

TENNESSEE SUPPLEMENT

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GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

It was 20 years ago or so from the time you read this writing when I received the York Rite degrees in Jackson, Tennessee. During that weekend of Saturday, September 8, 2001, we lived in a different world. I had taken off work at the Jackson Police Department to make the Fall Festival and receive my degrees and orders. I remember the promises I made to defend Christianity and gave little thought to how this might manifest itself. Three days later, my life and world changed, along with everyone else's. My nation was attacked by Muslim fundamentalists based in Afghanistan. Watching the towers fall, I remembered the vows I took as a Pilgrim Warrior and the new meaning those vows had. As the weeks, months, and years unfolded, the impact of those events revealed themselves in my life, carrying me first to Iraq and then Afghanistan.

Those adventures overseas dealing with a different culture and religion allowed me to understand our Commandary Orders on a different level. Traveling the Middle East and experiencing the Holy Land and Mesopotamia was an opportunity of a lifetime. Living and working under the Hindu Kush mountains near a city (Charikar) founded by Alexander the Great carried me back to the Bronze Age. During these missions, I worked with the finest Americans in the world in our military branches. I watched them and joined them in combat with our enemies and am proud to have fired rounds at the enemy on the eleventh anniversary of the attacks against my country. I believed then and now that what we were doing in Iraq and Afghanistan were engaging our enemies on their home turf instead of waiting for them to continue attacking us in our homeland.

I have related in an earlier issue about the loss of some of my military friends in both wars and the sacrifices they made for this country. Those sacrifices can never be repaid by this county. I owe my life to these wonderful Americans who protected me as I went about Baghdad, Iraq, and Parwan Province in Afghanistan. When I came home from my last war in January 2014, I vowed never to forget them and so far, I have kept my promise.

When I was honored by my fellow Sir Knights by being elected as the Grand Commander of Tennessee, I decided to hold my homecoming in Jackson Commandery #13 on the weekend of the 20th anniversary of both my knighting

and to bring the events of September 11, 2001, to some kind of closure, ending the cycle where it began. I will be watching as a new group of pilgrim warriors take the same vows I did before our country was attacked, all the while thinking about the last 20 years and all the adventures that those days led to. I could not relive those adventures these days, even if I wanted to. During this last 20 years, I have gone from a young man to a middle-aged one, now watching younger men grow up. I pray that these young men will not have to sacrifice their lives in another war, but I am pessimistic about that.

To conclude this piece, I would like all of us to reflect on the events of September 11, 2001 and consider the sacrifices of our young men and women, as well as all the Americans who died in those attacks, and those in our late wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have many hurting Americans who served in those wars. Currently, approximately 22 veteran U.S. military personnel commit suicide each day. These veterans, along with all our former veterans, deserve our support. We have a number of former personnel in our fraternity and the York Rite. I would ask that all of you offer your assistance and ear to any of our veterans in crisis. Below is the link for the Veterans Crisis Line:

Veterans Crisis Line/Military Crisis Line- 1-800-273-8255 press 1.
Crisis Chat <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

Please share this with someone who needs help to work through their pain. We owe our veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Vietnam and any other conflict, all the assistance we can give them.

Thanks, and remember that I love you all, and you can call me at 731-217-7284 anytime you need someone to talk to.

Bill



GRAND ENCAMPMENT TO UNVEIL SID C. DORRIS AWARD IN MARCH

The Grand Encampment will unveil a new award named in memory of Sir Knight Sid C. Dorris PGC. Sir Knight Dorris was serving as Right Eminent Grand Generalissimo for the Grand Encampment at the time of his passing, and one of his goals was to see that the Grand Encampment was fully funded and did not have to depend on periodic per capita increases.

This new award will be unveiled in March 2022 in conjunction with our Grand Conclave, with officials from the Grand Encampment present. More details will be made available over the next several months, but make plans now to attend the Grand York Rite Sessions!