

The Florida Knight

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Right Eminent Grand Commander 2021
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State Editor

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Greetings Sir Knights.

March is upon us. Spring is near, Commanderies are gearing up for festivals, Commanders are getting their plans implemented hopefully and we are in full swing for a good year.

March is a pretty busy month. One of the interesting things happening this month is something that is a first. There is a Special Conclave of the Grand Encampment being convened on March 11th in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Usually the Grand Encampment is convened once every three years to conduct business. Just like Grand Commanderies and Constituent Commanderies though, a Special Conclave may be called by the Most Eminent Grand Master or by at least nine Grand Commanderies to conduct business that is necessary to be addressed prior to the next Triennial. This rarely happens on the Grand Commandery level and to all known information, never before now has this occurred on the Grand Encampment level. It should be pretty interesting. So what does this mean for us here in Florida? Well, the Dais Officers and any Past Grand Commanders that are able to travel, as they are the voting delegates for Florida in the Grand Encampment, will be attending to participate in the session. We will listen to all the information presented and vote accordingly to the best interest of the Sir Knights we are representing...You, the Sir Knights of this jurisdiction. I will not go into the specifics of the topics to be covered as most already know what they are by this time and I personally feel this is not the medium to present the issues. What I will say is that no matter what the topics may be, it is my personal belief that it is more about the process than anything. We, as an organization, have a right to due process. Masonry is a democratic organization. The will of the Craft, when presented correctly and voted upon in due process is the rule.

Though Easter is in April, now is the time for Commanders and Commanderies to prepare for their Easter Observances. We, as a Christian organization, have a few holidays that are very important to us. Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, these are part of the foundation of who we are. Each has their importance and each should be celebrated accordingly. They can be within your own Commandery, can be celebrated with a group of Sir Knights attending a divine service at a local church or a larger program. However you plan your services, remember that as Christians, that this is something special to us, not just a task to complete.

Also in early April, there will be a joint homecoming for the Most Excellent Grand High Priest, Most Illustrious Grand Master and myself at the Tampa Scottish Rite Temple on April 9th. Information for this will be on the website. Information for the Convention in May will also be on the website and will be updated accordingly as it gets closer. I hope to see many of you there. I am wrapping up my Official Visitations this year and only have a couple more Commanderies to be attending. I know that there are many that were not able to attend their Commanderies during my Visitations and I hope that I will get to meet you in the future as I still plan to travel as much as I can through the upcoming years.

Courteously, yours in Christ,
Adam M. Bryan
Right Eminent Grand Commander

Current Events in Florida

Editor's Contribution "The Key Lecture"

One evening about 8 years ago, I summoned the courage to go to a Masonic Lodge, determined to discover what my Grandfather had always hinted was a path to being a great man. I walked into the Lodge, knowing absolutely no one, and there sat Louie Thomas. He was the very first brother I met when becoming a Mason was at its most important to me personally, I was ready and he didn't fail me. He later encouraged me to join the York Rite and we even sat in Blue Lodge together as Master and Junior Warden. We spent a number of nights travelling together, and got to know each other very well, always enjoying the fellowship we shared, he even let me chastise him for wrecking his car and hiding it from his wife. When Louie passed, it was a big change for many of us, his involvement was deep and he is still terribly missed to this day. While it did bring a number of us closer, agreeing not to let time separate our communications and to stay current, it also literally helped me to discover the long lost Key that only Louie could have provided.

Lou Thomas loved the festivals, it's a time to bring in new companions and have the fellowship of everyone together at once. He prefaced the Key Lecture at the end of the Royal Arch degree by saying it had been handed down to him by Jim Rochelle and it was a sincere honor to give it. He took his time, partly due to age, partly to be thorough, and made sure every candidate understood the Key in full. He did this, amazingly, with a few crumpled cards and some haggard scrawlings on an easel, yet when I left his lecture, the entire thing was clear. He approached me after and said without hesitation, "I hope you paid attention, you'll be the next one giving this." A few days later at a York Rite meeting, Lou handed me a single set of very worn cards and said "I've searched everywhere and all I can find are these. I have a folder somewhere, but just can't find it."

I studied the cards with great enthusiasm, gleaning the knowledge and trying my best to recall how it had been delivered, where the inflection made the most sense, which words needed to be pronounced just so etc. My first time presenting the lecture was horrible. I am not a public speaker and I did a terrible job drawing on the easel, making me appreciate my teacher that much more. Lou laughed and said "Keep at it, you'll get better." I have given the lecture about 10 times now. And Lou was right, slowly, my delivery has improved. I introduced slides to help with my bad drawing and have a good cadence with the lecture now, keeping a decent pace.

Shortly after Lou passed, I visited his wife Alice to collect his Masonic belongings. There were stacks of books, papers and regalia all over their dining room and it just about filled up my Subaru. I promptly drove home and with a number of totes and bags, emptied my car. I spent the entire night going through Louie's Masonic career, sorting everything by Body. More than half of my spare bedroom was covered with stacks of organized honors and tales of lectures untold as I slowly started the task of packing it all away to carry to our Lodge. I stacked 5 totes of books and regalia in the front room and came back to finish with all the loose papers and what not. There were countless hand written notes from lectures and presentations, folders with programs and entire educational topics and far too many other things to list. I decided to simply bag these and carry them to Lodge, welcoming anyone with interest to take whatever suited them. I tossed in a large stack of folders at the top of a bag and it fell over, as I started to curse, that need changed, the only thing that fell out of the bag, and landed at my feet, was a simple manila folder with Louie's writing, "Key Lecture". I am not ashamed, I cried, and then said "Thanks Lou".

Months later another great companion passed, G. Gordon Goodman. I was speaking with my friend and mentor Marvin Gerhard concerning his memorial, and shared my story about the Key Lecture with him. He took great amusement in telling me that he himself handed it down to Jim Rochelle and the "ownership" term is about 10 years! I will proudly continue presenting the Key Lecture and, knowing its legacy, will be doing so for about another 5 years. Thanks Lou, miss you buddy!

Fraternally,

Gary R. Roane
Clearwater Florida York Rite