

President General's Dispatch – January 2012

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The Domingo Ramon Diary

"In the Valle of the Circunsicion on the first day of the month of March 1700, I Mayor Diego Ramon placed for execution the founding of a new mission some two leagues, more or less, from the banks of the same river or copious water spring. It is on a pleasant and fertile site, with abundant land and much facility, on a source of eater for irrigation. I brought with me, with the assistance of the Father Predicator Friar Antonio de San Buenarcenturay y Olivares, the Friar Francisco Hidalgo and Indians gathered from the surrounding land for the great honor of God and of his Most Holly Mother I found this site and place this pueblo and mission and give it the name San Francisco Solano. I give in the civil and criminal jurisdiction which accorded the other pueblos and missions of this province."

With this official decree, Diego Ramon established the Mission San Francisco Solano in conjunction with Mission San Juan Bautista. In 1703 a military plaza was laid out and Ramon's Spanish soldiers became the "flying company", a garrison of Presidio de San Juan Bautista del Rio Grande. From 1700 to 1716 the San Juan Bautista settlement was the most advanced on the New Spain northeastern frontier according to the *Handbook of Texas*.

In 1716 it launched an entrado into Texas with Diego's son Domingo Ramon in charge. They were certainly soldiers of the Spanish army, but they were also colonizers in Spanish Texas. Domingo Ramon kept a detail diary of this 1716 expedition, or entry, into Texas, which includes a descriptive account of reaching San Pedro Springs where in 1718 the Mission San Francisco Solano would be moved. Then the next year, 1719, the mission would be moved across the river and renamed Mission San Antonio de Valero, which would become known as **The Alamo**.

The 1716 diary is locked away in the Mexican Archives in Mexico City, and to our great surprise, on December 22, 2011 the Daughters of the Republic of Texas were presented a beautiful copy of that diary. The December 22, 2011 event happened because of a chance meeting. In October, I attended an event where a few media people had gathered. Someone mentioned a man there was filming for PBS and I mentioned that I wanted a film about the history of DRT to be on PBS. Eventually I was introduced to Bill Millet, a film producer, and we hit it off immediately. Bill currently has a film showing all over Texas, it is *El Camino Olive Trail*. It tell the story of people of vision who were pioneers in a land of sun, drought, and sometimes broken dreams; just across the US/Mexico border along a historic route where Spanish priests established missions and planted trees, olive trees. This is the story of the olive trees in the land along the fabled El Camino Real.

I told Bill we had an olive tree just outside the Alamo entrance, and I asked what he knew about it. He said it was a native Texas Olive Tree, not a Mission Olive Tree. We talked more and somehow it came up that Mexican Senator Ramon had planted thousands of olive trees. Senator Ramon is a descendant of Diego and Domingo Ramon of the 1700s history connected to the Alamo and I said I would like to present Mexican Senator Jesus Maria Ramon with a Texas flag that flew over the Alamo to recognize the Ramon family for their contribution to Alamo history.

It turns our my cousin in Del Rio, where Senator Ramon actually resides, is best friends with Senator Ramon's granddaughter. My cousin has known the entire Ramon family for many years and Shannon said I would "fall in love with Chata Ramon," and believe me it is true. We start making plans for the

presentation to take place on December 22, 2011 in Alamo Hall. I was told (and since we have discovered it was true) that Ramon's visit was to be closely guarded for security reasons). So I didn't invite even the DRT Board of Management, or the Alamo and Library committees. Now I wish I had. Fast forward to December 22, 2011, a gorgeous day in San Antonio at the Alamo. I had no idea how many members of the large Ramon family would come, and when dozens showed up I was extremely happy. Senator and Mrs. Ramon have eight grown children and about 24 grandchildren, and along with spouses, just about the entire clan was there. The actual ceremony took place in the Alamo Hall. The master of ceremonies was Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson. Dr. Felix D. Almaraz, Jr., Professor Emeritus of Borderlands History, The University of Texas at San Antonio, gave a great talk about the Alamo and the borderlands. Senator Jeff Wentworth of San Antonio joined me in presenting the Texas flag.

The next part was a total surprise, Senator Ramon gave a wonderful speech about how much this event meant to his family (who filled Alamo Hall) and he handed me a copy of the 1716 diary that his ancestor Domingo Ramon kept on his "entrado" into Texas. The only difference is the copy is in English instead of Spanish. It is bound in the same brown leather of the original in the Mexican Archives. We were shocked!! The Senator and I were both very moved. It was an early Christmas present for the DRT Library at the Alamo.

