



FORT HARRISON SENTINEL

Fort Harrison Chapter

Sons of the American Revolution



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Compatriots, on behalf of our Chapter I wish all of you a wonderful 2013. As we enter this year, we closed the last by celebrating our “Silver Anniversary” as a Chapter. Yes, we are now entering our 26th year as a Chapter. Our “Silver Anniversary” celebration in December was truly “something to remember”. This milestone was marked by a wonderful luncheon meeting held in the Houff Community Center at the Bridgewater Retirement Community. The meeting highlighted the history and accomplishments of our Chapter beginning with its organizational meeting on November 7, 1987. We owe Compatriots Vic Diehl, Randy Heneberger and John Sipe a “big thanks” for serving as a committee to organize this event and also Hugh Hutchens and Betty Diehl for all the work they did to make this event a great success. We also owe the same to those who spoke: Compatriots John Sipe, Vic Diehl, Tim Knight, Hank Almond and Kirk Sheap and to Compatriot Randy Heneberger who served as Master of Ceremonies. The program ended with Compatriot Vic Diehl presenting an updated Chapter Presidents Plaque that now hangs at Fort Harrison. In January, we had VASSAR President Phil Williams as our speaker. He gave a wonderful presentation on the seven Virginians who signed the Declaration of Independence and also updated us on VASSAR activities and on his activities over the past year as VASSAR President. A lot of miles traveled, a lot of meetings with dinners and a bit added to the waistline. This last problem seems to be one of which a number of VASSAR Presidents have complained. Phil also installed our Chapter’s officers for 2013: President Henry H. Almond Jr.; 2nd Vice President Clayton Timothy Knight; Treasurer James T. Nelson Jr.; Recording Secretary Thomas A. Pettit and Chaplain Christopher N. Sheap M.D. As you can see, there are several offices unfilled. I will return to this later in this letter. President Williams also inducted into membership in the SAR and our Chapter a number of new Compatriots. We welcome to membership in our Chapter Compatriots Mark Robinson, Amos Thomas, Everett Andes and Jerry Andes. At this meeting, Compatriot Tim Knight received a number of Supplemental Certificates. Each recognizes his descent from a different Revolutionary War Compatriot. As of mid-January of this year, Tim now has forty such supplementals approved with several more pending approval by the National Society (NSSAR) and, so I am informed, about 10-15 more “in the wings”. What is more impressive is that a number of these are “Forgotten Patriots” meaning ancestors whose service during the Revolution has not been previously recognized either by the SAR or DAR. Their approval by the SAR opens new ancestral lines for potential, future Compatriots. At our February meeting Mrs. Penny Imeson, Director of the Heritage Museum gave a very interesting presentation on the Museum in Dayton and also tested the knowledge of those present by presenting five items from the museum’s collection and asking for their identification. Congratulations to Compatriot John Sipe who was able to correctly identify four of them. At the same meeting, our Chapter recognized a number of our Compatriots for their military service by presenting them with Chapter Veteran’s Certificates. A number will have to be presented at a later date to those who were absent and we have a number to present to the families of deceased Compatriots who served our Country. I would ask that if any of our Compatriots did not inform me of their service, please do so that we can recognize you. My telephone number and e-mail address will be found at the end of this letter. We have a number of very interesting programs “on tap” for the coming months. In March, John Mann IV will talk on the “Evolution of the Confederate Uniform in the 10th Virginia”. In April, Chaz Haywood will talk about early documents discovered in the County

and their preservation. In May, we will have with us Eric Bryan, Assistant Director of the Frontier Culture Museum who will talk on “Slavery in the Shenandoah Valley”. In September, noted author and historian Mark Leepson will be with us to talk about his book “The Flag”. Of course, during the summer months when we do not meet formally, Compatriot David Hatmaker will, on July 4th, read the Declaration of Independence from the steps of the Rockingham County Court House in Harrisonburg. This annual event continues to draw an ever increasing audience and I invite you to join with us at noon on the 4th to honor the birth of our Nation.

Of course, our Chapter has also been active out in our Community. In November, December and January, we participated in five Naturalization Ceremonies. In January, our Chapter presented four Flag Certificates recognizing Wayne and Linda Whitmore of Bridgewater, Riddleberger Brothers, Inc. of Mt. Crawford, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative of Mt. Crawford and Dynamic Aviation of Bridgewater in recognition of their proper display of the American Flag. We also will be recognizing a member of one of our local Law Enforcement Agencies for their service to the community in the not too distant future and will be recognizing outstanding Cadets in the ROTC Program at James Madison University and JROTC Program at Harrisonburg High School before the end of May. On a State level, I had the opportunity to represent our Chapter and present one of our Chapter wreaths at the Battle of Great Bridge Commemoration in Chesapeake in December. President Hank Almond and I will be presenting one of our Chapter Wreaths at the Crossing of the Dan Ceremony and Reenactment to be held in South Boston, VA on the 16th of this month and we will also be representing our Chapter at the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Society (VASSAR) in Richmond on the following weekend. Further upcoming SAR events at which we will be represented will be the celebration of President James Madison’s Birthday at Montpelier on March 16th and the Graves Mountain Multi-Chapter Meeting on April 13th. Please remember that these events are open to all Compatriots and their spouses. My wife, Norma, will be with me in South Boston and in Richmond as she was in Chesapeake in December. I hope that you might take this opportunity to attend at least one of these events and bring your spouse or significant other with you.

Compatriots, as you can see we are, at this time, a very active, vibrant Chapter but will this continue? At the beginning of this Newsletter, I named the Chapter Officers installed in January by VASSAR President Phil Williams. There was no President-elect. Due to very serious health issues, Compatriot Vic Diehl has resigned this position. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and with his family. Our Registrar, Hugh Hutchens, who was also filling in as Corresponding Secretary, has also resigned though he continues, for the time being, to assist the Chapter in these functions. We owe Hugh a great deal of thanks and gratitude for the outstanding work he performed in these capacities. Compatriots, the ranks of your Chapter Officers are thinning very quickly. There are only a very few who now perform the functions needed to keep our Chapter active. This cannot continue. Time will take its toll on those who are active and with no one willing to step in and help out, our Chapter will cease to exist. I am earnestly asking for you to consider “stepping up to the plate” and pitching in to help maintain this Chapter. We would love to expand the SAR programs in which we participate but, as of now, we cannot simply because we don’t have the manpower to do so. But this is not simply a question of expanding our efforts, it is one not only of keeping up those programs in which we now participate but also one of our ability to survive as a Chapter. We need your active participation.

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