

TO ALL COMPATRIOTS AND FRIENDS:

### **FEBRUARY MEETING**

The February meeting of the Wiregrass Chapter, SAR will be held **Thursday 17 February, 2000** at **Po' Folks Restaurant** in Enterprise at Noon. This will be our George Washington Birthday meeting and it is hoped as many members as possible can attend. However, with the amount of flu that is being seen in the area, your absence will be understood, if you are under the weather. We hope to have the contestants who are submitting entries for the Knight Essay Contest available to share their work with the group.

### **SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT**

The membership is to be thanked for their timely submissions of their 2000 annual dues. A finalized roster of 19 members, along with a check for \$ 522.50 has been submitted to the ALSSAR Treasurer. This leaves a balance of \$584.40 in the treasury for the upcoming year. We are happy to report that we had one reinstatement this year, **Leon G. Meadows, Jr.**, of Opp. Compatriot Meadows is back in the area, and is a past president of the Wiregrass Chapter. On the other hand, SGM Dan Coberly has been dropped from our roster. An updated membership roster is included with this mailing. Our membership drive for the year 2000 is off to a good start. The finalized application of Jody Creekmore has been submitted and we anticipate a rapid approval of his request for membership.

### **ALSSAR STATE CONVENTION**

The State Convention is to be held on 25-26 February at the Hilton Hotel in Huntsville, AL. A registration form along with an itinerary of

events were included in the Winter, 1999 mailing of *The ALSSAR Newsletter*. It is realized the location represents a long drive from our corner of the state, but attendance at such a meeting allows members to meet both State and National SAR Officers. President General Howard Horne is scheduled to be in attendance. Compatriots Kemp and Wallace are currently making plans to attend the convention, and they would like to have as many members as possible join them.

### **EAGLE SCOUT PROGRAM**

One of the chapter's areas of emphasis this year is increasing the awareness of the SAR Eagle Scout Program and scholarships. Jody Creekmore, once approved for membership, has volunteered to help work with the scouts. He himself is an Eagle Scout. Compatriot Wallace who has served on a Troop Committee in the past, has volunteered to assist in the mentoring of the Genealogy Merit Badge. Any member who would like additional information of the Eagle Scout Program should contact Compatriot Kemp.

### **STARS AND STRIPES**

In the Spring 2000 edition of *USA Philatelic*, the US Post Office announced the new stamps which are to be issued in the upcoming year. Among the stamps planned for release is a sheet of 20 different flag stamps tracking the evolution of the Stars and Stripes from colonial times to the present. The first day of issue of these stamps is 14 June 2000 - Flag Day. History buffs will be interested in these new stamp issues. For additional information, contact your local post office.

## ***AN AMERICAN TURTLE***

### **A 1776 Submarine**

This first submarine used in a combat situation was built by David Bushnell. The vessel was actually constructed as an afterthought when Bushnell and Yale University colleague, Phineas Pratt, conceived of an underwater bomb with a time delayed flintlock detonator. In order to deliver their bomb to an enemy ship, some type of submersible device was required.

Bushnell called his submarine the *Turtle* because it resembled two large tortoise shells joined together. It was made of six inch oak timbers, coated with tar and measured some 7.5 feet long and 6 feet wide. It was large enough to hold one man and was hand propelled. This new maritime invention had undergone extensive trials in the waters of the Connecticut River piloted by the inventor's brother Eraa Bushnell. However, on the eve of the *Turtle's* first combat mission, Erza Bushnell died, and a freshly recruited, but less practiced pilot, Era Lee, was destined to command the submarine's first mission.

During September, 1776 the British Fleet was blockading New York harbor and the American forces were looking for any possible means to break the strangle hold the British held on this important shipping center. On the night of September 6/7, 1776 the *Turtle* was launched against the British Flagship, *HMS Eagle*, a 64 gun frigate, moored in New York harbor. Lee made his way underwater to the rudder of the *Eagle's* hull, but when he tried to use the screw to attach the bomb to the enemy ship, he hit metal rather than wood. After a second attempt failed, the *Turtle* became entangled with the *Eagle's* rudder bar: lost ballast and surfaced before the charge could be planted.

The bomb was released into the water, then exploded. The British were so scared by the appearance of the *Turtle*, they moved their fleet from the harbor. So the submarine achieved its goal of breaking the blockade of New York harbor, even if it did not complete its mission of destroying an enemy ship.

On September 26, 1776 General Washington noted, "*Bushnell is a man of great mechanical powers, fertile in invention and a master of execution*".

A model of the *Turtle* is on exhibit at the Connecticut River Museum in Essex, CT. It was built in 1976 as a Bicentennial project and was tested for its maneuverability and submersible ability in the Connecticut River. It demonstrated to the modern viewer that the submarine worked as intended and confirmed the ingenuity of its inventor, David Bushnell.

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### ***THE CROSSING***

During January the cable channel A&E presented a two hour film, *The Crossing*, based on General Washington's crossing of the Delaware River to attack Trenton on Christmas, 1776. It was an excellent production and is recommended for viewing when it airs again.

Dick Kemp - President

John Wallace - Editor