

President General and First Lady

See Lots of Texas

By

Ed Butler

PG David Sympson and First Lady Evelyn made three visits to Texas during his term. First, in February, 2011, to Laredo in south Texas, for the George Washington Parade and Laredo chapter meeting; second, to San Antonio, in central Texas, for a dinner meeting with members of the San Antonio and Boerne, TX chapters in March; and finally, in north Texas, to the Texas Society Convention in Irving at the end of March. Between San Antonio and Irving, the PG and First Lady saw lots of Texas.

Large SAR Turnout For George Washington Birthday Celebration

In Laredo, TX Feb. 19 – 20, 2011

President General David Sympson and First Lady Evelyn led the multi-state SAR group in the 113th annual George Washington Birthday Celebration Parade – an official NSSAR national event. The Sympsons flew in from Louisville. Registrar General Lindsey Brock and wife, Billie flew from Jacksonville, FL, stopping off for a visit with PG Butler and wife, Robin. Jack and Shelia Manning flew into San Antonio from Boston and rented a car for the drive. The evening before the drive south to Laredo, the Brocks and the Mannings were hosted to a home cooked dinner at the Butlers.

Sam and Karin Powell flew in from Burlington, NC. Past Arizona State SAR Presidents Al Neimeyer and Dr. Rudy Byrd, George Lipphardt, AZSSAR color guard commander, and Al's son John – all from Tucson, participated in uniform. The George Washington Parade is now a NSSAR national event, and counts toward the Silver Color Guard Medal. This parade is arguably the largest event participated in by the SAR each year.



The Laredo Chapter was founded by Ed Butler in 2000 and sponsored by the San Antonio chapter. Members of the San Antonio chapter in attendance were Ed and Robin Butler, Rev. James and Pat Taylor, Steve Rohrbough, Frank Rohrbough, Peter Baron and wife and son Campbell

The following members of the Texas Society also participated:

Tom Green, Rick Ramirez, Louis Ramirez, Louis Ramirez, Jr., Ramiro Ramirez, Jr., TXSSAR President, Jim and Diane Jones, Larry and Barbara Stevens, Jim Mitchell, Marvin and Zipa Morgan, Mike Radcliff, Ray and Marty Cox, Bob Northcroft, Carl Hill, Tom Houston, Ron Brown, Stephen Tanner, John Thompson, Tom Whitlock, Dr. Art Munford, and prospective member Caleb Hall, who drove the Liberty Bell float.

On Friday night TXSSAR President Jim Jones and many of the TXSSAR color guard were already lined up to take the Liberty Bell float and station it between the site of a Martha Washington Society cocktail party and the auditorium where the Laredo annul debutante party is held. Many local participants when leaving the cocktail party were allowed to ring the bell. This is a great public relations tool.

President General Simpson and First Lady Evelyn led a group of 12 to dinner, including PG Ed and Robin Butler, Lindsey and Billie Brock, Jack and Shelia Manning, Rev. James and Pat Taylor, and the Rohrbough twins, Steve and Frank.

Sat. Feb. 19th – Laredo and Return to San Antonio

Because Ed Butler had participated in the International Bridge Ceremony the year before, he gave his flag to Lindsey Brock. Lindsey and the small group of color guardsmen participating left the hotel lobby at 6:30 a.m. They enjoyed a scrumptious complimentary buffet breakfast at the hotel near the bridge. The group was bussed to a point near the bridge, from which they paraded to the center of the bridge.

The international George Washington Birthday ceremony starts with a large number of color guard units from each country marching onto the international bridge, and lining the sides of the bridge. All the while a Mexican band is playing music. Bleachers on each side of the bridge held dignitaries. The National Anthem of each country was then played.



The “*Abrazos* Greeting” on the International Bridge features two American children dressed like George and Martha Washington and two Mexican children dressed in festive attire. Each carried a small flag of their country. When they met at the center of the bridge they hugged (“*abrazo*”) and exchanged flags, while a Mexican Military band played music. Afterwards, the mayors of Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico each spoke. They were followed by the Catholic Bishops from each city, and then several lesser officials had their respective time at the microphone.

