



George Washington Chapter Sons of the American Revolution



Newsletter

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Volume 9, Issue 8

October, 2009

Our Next Meeting Will Be Held on October 10

Please Join Us for Another Interesting Presentation

Our next luncheon will feature Dr. Matthew Spalding of The Heritage Foundation who will tell us about his most recent book, *We Still Hold These Truths: Rediscovering Our Principles, Reclaiming Our Future*. Dr. Spalding, an expert on the American Founding and particularly the life of George Washington is the Director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for American Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

The Center for American Studies sponsors lectures, organizes seminars, crafts publications and supports scholars with the objective of teaching policymakers and political leaders about the basic principles of our political tradition and explaining the continued relevance and application of those principles in 21st century America. Spalding is a graduate of Claremont McKenna College and has a Ph.D. in government from the Claremont Graduate School, where his work concentrated on government, political philosophy and early American political thought. A Henry Salvatori Dissertation Fellow with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, he has taught American government courses at George Mason University, the Catholic University of America, Claremont McKenna College and Hillsdale College.

Before joining Heritage in 1994, Spalding was a Senior Policy Analyst at the Claremont Institute, a public policy think tank in Southern California, where he is currently an adjunct fellow. He also serves on the Board of Academic Advisors at Mount Vernon Estate - George Washington's home.

An expert on political history and constitutionalism, as well as religious liberty and religious life in America, he is the author of *A Sacred Union of Citizens: Washington's Farewell Address and the American Character*, the co-editor of *Patriot Sage: George Washington and the American Political Tradition* and the editor of *The Founders' Almanac: A Practical Guide to the Notable Events, Greatest Leaders & Most Eloquent Words of the American Founding*. He is also co-editor of the best-selling book, *The Heritage Guide to the Constitution*, a clause-by-clause look at the important document by 109 legal experts.

Please see RSVP information in this issue and plan on joining us to hear this informative presentation by Dr. Spalding.

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Highlights of the September Meeting

Guest Speaker Dr. John Maas

Dr. John Maas, an historian on the staff of the U.S. Army Center of Military History at Fort McNair, held our attention with a discussion of the role played by the militia during the Revolutionary War. When compared with the Continental Line, the 18th century militia was quite a different group of soldiers. Generally, the colonies required all able bodied men to serve in their militia units. Militia soldiers were required to bring their own arms and equipment and generally served short tours of duty. Logistic support was normally erratic and complicated by the lack of standards for arms. The short tours of duty made it extremely difficult to train an effective force before their tours of duty were completed. Desertion was a serious problem



Dr. Maas receives the coveted bust of General Washington from Chapter Vice President McHargue.

Armies under Washington's generals consisted of a mixture of Continental Line units and militia units. Nevertheless, generals with good leadership skills were able to use this blend of regular and militia units effectively.

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Firefighter of the Year Award



Captain Troy Gibbs receives the Firefighter of the Year Award.

From the left: Chapter President Walker, Compatriot Becker, Captain Gibbs and Fire Chief Theil

Compatriot James Becker presided over the presentation of our Chapter's Firefighter of the Year Award. This year's award was presented to Captain Troy Gibbs, who was introduced by her commander, Alexandria Fire Chief Adam Theil. Chief Theil described Captain Gibbs's outstanding accomplishments in the Alexandria Fire Department's Health and Safety Unit. This special unit, organized and directed by Captain Gibbs, is dedicated to reducing accidental injuries which are an ever-present concern of those whose daily tasks place them in very hazardous situations. Her success in this important endeavor is recognized by her selection for this special award.

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The Chapter President's Column

Dear Compatriots,

After a summer without monthly meetings, the George Washington Chapter re-commenced our regular schedule on Saturday, September 12. We had a full agenda and a relatively good turnout. In addition to our luncheon speaker, we presented the Firefighter of the Year Award. Thanks go to Frank and Jim Becker for coordinating this year's award. They are also taking the lead on the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award that will be presented at our October monthly meeting.

Our chapter website is now live. You can view it at www.gwsar.org. Please check it out. This site will be used to help communicate with our members and other interested parties, including potential members. In that regard, Bob Carr, our chapter registrar, noted that we have over a dozen new member applications.

