



Sir Knight Thurman C. Pace, Jr., and Lady Betty

One of the Great Men!: **Sir Knight Thurman C. Pace, Jr.**

by Sir Knight William Howard Koon II, GCT

In a conversation many years ago during Masonic Week, Grand Master Richard B. Baldwin referred to a meeting of Masonic leaders taking place in one of the Hotel Washington suites, as a "Meeting of the Great Men."

But what defines greatness? What single thing separates what is "great" in a man from what is ordinary? Greatness must be connected with SUCCESS in some way, and the best definition of "success" that I've ever seen was on an old, framed document hanging on the wall of one of those restaurants decorated in old pictures, signs, and tools of a bygone era. That document is quoted below:

SUCCESS

To have laughed often and loved much;

To have won the respect of intelligent people and the affection of little children;

To look an old dog in the eye and know that he likes you, just because you like him; To have looked for the best in people, instead of the worst;

To have withstood the betrayal of false friends, and won the approbation of honest critics;

To leave the world a little better, whether it is through a garden patch, a healthy child, a better business, a better association, or a redeemed social condition;

To know that even one life has breathed a little easier because you have lived; That is to have succeeded!

The author was not listed and may well be lost to the sands of time. But anyone whom we consider "great" we recall in many of the terms quoted. Many times the names of the "great" are lost in time, but the contributions they made live on in the freedoms we take for granted, the prosperity we enjoy, and the Fraternity we love.

When one thinks of "greatness," one thinks of those brave souls who fought at the bridge in Lexington and Concord, those Texans who lost their lives in a crumbling adobe mission called the Alamo, those brave soldiers who died that the Stars and Stripes might be raised over Mt. Suribachi on an island called Iwo Jima, or those who landed on a deserted beach to the sound of gunfire in Normandy. There are others whose sacrifices weren't as final but who, nevertheless, left their mark on these United States of America.

There were Fraternal Greats as well: Sir Knight Thomas Smith Webb envisioned and shaped the Grand Encampment, though he never served as a Grand Master because he felt it more important that a man of the time with "name recognition" serve as Grand Master so that Templary might be identified with the "great men" of that time. Thomas Smith Webb had the "vision," but he loved the Fraternity so much that he gave up its highest office that a fledgling order might have credibility. Sir Knight DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York, was our first Grand Master, though he never attended a single Grand Encampment Conclave.

In the mid-1800s a "Templar Great" came along in the person of Sir Knight William Blackstone Hubbard, who served longer as Grand Master than any other. Hubbard reshaped the structure of Templary into what we enjoy today. It was under his able leadership that our present system evolved out of Sir Knight Thomas Smith Webb's "vision."

Sir Knight Joseph Kyle Orr came on the scene in the early 1900s, and as Grand Master, he gave us the Knights Templar Educational Foundation at a time when not many were particularly interested in "higher education" for those who were not wealthy.

In the mid-1900s, a retired brigadier general by the name of Walter Allen DeLamater had the "vision" of the Knights' Templar Eye Foundation. He had the unmitigated gall to ask every member in 1955 to donate one dollar for this philanthropic endeavor. By the strength of his idea and the "greatness" of his purpose, the voting delegates of Grand Encampment adopted his "vision" just before they elected him Grand Master.

Following DeLamater's death, Sir Knight Wilbur Bell, as he finished his triennium as Grand Master, picked up Sir Knight DeLamater's "vision," making it his own, and in the twenty plus years he served as Executive Director of the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, he built it into a major philanthropic foundation. Nobody could tell Wilbur "no" when he asked them for money! The people whose lives have been touched by the Foundation, through treatment, number in the hundreds of thousands and through our contributions to research, they number in the millions.

In more recent times, the ministers whose lives have changed because we sent them to the Holy Land will be the legacy of Sir Knights P. Fred Lesley and R. Frank Williams. I'm sure that some Sir Knight will write in glowing terms of their greatness in future articles of this magazine.

There are others who have had a positive impact on our Fraternity. Time and space prevent us from listing all of them, but each of them has one thing in common: They left Templary and our Fraternity a little better than they found it. They made a difference! Many of their names are "known but to God," but their contributions remain.

Greatness is always defined by others and never by those who are its subject. There is a line out of the 32nd ritual of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite as conferred in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction that addresses this: "It is not for me to speak. Unless my Brethren can answer for me, I am indeed unworthy."

In this article it is my great pleasure to "speak" for Sir Knight Thurman Cleveland Pace, Jr., who without question would, by anyone's standards, be considered a "Great Man." Much like the early examples of those who fought to keep us free, Sir Knight Thurman following graduation in 1942 enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in the European Theatre during World War II, earning battle stars for the Battle of the Rhine River and the Battle of Central Europe. He was present when the Dachau Death Camp was liberated, an experience that he has never forgotten. When his country called, Thurman was there in the field of battle looking the enemy in the eye before many of us were born! He made a difference for all of his country. Following his discharge in 1946, he received a Bachelor of Science Degree from Auburn University in Auburn Alabama. After working a year for Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Company, he joined Amstar Corporation, where he worked for 38 years, retiring in 1987 as Financial Executive of the corporation and President of the United States Mutual Liability Insurance Company. He made a difference in his professional life!

In 1950 he made one of the smartest moves of his life when he married Betty Annette Drake! They've been blessed with three children; Donna, Arthur, and Susan; and four grandchildren. Over the years Thurman has been active in the Presbyterian Church and in more civic organizations than this magazine has room to mention. He has made a difference and is beloved in his personal life!

Sir Knight Thurman's Masonic record is an enviable one. He's presided over more than 30 Masonic organizations during his life. Again, space does not permit their listing. It would be far easier to list what Thurman hasn't done! Few in our Fraternity have had the privilege of "touching" nearly all the many branches of Freemasonry, but Thurman has! He's left an indelible mark over the past 50 years on Templary, Scottish Rite Masonry, Symbolic Masonry, Masonic Rosicrucians, to name just a few. I dare say, there are few Masons today who aren't familiar with his name, though they may never have met him.

Scottish Rite thrived in New Jersey during the years he served as both an Active and Deputy for the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. The Scottish Rite Learning Centers were in their infancy, and they are better today because of Thurman Pace's influence. DeMolay has always been close to his heart, and he's spent a lifetime helping and assisting behind the scenes to make it as great as it should be. Templary has been much improved because Thurman served as the

Grand Commander and later as Grand Recorder of New Jersey. The entire Northeastern Department thrived as a testament to Templar Unity under his able leadership. His handling of our finances as Chairman of the Committee on Finance has been one of credibility and fiscal responsibility. The Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (MSRICF) experienced its greatest time of growth under his able leadership. He has made a BIG difference in our Fraternity! During the 63rd Triennial Conclave of the Grand Encampment last summer in Houston, Texas, he was elevated to the rank and title of "Honorary Past Grand Master." At the time of his elevation, he truly honored us by accepting! Templary is grateful for the time he's spent making us better!

Time alone will determine the level of his greatness. He didn't win every battle, and he wasn't always right, but in the end, he won far more than he lost, and he was right more times than not! More importantly, he never gave up! I dare say that future generations of Masons and Templars will be better because Thurman Cleveland Pace, Jr., passed our way. He is truly one of the "Great Men."

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