I have read it about ten times. Page one starts out: *"The Domingo Ramon Diary of the 1716 Expedition into the province of Texas. In the name of the Holy Trinity, in the town of Saltillo, Government of Nueva Viscaya, on the seventeenth day of February of the year 1716, I begin the diary and route of the expedition to the Province of the Texas. By order of His Excellency, my master, Dugue de Linares, Vicery and Captain General of this New Spain, I, Captain Domingo Ramon, with the company of 25 cavalymen, enter said province for the protection and custody of the missions that are to be established, of which company I am named, by my master, His Excellency, as commander-in-chief, their protector."* He continues, *"this day, February 17, 1716 I left said town of Saltillo with all my company and pack train and the rest of the train. I marched one league in a northerly direction to some corn stalks where the horses and mules pastured, and the place was named San Ines. February 18, I marched with all the train four leagues in a northerly direction until arriving at an arroyo that is called Padilla, where I stopped."* Page 2 starts: *"February 19, I stopped in this place on account of some pack mules, being lost and mbebecause one of the herdsmen of said pack mules ran away, when he was most needed."*

"February 20, This day I marched eight leagues in an easterly direction to the Rinconada Place because there was avery high mountain ahead. (Note: eight leagues is 27.6 miles). February 21, This day I marched five leagues in a northerly direction until I arrived at Nacatas Post where I set up my camp. At this time I gave the order that the Second Lieutenant Pedro de los Santos leave Icamole Post with all his horses to join me at this place, as it is suitable, and to allow for the Religious of the Cross to catch up with us, because they had to join my convey in order to undertake said trip; this place being suitable as a stopping place."

"February 22, This day I left my camp and I arrived at four in the afternoon at the town of Saltillo, where I had sent the sergeant of this company with six soldiers to escort the religious to said camp, and because the religious had detained themselves in said town ten days on charity work. They left the first day of March, having spent three days on said distance to the camp, and they arrived at Nacatas on the third." End of page 2.

DRT members, in addition to me, at the December 22 event were Melinda Navarro, Alamo Committee Chairman, Janie Babcock, Corresponding Secretary General, Stephanie Gault, Historian General, and Lee Spencer White, Alamo Committee member and founder of the Alamo Defenders Descendants Association. All of us were excited to examine the copy of a 296-year-old diary.

I am planning future events and possible trips with Mexican Senator Jesus M. Ramon as we try to bring new information to the Alamo about the missions that preceded the Mission San Antonio de Valero, the Alamo. At this event Dr. Almaraz said "It's a new era in Texas historiography and a new era in U.S.- Mexico relations that for a half-century, historians in the region have sought a change in attitude regarding trans-Rio Grande relations and research."

Even after almost 300 years, we have a lot to learn and discover about this part of our history.



Mexico Senator Ramon being presented with a flag that flew over The Alamo by DRT President General Karen R. Thompson



DRT President General Karen R. Thompson, Mexico Senator Ramon, & DRT Corresponding Secretary General Janie Babcock



DRT President Karen R. Thompson and Alamo Chairman Melinda Navarro examining the copy of the diary



Texas Senator Jeff Wentworth, DRT President General Karen R. Thompson, & Mexico Senator Ramon



DRT Historian General, Stephanie Gault, DRT Alamo Chairman Melinda Navarro, Mexico Senator Ramon, DRT President General Karen R. Thompson, DRT Alamo Committee member, Lee Spencer White, & DRT Corresponding Secretary General, Janie Babcock

Meet the Board

Part of my newsletter is to introduce our Board of Management members. Last issue of the *President General's Dispatch* I featured First Vice President Charlotte Moody and Second Vice President Judy Tannehill. Now it is my pleasure to feature Third Vice President Faye Chism and Fourth Vice President Betty Edwards.

3rd Vice President General – Faye Chism

Ruby Faye Atkission was born to Cecil R. Atkission and Ruby Loureen Ruff Atkission in Vernon, Texas. The oldest of four children, Faye attended Vernon schools from First grade through graduation of high school. Faye attended Texas Women's University in Denton and majored in history (surprise!) which she has loved all her life, following in the foot steps of her parents. Her mother's father died when she was only 18 months old. Many times she heard her mother say she wished she knew more about her father and his people. It took Faye a long time to find "her people" but she did. In her mother's 75th birthday, she gave her a bout about her life and family. It was titled "*Ruby Atkission an Independent Woman.*"

On Thanksgiving day 1960, Faye went on a double date with a boy named Roy Chism, and Faye never went on a date with anyone else. They married January 16, 1961 (Faye says "God he was good looking"). Roy and Faye have two children, Robin Diane Miller and Randall Guy Chism. One grandchild, Britton who is a member of CRT and past Custodian General. Faye is a charter member of Cross Timbers Chapter that was 20 years old last March. She has served as chapter president, vice-president, treasurer, parliamentarian, chaplain and CRT sponsor.

Faye has served two terms as District II Representative/Convention Chairman and two terms as 3rd vice president, and many state committees, including Bylaws, Nominating, Legislative and CRT. Her ancestors are Dr. William Mitchell Owen and Sarah Groom Owen, both a buried in Round Rock Cemetery. Dr. Owen is in my book *Historical Round Rock, Texas* and his beautiful two-story home is well preserved at #8 Chisholm Trail, just a short distance from the "round rock." Dr. Owen was elected to the Texas legislature in 1860.