The Chapter sent a small delegation to VASSAR's Semi-annual meeting in September. Thanks to all who attended. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend due to the deadline for my forthcoming book. Very deservedly, Bob Carr was awarded the Liberty Medal at that meeting. Congratulations, Bob.

Bob is also leading this year's dues efforts. The annual statements have been revised and were sent out earlier than ever. Please return your annual dues if you have not done so already. It is important that we do everything possible to avoid the time and "pain" associated with member reinstatement process.

Finally, I have been able to connect with General Shinseki who is now Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He will accept the Gold Good Citizenship Award and address our chapter in January. We need to agree on a date. In this regard, I would like for us to have a special evening event, possibly in lieu of our regular monthly meeting, to maximize attendance both by our chapter members and other SAR compatriots. I hope to be able to announce at our October monthly meeting.

Patriotically Yours,

Dave Walker
Chapter President

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Bob Carr Awarded Liberty Medal at VASSAR Semi-annual Meeting

Chapter Registrar Bob Carr was awarded the Liberty Medal during the proceedings of VASSAR's Semi-annual Meeting. That decoration is presented to compatriots who have facilitated the first line signing of ten new members to the SAR. The citation on Bob's certificate reads "In recognition of outstanding services in the recruitment of new members." We are all proud of Bob's achievement and appreciate his diligent performance of the trying work of chapter registrar.



Bob Carr receives the SAR Liberty Medal from
VASSAR President William Simpson, Jr.

Photo by Ray Hawn

Compatriots Don Reynolds, and Ray Hawn also attended the meeting, which was held at the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel on September 18-19. The weekend meeting was one of the best attended semi-annual meetings in recent times. It was announced that the Virginia Society is now the second largest state society in the SAR, only surpassed by Texas.

During the business session, the VASSAR Bylaws were amended to allow the Assistant Secretary/Treasurer to sign checks to pay society bills.

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To Serve You Better, We Need Your Participation

The Board of Managers often does not get timely information on important events happening in the lives of our members that would be of interest to all. There are times when the GW Chapter might be able to assist members and their families if we only knew of changed circumstances. As you might suspect, those occasions when help and comfort could be offered are often linked to sadness or tragedies. There are, however, also times of joy and celebration - promotions, marriages, childbirth - which could be acknowledged and shared if only we knew.

To improve the Chapter's performance in this area, members are asked to provide information about important events in their lives. Contact information for Chapter officers may be found in the text box at the end of each newsletter.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership Dues

DO NOT FORGET the NOVEMBER 15, 2009 deadline for the return of your 2010 dues payments. All dues received after that may require a reinstatement form to continue as an active member in the Sons of the American Revolution. VASSAR submits their report to NSSAR on December 1, 2009 and after that report is submitted, ALL dues payments after that date will require a reinstatement form signed by the member. Last year we had to submit over fifty reinstatements. Let's not have to do that again this year.

If you did not receive a 2010 Dues Invoice, please contact Bob Carr or Paul Briggs and they will make sure you receive one in the next day's mail.

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SAR to Participate in Combined Federal Campaign

The SAR is participating for the first time in the federal government's charitable giving program, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Virginia is one of the states that will share in the proceeds of money NSSAR receives from CFC for the 2009 campaign. That money will be collected throughout 2010 and will be distributed early in 2011. If you are a federal employee or have a family member who is a federal employee, please consider making a contribution to the SAR through the CFC. The SAR's CFC donation number is 22587. The pledge campaign began in September and concludes in December.

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Inputs for our Website

The Chapter is collecting short biographies of the patriot ancestors of our members for publication on the website. If you have not already submitted yours, please do so as soon as possible. Your biographies and any other comments you have for the website should be directed to Chapter Secretary Mike Elston at gwsarsec@gmail.com.

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Questionnaire

If you have submitted your dues payment and did not enclose your completed Questionnaire, please do so as soon as possible. Those of you just submitting your dues payment, please remember to enclose the completed Questionnaire with your payment.

We apologize for the undersize envelope included with your dues statement and questionnaire. We have learned from this and will make sure the envelope will be of sufficient size next year to accommodate the returned information.

