

My fellow S.A.L. members, thank you for the trust and faith you demonstrated when you granted me the opportunity to serve as Commander for the Detachment of Texas. This is an experience I will not ever forget. While I certainly enjoyed doing the things that are expected of a detachment commander, the successes of the Detachment of Texas that were achieved during 2024-2025 are the result of the hard work and dedication of each squadron and each S.A.L. member in Texas. To you I offer thanks and congratulations. Please give yourselves a standing ovation, you deserve it.

I wish I'd had the time and the resources to visit every squadron, but the immense size of our beautiful state makes that an almost insurmountable challenge. However, the squadrons that I did visit more than made up for that. I sincerely appreciated the hospitality, warmth, friendship, and respect that was accorded to me by everyone I met during my official travels.

During my term as Commander, I visited veterans in a VA hospital, attended conventions, judged incredibly delicious barbecue, rode in parades, resolved issues, trained others, addressed city councils, attended memorial services, attended fundraisers and dinners, gave speeches, shook a lot of hands, took lots of photos, and drove what felt like a million miles. Representing Texas in Washington, D.C., as a member of the National Legislative Commission, was a privilege. I cannot adequately express the flood of emotion that I felt as I placed a wreath at the Vietnam War Memorial. Later that day, I was part of the group of Sons, Legion, and Auxiliary that witnessed S.A.L. National Commander Joseph Navarrete place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

There are so many people to thank for this unforgettable journey. Please don't be hurt or offended if your name is not mentioned here. Your name is in my heart. Thank you, Henry Creech for mentoring me. Kevin Winkelmann, you are the best adjutant that a commander can be blessed to have in his corner. My two very young Sergeants-at-Arms, Hunter and Nicholaz, you are the future of our organization. PDC's Roy, Clifton, Tom, Eddy, Jon, Juan, Bill, et al., yours are the shoulders on which I stand. Thom Skelly, thank you for all the phone conversations and free advice. You're going to be a great national commander. Eddy Seegers, you are simply as awesome a friend as anyone can ever hope to have. Thank you Squadron and Post 245 in Seguin for hosting my homecoming. Your kindness and generosity are overwhelming. Kerrville is the fun squadron which makes those memories a little fuzzy. Mercedes, Willis, and McAllen - love you guys. Thank you to my officers, division commanders, district commanders, squadron commanders and officers, and everyone who proudly wears the French-blue cover that honors the service and sacrifice of our ancestors. Mike Simon, you get an honorable mention.

It's almost time to hand over the gavel to our next commander. He's a good man and great guy. Please give him all the support, respect, and affection you have shown for me. I look forward to the next phase of my S.A.L. career and I look forward to spending quality time with each of you. There is still so much to learn and accomplish.

They say to always save the best for last. The biggest thank you goes to my incredibly wonderful wife and First Lady, Robin. Her love, support, and belief in this organization and my part in it has made everything possible. My proudest moment in the S.A.L. was when she placed the Detachment Commander cover on my head. To her, I am eternally grateful for everything I am.

Gentlemen, it is incumbent upon all of us to keep the Sons of The American Legion a viable and relevant organization. Membership is important, but without mentorship it doesn't matter. Share your knowledge with those that will succeed you and encourage your members to participate in our programs and projects. Good luck and may God bless all of you.