

March 2010, Number 2

Annual Meeting Speech of Newly Elected President John Crocker Eastman II.

February 13, 2010

I stand here today as your 88th president at the beginning of our one hundredth and twenty first year. It is a source of relief to me to know that so many of you have been around for 20, 30, 40 and even 50 years. That means that when I falter, someone will be around to pick me up.

I believe that people don't belong to the SAR just because of the social aspects of this organization (although that is an important part). I'd like to believe that we're more than a glass of fish house punch or a well-grilled steak and it's the ideals we espouse that attract and keep people in this organization we belong to.

To quote from the President General's newsletter, "The Sons of the American Revolution is the leading male lineage society that perpetuates the ideals, principles and liberties established by the founding fathers during the American Revolution. As a patriotic, historical, and educational organization, we seek to maintain and expand the knowledge and meaning of patriotism, promote respect for our national symbols, and the value of our American citizenship. Through these efforts we hope all Americans come to have a better understanding of their rights and duties as expressed in the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights".

I'd like to share with you a short history of the SAR and the reasons I think it has lasted as long as it has. In 1876 there were many celebrations to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence which occurred on July 4, 1776. As part of this patriotic fervor, a group of men in the San Francisco area, who were descendants of patriots involved in the American Revolution, formed an organization called the Sons of Revolutionary Sires.

Their objective was to have a fraternal and civic society to salute those men and women who pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the battle for independence from Great Britain. They desired to keep alive their ancestors' story of patriotism and courage in the belief that it is a universal one of man's struggle against tyranny -- a story that would inspire and sustain succeeding generations when they would have to defend and extend our freedoms.

Out of the Sires grew the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, which was organized on April 30, 1889 -- the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as

our nation's first President. We have used the acronym SAR to identify ourselves for over 120 years.

The Sons of the American Revolution was conceived as a fraternal and civic society composed of lineal descendants of the men who wintered at Valley Forge, signed the Declaration of Independence, fought in the battles of the American Revolution, served in the Continental Congress, or otherwise supported the cause of American Independence. The National Society was chartered by an Act of the United States Congress on June 9, 1906 and was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, who, by the way, was a member of the SAR. The charter authorizes the granting of charters to societies of the various states and territories and authorizes the state societies to charter chapters within their borders.

As to the purpose of the SAR, I quote and paraphrase from National SAR literature; “the SAR is a historical, educational, and patriotic corporation that seeks to maintain and expand:

- the institutions of American freedom
- the meaning of patriotism
- a respect for our national symbols
- the value of American citizenship
- and the unifying force of *e pluribus unum* that has created, from the people of many nations, one nation and one people.

SAR has goals and they fall into three main categories.

- Historic
 - We commemorate and provide memorials for the people and the events of the American Revolution.
 - We help preserve records relating to the Revolution.
 - The SAR supports research and publications.
- Educational
 - We sponsor essay and oration contests based on historical themes for high-school students
- Patriotic
 - We endeavor to inspire the community with the principles on which our nation was founded
 - Some chapters have color guards that participate in community recognition ceremonies.
 - We provide recognition for public service
 - And we honor, respect and support veterans

It is to this last goal that I wish to speak a little bit today. We are starting the ninth year of war in the Middle East. In a recent article I read that over 32,000 veterans have been seriously wounded in action in Iraq and over 3,500 in Afghanistan. The rate of service men and women wounded in Afghanistan is exceeding the rate of the early stages of the 2007 Iraq surge. The badly wounded from these two countries are returning home with injuries that would have killed their fathers and grandfathers.

Martin Luther King, Jr. in his letter from a Birmingham jail in 1963 said, “the time is always ripe to do what is right”. It seems to me that it is our duty as citizens and patriots to step up to the plate and “do what is right” and it is in that vein that I’m presently looking at a number of ways that we as an organization may honor and serve some of these veterans who live in Rhode Island. If you have ideas on the subject, I welcome them.

When writer Robert Louis Stevenson was a little boy, he lived in a house on a hillside in Scotland. Every evening he would watch the lamplighter walk through the streets in the valley below, lighting each of the village street lights. “Look, Mother,” he would say. “Here comes the man who punches holes in the darkness.”

My hope is that we can become the lamplighters and regardless of our thoughts on war, or this war in particular, we can “punch a hole in the darkness” and do something to bring light to the lives of these men and women who serve our country. Our Pledge to the SAR calls us to pledge ourselves to defend the principles of liberty and our Constitutional Republic against every foe. We may be too old to fight, but we are never too old to honor and help those that do our fighting for us.