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OBITUARIES

We regret to inform you of the recently reported deaths of three of our Compatriots: Kenneth Paul Baker on April 16, 2009; Walter Harry Graham Capt, USN (Ret) on December 20, 2008; and Charles W. Baker Col, USA (Ret) on November 23, 2008

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William A. Sommerfield

William A. Sommerfield was known to many members of our Chapter through his masterful

reenactment of General Washington. Although not a member of the SAR, Mr. Sommerfield was an honorary member of the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati.

In 1989, former Chief Justice Warren Burger selected Mr. Sommerfield to reenact Washington's eight-day ride in 1789 from Mount Vernon to New York City, where Washington was sworn in for his first term. That performance led to Mr. Sommerfield's job interpreting Washington at Mount Vernon.

Besides frequent performances at Mount Vernon, he appeared as Washington in all 50 states, in Europe, and at the White House during the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations. He was featured on television programs including *Good Morning America* and *Today*. In 1990, he portrayed Washington when he was acquitted of treason at a mock trial in London.

Mr. Sommerfield died of heart failure on September 11 at the Watermark at Logan Square in Philadelphia. Until this summer, he had lived on Mount Vernon Street in the Spring Garden section of Philadelphia. A celebration of his life will begin at noon on October 10 at Christ Church, 20 N. America Street, Philadelphia.

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Registrars Report

Membership

Our Chapter continues to grow with the addition of new members, transfers and reinstatements. Since my last report, three new member applications have been approved.

Presently, five new applications are at National level for approval. There are nineteen applications in progress. Eight are complete in draft and have been returned to the applicant for review and attachment of additional supporting documentation. Eleven are in draft awaiting additional documentation from the applicant.

Certificates are on hand for eight new members who await induction into the chapter. Some are out of town members who will be inducted when they are able to attend our meeting. The remaining members awaiting induction live in the local area but have been unable to attend due to various reasons.

At our October meeting we will induct Richard James Elston, Mike Elston's brother from Machesney, Illinois. Richard's application was approved on

January 22, 2007. We are so thankful that Richard could come to Alexandria for his induction and have his brother pin on his SAR membership rosette.

Application Notes

If you have family members or friends who are interested in joining SAR, you should encourage them to submit their applications as soon as possible so that they can take advantage of the current application fees. With the current fee increases for 2010, applicants can save at least \$20.00 by doing so. The cost of all applications after November 1, 2010 will increase by \$30.00 - \$20.00 increase in application fee and \$10.00 increase in NSSAR dues. Compatriots with names of prospective members should contact Bob Carr at 703-780-3066, 703-407-4496 or e-mail capt7cs@aol.com with the prospective member's telephone number and home address. A New Member packet with application instructions and membership benefits information will be provided. If you would like a New Member packet to give to a prospective member, please let Bob know and he will get a packet to you.

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George Washington's Early Experiences with Militia Soldiers

George Washington's experiences with militia units was not the subject of any of the antidotes used to illustrate Dr. Maas's presentation.. We know, however, that Washington's military career started in Virginia's militia — and that was 20 years before the Revolutionary War.

On August 14, 1755, Governor Dinwiddie appointed George Washington a colonel of the Virginia Regiment and Commander-in-Chief of all the forces now raised and to be raised for the defense of his Majesty's colony and for repelling the unjust and hostile invasions of the French and their Indian allies. The Virginia Regiment was to consist of 1,000 men organized in 16 companies. Washington, then only 23 years old, soon had his hands full in recruiting, provisioning and training this large militia.

Washington's experiences and frustrations are recounted in Volume Two of D. S. Freeman's biography *George Washington*, from which much of the following was extracted.

It became evident that accomplishing the mission Washington had been assigned was too much to be expected of the men he had. No amount of good

leadership could overcome the low pay, fatiguing service and severe hardships of service in the Virginia Regiment. Washington attempted to enforce good conduct and discipline with harsh penalties. Swearing was punishable with twenty-five lashes. The punishment for drunkenness, which was apparently rampant after each payday, was fifty lashes. Rewards were established for soldiers who reported comrades guilty of that offence.

