



The Hoosier Templar

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Ed Fodrea KCT, GC

Like a trip to the Holy Land

By SK Edward L. Sebring KCT, KTCH, GPE
Editor

MUNCIE – Just imagine: You are dining in a quiet, seaside restaurant in Israel. Your window table looks out over the Sea of Galilee, and you find the movement of the water to be so relaxing as you enjoy a sumptuous meal of dishes from the Eastern Mediterranean.

That was exactly the effect the organizers of the 2022 Newby-Avery Banquet were trying to create.

SK Ed Fodrea, KCT, Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar, of Indiana, said he and Lady Christine Fodrea, a United Methodist minister, had worked for many months, planning the event. But, unfortunately, a whole lot of things went wrong on the way to making those plans become a reality, some even at the last possible second.

The annual event is named after SK Leonidas Newby and SK Willard Avery, both Past Grand Masters of the Grand Encampment, Knights Templar, of the United States of America. It started decades ago as a working dinner where primarily Grand Officers and Past Grand Commanders were invited to go over the Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander's plans for his coming year as Grand Commander. But eventually it lost its identity as a work session and became a by-invitation entertaining fund-raising event for the Grand Commandery's Permanent Fund, created and produced by the current Grand Commander and his Lady. As its name suggests, the Permanent Fund provides permanent operating income to the Grand Commandery of Indiana by earning interest which can be used to meet current expenses. Members may support the fund by donating \$250 to become a Newby-Avery Fellow, which brings invitations to the annual dinners, as well as a handsome lapel button, to which diamonds are added for subsequent donations of \$250.

Lady Christine had traveled through the Holy Land on one of the ministers' trips, and much of the theme of the dinner came from what she experienced.

Fodrea said she visited an ancient church whose floor had a mosaic representation of Jesus Christ's miracle of the loaves and fishes. That image inspired Lady Christine to, with her husband, design the entire dinner around the Loaves and Fishes, and her experience in the Holy Land.

For many years each table setting has been graced with a crystal champagne flute, engraved with a Templar theme, and which were taken home by guests as a table favor.

This year, instead, the table favors were ceramic chalices, the gift of Lady Christine. They were decorated with loaves and fishes, which echoed the centerpiece at each table, a crystal vase containing two live fish swimming around, plus five loaves of bread on the table near the vase.





The Grand Commander's coin also featured the loaves and fishes.

But getting those chalices to Indiana was the first of a series of glitches:

Lady Christine had photographed that mosaic church floor and, armed with that photo, went hunting for a ceramic representation. She found a business in Israel that could supply 100 chalices. The deal was made and the company shipped them. The problem was, only 46 out of the 100 chalices arrived intact. No problem, the supplier shipped replacement chalices free. But a number of the replacements then arrived broken. It finally took five shipments for the Fodreas to have 100 intact chalices – and each shipment took weeks to arrive.



To try to create that seaside-restaurant atmosphere at the banquet, which took place Jan. 8 at the Horizons Convention Center in Muncie, the Fodreas had large video screens placed behind and above the head table. Each screen showed a one-hour loop image of the tide coming in at dusk, the waves and surf, on the Sea of Galilee.

The food was Greek, echoing the cuisine of the broad geographical region which includes Israel. Diners had their choice of Greek-style roast beef, Ionian Sea salmon, or, for the vegetarians, spanakopita, which is a Greek spinach pies. Dessert was a choice of baklava or melopita, which is a Greek honey pie.

"The Greek roast beef, there was a generous portion on the plate, and my knife literally fell through the meat. It was that tender," Fodrea said.

The glitch COVID didn't affect those things above, but it certainly caused some last-second changes in the program.

Fodrea said he had asked two members of the Levant Preceptory to appear in their medieval armor to act as doormen. They were both home sick.

Grand Organist SK Chris Gambrell was to provide keyboard music for the event. He was home sick.

Roughly 12-15 couples who had reserved places at the banquet were also home sick, Fodrea said.

But the largest hole to be filled due to COVID was that of the Master of Ceremonies. It was to have been SK Paul Page, known as the "Voice of the Indianapolis 500," and a close friend of Fodrea. Fortunately, Fodrea was able to recruit RW Bro. Richard Lentz, Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Indiana, to fill in and do a superb job at it.

New Newby-Avery Fellows, or those whose additional donations had moved them to a higher level,

were recognized, and the first part of Fodrea's program to honor our military veterans was unveiled.

Fodrea said it is called the "Quilt of Honor" program. The Ladies of Grand Commandery made quilts, with one being presented to a selected veteran in each of the nine battalions.

"There are about 200 woman-hours in each quilt," Fodrea added.

The first two quilts were presented that night to SK Dathan Reed of Battalion II, and SK Terry Bisping of Battalion IV. The rest will be presented during the Grand Commander's Banquet, the night before Grand Commandery's annual Grand Conclave.

"I want to thank everybody who participated in and supported the banquet," Fodrea said. "We set a new record for the amount of money raised to support the Permanent Fund. But I am not one to boast about records; this was the chance to get together and break bread as brothers."

