



# Robert Rankin Chapter #62

Texas Society Sons of the American Revolution

# The Rankin Register

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## Richard Shanks,

*Our Beloved Compatriot*

*By Thomas Jackson*

Bobby asked me to say a few brief words tonight regarding Richard's involvement with the Robert Rankin Chapter. I have split my comments into things he did and memories I have.

Richard, a brilliant engineer, was also the second President of our Chapter. In September 2006 he became the second member of our chapter to receive the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal in recognition of three years work with the Flag Program.



Richard Shanks receives the Bronze Good Citizenship medal from Tom Jackson. He later received the Bronze Chapter Service Medal for his ongoing support of the Flag Presentation Program.

That same month we said thank you to his lovely wife Vionna for her help and support.



DAR Tejas Chapter Regent Marti Thorne congratulates Tejas members Gail Raines and Vionna Shanks on their receipt of the Martha Washington Medal.

In February 2008 he was awarded the Bronze Color Guard Medal for three years of faithful service. He and Ed Raines were the first in the Chapter to receive this award.



Rankin Compatriot Richard Shanks (left) receives his Bronze Color Guard Medal from TXSSAR Past President Tom Green (right). Richard was a color guardsman from 2003-2010.

Richard and Gus Mistrot were the first in the chapter to receive the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal for Leadership in March 2009.



From left to right, Richard Shanks, Gus Mistrot, and Tom Jackson. Richard and Gus are receiving their BGCML for Leadership at the annual banquet in April 2009. Raymond Cox is in the foreground.

What you may not know is that Richard stepped up to take officer positions for our Chapter when others wouldn't. That is how he served as President, Chaplain, and Secretary/ Treasurer.



January 2007. Compatriot Shanks is presenting the Officer Slate. He has added his name as Secretary/ Treasurer when none other would. Thanks Richard!

The Robert Rankin Chapter was born April 10, 2002 and Richard Shanks was one of our charter members along with Ed Raines, Gus Mistrot, and Allan Henshaw, among others.



From left to right, Richard Shanks, Gus Mistrot, Kameron Searle, Ed Raines, and Allan Henshaw. This was the organizational banquet in April 2002.

That year Richard was our Sgt-at-Arms and served as our Genealogist in 2003. He and his lovely wife, Vionna, were present at the first state convention our chapter was eligible to attend in March 2003.

At the 2003 state convention the Rankin Chapter received the Wilbur Strong Award for outstanding new chapter and we were recognized as the Outstanding Chapter in the State in our size category for calendar years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

During the 2009 National Convention, the chapter received the President's General's Cup Award and the Americanism Award signifying our being the National Outstanding Chapter in our size category.





The Rankin Presidents are shown in this photo at their September 2009 meeting where TXSSAR President Judge Thomas Lawrence presented the Chapter with The President General Activities Award and the Americanism Liberty Bell Award. From left to right, Richard Shanks, David Jones, Pat Kerr, Ed Raines, Gus Mistrot, Kelly McBride, and Tom Jackson.

At the 2009 state convention I was asked how our little chapter achieved so much.

I replied, it was attributable to collective efforts of a group of very talented men, but it started primarily with two, Ed Raines and Richard Shanks.

If Ed is the Paul Bunyan of our Chapter, then Richard was surely our Johnny Appleseed. He was never one for the limelight, but could always be seen planting his apple seeds reflecting his love of America, love of history, and friendship. He was the embodiment of SAR ideals.

A strength of our Chapter is our committee structure and wouldn't you know that in 2003, Richard was tasked with the early responsibility of identification of committees and persuading Compatriots to assume the responsibility.

Early on, Richard stepped up quickly to become part of our Flag Program and along with Ed Raines they formed our color guard.



(From left to right: Ed Raines, Virginia Evans, Richard Shanks, Vionna Shanks, and Patrick Kerr.) Chapter members are shown here with members of the Tejas Chapter of the DAR after they finished their presentation for members of the Libertad Chapter of the NSDAR on October 4, 2007 as part of a celebration of the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States.

Richard helped start the JROTC program and nurtured it before turning it over to Patrick Kerr. Along the way he built goodwill at the schools with the JROTC instructors and visited with chapter members to encourage them to become involved with the presentations.

He also helped start the Eagle Scout program and persuaded John Davis, a lifelong Scouter, to assume the reins.

The success of our Chapter is predicated upon the many seeds that Richard planted along the way and then carefully tended.



Richard at McRoberts Elementary before the 2004 Flag Presentation.

He was the first of our chapter to attend a naturalization program for new citizens.



At the Office of Homeland Security, Houston TX, Compatriot Shanks (left back row) and Compatriot Kerr (just behind man in the yellow shirt) provide the color guard at two swearing in ceremonies for new citizens on July 16, 2008. Past President Thomas Green is in the center.

I also wanted to share a few brief memories I have of Richard's involvement in our Chapter.

As a prospective member I first met Richard as he made his rounds visiting with each person at Denny's restaurant. With a smile on his face, he inquired about my family and found interest in my noting the presence of relatives in Louisiana.

After the meeting he gave me an SAR magazine detailing the role of Acadians in the Revolution.

