

Thank you, Genealogist General Dooley.....

Friends, family, and compatriots, thank you very much for your support. I am honored to stand before you tonight as the 91st President of the Virginia Society. I humbly accept the duties and responsibilities that accompany the title.

No man rises to occupy this position without the support of many people. First and foremost, I'd to thank my wife Renu, who has supported me by accompanying me to SAR events and for her patience while I left home to attend many SAR activities throughout the years. And I'd like to thank her in advance for her sacrifices of time coming in the very busy year ahead, some of which she is aware of, and many others of which she is not yet aware. And I'd like to recognize the rest of my family, my daughter Mallory, who decided make the eight hours round trip to and from college to see her dad sworn in, to my sons Mark, Jr., William, Andrew, and Ben.

If there is one thing that I have learned as a member of any group that I belong to, it is that most successful organizations possess a core group of dedicated, hardworking individuals. These individuals, the composition of which changes over the years are what makes the organization active, successful, useful, and interesting. The Virginia Society is no

different. To that end, I have had the great fortune to serve as an officer under four fine VASSAR presidents: Joe Dooley, Art Batten, Bill Simpson, and Bob Bowen, each with very different and distinctive styles of leadership, very different men but with a few things in common: honesty, integrity, and always acting with the best interests of VASSAR as they saw it, in their minds and hearts. From each I have learned much and will undoubtedly look to Joe, Bill, and Bob for their wise counsel and advice this year.

My thanks also to Larry McKinley, another past president, who started all of this one night in 2007 when he called me at home and asked if I'd be interested in possibly being nominated to serve as Secretary for the Society. I immediately accepted, having no idea as to the ramifications. And my thanks also to the fine men that currently comprise the new Executive Committee as well members of the past several Executive Committees. And of course, thanks to my chapter, the Richmond Chapter, for its loyal support and hard work throughout the years, my particular thanks to Taylor Cowardin and Jim Robeson.

I have several presidential initiatives and projects planned for this year and the beginning of next.

First, there are two specific projects planned. The first, chronologically, is to commemorate the Revolutionary War veterans buried in the Shockoe Cemetery in Richmond, including John Marshall and Col. James Wood II, along with hundreds of veterans of the War of 1812. The Richmond Chapter is spearheading this project and it is a joint project with the War of 1812 Society in Virginia. I anticipate that there will either be a stone with a metal plaque on the ground, or a Virginia state historical marker. This event is tentatively scheduled for 11-11-11, Veteran's Day. This is a project I have entrusted to the able men of my home chapter.

The second project has been a more ambitious and difficult one, as it has involved extensive genealogical research and skills of many of our Society's best genealogists, as well as review by the heritage committee of a church. This is a project to honor with a suitable marker or monument the Revolutionary War patriots interred in the cemetery and actually buried outside the walls of the present cemetery of the old St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Norfolk. This is the church with the British cannon ball stuck in it side from Lord Dunmore's bombardment of that city on January 1, 1776. The

Norfolk Chapter has been working very hard on this since the summer of 2010. The date of the commemoration ceremony is December 3, 2011 after some of the ceremonies marking the Battle of Great Bridge. This is another joint effort with the War of 1812 Society in Virginia, which has lent considerable genealogical talent to the effort.

There are other initiatives planned. We have 26 chapters. With the assistance of Mike Lyman and Thad Hartman, it is the Society's goal for each chapter, between now and February 25, 2012, to mark a Revolutionary War veteran's grave. Placement of a stone or plaque or some other memorial in a cemetery or final resting place to honor a number of such men will also count as a grave marking. Thad and Mike have encouraged me that this goal can be achieved and I will look to Thad and Mike to assist the chapters in identifying such opportunities and helping them to follow through. In anticipation of this project, we have increased the budget for grave marker reimbursements for the chapters

