



Roy Wilford Riegle
44th Grand Master of the Grand Encampment
1973-1976

(13th in a Series on our Past Grand Masters) by
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Roy Wilford Riegle, who also went by his middle name as Wilford Riegle, was born on a farm in Rice County, Kansas, near the town of Lyons on April 27, 1896. He was one of ten children, eight sons and two daughters, three of the sons dying in infancy, born to Uriah Riegle (1860-1940) and Joanna (Gentzler) Riegle (1861-1928). The family moved to Pennsylvania in 1903 and lived there in the log cabin in which his father was born. He started high school in Pennsylvania and completed it upon the family's return to St. John, Kansas. Struggling to get by on his own in the pursuit of higher education, he worked at a local mortuary in Jetmore, Kansas, as well as attending summer school at Teacher's College at Emporia for several terms and taught school in Stafford County for three terms. In 1922 he entered Washburn College (now University) in Topeka, where he received his A.B. degree in 1924 and his M. A. and LL.B. in 1925. At the time, he was the only graduate of Washburn to whom three degrees had been awarded. While in college, he was elected a Sagamore, the highest scholastic honor conferred by that institution. He was admitted to the bar in June of 1925.

On June 3, 1923, he was united in marriage to Keith Maria Roberts (1902-2000) from Nevada, Missouri, who had been a student at Teacher's College at Emporia. To this union were born four Roy Wilford Riegle, Jr. (1926-1969), like his father, graduated with a degree in law from Washburn University. He partnered with his father at Riegle & Riegle Law for several years. Eventually, however, he left Kansas for a position in Los Angeles

as the Chief Counsel of McDonnell Douglas Aviation. Jo Anna Riegler (1930-2011) attended Kansas State Teachers College. By 1951, toward the end of her undergraduate career, she married and moved to New York State where she taught music in school. In 1995, having completed twenty-seven years of musicianship in Bethpage, New York schools, she retired from her career. The other two children were Ardis Gene Riegler and Mary Keith Riegler, about whom I have been unable to locate any information.

Wilford Riegler enlisted on May 24, 1917, as part of the United States Army in Company L, 137th Infantry, 35th Division. He served with that Company throughout World War I with the exception of four months, during which time he was attached to the British army at Calais, France, for special duty. He was wounded in the right arm by shrapnel in the Argonne, spent two months in the hospital, and was discharged two days before the Armistice. He returned home with his company in May of 1919. He maintained his presence in the military as a Colonel during World War II.

In 1926 he was elected Probate Judge in Emporia and served with great efficiency and success. By the end of his career in 1986, he was the longest-serving probate judge in the history of Lyon County and quite possibly, the state of Kansas.

He was a republican member of both the Kansas House of Representatives and the Kansas Senate for multiple terms, from 1933-1939; 1941; 1953-1960. In 1957, he became president of the Kansas State Historical Society (he also acted as secretary and historian of the Society at various times). At the Society in Topeka, Kansas, are found his personal papers. Included are records from Company L, 137th Infantry 35th Division reunions after the end of the World War, including meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, photographs, and correspondence; other papers and records related to World War veterans; correspondence, informational bulletins, and meeting materials from the Knights Templar, including materials from when he was on the Drill Team Committee and when he acted as grand master for Kansas; miscellaneous correspondence; insurance information from the Modern Woodmen of America; and other such papers. The collection also includes some records from his legal practice, notably probate and guardianship cases.

Sir Knight Riegler was a member of several civic and fraternal groups including Modern Woodmen of America, American Legion, Lions Club, and the Outlook Club. In Templary, he was a member of Emporia Commandery 8, serving as eminent commander in 1934. He was an active member and supporter of the Emporia Knights Templar Drill Team. He served as grand commander of Knights Templar of Kansas in 1946 and was most illustrious grand master of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Kansas in 1967. He also held memberships and offices in other numerous state and national Masonic organizations.

He was elected as grand master at the 52nd Triennial Conclave in 1973, held in Chicago and presided over the 53rd Triennial in 1976 held in Kansas City, Missouri. During his tenure, new Commanderies under dispensation included those in Germany and Greece. He died in peace, surrounded by his family, on February 2nd, 1988. He was buried in the Leavenworth National Cemetery, Leavenworth, Kansas, on February 5, 1988.

Sources Used

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The Emporia Gazette, Emporia, KS, 25 Oct 1928, Page 12

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