As the other color guardsmen were being bused to the parade starting point, PG Sympson and the First Lady joined the Butlers for an enjoyable breakfast buffet at the hotel. They had a nice but brief visit with Sam and Karin Powell from Burlington, NC, who were sitting with Billie Brock and the Taylors.

Billie Brock, Evelyn Sympson, Pat Taylor, Karin Powell, Diane Jones, Barbara Stevens, Marty Cox and other TXSSAR ladies were dressed in their finest colonial attire. In our colonial attire a large group of us walked through the parade crowd already lining the streets. We walked by the famous Budweiser Beer Clydsdale horses.



The ladies were fascinated by the beautiful gowns of many of the young ladies from the debutant party the night before, and by this year's Martha Washington. Rick Ramirez' daughter had been a debutant two years before. Her gown cost over \$40,000.00, so no telling how much the Martha Washington's gown was.



We were unit #81. When the SAR first entered this parade some 10 years ago, we were unit #238. Last year we were #134, so we are working our way to the front of the parade. The SAR was represented by five units: 1) two color guardsmen carrying the SAR banner; 2) the float with the exact replica of the Liberty Bell and the 10 Commandment tablets, along with a Texas Society SAR Flag; 3) PG Sympson and the First Lady leading the marching members of the uniformed color guard, each with a flag; 4) the ladies in their colonial dresses; and 5) the TXSSAR float upon which uniformed SAR members, ladies and children rode. From the float *Mardi Gras* type necklaces were thrown to the crowd. Flags were also displayed from the float. Robin, Billie, and many of the other ladies walked along the float tossing necklaces to the crowd. Over 50 SAR members and wives participated in the parade.



The first unit of parade stepped off at 10:00 a.m. Some 400,000 people, sometimes 8 deep lined the 1 ½ mile parade route. It was a hot, sunny day and most participants were wringing wet by its end. The Laredo George Washington Birthday Parade is the largest George Washington celebration in the world. It began in 1898. As we passed, the crowds cheered. Shelia watched the entire parade on Channel 8 because she was having problems with her knee. Since our group was at the beginning of the parade, we returned to the float parking area before noon, but it was 12:00 before we got back to the hotel.

The post parade luncheon is donated each year by the Laredo SAR chapter in the Holiday Inn banquet room. All SAR parade participants are invited to attend free of charge. With chapter members and family, over 100 participated. Lunch was not until 1:00, so we had time to shower again; to rest for a few minutes; and to finish packing. At each plate was a four page program, with color photos from last year's parade

The meal was great, which included a salad, a mixture of beef and chicken fajitas, and carrot cake for desert. PG Sympson presented an interesting talk on the SAR heritage. Tom Green introduced all the dignitaries, which included almost everybody there. He presented a Bernardo Galvez TXSSAR Medal and parade pin to all participants, and announced that future participants would also be awarded that medal.



Host Rick Ramirez explained the significance of both the commemorative coin presented to each participant as well as the parade lapel pin (proposed by Compatriot Jim Mitchell and designed by Compatriot Larry Stevens) given to each of us. This parade had been an ongoing event in Laredo since 1898. Rick stated that each parade participant in the future would also be presented with a lapel pin.

The Butlers and the Brocks stayed until the end to visit with friends. The Mannings and the Sympsions were staying overnight, and they planned to eat together that evening. The fellowship had been great.



PG Sympson and First Lady Visit

With Ed and Robin Butler in San Antonio, TX

Mar. 22 – 25, 2010

Tue. Mar. 22nd



Upon their arrival at the San Antonio airport, PG Butler presented the First Lady with a dozen long stemmed yellow roses, and proclaimed that “by the power vested in me, I proclaim that you are an official ‘Yellow Rose of Texas’”. On the way to the Butler home, they stopped to view old Wells Fargo stage coach inn in Leon Springs, TX. After the Sympsons got settled in they enjoyed a home cooked dinner.