Washington was discouraged by the disorder he found. In 1756, he reported to Dinwiddie that, "for want of proper laws... [the militia soldiers] are obstinate, self-willed, perverse, of little or no service to the people, and very burthensome to the country." The garrisons "were weak for want of men, but more so by indolence and irregularity."

Desertion was perhaps his most stubborn problem. Washington had felt for months that he could not stop desertion until some notorious offenders were executed. Washington reported that: "I have a gallows near forty foot high erected (which has terrified the *rest* exceedingly) and I am determined if I can be justified in the proceeding, to hang two or three on it, as an example to others." And this he did. Two incorrigible deserters had been tried by courts-martial and condemned to death by shooting. Washington thought hemp carried a sterner warning than lead. Just before newly recruited companies were leaving Winchester for their posts, those two soldiers were hanged from the tall gallows. This spectacle was something that the drafted men were not likely to forget

Washington reported this to Dinwiddie and added: "Your Honor will, I hope, excuse my hanging instead of shooting them. It conveyed much more terror to others; and it was for example sake we did it."

Throughout 1756, Washington was distressed and probably bored - but he did not let up in the work at hand. Gradually, the Regiment became a more effective fighting force, though never approaching its authorized strength. His resolve is reflected in the closing sentences of a letter of instruction to captains who were about to take their companies to the more remote forts, "devote some part of your leisure hours to the study of your profession, a knowledge in which cannot be attained without application; nor any merit or applause to be achieved without a certain knowledge thereof. *Discipline is the soul of an army.* It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all . . . [Emphasis added.]

Calendar of Coming Events

October

10 GW Chapter Luncheon Meeting. Guest Speaker will be Dr. Matthew Spalding of The Heritage Foundation. His topic will be "First Principles."

19 Battle of Yorktown, Yorktown, VA - 10 am

November

11 GW Chapter participates with Kate Waller Barrett Chapter DAR in Veterans' Day Ceremonies at Mount Vernon

14 GW Chapter Luncheon Meeting. Speaker TBA

TBA Wreath-laying Ceremony at Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery

December

12 GW Chapter Luncheon Meeting, **Officers for the coming year will be elected at this meeting.** Guest Speaker TBA.

9 Battle of Great Bridge. Details TBA

14 Wreaths Across America, National Cemeteries, noon.

February

12-13 2010 VASSAR Annual Meeting, Richmond

20 Crossing of the Dan, South Boston, VA

The George Washington Chapter was chartered in its present form on April 2, 1954. With over 200 members, it is Virginia's largest SAR chapter. Meetings are held at 11:30 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month (June, July & August excepted) at the Belle Haven Country Club, 6023 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, Virginia.

Present officers are:

President: Dave Walker 703-619-9751

Vice President: Vern McHargue 202-439-1530

Secretary: Mike Elston 703-680-0866

Treasurer: Paul Briggs 703-768-6910

Registrar: Bob Carr 703-780-3066

This monthly newsletter is edited by Don Kraft, who depends heavily on inputs from chapter officers and committee chairmen. Inputs from others are always welcome. Please send your inputs and comments to kraftdon@att.net or call 703-451-6132.

October 10, 2009

Lunch Meeting Reservation Form

Please use this form to make a reservation for the chapter's lunch at the Belle Haven Country Club, 6023 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, Virginia. The lunch cost is \$35.00 per person. Check in and social time begin at 11:30 a.m. The meeting will be called to order at 12:00 noon. Feel free to invite your wife and friends as your guests.

RSVP no later than Monday, October 5th.

Walk-ins will be accommodated if possible, but note that to cover the Club's charge for serving those without a timely reservation a walk-in price of \$37.00 is required.

Name: _____

A check for _____ persons in the amount of \$_____ payable to **G. W. Chapter SAR** is enclosed.

Mail this reservation form with your check to:

F. Paul Briggs, Treasurer

7213 Regent Drive

Alexandria, VA 22307

You may also phone (703) 768-6910 and leave a message or e-mail gnpbriggs@cox.net.

Please include "SAR reservation for (spell out name)" on the subject line of the e-mail.

It is important to provide advance notice of attendance to be sure you get a seat.

Valet parking is available.