **mysal** link. Complete the authorization form and collect the proper authorized signatures from the squadron and you are on your way.

This is a free service, which over 106 squadrons to date have already registered for . Only one person per squadron may be authorized. Keep in mind this person must be a member of the sons with current membership dues paid.

## National Commander's Project: Legacy Scholarship

By Joe Korba ANEC  
Detachment of New Jersey

Our National Commander, Joe Gladden of Maryland, was elected the 2013-14 National Commander in August at our National Convention in Houston, Texas.

Commander Gladden's theme this year is "United in Service". Working together with the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Legion Riders, we can accomplish anything we put our minds to.

Commander Gladden's project this year is the Legacy Scholarship Fund. It is estimated that over 11,000 children have lost a parent in the war overseas. That number continues to grow each day. The Legion is actively working to ensure that all those children who want a post-secondary education will be provided one. The Legacy Scholarship fund was established in 2001 to fill the scholarship gap for children of Soldiers killed on or after September 11, 2001.

The American Legion has established a goal of raising \$20 million

to fund this cause.

Currently there are over 6,000 children that may someday need the Legacy Scholarship.

Please support Commander Gladden's project and spread the word to our members of the important help that the Legacy Scholarship Fund provides



**National Commander Joe Gladden supports The Legacy Scholarship**

## Membership:

By Patrick Gallagher PDC  
Detachment Membership Chairman

Good news!

New Jersey was in 3rd place in the eastern membership ranking behind Maryland and Delaware . We hit our first target date of 10%; we had 12.254% as of September 14, 2013. On the national board we are currently in 30th place. We can do better.

Last year the detachment hit the 100% goal. **GREAT JOB!**

Unfortunately, not every squadron hit their 100% goal, so we have some work still from the 2013 membership year. The membership team has sent out a letter to those sq that did not go over the top for 2013. These actions seem to help. We are working on getting the paper certificates to all the squadrons who went over the top during membership year 2013.

Congratulations to the following Squadrons: 516 Burlington, 49 Gloucester, 31 Mercer, and 304 Somerset. They have already reached the 100% annual membership goal. This is proof that we can do it.

Detachment Commander Amel Balega is asking for all squadrons' support in hitting the over the top goal by the American Legion birthday, March 13-17, 2014. We urge you to go out and talk to your mem-

bers, make sure they know why it important to keep the members we have, and to keep the American Legion family growing.

We would like to start having membership committee meetings. All members are welcome to participate. New ideas are welcome and encouraged. We are interested in learning which steps you are taking to get and keep your memberships growing. Something the national membership committee is doing is holding regular conference calls on the phone, which is working very well.

Lets work together and bring our membership numbers up.

Feel free to or call me:

[\(848\) 992-4337](tel:8489924337)

or email me:

[njsalgallagher@gmail.com](mailto:njsalgallagher@gmail.com) if you have any questions or suggestions regarding membership, or other programs.

## A Night to Remember: 23rd Annual SAL Watch Fire

By Tony Clapps  
Detachment of New Jersey

On September 20-21 the Detachment of New Jersey's Sons of the American Legion joined together with representatives from the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary for the 23rd Annual Watch Fire in Seaside Heights.

It was a night of solemn vigil for those men and women who had gone to serve our country and never returned. They are our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters; they are Our POW's and MIA's and they are not forgotten. Over 78,000 soldiers are still unaccounted for from WWII, more than 8,000 still missing from the Korean War, 1,855 from Vietnam, 120 from the Cold war, and the fight to bring Bo Bergdahl home still continues. These are the people we honor each year. As long as there is one soldier unaccounted for; we as a nation will never give up or forget.

The event began with the color guard presentation, the empty chair dedication and the setting of the empty table; guest speakers, stories and songs were shared from dusk till dawn. The recent fire which ravaged several



SAL Commander Amel Balega speaks at the Auxiliary Watch Fire.

blocks of an already devastated boardwalk prevented the traditional bon-fire usually present at our watch fires and was replaced with a searchlight which burned all night long followed by a hot breakfast on the beach.

On Sept 21<sup>st</sup> the detachment traveled down to Wildwood where the Auxiliary held its service for POW's and MIA's. They shared the importance to remain vigilant and prey for those who have not yet returned home.



Thomas Marsden PNVCMIA Committee Chairman

**Congratulations**  
**Thomas Marsden Announced National Historian**

## Special Olympics:

By Stephen Rodriguez  
Special Olympics Chairman

The state of New Jersey is proud to announce it is hosting the 2014 Summer Special Olympics.

These Games will celebrate the Special Olympics movement while promoting the ideals of acceptance and inclusion through sport and highlighting the abilities of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Last year The detachment of New Jersey collected \$6,750.00 for this worthy cause, and has collected \$10,250.00 so far for this year's event.

Sports competitions will be held at venues throughout Mercer County, New Jersey, including Princeton University, Rider University, The College of New Jersey, Mercer County Park and several area private schools. Donations may be mailed to: Stephen Rodriguez, NJSAL Special Olympics Chairman, 295 Wilson Ave. Fairview, NJ 07022.

