

President General C. Bruce Pickette

2022-2023

Installation Speech - July 14, 2022

Compatriots, ladies, and guests, good evening. I am sincerely honored and humbled to be your President General. As the 118th president general, I stand in the footsteps of many of the President Generals who came before me that I admire so much.

A former President of the Alabama Society, like me, was Ryall Morgan. He went on to serve as President General for the year 1972 to 1973, 50 years ago to this date. He is buried at the Ryal Cemetery in Effingham County, Georgia, about 35 miles north of this wonderful city of Savannah. During the coming year and with the cooperation of the color guards of Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, I hope we can mark his grave with a Compatriot marker. Perhaps future President Generals will consider doing the same and mark other PG gravesites.

Allow me to acknowledge the Alabama Society compatriots and their ladies. The state had almost a full slate of its allotted delegates attending the congress. I thank my fellow state compatriots for their support throughout the years.

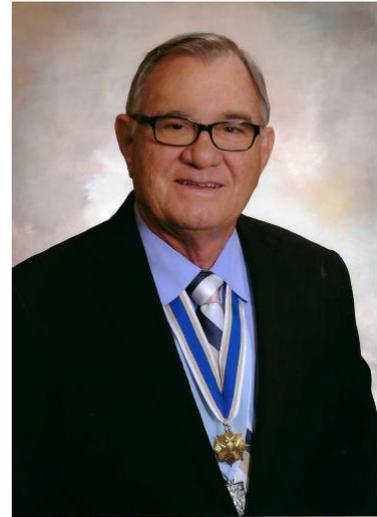
My congratulations to those elected as General Officers and as Vice President Generals, and to those installed earlier today as Trustee and Alternate Trustees. I look forward to working together with you to continue to grow and improve our Society in service to our nation and communities.

I would not be before you tonight if it were not for Rita. I have been wonderfully blessed with her love, and tolerance, for 53 years.

Our family and close friends are here tonight. Our forever friends are Allen and Donna Reid who live in Charleston and who joined us before at the 2014 Congress in Greenville. Thank you, Allen and Donna, for being here for Rita and me. Our daughter Laura, who is a schoolteacher, and two of her three children, Megan and Garrett, are here tonight. Our son Greg, who is a Fedex pilot, is here with his wife Lyz and their two boys, Bennett and Charlie. Laura and family live in Montana and Greg and family live in the Tampa area. Our oldest grandson Kenneth is at home in Montana with his wife Brooke. Greg and all four of the grandsons are also Compatriots. We love all of you. Greg, Bennett, Charlie, and Garrett, come forward, please?

Garrett is a member of the Guardian Chapter in Helena, Montana. Greg, Bennett, and Charlie are currently members of the International Society, having lived recently in Hong Kong. The rosette is the official recognition emblem of the SAR. None of them have ever been presented their member rosette and it's my honor to pin it on them.

Greg is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. For all his Air Force Career he was an F-15 fighter pilot. During his time in the Air Force, he served in combat in the Global War on Terrorism, flying once on the Northern Watch over Iraq and once on the Southern Watch over Iraq. Greg, it is with pride that I present you the SAR War Service Medal. The medal and certificate were arranged through the International Society.



I want to express my appreciation to President General Wright for his service the past year. Davis has made significant and far-reaching contributions to our Society. Among his family, professional career, and the SAR, he maintained a busy, full schedule. One of your objectives, Davis, was to ensure our presence in key activities and initiatives of other organizations such as ours. We will continue to develop those relationships with your advice and assistance. Thank you for the outreach, Davis, just as we thank you for all you have done.

