

In Survival Bid, DAR Tries Fajitas 'n 'Ritas

by Con Chapman

WASHINGTON, D.C. Visitors to the national headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution here are often surprised by the broad diversity of women who have joined the lineage-based organization after successfully tracing their roots to the War of Independence. “Phyllis Schlafly I can believe,” says Ron Milarski, who is visiting with the eighth grade civics class that he teaches in Roanoke, Virginia. “But Bo Derek? Way cool!”



“Get a load of the amendments on that constitution.”

But as current as those names may be to some, in truth the organization more widely known as the D.A.R. has seen a fall-off in membership as fewer women see the benefit in spending thousands of dollars on genealogical research in order to establish their qualifications—a direct link by blood to a participant in the American Revolution. “I asked a genealogist to give me an estimate and he said it would cost around \$2,000,” says Cindy Morthin, a police dispatcher and aspiring pole dancer in Osawatomie, Kansas. “For that kind of money I could get an on-line Ph.D.”

“What’s a Cosmopolitan?”

So the organization is spending more on outreach than ever, as evidenced by the decision to hire party planner Bryan Moskowitz to stage gala recruitment events at ten regional locations to introduce the D.A.R. to a new generation of women. “We hope to find gals who have never heard of our history of racial discrimination,” says Polly Wainscoting, referring to the “whites only” policy behind the decision to bar African-American contralto Marian Anderson from performing in its concert hall in 1935 and 1939. “We’re a very diverse group—Episcopalians, Methodists—you name it.”



“Does anyone know how to use a defibrillator?”

Moskowitz has accordingly created a welcoming atmosphere that includes a martini bar, a DJ playing an eclectic mix of music ranging from Devo to Lawrence Welk, and “quoits,” a Colonial ring-toss game that newcomers can play to win membership discounts, perfume and Talbots gift certificates.

Quoits fever—catch it!

“At any multi-generational event you have a certain—shall we say—'stratification' issue,” Moskowitz says as he fiddles with a floral

arrangement. "The older women wanted Yankee pot roast and Boston baked beans," he notes as he shakes his head. "I created a 'Fajitas and 'ritas' buffet," he says with a note of determination in his voice. "It's time some of these . . . biddies let a little tequila into their lives."



Yankee Pot Roast fajita

The potentially volatile combination seems to be working as women young and old mingle while braver souls take to the polished wood floor for a massive group "chicken dance."



Direct descendant of Thomas Jefferson's pullet.

"Sure there's a risk that things will get out of hand," Moskolitz says as he scans the crowd for signs of trouble. "We have an on-call chiropractor over at the Limbo Pit, and there's a state-of-the-art defibrillator on every wall."



"James Madison? You're kidding—we're related!"

Moskolitz agrees to allow this reporter to enter the V.I.P Room on the condition that what happens there will remain "off the record," a promise this reporter makes with his fingers crossed behind his back, King's X-no noogies. "Here's where I think you'll see the true spirit of the Revolution," he says as he draws back a heavy curtain. "There's nothing more inspiring, more truly American, than a wet t-shirt contest, even if some of the members' blouses get dirty from dragging on the floor."

