

# A Necessary American Tradition

By Anna Von Reitz



It was November of 1963 when our family tradition of watching the rats in Washington, DC, at [Christmas](#) time took on a new degree of urgency.

My Grandmother, observing that the Federal Reserve Act was passed during the holidays, had actually started paying attention in 1913. She reasoned, and she was right, that if they got away with ramming through bad legislation over the holidays once, they'd try it again.

So she made it her business to watch Washington, DC over the holidays.

Just shy of fifty years later, the assassination of President Kennedy made our Congress-watch over the 1963 holidays grim and thoughtful.

The country was in trouble, and though we were confused and distressed and didn't yet have a handle on it, we watched what was going on more intently than ever.

The first week of November saw us "suited up" and watching C-SPAN and listening to radio broadcasts. We made friends with real people in Washington, DC --- just average folk who lived there, and they started sharing their insights.

After my Grandmother died, we wavered. Would we continue the Rat Watch? Or, without her example, stand down and simply enjoy the holidays like everyone else?

We continued. We knew we had to.

Including the years between 1913 and 1963, when it was largely the solitary vigil of my Grandmother, and later, my Grandmother and Mother, our family has been rat-watching for 110 years. It was 2016 when I woke up one wintry morning, facing my Mother's death, and realizing that I was alone: the last Rat-Watcher.

What a sad moment that was.

Still, I didn't stop, and one day on a webinar broadcast, I explained my lonely annual vigil keeping eyes and ears on Washington, DC, during the holidays. Soon, I had a virtual army of rat-watchers going for the gusto year round.

It was no longer just my family, but a much larger family keeping tabs on what was going down in DC.

Rat-watching has become a spectator sport year round. It's not just for the holidays anymore, and our cadre now has members in every State.

Yesterday, I received a bag full of embroidered "Rat Watch" iron-on patches.

How amazed -- and pleased -- my Grandmother and Mom would be!

Our little family tradition has grown into a national tradition upheld in fifty separate sovereign and independent States of the Union.

Minnesotans are watching. Idahoans are watching. Georgians are watching. New Yorkers are watching....

Across this whole country people are paying attention to what members of Congress are doing and failing to do, and they are doing it in an organized fashion: they are reporting their findings back to each other, and to me.

As a result, the Rat Watch research is spurring additional action. Letter writing. Notices to Congress and local governments. Education efforts at all levels. More research.

Members of Congressional Delegations now know that we are watching, and it's largely because of Rat Watchers putting in the extra hours and making the connections that they do.

When our Federation officers walk into Congressional offices now, it's an entirely different and far more respectful atmosphere, and it's not just because our Federation officers have earned respect or because our separate political status and standing is now far better understood.

It's also due to our Rat Watch compatriots, patrolling the frontiers of the information highway, digging and doing, and making sure we are all kept up to speed, aware, and knowledgeable.

Please pause a moment and give a "thank you" in your minds and hearts and with your voices, too --- thank you, Rat Watch! Thank you for the crucial often unsung work you do! We can't solve problems until we have them firmly in view, and helping us do that is often up to you.

So shine your lights and shine them well! Expose all the dark corners, all the dirty deals. Wear your new patches with pride and, when people ask --- as they will --- tell them what you are doing and tell them why.

The price of eternal freedom, as Thomas Jefferson taught us, is eternal vigilance.

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