Wed. Mar. 23rd

This was to be two full days of sightseeing in Texas’ most visited and most tourist friendly city. After a bit of shopping in the River City Mall, the foursome took a river boat ride on the beautiful San Antonio River. They got seats at a table adjacent to the river for lunch on the River Walk at the Republic of Texas Restaurant. Mariachi musicians serenaded the tourists, adding a festive air. They strolled along the famous San Antonio River Walk back to the mall, where the car was parked.

At the Tower of the Americas, built for the 1968 World’s Fair, they watched an exciting 4D Movie on Texas. Afterwards they took the elevator to the top for panoramic view of the city, and visited the San Antonio Historical Gallery of exhibits.



That evening they took a tour of Boerne, TX, a nearby town of German origin. They had a very enjoyable Czech dinner at the Little Gretel Restaurant on River Road.

Thur. Mar. 24th

The second day of sightseeing began in the River Center Mall. After PG Sympton made a purchase in a flag shop, they viewed a 40 minute IMAX Movie on the Alamo. On the way to the Alamo, they walked through the famous Menger Hotel, visiting the Teddy Roosevelt Gallery, and taking in the beautiful wood paneled bar, where Lt. Col. Roosevelt got his Rough Rider recruits drunk and signed them up. The bar is an exact replica of the bar in the House of Lords in London.



The PG and First Lady were impressed with their visit to the Alamo. David was deflated to learn that so few Kentuckians were among the heroes there, but Evelyn was ecstatic that so many Irish participated in the battle. The group watched an 8 minute movie in the Alamo Long Barracks, which PG Sympton found to be very interesting.

Next was a visit to the historic Spanish Governor's Palace¹ – the oldest building in San Antonio, from about 1720. It is a National Historic Landmark, which represents the last vestiges of the *Presidio San Antonio de Bejar*. It was here that the historic cattle drive to Gen. Bernardo de Galvez was planned. That cattle drive was the Texas connection to the American Revolution.

Then, a short walk away, the group visited the San Fernando Cathedral, founded in 1731, which is the oldest Cathedral Sanctuary in the United States. The PG and First Lady viewed the sarcophagus which contained the remains of the heroes of the Alamo. Evelyn lit a candle for her mother, who died during the last SAR Congress.

Just a few blocks away the group enjoyed a festive Tex-Mex lunch at *Mi Tierra Café y Panaderia* at the Mercado (Mexican Market). Decorated year round for Christmas, it never closes. Customers from miles around come to buy the Mexican bakery goods called *pan dulce* (sweet bread). Evelyn loved shopping in the adjacent jewelry stores and gift shops. Then they walked through the authentic Mexican Market at El Mercado.



Following an afternoon rest at home, the PG and First Lady enjoyed a dinner in his honor with leaders of San Antonio and Boerne, TX Chapters. They dined informally in a private room at the Lion & Rose Pub. PG Sympton has been a dual member of the San Antonio Chapter for many years. The Chapter gave him a Certificate of Appreciation, a copy of a book about the Revolutionary War sons and grandsons who fought at the Alamo, and a novel.

¹ The National Geographic Society has called the landmark “the most beautiful building in San Antonio.”

Fri. Mar. 25th - Drive to Dallas via Fredericksburg and the LBJ Ranch

This was to become a 13 hour day of travel. PG Butler drove the first family to Fredericksburg, via Luckenbach, TX. Luckenbach (Population 3) has been made famous by country music star Willie Nelson, who has played there several times. David and Evelyn were fascinated by the Post Office and gift shop. They purchased post cards, scribbled notes to loved ones and had them postmarked there.



It was only a few minutes down the road to the Pacific WWII Museum of The Pacific in Fredericksburg. Admiral Chester Nimitz grew up there, with his parents operating the Nimitz Hotel. That hotel was the nucleus of the original Nimitz Museum, which has steadily become a major museum. Trying to speed PG Sympson through this museum was like herding cats.