I also want to sincerely thank the members of the Color Guard both here and at home. It's very true, you are the face of the Society. It's always amazing to see what you have accomplished and proudly been a part of, whether it be a Compatriot grave marking, a presentation of the colors, or simply standing with the ladies of other heritage societies in support of their activities. A special appreciation to you, Lou Raborg, for your unfailing devotion and superb work as Color Guard commander for the past year. Congratulations to our new Color Guard Commander, and Historian General, Brooks Lyles, and my deep appreciation to Former President General Mike Tomme and his Lady Cilla, the Color Guard members, and First lady Janet Leishman, for the wonderful ring ceremony and presentation tonight.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge and also thank our wonderful Headquarters staff in Louisville for all they do and have done, for me, and in ways known and unknown, for each of us. They truly go above and beyond to support us. You should know that they also deeply believe, as we do, in our purposes and missions. This week we have honored Executive Director Don Shaw. Thank you again, Don, for your many years of service and dedication to the Society. We wish you well in your retirement. I have always enjoyed working with you, and I will miss you.

Later this year I will have been a member for 20 years and this will be my ninth year as a General Officer of our Society. I've been honored to serve you previously as Librarian General, Registrar General, Treasurer General, and Secretary General. I could not have fulfilled my duties as Secretary General without having Dave Perkins as the Recording Secretary this past year. I am deeply grateful to you, Dave, you made everything much easier for me. I feel I've worked very hard in each of the positions I've held, and I certainly never believed any of them were just something where I was "holding the fort." Compatriots, I hope you know by now that I try to be a forthright person and have not hesitated to offer my comments or express my opinions, and I hope you will do the same with me. But gently, if you would, please.

I mentioned my admiration for those who came before. I know their efforts and accomplishments, were not possible without everyone working together. The same will be true for me and you. My appreciation to all of you who have journeyed both near and far to be here tonight as well as those who could not be here, who have supported me and worked to achieve the goals of this great Society through many years.

And now Compatriots, to matters at hand.

My message is simple. Stay the course for those areas that we've been focused on this past year.

The first of these are the preparations and activities surrounding the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We have approved the five-year operational plan developed by the Strategic Planning committee, known as "SAR 2026," identifying goals and objectives for us to accomplish as the focus year of 2026 nears. State Societies need to establish their own America250 SAR committee. Many of you have already done so, just as many Compatriots have begun to track their 250th activities for purposes of earning the Anniversary Medal.

In support of our 250th efforts and to bolster coordination among the committees, I have asked PG Wright to be the "Program Coordinator, 250th Programs and Commemorations" to ensure programs and efforts are aligned and not duplicative across the committees and to keep his

eye on our involvement with other organizations at the national level. I ask that the committees and States derive their own goals and objectives in support of the SAR 2026 strategic plan and send to Davis by November 1st.

It's proper that we, as a society, celebrate this historic commemoration of our nation. and secondly, it is a terrific opportunity to attract new members through our activities.

The second area we have been focused on this past year is the SAR Education Center and Museum. Our objective remains to open the Museum to the public by July 2026. In early July, the Trustees approved the Design Deliverable documents of the Museum Plan prepared by Solid Light, Incorporated. I hope you will also be able to view the animated video of a walk through the Museum that the Trustees have seen.

We have reached this stage after nine years and at the cost of 2.63 million dollars, which includes the generous donations of our membership and friends. It also includes over a half of a million dollars given by Solid Light. I want to commend those involved over the long term to bring the project to this point. We need to especially thank the efforts of Project Manager Bill Stone who conceived so much of the Museum and who devoted countless hours to it. I also want to thank Former President General Joe Dooley for sharing his knowledge and time in working with Solid Light on the "Historical Content" that is incorporated in the design of the Museum. Nine years of hard work by these two individuals deserves our congratulations and respect.

Our next phase is the buildout of the Museum and we will need to make several choices along the way. As a first step of this phase, the infrastructure of the Museum area needs to be upgraded. By that, I mean such things as a needed elevator, the electrical and heating and air conditioning systems, and the supporting steel beam structure for what we call the "upper world" of the museum. When we build the Museum, we could do it gallery by gallery or, if the donated or borrowed funds are sufficient, continuously until completed. We are looking for approximately two or three million dollars to accomplish this next step to upgrade the infrastructure as I partially described.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Museum will be a reality. In support of the entire buildout, and in recognition that we have moved out of the planning phase, I am appointing Former President General Warren Alter as Project Manager, SAR Museum, Construction Phase. I've asked Warren to pick his team to assist him. To be clear, project management will replace the present committee structure in guiding the project. Of course, major decision points along the way remain the purview of the Trustees.

