



THE EAST TEXAS PATRIOT

Sons of the American Revolution

Chapter # 57 Longview, Texas



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President's Message -- Seventeen Inches

In Nashville, Tennessee, during the first week of January, 1996, more than 4,000 baseball coaches descended upon the Opryland Hotel for the 52nd annual ABCA'S convention.

Veteran coaches were rumbling about the lineup of speakers scheduled to present during the weekend. One name, in particular, kept resurfacing,--"John Scolinos is here?"

Who is John Scolinos? Coach Scolinos was 78 years old and 5 years retired from a college coaching career that began in 1948. He shuffled to the stage to a standing ovation, wearing dark polyester pants, a light blue shirt, and a string around his neck from which home plate hung—a full sized, stark-white home plate.

After speaking for twenty-five minutes, not once mentioning the prop hanging around his neck, Coach Scolinos appeared to notice the snickering among some of the coaches. Even those who knew Coach Scolinos had to wonder exactly where he was going with this, or if he had simply forgotten about home plate since he'd gotten on stage.

Then, finally..."You're probably all wondering why I'm wearing home plate around my neck," he said. I may be old, but I'm not crazy. The reason I stand before you today is to share with you baseball people what I've learned in my life, what I've learned about home plate in my 78 years."

Several hands went up when Scolinos asked how many Little League Coaches were in the room. "Do you know how wide home plate is in Little League?" After a pause, someone offered, "Seventeen inches?" more of a question than an answer.

"That's right," said Scolinos. "How about in Babe Ruth's day? Any Babe Ruth coaches in the house?" Another long pause. "Seventeen inches?" a guess from another reluctant coach.

"That's right, he said. "Now, how many high school coaches do we have in the room?" Hundreds of hands shot up, as the pattern began to appear. "How wide is home plate in high school baseball" "Seventeen inches," they said, sounding more confident.

"You're right!" Scolinos basked. "And you college coaches, how wide is home plate in college?" "Seventeen inches!" they said in unison.

"Any Minor League coaches here? How wide is home plate in pro ball?" "Seventeen inches!"

"Right! And in the Major Leagues, how wide is home plate in the Major Leagues?" "Seventeen inches!"

"SEV-EN-TEEN INCHES!" he confirmed. "And what do they do with a Big League pitcher who can't throw the ball over seventeen inches?" Pause. "They send him to Pocatello!" he hollered, drawing raucous laughter.

"What they don't do is this: They don't say, "Ah, that's okay, Jimmy. You can't hit a seventeen-inch target? We'll make it eighteen inches or nineteen inches. We'll make it twenty inches so you have a better chance of hitting it. If you can't hit that, let us know so we can make it wider still, say twenty-five inches."

"Coaches..." pause "...what do we do when our best player shows up late to practice?
When our team rules forbid facial hair and a guy shows up unshaven?
What if he gets caught drinking?
Do we hold him accountable? Or do we change the rules to fit him?"

Do we widen home plate?

The chuckles gradually faded as four thousand coaches grew quiet, the fog lifting as the old coach's message began to unfold.

He turned the plate toward himself and, using a Sharpie, began to draw something.

When he turned it toward the crowd, point up, a house was revealed, complete with a freshly drawn door and two windows. "This is the problem in our homes today. With our marriages, with the way we parent our kids. With our discipline.

We don't teach accountability to our kids, and there is no consequence for failing to meet standards. We widen the plate!"

Pause. Then to the point at the top of the house he added a small American flag. "This is the problem in our schools today. The quality of our education is going downhill fast and teachers have been stripped of the tools they need to be successful, and to educate and discipline our young people. We are allowing others to widen home plate! Where is that getting us?"

In the silence, he replaced the flag with a Cross. "And this is the problem in the Church, where powerful people in positions of authority have taken advantage of young children, only to have such atrocity swept under the rug for years. Our church leaders are widening home plate for themselves! And we allow it."

"And the same is true with our government. Our so called representatives make rules for us that don't apply to themselves. They take bribes from lobbyists and foreign countries. They no longer serve us. And we allow them to widen home plate and we see our country falling into a dark abyss while we watch."

At a baseball convention where one expected to learn something about curve balls and bunting and how to run better practices, one had learned something far more valuable.

From an old man with home plate strung around his neck, a lesson was taught about life, about one's self, about one's own weaknesses and about one's responsibilities as a leader. We have to hold ourselves and others accountable to that which we know to be right, lest our families, our faith, and our society continue down an undesirable path.

"If I am lucky," Coach Scolinos concluded, "you will remember one thing from this old coach today. It is this: if we fail to hold ourselves to a higher standard, a standard of what we know to be right; if we fail to hold our spouses and our children to the same standards, if we are unwilling or unable to provide a consequence when they do not meet the standard; and if our schools & churches & our government fail to hold themselves accountable to those they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to..." With that, he held home plate in front of his chest, turned it around, and revealed its dark black backside, "...dark days ahead."

Coach Scolinos died in 2009 at the age of 91, but not before touching the lives of hundreds of players and coaches. His message was clear: "Coaches, keep your players—no matter how good they are—your own children, your churches, your government, and most of all, keep yourself at seventeen inches."

And this my friends is what our country has become and what is wrong with it today, and how to fix it.

"Don't widen the plate!"

I look forward to seeing each of you at the next meeting. *Carl*

Minutes and Treasurer's Report for April 6, 2017

The East Texas Chapter #57, TXSSAR, met on April 6, 2017, at Casa Ole` Restaurant in Longview, Texas at 7 PM. The meeting was called to order by Compatriot John Bolton. The opening prayer was given by Chaplain, Mack Bond. The pledges to the United States flag, the Texas flag and the SAR flag were given. Guests were introduced.

The meeting resumed with the acceptance of the Minutes of the previous meeting and the Treasurer's report as printed in the newsletter . Under old business, the matter of e-mails was once again addressed. If your address has changed, please let us know. We need to keep our records up to date. Our entry, Cullen M. Malone, did not place at the state level with his essay, "George Washington—the Precedent for the Presidency.

A health update was given on member Dr. Warren Hunt and his wife, Norma.

Panera Bread would like for us to use them for a fund raiser. President, Carl Hedges had presented the JRROTC award to Andrew Sanchez at the Longview High School.

Compatriot Bolton introduced the speaker for the evening, Chapter 57 member, James David Denton.



Andrew Sanchez

The meeting was adjourned with the SAR Closing and the benediction by Mack Bonds.

Treasurer's Report: The current balance : \$1,612.72



J. D. Denton presented the program on April 6. The program was entitled "America Before the Revolution and concerned the years from 1492 to 1775.



Brian Naples will present the program in June entitled "The Plight for Constitutional Freedom". He has a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. He attended the University of Dallas to study American political philosophy. After earning a Master's Degree, he began working as a Government instructor at Panola College and now serves as the Dept. Chair of Social and Behavioral Science at the college.

SAR Chapter 57 Officers

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Our chapter has lost five important compatriots and friends since April 28. Please keep these loved ones and their families in your prayers.



Anna and Steve Lee



Dr. Warren and Norma Hunt



June Everheart



Remember—We meet at Casa Ole' on June 1, 2017!!

Dinner at 6:00 p.m. and meeting at 7:00 p.m.