



Sovereign Order Of
ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM
Knights Hospitaller c.1048



The Vancouver Commandery NEWSLETTER

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum
For Faith, For Service to Humanity

Fall 2021



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The 2021 Investiture and Gala - Plan. Then plan again.

To borrow from the theme of the U.S. Postal Service motto: 'Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of pandemic stays these members of the Marshal's Committee from the delivery of the Vancouver Commandery Investiture.'

As Commander David Hunt states so eloquently in his praise for our Marshal, Dame Teresa Mitchell-Banks, together with her two Vice Marshals, Chevalier Don Foster and Chevalier Bill Rodgers, and very ably assisted by Chevalier Sir John Cave-Browne-Cave and other Committee Chairs and senior officers, "they delivered what has been described by many as one of the best Investitures in memory (despite COVID)."

The planning and execution of a Sovereign Order Investiture, at the best of times, is a logistical feat of major proportion, given the many moving parts, from venue, to protocol, and to the careful training and rehearsal of both Aspirants and supporting players in the ceremony. What few knew, was the newest and largest challenge placed on Teresa and her team with the ever-changing nature of the Provincial health guidelines concerning COVID affecting public gatherings. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Investiture was planned with not only an 'A' and 'B' plan, but a 'C', 'D', and an 'E' plan as well. Well done, Dame Teresa Mitchell-Banks and team.

As you peruse the special 2021 Investiture supplement that comes with this newsletter, you will be introduced to a fine group of Aspirants we are proud to now call Knights and Dames of our Vancouver Commandery. But in reading the Commander's section on awards, promotions and honourable mentions of the current Vancouver Commandery members, you will gain an appreciation for the hard work that continues to go on, often behind the scenes, that keeps our Vancouver Commandery moving forward, even with the challenges of the pandemic. Due to space limitations in this issue, we hope to publish more photos in the next newsletter.



Preparations Continue for the 2022 Sovereign Council Meeting

Despite a two-year delay due to the global pandemic, the Vancouver Commandery is pleased to report that 85 members have already registered to attend the International Meeting of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller being held in Vancouver from September 12 – 18, 2022.

Chevalier Jack McGee, Chair of the Planning Committee, says the committee, which has been in place since early 2018, is busy reviewing and finalizing the myriad of details necessary to ensure a memorable and pleasurable event for all attendees. “We are delighted that the five-star Pan Pacific Hotel, which is situated on Vancouver’s scenic waterfront, will once again be home for this prestigious event.”

The SOSJ Sovereign Council Meetings are held every two years – alternating between a European location and a North American one (Vancouver last hosted in 2000). During this Meeting, members of the Sovereign Council discuss business of the Sovereign Order for the coming years. The Sovereign Council Meetings on Thursday, September 15 and Friday, September 16, 2022, are open to all members of the Sovereign Order.

“For the past many months, we have been doing our best to stay connected through video conferencing, but nothing substitutes meeting in person,” says

H.E. Conventual Bailiff Richard Earthy, GCSJ, MMSJ. “A Sovereign Council Meeting is the perfect opportunity to meet Dames and Knights, from far and wide, to appreciate the breadth of our Sovereign Order.”

Throughout the week, there are a wide variety of exclusive tours being planned – from a harbour boat tour of the city to dinner at the magnificent Royal Vancouver Yacht Club.

Options include theatre with the highly regarded local Shakespearean troop -- Bard on the Beach (Chevalier Christopher Gaze is the founder and artistic director), and a day trip to Queen Victoria’s namesake city (and the provincial capital) Victoria, on Vancouver Island. The tours are designed to not compete with the Sovereign Council Meetings to which all members are invited as observers.

As the next 12 months tick down, the Committee will publish regular updates on the website www.sosjinternational.org/vancouver-2022/ as well as Facebook. Registration and program details will be released in late October and will also be available on the Sovereign Order website and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/211554160933496/about>.

Congratulations Are In Order



We are pleased to report that our very own Chevalier Jack McGee is one of the 2021 recipients of the BC Achievement Foundation’s BC Community Award for his contributions as a volunteer.



**BC Achievement
Foundation**

The Community Award is the cornerstone of the BC Achievement’s mission to honour excellence and inspire achievement in the province of BC. The program recognizes the contributions of extraordinary British Columbians who build better, stronger, more resilient communities and shine as examples of dedication and service.

We congratulate Chevalier Jack McGee on this deserved recognition and are grateful to have him as a member of the Vancouver Commandery and the Sovereign Order.

Commander's Report - A Time For Gratitude and Thanksgiving

As we head deeper into Fall, we appear to be confronted with a panoply of impending events ranging from a possible nasty flu season superimposed on top of an escalating COVID fourth wave, strangled supply lines, escalating food costs and a fear of inflation.

