

**San Antonio Chapter Members Participate in Large SAR Turnout  
For George Washington Birthday Celebration**

**In Laredo, TX**

**Feb. 19 – 20, 2011**

**by**

**Ed Butler**

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SAR Chapter dual member President General David Sympson and First Lady Evelyn led the multi-state SAR group in the 113<sup>th</sup> annual George Washington Birthday Celebration Parade. The Sympsons flew in from Louisville. Registrar General Lindsey Brock and wife, Billie flew from Jacksonville, FL, stopping off for a visit with PG Ed Butler and wife, Robin. Jack and Shelia Manning flew into San Antonio from Boston and rented a car for the drive. 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, Rick Ramirez, Luis Ramirez, Louis Ramirez, Jr., Ramiro Ramirez, Jr., Jim Mitchell, Marvin and Zipa Morgan, Mike Radcliff, Ray and Marty Cox, Bob Northcroft,

Jim Mitchell, 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 annual 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 David Sympson 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. 19<sup>th</sup> – 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. 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 and the Taylors.

Billie, 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) 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 *Madri 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 Symson 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 Symptons were staying overnight, and they planned to eat together that evening. The fellowship had been great.

