

State of Maryland July Supplement Knights Templar Magazine

I am spending my July 4th holiday with family at an idyllic spot on the Choptank River in Denton Maryland. The sun has risen, the mist is lifting off the barely moving water and the songbirds are singing at the feeder hanging nearby the deck beside a clear pool. As I took my coffee outside the sight that greeted me was a low flying Bald Eagle effortlessly gliding along the River. Grandchildren are still nestled in bed after an active day in pool and river. I arrived here late yesterday afternoon after an unhampered trip across the dreaded Bay Bridge on a Holiday weekend. It could not be better. An opportunity to spend some time on break after a very busy Spring is welcome.

Life is hectic for your Grand Commander. I still help to run a business with 2 major Landscape projects underway, lots of children and Grandchildren consume my thoughts, and Masonry consumes a large part of my spare time. The rewards however are remarkable.

This past week I spent 2 days with Department Commander James Steele who drove up to this area from North Carolina to make Grant Presentations to doctors from the National Institute of Health and Johns Hopkins University Hospital, from the Knights Templar Eye Foundation Endowment. I have had the opportunity to accompany Department Commanders and Past Grand Commanders several times (past 2 years excluded) as the Chairman of the State of Maryland KTEF program. These opportunities to actually meet the Grant recipients and hear about (and see) the work that is ongoing is very rewarding. I wish you all could see the operations underway that your contributions help to support. You actually can have a glimpse by heading to the Grand Encampment website (knightstemplar.org), find the KTEF logo and activate that site, and watch one or more of the several testaments (media/videos) by practicing physicians and researchers that have received past Grants.

In last month's supplement I described the efforts made to bring KTEF Life Sponsors of Maryland to 100% participation by all Maryland members of Commanderies. Congratulations again to all for your inclusion in this worthwhile program benefitting so many people across this country and the world. A special shout out to current State Chairman (KTEF) Gary Kennedy and along with EC Bob Candler and PEC George Christoff along with members of Jacques DeMolay #4, Monumental Crusade #3, and Beauseant #8 for substantial vision and assistance.

On Thursday June 30 members of several Commanderies and Grand Commandery came together in Frederick at Jacques DeMolay for a final practice of the Order of the Temple ritual which will be conferred July 7 (7PM) in Frederick. REPGC Randolph Disney will reprise his multiple efforts in the East and confer the Order. EC James Stargel (JDM #4) has arranged for this opportunity and any Sir Knights that have received the previous 2 orders (Red Cross and Malta) that have not yet been able to be knighted are welcome to attend. All other knights wishing to attend to witness are welcome as well.

Although Summer is officially here as of June 21, our work with Grand Commandery continues. On June 25th I participated in a new program that the Shrine is introducing. We were offered the opportunity to join with the members of Boumi Shrine as they initiated dozens of new

candidates. A presentation called The Arch Program was introduced as a new part of membership. While not in the Shrine myself I jumped at the opportunity. The program is a short play in which members construct a huge Stone Arch representing construction of the Masonic Craft with the inclusion of the York Rite and Scottish Rite in addition to the Shrine as building blocks of Freemasonry. I see this as an excellent tool to introduce Masons who might not otherwise know of the York Rite and/or Scottish Rite. The entire leadership of the Shrine was there with a program that included all of the branches of the Shrine family. Presentation of the York Rite aspect was given by MIGM Randy Disney and Myself. Presentation of Scottish Rite program was given by SGIG/MW Grand Master Marlin Mills and SR member Bob Reynolds. It was great to be in such company.

A meeting next week with GC Dais officers will outline Summer Committee meetings and other activities.

I want you all to keep in your prayers our Eminent Grand Recorder Kris Brown. Kris is recovering from several Medical difficulties that have compounded to land him in Hospital multiple times and caused him to reside in a recovery facility. It is unclear when or if he will return to his role with the Grand Commandery. We all pray for his full recovery and wish only that he receives the best of care in his struggle to regain his health.

In the meantime, I have ordered Assistant Grand Recorder SK Vernon Huebschman to assume the full role as Grand Recorder Pro tempore. Vernon has done a remarkable job for your Grand Commandery since the Semi Annual Conclave in May. It's been a huge learning curve for Vernon but he is an enthusiastic participant and has learned much from years of working with Kris and now having contacts in Grand Encampment circles he is working wonders. This past week when Department Commander Steele was in town we took the opportunity to have lunch together so James and Vernon could become acquainted.

As you each celebrate the July 4th Holiday, Kandi and I wish you all a great time with family and friends. As you are entertained by barbeques and fireworks, let us each take a moment to remember the sacrifices of our forebears who took on the task of creating a New Nation, founded upon Freedom and Individual Rights, Freedom of Religion and Justice for all. When you pray over your barbeque meal, think of the desperation of those hungry and cold men at Valley Forge, their heroism against all odds. As those fireworks are in the air you may be reminded of the words of Francis Scott Key as he witnessed the shelling of nearby Fort McHenry. His words are now enshrined as our National Anthem.

God Bless you all and God Bless America.

In His Service,
John H. Austin,
Right Eminent Grand Commander
Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Maryland

