

Rite Notes  
Membership and Recruiting  
Grand York Rite Bodies of Florida  
15 March 2009

**Assimilating New Templars  
Into Our Ranks**

Over the past several months we have discussed, how to talk to prospective York Rite Members, what people want in an organization, even what drives them away from a group. Once we have their petition and elect them in our Bodies, what next?.

Assimilation of each new Templar should start when he is elected to become a member of our Order. Notification of his election should be given to him immediately. He should be congratulated by his Templar friends and assured of the wisdom of his course of action. He should be given the dates at once for receiving the degrees and the Orders of Knighthood. Some Past Commander or other highly qualified Sir Knight should be assigned by the Eminent Commander to act as his counselor from that time on. His advance to the Order of the Temple should be the signal for special notice to his Templar friends of the time of his Knighthing.

The evening of the Knighthing should become one that he will never forget. Here is the time and place when important and lasting impressions will be made. **If the work is done in a dignified and exalted manner, he will respond - as thousands have done before him - and become deeply impressed. If the work is done in a careless manner, he will be forever lost to our cause.**

The ritualistic work should be programmed in such a way that there be no lost motion or wasted time. Everything should be well timed. A “stage manager” should be selected whose sole job is to see that the work moves smoothly and without gaps. The ritualistic work deserves the assignment of the best and most talented ritualists available.

After all, it is the candidate who is the most important one to consider, and he is entitled to the best exemplification the Commandery can provide.

After his Knighthing, the new Templar should be warmly welcomed by every Sir Knight in the Asylum, and made to “feel at home” at once. He should be given some small assignment - no matter how small - so that he will return to the Asylum at the very next Knighthing, when he can live over again the beautiful work in which he has participated. From that time on his Mentor should give him instructions about the customs and traditions of the Order. He should “take him under his wing” until he is throughly oriented.

The **follow-up** process cements this fine relationship and secures his continued interest and involvement in the York Rite Bodies. If there is a drill corps in the Commandery, he should be invited to join. The sooner the newly knighted Templar learns how to handle his sword and tactics, the better member he will become. **The early days and weeks of membership will often be decisive as to whether the new Sir Knight will take an active interest in Templar activities, or become absorbed in other affairs and fail to come back.**

Many Commanderies, at the time of the Knighting, will present a new Templar with one or more of the following: A membership certificate, a Knight Templar Lapel pin, an up to date roster and a calender of upcoming events.

A special supplement entitled "New Member Packet" has been developed by the Grand Encampment Membership Committee that can assist you.

Each of us has heard of the old "trap doors" created by building architects of the past. They were hinged platforms hidden in inconspicuous locations within the floor, and with the slightest tug of a pin, chain or rope, the person standing on the "trap door" would disappear from sight, and fall into a pre-determined chamber. They may have become prisoners and faced cruel torture, but generally were never seen again.

Are Chapters, Councils and Commanderies ready to properly introduce these new Companions and Sir Knights to our history and our heritage? Will this information stimulate these new Sir Knights to return to the Asylum, and want to become actively engaged in our travels, or will they fall through the "trap door" never to be heard from again.

Recruiting new members for any fraternity is hard work. It requires time, and resources committed to a single purpose. But new Sir Knights can be lost in a heartbeat if they are not properly and personally welcomed and assimilated into the fraternity by its leadership. After the knighting, but before they return home, they need to be given a "new member packet" with their name on it by the Eminent Commander. What information should be contained in the information packet?

The answer to what should be contained in this packet of information is endless, but here are a few suggestions that should be mandatory:

1. A personal letter of congratulations and welcome to the new Sir Knights signed by the Eminent Commander preferably on Commandery stationery. This letter should contain information on Stated Meetings, and invite him to attend the next one. A letter from the Grand Commander would be ideal if logistically possible.
2. A list of the Officers of the local Chapter, Council and Commandery along with their addresses both telephone and "cell phone" numbers and e-mail addresses. Include the names of their spouses.

3. A summary of special activities of that Commandery that may have become traditions and part of its local heritage: annual events, Quarterly events, Special Holiday events and planned events. Mention activities like trips , picnics, cookouts, festivals, parades and celebrations, that include the ladies and the entire family. Encourage them to attend and bring a friend.
4. History of your local York Rite Bodies: the dates of their Charters, the size of its membership, how many live out of state, how long have you met in the current building, interesting stories from you history, Public or Fraternal leaders (past and present) that are proud members. Include the ladies as they too may have assumed key leadership roles in selected organizations. This is a time to promote your long history.
5. List the names of any Masonic “Youth Groups” that may meet locally, and the names of the leaders along with their telephone numbers. Many new Sir Knights may have children or grandchildren who might fit the age criteria to belong. If not, at least give them a summary of the purpose of the organization. Informational brochures are available locally for DeMolay, Jobs Daughters, and Order of the Rainbow Girls.
6. A History of the glorious Knights Templar, and its evolution into the fraternity we now belong. The Grand Encampment Office publishes a list of the information that is currently available. It is distributed to each Grand Recorder and to the Officers of each Grand Commandery.
7. A summary of the Philanthropies of each of the Bodies.
8. A description of the Knights Templar Education Foundation describing the scholarship program available to qualifying students.
9. A Commandery or York Rite dues card with the new Sir Knights name on it.

As you know, we now live in an information age. People are busy, live in the fast lane, and are pressed for time. They want to participate in organizations if it is worth their time, and experience a sense of fulfillment by belonging. The sharing of information and knowledge is critical to making new Knights Templar and their family feels welcomed in a new fraternal order.

Think about it. It's the right thing to do. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Perhaps you'll be starting a new tradition, but you will have eliminated the invisible “trap door”. You will also be displaying leadership, and retaining new members. Don't talk about it, just do it! Don't take a vote, just do it! Take charge. Make it happen.

**We cannot hope to build our membership if we cannot provide weekend degree programs within a reasonable time period and distance. One or two Sir Knights should visit the other Commanderies within your District and discuss ways in which this can be accomplished. Each Commandery should provide the teams for two or three different**

**degrees. If this cannot be accomplished within the district, pursue an neighboring district, until all degrees are filled. Finally, a set date and location each year should be established well in advance so candidates can properly plan. If Scottish Rite and the Shrine can do it, and they are successful, we should also.**

**Note: If any York Rite Bodies plan weekend festivals, please let me know, with the date, time, location and contact person, and I will put it in the next newsletter, and on the website. Remember, Membership and Retention is everyone's business.**

Mar 28                                      Commandery Orders                      7:00 am    Eola Lodge Orlando

Mar 14 & 28                                      Pensacola York Rite Center

April 16-18                                      Jacksonville York Rite Center

April 18 & 25                                      Tampa York Rite Bodies

( Details available online at <http://www.flgyr.org/grand-york-rite/festivals/> )

HENRY A. ADAMS  
Eminent Grand Junior Warden  
Chairman, Membership Committee

\*some excerpts , from Guidelines for Membership, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, p.33, and Grand Commandery of Florida. And from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006