

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER EAST RECOGNIZED FOR POW/MIA SUPPORT

At his homecoming dinner on Saturday, March 8, National Vice Commander East Thomas E. Marsden was recognized for his 16 years of untiring service to the POW/MIA issue.

Tom has been in the forefront of the issue for many years and has worked closely with the Department of New Jersey and the National League of POW/MIA Families to promote this very serious issue. He volunteer efforts in Detachment's annual "POW/MIA Watchfire" began over 16 years ago.

The Watchfire is an annual event held on the Seaside Heights oceanfront on POW/MIA National Recognition Day from dusk until dawn the next day. Throughout the event, a fire burns to promote POW/MIA awareness. It features guest speakers on the issue, New Jersey and National MIA recognition, greetings from MIA families, a flag retirement ceremony, and proper POW/MIA ceremonies and readings. It is held no matter what the weather is. It was even held one year in a hurricane.

To Tom, the issue is a concern 365 days a year/24 hours a day. He strongly believes that public awareness coming from events like this held throughout the year by the SAL and Legion, helps make more Americans be accounted. He also feels if the current day soldier were captured or declared MIA, that our government would immediately demand a swift accounting because our people want us to "Bring them home".

Col. Stephen G. Abel (U. S. Army retired), New Jersey Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs from the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, awarded Vice Commander Marsden a framed certificate of appreciation along with the New Jersey POW/MIA medal. It is one of only a few ever given out to a non-POW. It was given in recognition of his outstanding and devoted service to the issue as well as to all POW/MIA's and their families.