His friendly smile encouraged me to return and because of Richard's suggestion, my son identified 41 Patriots of Acadian descent.

The following year, the meeting location for Rankin changed to King Fish Market and I noted Richard once again making his rounds warmly saying hello to each person in the room.

I found it interesting that he encouraged people who were sitting by themselves to move and sit with others.

I was also fascinated that his cheerful demeanor attracted the attention of schoolchildren when he assisted Ed at the flag shows.



All smiles after the King Elementary performance in 2006. From L to R: Richard and Vionna Shanks, Kelly McBride, Gail and Ed Raines, and Virginia Evans.



Shown here at the Parish School in September 2007, are, from left to right: Tom Green, Ed Raines, Richard Shanks, Ginny Evans.

One morning we were prepared to make a day long presentation at Langham Creek High School in Cy Fair and I arrived at the front desk and noted Richard and Vionna in their colonial regalia sitting comfortably and was outraged to discover that the school refused us admission.



I apologized to Richard and Vionna for the long drive for nothing. Richard was unfazed, smiled big and said “not a problem.”

We returned the following week for our presentation. I did mine and Ed was in the midst of his when he was called away. After an awkward silence with students and teachers waiting, Richard stood up and walked purposefully to the front of the room. Without advance preparation, he kept a roomful of students from four continents spellbound with his retelling of his time as a NASA moon shot controller.

Richard is shown below addressing students from nine different countries in 2008.



I will close with a final remembrance.

This chapter of ours has many moving parts and serving as President is not for the faint of heart. When I was President, Richard made a point of seeing me at the conclusion of every meeting and offering words of encouragement punctuated with his famous smile. This helped me to return for the next meeting.

Richard, some of your seeds have grown into saplings and others into trees. We will nurture them the best we can and as we relax in their shade and sample their sweet fruit we will remember you.



Rankin Compatriots have plenty of help at their first Flag Show at McRoberts Elementary in 2004. In the photo at the far left is Kelly McBride, at the far right is Ed Raines and third from the left with his trademark smile is Richard Shanks.

*Editors Note:*

Richard received his BGCM for leadership in recognition of his serving as a church leader for over 30 years in three different states in addition to leadership roles in scouting, military, and hereditary groups. He was a NASA controller during the moon launch and during the same period he was an officer in a business association of space scientists and managers.

*Editors Note:*

The **President General's Award** recognizes chapters and state societies for their efforts to achieve the administrative goals of the SAR and who contribute to the success of the NSSAR. The **Americanism Award (Liberty Bell Award** for chapters) recognizes the chapters that participate in outreach education efforts and who acknowledge community leaders for their efforts to perpetuate the goals of the SAR. The **President General's Cup** recognizes the chapter that best achieves the goals of both the President General's and Americanism Awards.

## Member Spotlight



### Richard Shanks

Second President  
Robert Rankin Chapter

**Personal:** Born 1925 in rural Jasper County, Missouri, with three brothers and one sister. He married Vionna Pauline Fee in 1952 at the Church of God Church, Columbus, Kansas. They have two children, Galen and Diana and four grandchildren. He has been active in the Christian Church serving as Deacon and Elder.

**Educational:** He attended grade school in a one room country school house with all eight grades in the same building. Later, he attended Riverton High School in Cherokee Co. Kansas graduating in 1942. He won the County Medal for scoring highest in the mathematics contest! Richard attended Kansas State Teachers College in Pittsburg, Kansas. and completed his Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering in 1951 from Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas.

**Military:** He entered the army in June 1944 at Fort Riley, Kansas followed by basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas in the Antiaircraft section. Subsequently he was assigned to the 123<sup>rd</sup> Antiaircraft Headquarters in Hawaii.

After the war he managed the demobilizations of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Antiaircraft Headquarters and the 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade Headquarters. He was awarded the WWII Service Medal, the WWII Asiatic Pacific Theatre Medal, the Good Conduct Medal,

and Rifle Sharpshooter Badge. He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant and was discharged in March 1946.

**Professional:** After college Richard started as an engineer with Empire District Electrical Company in Joplin, Missouri. Subsequently, he worked for Boeing Co. in Wichita, Kansas. He followed this with a stint with Rockwell International as a Rocket Test Engineer in Neosho, Missouri. This was followed by a stay at Cape Kennedy on the Apollo Space Program. The aircraft projects were completed in 1970 and Richard entered the oil and gas industry. In 1971 he obtained his Professional Engineer License in Texas.

**Genealogical:** Richard joined the NSSAR in 1996 and transferred to the Rankin Chapter in 2003. He has his Patriot and 16 additional supplements. He has held various positions with the Robert Rankin Chapter including President, Secretary, Treasurer, Genealogist, Sgt. At Arms, and Chaplain. His Committee Chairs included JROTC and Nominations. Richard was awarded the BGCM for leadership, the BGCM for noteworthy service to the community, the Bronze Chapter Service Medal for five years SAR leadership, the BCSM for community service, the Color Guard medal for service, and the Knox Medal for color guard service.



The photo above says it all. Richard Shanks (left) has just received from Kelly McBride a National Society Sons of the American Revolution Certificate of Appreciation. Richard, we certifiably appreciate all that you are and all that you have done!