Top – Faye Chism with CRT member

Bottom – Faye Chism with her husband Roy

4th Vice President General – Dr. Betty Edwards

Betty Edwards is a native Houstonian. She graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with a cum laude degree in biology, and the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston, with Internship at Medical College of Ohio. Betty returned to UTMB for her Residency Obstetrics and Gynecology where she stayed one year on the faculty as Assistant Professor before starting private practice in General Ob-Gyn. In November of 1981 Betty opened her office in northwest Harris County in the FM 1960 area. Betty had her private practice open for over 30 years and as she said “I have had the honor of delivering over 7,000 TEXANS!” She currently is teaching at UTMB as a Clinical Professor with the Department of Ob-Gyn.

When Betty and her sisters were little girls their grandmother Eugenia Noble Edwards told them they were eligible to be members of DRT. Because of her busy medical career, Betty waited until 1992 to officially join DRT, but she has served this organization in many ways since coming on board.

As a history buff, joining DRT came naturally, and what followed was restoration of historic buildings. Betty has restored several old stone buildings in Hallettsville, Lavaca County, circa 1875 and they await historical designation. Her ancestor Jesse Beeson, as a young man wrote political articles for the Democratic Watchman in Pennsylvania, he was from Ohio, he joined the Republic of Texas Army. After being commissioned he returned to Ohio to Medical School. He applied for a land grant and moved his family to Texas where he practiced general medicine in DeWitt and Lavaca Counties. He also helped establish the Victoria Advocate newspaper. He is buried on his farm Souplejack near Big Brushy Creek in Lavaca County.



Dr. Betty Edwards

The Sidney Sherman Chapter



Pictured L-R: President Joanna Wilson, Santa Fe; Diane Reynolds, Harris County; Gwen Lejsal, Pearland; and Registrar Linda Cooper, Texas City.

The Sidney Sherman Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in Galveston welcomed two new members at their December meeting. They were the first DRT chapter organized when the association was founded in 1891. They have over 75 members from throughout the Gulf Coast area. The chapter participates fully in DRT activities, Texas Honor Days, essay contests, and of course continue to operate our beloved Cradle. We owe a deal of gratitude to the Sidney Sherman Chapter for 120 years of work and dedication!

Upcoming DRT Events!

We have several events coming up. Mark February 25, 2012 on your calendar for the dedication of the new Adina de Zavala painting to be unveiled at 2 pm in the Alamo Hall. This will be a momentous occasion, as the Alamo Mission Chapter puts this painting on loan to the Alamo. In addition to having this long overdue painting done the Alamo Mission Chapter are having Jim Guimarin of The History Shop (next door to the Gallagher Building) restore the early chapter scrapbooks, which of course contain a lot of history, especially about DRT. Dr. Sharon Skrobarcek, president of the Alamo Mission Chapter, founded in 1906, is very instrumental in preserving the documents and history that are part of their chapter history collection. As you know, the original DRT Alamo Committee members and ladies that operated the shrine were members of AMC. After the 2 pm event, come back to the Alamo Hall for the the "Voices" program at 6:30 pm of the Alamo Couriers Chapter. This is an outstanding event!

Dr. Sharon Skrobarcek and Jim Guimarin in his shop.

The 176th year anniversary of Texas Independence has celebrations both in Fort Worth and San Antonio. The Alamo Mission Chapter in San Antonio, on Friday, March 2, 2012 at 12:45 pm will start their annual *Texas Independence Day* event at the Alamo. Speakers will include Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, President, Texas A & M at San Antonio. She is one of the most amazing women I have ever met. She didn't start college until she was 30 years old, and in fact did not know very good English. She is an inspiration to girls and women everywhere.

The next day, Saturday, March 3, 2012 in Fort Worth, the *Texas Independence Day Luncheon* of the Frances Cooke Van Zandt Chapter will be held at the Ridglea Country Club at 11:30 am. The speaker will be Linda Spangler and her topic is "*Mitchell Putnam, Courageous Texas Frontiersman.*" Cost is \$25 and make reservations to Joannart35@charter.net.

The Alamo Mission Chapter will hold the *Annual Memorial Service for the Heroes of the Alamo - Victory or Death*, a candlelight tribute commemorating the 176th anniversary of the Battle of the Alamo at 6:30 pm in front of the shrine.

Last but not least, get in your 2012 DRT Convention registration to come to Austin on Thursday, May 17, 2012 to the Doubletree Hotel North. See our website www.drinfo.org/members for details and the registration form. Patricia Horridge and her committee are going to put on the biggest and best DRT convention we have ever had, and after all this is our 121st gathering! Come and join us!