We are going to get this Museum built!

Continuing on the theme of committees, let me announce that Compatriot and Surgeon General Keith Weissinger of the Washington Society is my Committee Coordinator. Many of you may already know that, as Keith and I have been working for a good while on the committee listing itself. My thanks to the committee chairmen for their cooperation with me ahead of this week. My goal is to publish the list by the first week of August.

I want to thank three long-time serving committee chairmen who are stepping down. Two of them are not in attendance tonight and they are Flag Chairman Jim Alexander of the Alabama Society and DAR Liaison Chairman Walt Timoschuk of the Tennessee Society. The third gentleman is here and that is Eagle Scout Chairman Ed Rigel, Senior, of the Georgia Society. We thank them for their years of service as the chair of their committees. I should also note that chairman of the Younger Members Committee, Kevin Mullen, has aged out of the committee and has graduated to the title of Advisor. Congratulations, Kevin.

I am pleased to announce other appointments. Derek Brown of the California Society has agreed to be my travel coordinator. You may now openly coordinate with him, but first you have to find his email address. I understand he may have quickly changed it earlier today! Ken Goodson

of the Michigan Society will remain as Vice President General of the International Society. Ray Wess of the Florida Society has accepted the position of Inspector General. David Boring of the DC Society will continue as the Chief Compliance Officer, and Dan Woodruff of the South Carolina Society will continue as the Chief Risk Management Officer. John Berg of the Oregon Society is appointed as the National Parliamentarian.

The appointed members of the Executive Committee have an important role to fulfill, and I am extremely grateful of their acceptance to help guide the society. They are: Davis Wright of Delaware, Ken Goodson of Michigan, Jim Klingler of California, Lee Popham of Florida, and Edmon McKinley of Alabama. I consider Paul Callanan as the Senior Advisor of the Executive Committee.

With a couple of changes, I am retaining the National Committees structure that was begun last year where, in some cases, selected committees are assigned to a major committee. We know that several room and noise problems arose at the last Leadership meetings. Some of that was, and is, unavoidable. However, Compatriot Weissinger took a fresh look at the Brown Hotel layout and then a small group that included Keith, Paul Callanan, Kelly Moore of the Headquarters staff, and me, closely reviewed the room assignments and meeting times of the committees at leadership. We have hopefully alleviated some of the previous issues. But I'm sure we'll be told if it works or not!

I have one other initiative to announce tonight and that is a return to the practice begun by Former President General Alter of holding virtual meetings with the General Officers, the Vice Presidents General, and the Executive Committee on a scheduled basis throughout the year. Communication among ourselves is vital.

We have many national priorities to accomplish in addition to the 250th Anniversary and the SAR Education Center and Museum. But I know, as you do, the hard work of the Society is accomplished at the State and Chapter levels where our efforts in the local communities are most important. No matter what the situation is within our organizations, there are still opportunities to find positive activities that can be used to further the missions of the SAR.

Compatriots, I commend your dedication and perseverance to the Patriotic, Historical, and Educational goals of the Society. Former President General Tom Lawrence said "many friends and Compatriots have worked hard to make this Society one of the strongest lineage and patriotic organizations." Let's keep the good work going.

Lastly, allow me to announce what Rita has chosen for her First Lady's project which is your financial support for our youth programs and contests. As we travel around, you'll hear more about that from her.

Ladies and gentlemen, it takes a lot of hard work and years of planning to organize and ensure the success of a Congress. Please join me in a round of applause for the Compatriots and Ladies of the Georgia Society who have made this Congress a fabulous event.

It has been an honor to address you tonight and I look forward to welcoming you at the 133rd Congress in Orlando. You are welcome to attend a reception hosted by the Alabama Society in the Scarbrough rooms area, immediately after our conclusion. Thank you.