

Remarks of J. Mark DeNicola
1st Vice President – Stephen Holston Chapter, TNSSAR
Patriot Grave Marking Ceremony
Honoring John Adair and Edward Smith
Berry Lynnhurst Funeral Home and Cemetery
Knoxville TN
September 28, 2024

Opening Remarks

Good morning everyone. I am Mark DeNicola, 1st Vice President of the Stephen Holston Chapter of the Tennessee Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. I am calling to order this patriot grave marking ceremony. Please accept a warm welcome to this meaningful ceremony on behalf of your hosts today, the Stephen Holston Chapter and the Berry Lynnhurst Funeral Home. As we gather here this morning, I would like you to reflect that grave markings and such commemorations are a cornerstone of the programs of the Sons of the American Revolution. In that respect, when we honor patriots such as the two interred here, we celebrate all the others who served with them, shoulder to shoulder, to give us this nation and our constitutional Republic.

Intros per the Program Categories (Program Attached)

Lead-In to the reading of the Patriot Biographies

I am going to guess that many of you in attendance today have spent countless hours researching your genealogy. During that research, have you ever wondered what the people who contributed to your gene pool were like? And then, reflected on how sad it was that, in most instances, there was nothing more than a few documents left to pay tribute to their existence here on earth.

A saying that I believe is relevant to this ceremony, and according to my research, has been attributed to the Egyptians, Jews, Romans, etc., and a not-so-ancient person named Banksy goes something like this: A man dies twice; the first time when you stop breathing and the second when somebody says your name for the last time.

Irvin Yalom, a professor of psychiatry at Stanford, wrote this: "Some day soon, perhaps in forty years, there will be no one alive who has ever known me. That's when I will be truly dead – when I exist in no one's memory. I thought a lot about how someone very old is the last living individual to have known some person or cluster of people. When that person dies, the whole cluster dies too, vanishes from the living memory. I wonder who that person will be for me. Whose death will make me truly dead?"

In the past, before technology and the digital age, the ordinary person, with emphasis on the term ordinary, was undoubtedly destined to die that second death in a generation or two because there was almost no thought, nor any way, to preserve the knowledge of a person's life. Untold billions have passed with no one the wiser they even existed! But the information age has helped change that!

And while we cannot prevent the first death, we can all delay the second death of our ancestors and those around us. Each of us should find time to connect with those we know who are housing treasures of knowledge that may soon be lost and record that knowledge so that we can ensure that their names and stories will be talked about by someone for generations to come.

And, while we did not personally know these patriots, John Adair and Edward Smith, interred in the adjacent cemetery, I feel that, in some way, we are postponing or preventing their second death by uttering their names here today, reading something about their lives, and recording their information for the ages.

Now for the reading of the biographies.

Rest of the Program