Checks payable to S.A.L. Detachment of New Jersey, memo Special Olympics.

If you would like to volunteer please visit the NJ Special Olympics website at: [www.sonj.org/utilities/contact](http://www.sonj.org/utilities/contact) to get in touch with your local Area Director.

**Special Olympics New Jersey, Inc.**  
Special Olympics New Jersey Sports Complex  
1 Eunice Kennedy Shriver Way



**Special Olympics**

## Josh Dog: I'll be O.K.

By Jackson Coles  
Josh Dog Chairman

While a hospital stay can be a frightening experience for an adult, it can be terrifying to a child. When visiting a doctor or going into the hospital children need to know one thing; that he/she will be O.K.

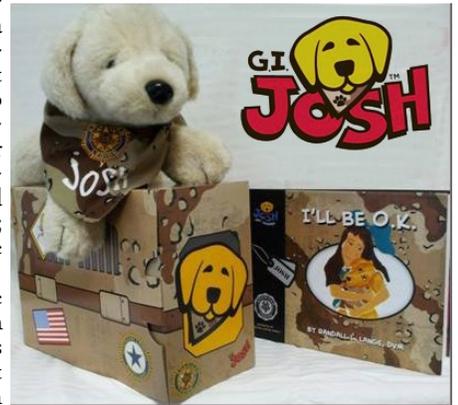
Meet Josh, the fun loving golden retriever that is also facing his first hospital stay. With the help of his family and friends, Josh learns the ins and outs of the hospital experience and comes to learn that he'll be O.K.

As the Detachment Josh Dog Committeeman, I ask for the support of the squadrons to help reach our goal. We want to provide at least 100 Josh Dogs I'll be OK gift packages, to sick children in hospitals. Each package costs \$40.00 and includes a hypoallergenic plush golden retriever, a 32-page hard cover book, and dog house packaging that provides an easy to tote, temporary home for Josh.

To see these children suffering through their personal ailments, many confined to their beds, finding such joy in receiving such a simple gift is heart breaking.

With your help you can make a difference. Please make checks payable to

Detachment of NJ,  
Jackson Coles,  
207 Walnut Creek Lane,



# Boys State:

By Patrick Gallagher PDC  
Detachment Boys State Chairman

THE AMERICAN LEGION



Boys State is made up of young men who have just completed their junior year of high school. They are selected to attend Boys State by their local American Legion Post based on their leadership and character. They then form a mythical state of Magnolia, where they are divided into groups of cities and countries.

The detachment of New Jersey sent two boys to the national Boys State held in Washington DC this year, one boy; Zachary Bourgeois, from Camden County, and the other; Andrew Ziccardi, from Cape May. PDC Patrick Gallagher had the chance to meet with both boys, who expressed their excitement to be part of the program.

If your squadron is able to sponsor a boy to Boy State or young lady to Girls State, please do. It's a great program that they will never forget. The cost to send one boy is \$250.00; which is not a great amount considering all it includes. If your Post, Squadron or Unit is not able to sponsor a child, you may solicit finds from an outside group (a local business, the Elks, etc...).

The Boys State committee is trying to push the number of boys at boy's state this year to 1000 boys. Last year's count was 960 boys. If we pull together we can do it. There is more information on the national website about "What is Boys State" as well as numerous videos on YouTube regarding the subject.

# High Point Memorial Service

What started off as an overcast day did not deter the men and women of the American Legion to gather together at High Point monument in High point NJ to pay tribute to the soldiers who had lain down their lives for our great country.

The Monument on High Point was built by Kuser to honor war veterans. Master mason Michael Maddaluna began construction of the 220 foot (67 m) tower - which has a base which is 34 square feet (3.2 m<sup>2</sup>) - in 1928 and completed it in 1930. The outside is made of New Hampshire granite and also Shawan-gunk quartz. There are four small windows through which observers have a view of the ridges of the Pocono Mountains toward the west, the Catskill Mountains to the north and the Walkill River Valley in the southeast.

The Monument is an obelisk monument similar to other war monuments, such as the one on Bunker Hill in Massachusetts.

Contingents of color guards stood poised in the rain before marching up the hill to the monument.

Each year the American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and Auxiliary hold a memorial service at the monument where wreaths were presented by the newly elected Department Commander, James Amos, Department Auxiliary President Char McConville and Detachment Commander Amel Balega.



# Internet Update:

By Carl Albern, Jr., PNEC  
Detachment Internet Chairman

The Detachment of NJ website is available online at <http://www.njsal.org> to provide you with updated information from your officers and chairmen as to what is going on in the Detachment. News, reports, membership numbers and form downloads are available, and you can even submit your squadron and county events to be posted for other members within (or outside of) the state to see.

The Internet Committee is also working on an Android app to provide a quick and convenient source of information for Android phone and tablet users. The hope is that the app will soon have notifications when news or other information is updated on the Detachment website. Presently, the app is in beta testing and hopefully will be released to the general public/membership in a few months. Anyone interested in becoming a beta tester for the app can find more information about it on the Detachment website's Internet Committee page.

The Detachment Internet Committee is always interested in feedback from members, and can be contacted at [webmasters@njsal.org](mailto:webmasters@njsal.org).

