

President General Installation Speech

125th Annual Congress

July 1, 2015 Louisville, KY

It is a pleasure to be here tonight and I thank you for the confidence you have shown in electing me as your President General. I would like to introduce you to my family and friends seated at the front table. Our daughter Bridgett Harsgaard who is a consultant living in New York City along with our grandchildren Lizzie and Gracie. Gracie is 7 and she plays baseball. Not T-Ball or softball but hardball on a baseball with boys and only 3 girls. Gracie plays catcher and shortstop and is a good batter with her own Louisville Slugger bat with her name on it. Lizzie is 12 and is a ballerina. She has danced in productions with the American School of Ballet and in 5 productions with the New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center. She is going to Paris next week to study with the Paris Opera Ballet. My Cousin Col. David Peel and his wife Maggie. David is a retired Air Force colonel and he and Maggie live in Leesburg Alabama not too far from Lee Swart and Rod Hildreth so you need to recruit him. Dr. Larry and Debbie Whittaker who we have know for 34 years, live across from the street from us and Mickey Jo and Debbie ride their horses together.

I look at you tonight and see so many friends and compatriots who have worked hard to make this Society one of the strongest lineage and patriotic organizations in the US.

Organizations that want to make a difference in this country, organizations that want to be great must have great dreams and must set lofty goals. There has been much discussion about the Solid Light proposal for the main floor education center, our need to move forward more aggressively with outreach education, the need to finish construction on our building and finally the need for new software and a new website.

While we were raising money and renovating the Library and Headquarters building we were all pretty much on the same page but when we completed enough of the building to move in, it became clear there were different opinions about what we should do next. Much like when all of our patriot ancestors were united to achieve independence but then became divided over the course to follow after we

won the war. And just like our founding fathers we will come together and here is how I think we can do it.

In order to make the best decision possible I will appoint a new committee called the SAR Implementation Committee with the sole purpose of looking at our options and being prepared to make recommendations at the Spring Leadership Meeting. They should have the final Solid Light plan by then, they already have the University of Louisville business plan, we should have a much better plan for outreach education and we will have updated IT plans. The committee will be chaired by PG Nathan White and will include all the principal stakeholders including the SAR Foundation, the IT committee, an Education representative, a Budget representative, someone from Strategic Planning, a Museum Board member and someone from our new Governance and Organization committee. They will review our existing plans and suggest options for the Trustees to consider. We have to make decisions about what type of exhibit space we will have, how to proceed with completing construction on the building, how to develop and make our outreach education programs national in scope, and a plan to complete our IT systems.

Another focus next year will be to bolster and enhance our SAR legacy. We all hope to leave a legacy so we will be remembered after we are gone. We have legacies with our family, at our jobs, our churches but another important legacy is our SAR legacy. How many lives will we touch, how many seeds of patriotism will we plant with the young people in this country? Because it is with the young people that we will build our SAR legacy, and we will do it with our youth programs. I am not minimizing the importance of our color guard or public service awards or any other programs but if we want to preserve the vision of our founding fathers then we must reach our youth. When you go to a school and put on a program or sponsor a poster contest or oration contest, or when Tom Green from Texas puts on a flag program, you are touching the lives of those students and giving them an opportunity to learn about Paul Revere's ride, the battle of Yorktown and about a brave young wife named Molly Pitcher. The fact that you went to the trouble to help them will leave a lasting impression as well as the knowledge that the American Revolution was important enough for you to take the time to come out and talk about it. It is hard work to set up these programs but it is incredibly rewarding and you know that by doing this you will make this country stronger and help to insure that your descendants will continue to enjoy the freedoms that Thomas Jefferson

and Thomas Paine wrote about so eloquently, and that Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams spoke about so passionately.

Our youth programs are all strong programs led by dedicated compatriots but not all states participate as fully as they could. Committee members have always talked informally but I think we would benefit from a more structured format where ideas and suggestions can be exchanged. In furtherance of this I will form a new Council of Youth Programs which will have as members all of the chairmen of the youth programs. There are 8 programs in all; the poster contest, middle school brochure contest, C.A.R. award, Eagle Scout award, Knight Essay, Oration contest, JROTC and the American History Teacher award. The council will be chaired by Dr. Rudy Byrd and I hope they will help each other strengthen all of our youth programs. I will ask that they design a brochure featuring all 8 programs that can be handed out in our schools to promote all of our programs. This brochure can be put on our website so chapters and states can download it, add their contact information and print it themselves. As encouragement for any state society that submits at least 4 candidates for a youth program national contest I will award them a streamer. For any state societies that submit an entry for all 8 contests I will personally write a check for \$250.00 to go to that state societies youth program budget. For any of those states who submit candidates for all 8 programs I will write them another check for \$250.00 if any of their candidates win a contest. So \$250 for any state who submits candidates for all 8 contests and an additional \$250 for any contests they win. Don't worry about the money, it is all coming out of Mickey Jo's shoe budget.

