

Citizenship – A Privilege to be Cherished

On October 2nd, I had the distinct honor of representing our Chapter at the Naturalization Ceremony in Wheeling, West Virginia. The Honorable Frederick P. Stamp, Jr. preside over the ceremony and remarks were given by Dr. Scott Miller, President of Bethany College, Ms. Debbie Smith, Regent of the Wheeling Chapter of DAR, and myself.

Fourteen individuals representing nine countries took the oath of allegiance to our United States. It was a humbling experience and yet extremely memorable as each one reflected on the privileges and responsibilities of being a US citizen.

The following comments were shared and are presented for each of us to be reminded of our role as citizens and especially as Compatriots:

“On behalf of the George Washington Chapter, the Pennsylvania Society and the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, I extend to you heart felt congratulations on becoming a Citizen of the United States of America.

One of the many objectives of the S.A.R. is to preserve the memory of the men and women who founded our great nation, and remember the sacrifices they made over 230 years ago. Over the past three centuries, individuals like you, have joined this cause of freedom and continued to shape our nation.

Ellis Island is well known for the 12million immigrants that came thru the immigrant station from 1892 to 1954, and today over 100million citizens can trace their ancestry to immigrants who arrived in America. Augmenting this influx is the welcoming to our shores of individuals, as depicted on the inscription on the Statue of Liberty. “Give me you’re tired, you’re poor, you’re huddled masses yearning to breath free ... send these to me”. So here you are, in Wheeling, WVA responding to the call, desiring to be an American. We welcome you with open arms.

To become a naturalized Citizen is a right you have attained through the process outlined by our government. For many, it may have seemed like a long road, but as you stand before us today, you demonstrate an unwavering commitment, and we commend you for your tenacity and faith in America. As Thomas Jefferson, outlined in the 1st Naturalization Act of 1795, natural born and native born are to be interchangeable, and so Naturalization can be interpreted “...to become as if natural born, that is, a citizen...”.

This right also carries with it responsibilities to defend and preserve our Constitution. The 14th Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1868 affirms that the state in which you reside shall not deprive you of life, liberty and property, with

equal protection under the law. You in turn assume the role of paying taxes, voting, serving on juries, and obeying the laws of the government. Active citizenship is one where you will work towards the betterment of your community, economic participation, public service, volunteerism and other such efforts to improve life for you and your fellow citizens.

You have chosen America as your home, but remember that you bring with you your own unique heritage to be passed on to future generations. We all have characteristics, traits and rituals from our individual roots. This must not be lost, but integrated into your American life-style.

In a few moments, you will take the oath of citizenship, and fulfill your dream of identifying with an historic line of immigrants that have come to America. You will be following after the Founders of our great country who signed our Declaration of Independence in 1776, along with past and present Patriots as you mutually pledge to each other, your lives, your fortunes, and your sacred honor. May God bless you, your families, and America.”

I trust, as we reflect on your heritage, that the George Washington Chapter will remain active in preserving our liberties, advancing freedom, and avoid the onslaught of tyranny that permeates our culture today.