



Message to the Guard

Nr. 5

December 22nd, 2022

Subject: End of Year Wrap Up

Guardsmen,

Thank you all for supporting the Virginia SAR over the past twelve months. The VASSAR Color Guard is active across the Commonwealth and has attended out-of-state events to ensure our presence is noted. My records show that the VASSAR Color Guard has attended over 127 National, State, and Chapter level events. Some of these included public service events, which raised public awareness of the SAR and what we stand for. One example was the annual Gold Star Family dinner in Virginia Beach, which several hundred people attended. This year marked the tenth year in a row we were invited to provide the Color Guard to open the event. The event organizer stated that we are the color guard of choice.

Indeed.

My Adjutant Dale Corey and I think this is a foundational goal for the VASSAR Color Guard – that we become the *color guard of choice*. Achieving this means more training and attention to detail, uniform appearance (Regimental and Militia), and practice. Like me, some of us make mistakes, but we learn and improve.

Towards this end, you will see more color guard workshops scheduled next year. We have expanded from the previous two state and two chapter color guard workshops held last year to several more. Our goal in 2023 is to have at least one per region – if not more – so that you can take time to attend, learn some new things, and attain/maintain firelock proficiency (a side note: there were over 50 VASSAR-sanctioned firing events in 2022). Since we will conduct in-depth workshops, Dale and I decided to discontinue the previous practice of holding a one-hour color guard workshop at the Semi and Annual VASSAR Conferences.

We have also seen changes in the past year:

- New General Liability Insurance that comprehensively accommodates the color guard activities.
- Development and approval of a VASSAR Accident/Incident Report and associated wallet reference cards.

- Formalize the Color Guard Committee with position descriptions for each member and add the position of VASSAR Color Guard Quartermaster, Training Officer, and Insurance Advisor.
- Refined online information is available to the Guard. For example, an enhanced color guard schedule format makes it easier to audit (i.e., the number of non-firing and firing events) for insurance purposes, providing Guardsmen with sufficient information on a particular event and adding a Heat Index factor during summer activities.
- Refinement of the color and honor guard concept that was introduced and implemented in the winter of 2021 and captured in a new document called the *Playbook* (version 9.0 is posted in the Resource tab).
- Continued updates to the draft *VASSAR Color Guard Handbook* (now version 8.3), which may be obtained/downloaded from the Resource tab in the color guard section of the new (member clicks) *Virginia Dispatch*. Copies of this have been shared with other states' color guard leadership, at their request.
- Successful transition of color guard files and pull-down menu format from the old *Dispatch*. [A huge shout out to Compatriots John Gullion and David Carpenter for making this happen. Thank you, gentlemen.]

And much more.

For next year, Dale and I look to enlist more Compatriots into the VASSAR Color Guard. As of writing this, the current active roster stands at 115 Guardsmen. While that is an impressive number, many Chapters do not have their own color guard and rely on other Chapters for color guard support. Generally, this is not an issue. However, when there are major commemorative/celebratory events like Memorial Day or July 4th, many of you are already busy across the Commonwealth supporting local color guard events.

The good news is that this demand for our Guardsmen for these events means we are engaging with the public in many local communities in Virginia, reinforcing our community ties in positive ways. An excellent underpinning for the 250th celebrations.

The logical conclusion is that we need more Guardsmen spread across more Chapters.

Already mentioned is our emphasis on training for next year. The Committee will also review the VASSAR medal award system.

We look forward to working closely with the French military in some of our capstone events in Virginia. This year marked the first time we have had active-duty French military participation in our color guards (possibly a "first").

We also encourage you to take the NSSAR Youth Protection training and get certified. It's easy to do and doesn't take long.

And this has been a sad year for Guardsmen who lost loved ones. Our deepest sympathies go out to you. In every case that I'm aware, grieving Compatriots have decided to continue participating in the Guard. I trust this reflects who we are: a group that cares about each other and offers camaraderie and solace. Thank you.

I will post next year's color guard schedule on January 1st.

To all Guardsmen and your families, please have a safe and restful holiday.

And well done, gentlemen. Our hats are off to you.

Happy Holidays.

Yours in Patriotism,

Chris Melhuish
VASSAR CG Commander

Dale Corey
VASSAR CG Adjutant and Vice Commander