



“Five Star Chapter of Excellence”

The Blue Skies Satellite of the Alamo Chapter will be having its quarterly meeting on April 12 in the Roadrunner beginning at 11:15am. We are honored to have a Great San Antonian and Army Military Officer as our speaker:

MG Alfred Valenzuela USA (Ret).



All members of MOAA and other interested residents are invited to attend. Our esteemed speaker will speak about his book, “No Greater Love, The Lives and Times of Hispanic Soldiers”, his recent activities with the World War I commemoration and other issues affecting our military.

After the meeting concludes around 12pm residents can get their lunch and return to the Roadrunner Lounge to eat and spend more time with the speaker if desired.

Biography: From the age of 5 years old, Freddie Valenzuela knew that the only route out of his rough west San Antonio neighborhood lead straight to the

U.S. Army. "There were a lot of challenges to overcome," says Valenzuela. "There was a lot of crime over there in those days." Guidance from his parents along with strong support systems from the likes of the Boy Scouts, the Boys & Girls Clubs and his church helped him steer clear of trouble. But it was Valenzuela's participation in ROTC at Jefferson High School and later at St. Mary's University that gave him direction and purpose. "I knew from the very beginning, growing up, that my options were going to be very limited as far as succeeding in life. The only way that I was going to get out of the barrio was through the military."

Valenzuela didn't just get out of the barrio. His 33 years of service saw him rise to the level of major general, become commander of the U.S. Army South and lead troops in numerous hotspots around the world, from Somalia to Panama to Kuwait.

More recently, Valenzuela, who retired in 2004, was selected by President Barack Obama to serve on a 10-person World War I Centennial Commission. In that role, Valenzuela has a variety of duties, including developing programs, projects and activities nationwide to help commemorate this often forgotten war. Though part of his job is to develop a new curriculum to boost awareness about World War I, it's also to encourage Americans to visit existing monuments and markers. Valenzuela is also involved with a fundraising effort to build a World War I memorial in Washington, which is expected to be completed by 2018, the 100 year anniversary of the Great War's conclusion.

But Valenzuela has never forgotten San Antonio. He and his wife, Esther,

started the General Alfred Valenzuela Foundation, which published his memoirs, *No Greater Love: The Lives and Times of Hispanic Soldiers*. The title borrows from the Bible verse John 15:13 and the book chronicles both his own story and the larger tale of Hispanic soldiers in the U.S. military. Just as important, Valenzuela's foundation uses the proceeds from the book to assist the children of the 21 soldiers whose funerals he has presided over. "I wanted to do what I could for them to help them achieve, to help them get an education. I wanted to fill a void in their lives," he says.

Valenzuela is also a board member at Haven for Hope, where he helps focus the organization's services to homeless veterans and sees it as a way to give them a well-earned new start. Their service includes working to identify the right medications to help veterans deal with post-traumatic stress disorder, and Valenzuela insists that the personal touch he and other veterans can provide is invaluable. "I think I have a lot of credibility with them," he says. "They see one of their own reaching out to them."

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