We are eligible for this organization by chance, but we belong by choice. We, the descendants of Patriots, have decided to join together not only for the purpose of honoring our noble ancestors, but to make this world a better place to live in. We must make sure that our descendants as well as our friends and neighbors don’t forget the sacrifice that our ancestors made so that this country could become what it is today, but more importantly than that, we must also make sure that this country does not forget those who fight now, who give their life and limb for us.

I pledge to you, compatriots and guests, I shall do all in my power to continue to hold these values forth to you and to continue the work done by the esteemed and honored past presidents of this society. I humbly accept this office and vow that I shall do my best to uphold the dignity and the splendor of the Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

President, John Crocker Eastman II

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Oliver Palmer, son of SAR member and Past President of the John Peck Rathbun Chapter #4, Richard Leslie Hall Palmer and grandson of Elmer Hall Palmer, Past President of the RISSAR was recently named a 2009 New England Intercollegiate Baseball Association Division I All-Star. Palmer, a senior at the University of Rhode Island, was also selected for the College Sports Information Directors of America/ESPN, The Magazine Academic All District I First Team. Oliver showed his prowess on the diamond last year by helping his team to win 37 games while defeating nationally ranked teams as they advanced to the Atlantic 10 championship game. This outstanding senior maintains a 3.69 grade point average while playing baseball and helping others in need. While playing for the Quincy Gems in Quincy, Illinois in 2008, he and his teammates worked placing sandbags on the banks of the Mississippi River to prevent flooding. We salute you Oliver for a job well done!

Award Presented September 14, 2009

Certificate of Appreciation

Recognition of Service to the State Society

John S. McCue (Posthumous), President 2003-2004

Presented to John's Widow Jackie McCue

Awards Presented at February 13, 2010 Annual Meeting

Patriot Medal

The highest award for exceptional services to the State Society

Recipient may only receive once.

Carlen P. Booth

Meritorious Service Medal

Long, faithful and meritorious service to State Society

John W. Adams

Walter J. Whitney

Bronze Good Citizenship Award

Noteworthy achievements in the community

John C. Collins

Certificate of Appreciation

Recognition of Service to the State Society

Ernest V. Moncrieff, Treasurer 1995-2007

James E. Moore, Treasurer 2007-2010

Long Service Awards

Walter Jenkins Whitley	50 years	March 31, 1960
Elmer Hall Palmer	40 Years	November 1, 1969
Albert T. Klyberg	40 years	November 20, 1969
Bruce C. MacGunnigle	40 years	February 4, 1970
Earl H. Jenks	40 years	February 23, 1970
David W. Ray	35 years	January 13, 1975
Phineas M. Randall, IV	35 years	January 13, 1975
Paul A. Merriam	35 years	February 8, 1980
Kenneth R. Franklin	30 years	March 31, 1980
Reinhard Battcher, III	30 years	March 31, 1980
Kenneth L. Hall	30 years	March 31, 1980
Raymond L. Hilton, Jr.	25 years	November 26, 1984

Jonathan I. Tucker	25 years	February 28, 1985
Arnold W. Durfee	20 years	December 5, 1989
Stephen R. Allen	20 years	March 12, 1990
Christopher G. Allen	20 years	March 12, 1990

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For those of you interested in historical Rhode Island maps, please note this site that contacted us through our website to tell us about their wonderful reproductions of historical maps and charts from rare originals held in the British archives dating from 1769-1781. www.heritagecharts.com

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If you have ever wondered about what records exist for the Rhode Island Society, a new find has uncovered the existence of the following at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library: the minute books of the Society from 1890-1953. These records had been the property of Lisa Berke of Saunderstown, RI. They were donated to the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in 2000. The Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in turn donated them to the Rhode Island Historical Society later in the year. A minute book from the Bristol Chapter of the RISSAR dated 1898-1919 was donated to the Bristol Historical society at the same time.

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CHANGE IN FEDERAL LAW REGARDING HAND SALUTE BY ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERANS

You may not be aware of a little-known change in federal law in the last few years. On 31 Oct, 2008, the law was changed to the following: "Veterans and service members not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the National Anthem." Public Law 110-181 FY 2008 Defense authorization Act, Section 594, also allows veterans and active service members not in uniform to render the military hand salute during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the flag.

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