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This year is the culmination of a journey that started when I became charter president of the Col. Fielding Lewis Chapter in 1999 and saw many challenges facing the Chapter and Virginia Society. In the intervening years I have worked alongside Virginia Society presidents & officers to modernize Virginia Society planning and management; improve members' participation in Society affairs, and to provide fun and fellowship at the Society meetings. This journey will end at the Annual Meeting in 2010. I have no desire or intent to run for National Office, although, if asked, I will fulfill the duties of National Trustee.

The combined efforts of the Society Presidents & Officers have solved most of the challenges encountered when this journey started. The Handbook is now clear, concise and user friendly. The Board of Managers' Meeting has been streamlined, focusing on key issues giving us time to either hold training or have informative presentations on Friday night. The Treasurer starts working on the next year's budget in August and the draft budget for the upcoming year is now presented to the members at the Semi-annual meeting giving them time to review and provide input before the annual meeting.

VASSAR has an excellent method of preparing its presidents for office by having them occupy in succession the offices of 3rd Vice President, 2nd Vice President, and President-Elect before taking the office of president. However longstanding traditional practices followed by VASSAR still do not take full advantage of this process. The President-Elect is an elected and installed officer yet he does not have the authority to fully prepare for his year. He does not have the responsibility to prepare his budget. The Chapter Annual Report form for his year, which could be a great management tool, is not even drafted until after he is president, and is normally not released until the year is one quarter to one third over.

There is absolutely no reason why he can't oversee the drafting of the report while he is President-Elect and release the report at the beginning of the calendar year it covers.

As a temporary solution, the President-Elect and the Treasurer are drafting next year's budget so it meets the incoming President's objectives. With the agreement of the President-Elect, I have directed that next year's Chapter Annual Report form be tailored to help the Society fill out our reports to National, meet the incoming Presidents agenda, AND be released before the calendar year it covers.

For a permanent solution, the Handbook Chairman and I are drafting proposals for the handbook to make these changes permanent. I hope to have these ready for a vote at the Semi-Annual meeting.

The 2009 Semi-Annual Meeting is at the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel and Conference Center on 18-19 September. It will be productive, informative, and FUN for Compatriots & their spouses! The theme is "Pirates of the Revolution." Since Pirates usually didn't wear neck ties, we won't either. (For some reason Pirates didn't like necktie parties.) The dress code for the Semi-Annual is easy. Coats and ties are optional.

The Norfolk Chapter has secured discounted rates for Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, so people can come early or stay later. The Norfolk Chapter is working on some great bus tours following the Saturday luncheon.

There will be three member contests to liven up the meetings. On Friday night, it is a tropical shirt contest; members wishing to participate will wear tropical shirts to the Board of Manager's meeting. The wives, lead by the first lady will judge the results and determine the categories. At the General Membership meeting, Saturday Morning, there will be two contests:

one for Sports Jackets, one for Golf Pants. Brave souls can participate in both. As before the ladies will be the judges.

For Friday Night, after the Board of Managers' meeting, I plan on following Art Batten's lead and have two or three short entertaining and informative presentations for the members. The first presentation will be on the Pirates of the Revolution. The Norfolk Chapter is pursuing the very exciting leads for the other presentations and the keynote speaker at the luncheon.

The First Lady is hosting two exciting events for the ladies one on Friday night during the Board of Managers Meeting and Saturday Morning during the General Membership Meeting and is planning a contest of her own.

More details on the Semi-Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach will follow soon.

The 120th Annual Meeting of the Virginia Society will be 13-15 February 2010 at the Holiday Inn Select, Richmond – Koger South Conference, the same hotel as this year.

Compatriotically
Bill Simpson
President, Virginia Society
Sons of the American Revolution

UPCOMING EVENTS

119th Annual Congress
Atlanta, Georgia
July 4-8, 2009

2009 AMS Conference
Rochester, NY
August 8-9, 2009

2009 VASSAR Semi-Annual
Virginia Beach, VA
September 18-19, 2009