



The Florida Knight

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Greetings Sir Knights,

As we move into the final few weeks of Summer, I hope all of you are doing well despite all this incredibly hot weather we are experiencing! The topic for this month may seem a little different from my others of late, but I trust you will find it interesting and enjoyable.

Since my first article for the Knights Templar Magazine in June, I have been questioned by many Sir Knights about the Coat-of-Arms I use rather than a personal picture, which has been the normal protocol for previous Grand Commanders. The Arms depicted are those that were Granted to my Father by the Court of Lord Lyon, King of Arms of Scotland, on direction of Queen Elizabeth II. Upon the death of my Father, these Arms matriculated to me and will eventually matriculate to my son. I am extremely proud to be able to display the Arms that were once my Father's, and now represent me. I have also on many occasions, discussed with my son the privilege he will have when the time comes for these Arms to represent him.

It may surprise many of you that more Coat-of-Arms are designed and recognized today than at any previous time in history. The reason for this is that Heraldic Arms suggest a specific solidarity with a person's family and encourage a lifestyle that is based on tenants such as honor, responsibility, and service. Heraldic Arms are therefore a graphic means of identification of the individual, which also serve as a subtle but constant reminder to all those who bear them of the continued responsibility to lead lives of honor, integrity, and service. Arms shared by descendants from the original grantee are a living heritage of belongingness and promote the ideal of a family joined-together and inseparable in spirit.

In modern times a person's property or wealth may be lost due to economic changes, wars, or other disasters, and this could ultimately mean that future generations are without inheritance. However, a Coat-of-Arms is fully able to survive change or loss and is a means whereby the original armiger can leave an armorial estate to his descendants throughout all future generations. It is a legacy which can never be depleted, devalued, lost, or stolen.

Coats-of-Arms depict a wide variety of symbols and animals that represent various traits and characteristics of the original armiger. In my case, the three boar's heads represent bravery and tenacity and have been borne on all Arms granted to those with the last name Gordon. In addition, my Arms depict two Cogwheels which represent, in ancient form, the vocation of my Father as a Civil Engineer. The Crest is depicted with a wyvern holding a book. The wyvern is a mythical creature that is said to fight evil and was used to demonstrate that my father was a veteran of World War II, which some would say was the ultimate battle of good versus evil. The book held by the wyvern has

a two-fold significance. My Father loved education and a book is certainly a meaningful representation of this aspect of his personality. However, books were also used to record history and the deeds of heroes, but it remains closed because true heroes do not feel the need to boast of their actions or accomplishments. While these symbols specifically represent my Father, they now represent the ideals that I must strive to instill into my life – bravery, honor, life-long learning, and the ability to remain humble. While I certainly may falter in trying to live up to these individual characteristics, they are constantly placed before me as a reminder of the heritage I possess and the responsibility I enjoy.

A Coat-of-Arms is not unlike our Templar Banner or the name Knight Templar. While Heraldic Arms represent only one person at a time (e.g. there is no such thing as a Family Coat-of-Arms), the Beauseant of our Order and the name Knight of the Temple are labels that we as Masonic Knights have taken to identify each other, and to remind ourselves of the oaths and obligations we have freely assumed for our daily lives. They are not a subtle reminder of the lives of honor and service we have sworn to live by, but rather they are a deliberate aide-mémoire to ourselves and those that view us from outside the walls of our fraternity. These symbols provide us a living heritage of belongingness and promote the ideal of our Masonic family, which is joined-together and inseparable in spirit. Throughout Masonry and Templary there are many characters, figures, and emblems which inculcate that practice of noble virtues. Which of these symbols would you choose to represent who you are to the world? Which of these would you want your descendants to live and model their lives upon?

You may be asking yourselves why this topic is so important to me personally. I believe that each modern Masonic Knight Templar should consider having a heraldic means of personal identification, which will also serve as a reminder of the responsibility each of us has to lead lives of honor and service. Also, it is tradition throughout history that all knights have been armigerous and it is a tradition that we should proudly continue. Many of you may have ancestors that once lived in United Kingdom, and you would be able to petition either the Court of Lord Lyon in Scotland, the College of Arms in England, or even the Canadian Heraldic authority to begin the process of obtaining a personal Grant of Arms. Those with ancestors from Spain could likewise petition the Cronista Rey de Armas, while others interested in developing their own Coat-of-Arms may contact the Russian College of Heraldry or the Bureau of Heraldry in South Africa. There is even an American College of Heraldry, which will assist you in designing and registering your Arms for a very modest fee. Even if you cannot trace your ancestors you will find that you can develop a Coat-of-Arms for yourself and your descendants, and organizations like the American College of Heraldry will be happy to assist you in designing it.

After reading this short article I hope your interest is piqued to discover more about this fascinating topic that has long been associated with knighthood. I hope that maybe one day in the not so distant future we will be able to attend a York Rite Convention in Florida were the Banners and Pennons of our membership will line the walls, demonstrating the rightful heritage which is ours.

Donec Totem Impleat Orbem,

Brett A. Gordon, KYCH
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