# This and That



NJ Detachment Commander Amel Balega and NJ Dept. Vice Commander Darryl J. Reid, at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Museum. Both Gentlemen had the Honor of presenting, two memorial wreaths at the Purple Heart Monument.

The joint American Legion Riders event to raise funds for the Educational Center at the VVM in Homdel, NJ.

S.A.L. Squadron 129 And George P. Vanderveer  
American Legion Post Invite All To Attend The  
3rd Annual  
**POW/MIA Christmas Tree  
Lighting Ceremony**  
Saturday Dec. 14th, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.  
Honoring and Remembering  
Our Nations and New Jersey's  
Prisoners of War / Missing in Action / From All Wars

## Chaplain's Message

By Bob Philips Chaplain  
Detachment of New Jersey

Hello Comrades,  
It's that time of year again, the hustle and bustle of shopping and getting ready for the Christmas season.

This is a great time of year for family and friends to gather together and enjoy each other's friendship. With that said, let us not forget those who are less fortunate. Let us remember the ones who do not have families to be with, our military personnel who are overseas protecting our rights, and our veterans of past and present.

Let us remember those in the American Legion Family who have passed away this year. PNEC Albert Robotti, Auxiliary member Colleen Jaxel, Legionnaire Len Kates, Legionnaire Kenneth Grunewald, PDC William Shipley, Legionnaire Tom Beitz, Officer Craig Berner, Legionnaire Roland Boone, Auxiliary member Diane Elder, Comrade Rob Nagle PCC, and Auxiliary member Roberta Buchanan. Remember those who are sick in body, mind, or spirit. Please keep them and their families in your prayers.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a happy Hanukah, Christmas, and Kwanza to the American Legion Family. Have a safe and joyous holiday season.



## SAL Member, Nathan Gilmore Squadron 370 Recognized For Americanism

By Mark Dodds  
Detachment of New Jersey

On September 10th, I received a phone call from the post stating that the halyard on the flag pole had broke and that our nations flag wasn't flying. This news was especially troubling seeing that the following day was September 11th and that we would be recognizing the events of that day that occurred in 2001. Seeing that it was late in the day, there was not much time to act.

The members of legion family 370 worked to fix the halyard by midday September 11th, but had no way of getting it back to the top of the flag pole. It was then that SAL member Nathan Gilmore, also a soldier in the New Jersey Army National Guard, stepped up and volunteered to climb the flag pole and get the job done. Nathan took the halyard and within a minute was high atop the flag pole, affixed the halyard to the pole and climbed back down. Shortly thereafter, in front of a decent group of people from the post, the flag of our great nation was flying proudly. The site and the actions witnessed brought tears to many eyes. Nothing could keep our flag from flying on 9/11/01 and this didn't keep our flag from flying on 9/11/13.

On November 14th, at the monthly meeting of Edwin I Johnson Squadron 370, an award presentation was made. With the approval of Squadron Commander Mark Dodds, Squadron Senior Vice Commander Timothy Blount recollected the events of those days and then proudly presented Squadron member Nathan Gilmore with a plaque in recognition of his patriotic actions. All of the members of Edwin I Johnson Legion Family 370 are proud of Nathan Gilmore for his pride in his community, state and nation.

Visit us online  
[www.njsal.org](http://www.njsal.org)

Don't forget to register on  
[mySAL.org](http://mySAL.org)

## Snapshot of Service:

By Joe Korba ANEC  
Detachment of New Jersey

The National PR Commission communicates the organizational image, goals, programs and legislative positions of the Sons of The American Legion to our members and the public. The commission has continued its "Snap Shots of Service" program, collecting and judging photos of our Squadrons promoting the four pillars of the American Legion. Information is available in the forms section on our website.

<http://www.njsal.org/Forms/Snapshots-of-service.pdf>

The American Legion has put together a PR tool kit that provides vital information to assist our Squadrons to get the word out regarding the vital work we do. You may get this info at [Legion.org](http://Legion.org) or contact Detachment PR chairman Jeff Hicks for a copy. Our projects and programs do so much good for our Veterans, Service Personnel, Children and Communities. Don't let the hard work you do go unnoticed to our national Organization or public.

## From the Editor:

By Tony Clapps  
Detachment SALUTE Chairman

Welcome back to the Detachment of New Jersey Salute. It is an honor to bring this newsletter back to the detachment, sharing information and going on within the New Jersey SAL.

After a 2 year absence the SALUTE returns. This publication can only succeed with the participation of the detachment, committees and squadrons.

In the past the SALUTE has received national awards for its publications. It is our hope to be recognized again. Only through your continued support and cooperation can this become a reality.

If you have an event or an article you would like to see included in future issues please send them to the editor via email and include the term "SALUTE" in the subject line,

Email: [tony713c@gmail.com](mailto:tony713c@gmail.com) all submissions need to be received prior to **February 1st** to be considered for the February release.

Survey question:  
Do you think a "Commanders Course" would be beneficial at the SAL College.  
Email response to:  
[njsalgallagher@gmail.com](mailto:njsalgallagher@gmail.com)