After a wonderful lunch at *der LindenBaum* (“Linden Tree”) German Restaurant on the *Hauptstrasse* In Fredericksburg the group stopped at the Wild Flower nursery outside Fredericksburg, where unfortunately no plants were in bloom. Next came an interesting tour of the LBJ Ranch a few miles west of Johnson City, TX. Some 800 acres of the original 1200 acres was open to the public. Our group took a leisure ride through the saturnine ranch. In addition to hundreds of head of cattle, there was an airport with Johnson’s Air Force One jet, a much smaller version that that used by more recent US Presidents.



The old home place had been in the family for years, and has been added to on a piecemeal basis. The house overlooked the tranquil Pedernales River.

PG Butler had been touting the home-made pies at the Koffee Kup Restaurant in Hico, TX (best pie in Texas). They each got a piece of pie to go, so as not to spoil their dinner.

Unfortunately, there was no time to stop at the Dinosaur Park near Glen Rose, TX.

Neither the PG nor

the First Lady had ever eaten a “What-a-Burger”, a Texas chain with the best hamburgers around. So, they stopped at a What-a-Burger outlet in Cleburne, TX. Needless to say, there was nothing left on their plates.



It was well past sunset when the group arrived in the Dallas metroplex. Between a faulty GPS and the expressway being closed for repairs, the group got temporarily lost. PG Sympson got to watch his Kentucky basketball team win its game in the Sweet Sixteen.

TEXAS SOCIETY ANNUAL CONVENTION IN IRVING TEXAS

Mar. 25 – 27, 2011

Some 92 TXSSAR members and SAR General Officers were registered for this meeting. Some 160 members, wives and guests attended the banquet on Saturday. The convention opened with a half day Genealogy Seminar on Thursday. In Irving the PG and First Lady were hosted by Jim and Diane Jones, TXSSAR President and First Lady. Their suite was on the concierge floor of the hotel, which offered complementary hot breakfast, and heavy appetizers and wine before dinner.

Saturday was filled with activity. At the First General Session, PG Butler informed the group that PG Sympton was the most popular student in the 5th grade because he was the only one with a driver's license. PG Sympton brought greetings from national and informed those gathered of the progress made at the national level. President Jones presented PG Sympton with the prestigious TXSSAR Silver State Service Medal.

At the Youth Luncheon PG Sympton assisted with the presentation of awards to the winners of the Boy Scout, Orations and Essay Contests. After a rousing presentation by H. Ross Perot, PG Sympton assisted President Jones in presenting Perot with the SAR Gold Good Citizenship Medal. The Texas SAR Ladies Auxiliary presented Evelyn with a lovely hummingbird wind chime for her garden.

Rev. Dr. James C. Taylor, TXSSAR Chaplain, and nominee for Chaplain General 2011-2012 led the annual Memorial Service honoring the 38 compatriots who died since the last convention. At the afternoon session of the convention the group elected Bill Marrs as president for 2011-2012. Bill is PG Sympton's Travel Coordinator – a position he also held for PGs Butler and White. Other incoming officers were:

Hon. Robert Clark - President Elect; Robert C. Cohen, Secretary; Steve Rohrbough, Staff Secretary; John Beard – Treasurer; Gerald Irion and Mike Radcliff – Registrars; Henry Voegtle, III – Chancellor; Rev. James C. Taylor – Chaplain; Larry Stevens – Historian; and Russell Dart – VP of Medals and Awards.

The Annual Banquet was very exciting. Six Patriot Medals were presented in a ceremony that honored all past recipients. Keynote speaker PG Sympton delivered a very interesting history of the national SAR Society, and then inducted the new officers. President Jones presented the PG and First Lady with a Texas Bluebonnet stain glass window hanging and a Texas shaped jalapeño cooker.

Goodbyes were said to the PG and First Lady at the concierge floor breakfast early on Sunday morning before their morning flight home. PG Sympton was wringing his hands in anticipation of the Kentucky game in the tournament.