I also wish to use the powers of this office to bring about a greater recognition to the Battle of Great Bridge, the first major Revolutionary War conflict fought in Virginia in 1775. Patriots and British soldiers faced each other for eleven days and skirmished amid constant cannon fire before the climatic battle

that lasted but a half hour. But in that short time, patriotic volunteers, still eight months from declaring independence from Great Britain, showed that they could stand up to cannon fire and rout a unit of the best professional soldiers in the world. One of the consequences of the battle was that it led to a great spirit of independence, causing the Fourth Virginia Convention, in a first time public declaration, to condemn the British action and it called for force to “maintain our rights and privileges.” I’d like to obtain better recognition of this important battle at the VASSAR level, raising it from Tier 3 to Tier 2 by this time next year and placing it on par with some of the other great battles that have been recognized for many years. Also, I would like for there to be national recognition at the NSSAR level.

The forgoing are the attentions that we will pay this year to the brave men and women who sacrificed so much in their day, so that we may have out day now. Some people, ignorant of our Society’s goals and purposes, think that all that we do is to mark graves and give each other medals and awards. But our Society has another great purpose, among many others. A duty to the living and the future. Among those other duties and purposes are to educate our youth and to encourage development of good, solid young citizens. As you know, the Virginia Society’s orator contestant won the National

Rumbaugh Orations contest last year. Bill Broadus was the Committee Chairman who helped to make that remarkable achievement happen. Larry McKinley, always a premier booster and motivator of this program, serves as the Vice Chairman of the National Rumbaugh Orations Committee. So I have, with Larry McKinley's blessing, another challenge for the chapters this year. We had eight participants in the contest today, which may be a record. President Bowen had to alter the schedule to accommodate the additional time needed by the young people.

So my challenge to the chapters is this: I want 12 winners/12 contestants from 12 chapters to compete in the 2012 orations contest, one year from today. I am looking this time to Larry and to Bill Broadus to spread, cajole, and encourage this challenge to be met. If it means that our awards ceremony has to be abbreviated next year, that's fine.

Next, we have an ambitious social and business agenda. This is Virginia's year to host the Mid-Atlantic District annual meeting on August 12 and 13, 2011. It's really an opportunity that we only enjoy once every seven years. Larry McKinley, Wayne Rouse, Bob Carr and others have been working very hard on preparations for this important meeting, which will be held in Alexandria, Virginia. The events will include a buffet

dinner on Friday night, a formal Saturday night banquet at the Belle Haven Country Club and a visit to Mount Vernon. It will be a very nice affair and I encourage as many Virginia compatriots as possible to attend. As the hosts, we need to make a good showing.

Shorty after that we will hold the VASSAR Semi-Annual Meeting in Fredericksburg on September 16 and 17. The Col Fielding Lewis Chapter has been busy with preparations since last summer. Spearheading the effort are our Chancellor Walt Sheffield, Marv Pixton, David Hazel, and Wayne and Wink Rouse. The James Monroe Chapter is also assisting. Walt promises to be a very enjoyable event. Walt, through his many local connections, has managed to obtain our use of the Old Council Chambers for a meeting and, among other things, free admission to the two areas or museums of the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center ,including a new 9/11 exhibit opening. Again, I encourage as many members as possible to attend.

I just mentioned 9/11. It has not escaped my attention, nor yours I am sure, that September, 11, 2011, is the tenth Anniversary of the cowardly attack on the United States that resulted in such horrific loss of life, not just on that day and in the days to follow, but in the wars that had to be fought as a

result and continue to be fought as I speak. By the time that we meet again, the tenth anniversary will have passed. Accordingly, I encourage each chapter to participate in and be a part of and attend as an organization one 9-11 memorial event. There will be ample opportunities to do so in your communities. I know that most of you will do something anyway to mark the event. There will be a place on the Annual Chapter Report Form to report such an activity, and a streamer will be awarded to participating chapters at next year's Annual Meeting.

And, now, it's time to celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of another. So, I will call Genealogist General Joe Dooley back to the lectern and ask that he close this meeting and direct you to the site of the Reception!

God Bless you, the SAR, and United States of America.