I will also ask this council to post the winning essays and speeches on the website as well as information about all of our current winners as well as past winners. I would like the committee chairmen to record videos that chapters and states can access on our website informing them as to how to set up a program and the benefits of having a youth program.

I would like to mention 3 other ideas before I close. The first deals with education, the second with the way our committees function and the third with our basic governance and organizational structure.

One of the first things the new regime does when they take over the government after a revolution is to change what the kids are taught in school. They now learn that the old government was bad and the new leaders are heroes.

Textbooks are rewritten, teachers reeducated and new pictures put up in the schoolhouses. If you teach history in a certain way long enough school children will begin to believe it so one of the fights is over how the history of the American Revolution is taught. Not only do we have to fight to make sure it is adequately covered but we need to make sure it is portrayed accurately. For that reason I am asking the Education committee to add a subcommittee to map out a strategy to exert influence on how textbooks and web based educational learning programs are written and selected for schools. I have asked Tom Jackson from Texas to chair this subcommittee. He is an elected school board member from one of the largest suburban school districts in the country with over 112,000 students. Anyone interested in this project should contact Larry Stevens, chairman of the Education Committee or Tom Jackson.

The second area of interest is in our national committees. It is clear that it is impossible to get all of our committee work done on a Friday at Leadership meetings. Every new PG tries to improve efficiency by dissolving some committees and creating new committees but I think we need to change the corporate culture of our committees. To help the committees I am appointing a committee coordinator who will be Mike Elston of VA. Mike will work with the committee chairmen to set and meet goals, submit budgets where needed, assist them in holding meetings with teleconferences and gotomeeting.com and introduce them to working with Sharefile for document access. He will also make sure committee concerns and items needing immediate attention are brought to the attention of the EXCOM and the PG.

In order to allow our members to attend all of the committee meetings they should, and to allow us sufficient time in the trustee meetings we may start on Thursday with a social activity out of the hotel on Thursday night.

Last I want to look at the governance and organizational structure of the SAR. As you know we have a Congressional Charter, which is prestigious but somewhat limiting. We also have the SAR Foundation, which is chartered in Kentucky, and we have the right to use the CAAH name, so we have many sets of laws and rules we must follow. Questions have come up over the years about our corporate structures in regard to liability, accepting donations from charitable entities, whether we have the exclusive right to use all of the potential operating names we need, and whether our system of governance still makes sense. I am appointing 3 of our best lawyers, John Dodd, Davis Wright and PG David Appleby to seek answers to these questions

and report to us by the Spring Leadership Meeting with any suggestions or proposed changes.

Over the last couple of years I often find myself reading the obituaries in the paper. I love to see where people were born, what they did and how they got to Houston. I look for their military service. I notice their work history sometimes being impressed if they were a doctor, partner in a big law firm or the president of a corporation. But what I increasingly search for is what they did to help their community. When you read an obituary you see at the top a year representing when they were born then a dash and then a year indicating when they died, **with the dash representing their life**. My wife Mickey Jo told me about a poem named the "Dash Between the Years" and I will quote a section from it;

"For it matters not how much we own...the cars...the house...the cash

What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash"

How do you want to spend the rest of your dash? The fact that you are here tonight and a member of this society indicates that you love this country, that you care about its future, and you respect the ideals of our founding fathers and mothers. I think if we want this country to continue to look like Washington and Adams and Jefferson envisioned it then we have to insure that our young people understand their vision and love our country as we do. I believe the best way for us to do this is through our youth programs. I think you will agree that instilling in our young people the philosophy of the declaration of independence and a love of the freedoms in our constitution is worth some of your dash.

The 66th President General of the SAR was a Texan who served from 1968-1969. He was the son of a Texas Governor and was considered to be a real character. Much like a couple of recent PG's from Texas here tonight. His name was Walter Sterling and his interests lay more in business than in politics but he also served on many charitable foundations, other than the SAR during his career. During an interview he was asked what kind of satisfaction he received from serving on a non-paying charitable board. His response was "You put a lot into it, and it's all for other people. That's satisfaction guaranteed". He went on to say "Nothing can buy the joy you get by doing things for other people. That's one of the satisfactions of life and that's why I served on these boards all of these years." I think PG Sterling captured the essence of what draws each of us to the SAR.

I close with a final thought about what makes an organization great. It is not how many members you have although people want to join organizations they think do worthwhile things. It is not how much money you have although people tend to vote with their pocketbook and give money when they think their money will be used for beneficial purposes. I think organizations become great when they help people or when they influence a positive and fundamental change in our society. Our chance for the SAR to become great is to inspire this great country to continue to follow the patriotic vision of our founding fathers. Those of us in this room have contributed our money and valuable time in furtherance of preserving the principles of the American Revolution and we recognize that the future of this country is dependent on those principles remaining the cornerstone of our government and national vision. We have to dream the same dream that George Washington, John Adams and all of our patriot ancestors dreamed and we have to work to make their sacrifices count and to make sure that the youth of today understand and appreciate those dreams.

It is both humbling and an honor to have been elected President General and Mickey Jo and I look forward to this year and we hope to see many of you in your home states soon. God bless you.