Thanksgiving festivities have come and gone, so why is my theme a reminder for Gratitude and Thanksgiving you might rightly ask?

'Because' we have been here before. We know what to do, and from experience, we know how to take care of ourselves, our families and our neighbours. So let's just do it!

'Because' we are blessed to have very dedicated health care workers: LPN'S, nurses, ward clerks, floor cleaners, laundry workers, pharmacists, laboratory staff, physios, OT'S, social workers, home care nurses, psychologists, hospital engineers, food service workers, dieticians, family physicians, specialists, clergy. They work through exhaustion and burnout, showing up for work each and every day to minister to us all, regardless of race, religion, station or even bias, such as those held by anti-vaxxers.

'Because' we were able to come out from under in the late spring, enjoy a fantastic summer, and hold a very successful Investiture and Gala on September 11. To my knowledge, not one person became ill with COVID due to the elaborate planning and detail work that went into ensuring a safe celebration.

'Because' we live in a democracy that values the Rule of Law, in a country that is stable politically, a country that cares for its citizens and never gave up on the return of the two Michaels, a country that is facing its injustices and working to address them, and a country which has a large social safety net to try and assist the poor and marginalized, and a country where our children are guaranteed an education to grade 12 regardless of ethnicity, gender or orientation.

'Because' we live in the Lower Mainland, the very best place in the whole wide world - with a great climate, with four distinct and wonderful seasons, with cultural diversity, lots of amenities and a wild untamed wilderness just over the mountains to our north.

'Because' we belong to and support the tenets of an ancient Christian Order whose roots go back to the Crusades and is dedicated to supporting the Lord's poor, sick, marginalized and isolated.

'Because' although our Sovereign Order is a small minority in society, we are blessed with the desire and ability to make a real difference through giving of our time, talent and treasure to benefit those less fortunate and those approaching end-of-life.

Is life perfect? Absolutely not! But in my estimation, we make life for many one heck of a lot better and for that we should all be grateful.

Yes, I am one very grateful, and thankful son of a gun! But wait, there is one more item that fits into my Thanksgiving gratitude. That we, as humans, have been equipped with a sense of humour and that, from time to time, we need to be reminded to use it. Laughter still is the best medicine!

AN OVERVIEW OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

We had a summer pause from Council Meetings, but true to form, there was consistent energy and hard work performed by all our Council members in launching our first St. John the Baptist Day Celebration with a Promotions component. It was followed by a flurry of summer activity to prepare for and accomplish an amazing and very successful Investiture and Gala, with multiple planning options designed to try and anticipate the moving target of ever changing guidelines stemming from varying COVID restrictions.

In celebration of a successful Investiture, our Herald has produced a special supplement as a keepsake for the newly invested and introduction of these fine, new folks to our membership at large.

Our 2022 SCM Planning Committee has been working quietly but diligently behind the scenes preparing all aspects of the week-long 2022 Sovereign Council Meeting and related social activities. Members can now book rooms at the Pan Pacific at a reduced group rate. A concerted national and international SOSJ advertising campaign including the use of social media will be launched this fall.

The Almoner Committee have been extremely active developing an excellent, comprehensive Almoner Committee Manual, to assist future Vancouver Commandery Almoner Committee members. This 'how-to-do-it' manual will also assist Almoner Committees of other Commanderies nationally and internationally and will serve as a template for other Vancouver Commandery Committees.

The Almoner Committee launched an excellent partnership with Pallium Canada Inc. as well as vetting and initiating some smaller grants. Almoner co-chairs Dame Susan Scott Gabe and Chevalier John Jennings have also set up a succession plan for their positions.

Our Membership Committee, although not formally meeting, have still been active in receiving names of some excellent new potential Aspirants and it will be vetting these candidates in the coming months. In discussions with Chair George Higgins, it is felt that an optimum number of Aspirants in the 2022 Aspirant Class would be approximately 12.

Serious consideration had been given to holding an event in October to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Vancouver Commandery, combining it with a fund raiser auction of art gifted to the Commandery.

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From Our Commander (cont.)

However, given that current COVID restrictions which only allow guests to sit, but not to mingle and engage in a cocktail party type of event, senior officers have decided to cancel the event. Instead, we will roll the 35th Anniversary into the Christmas party, which is still planned to be held at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, Wednesday, December 8, 2021. We will save the art auction for another event in 2022.

The Hospitaller Committee's last formal event was the very successful virtual Hike For Hospice. We are hoping to go 'live' next year (COVID restriction dependent). Another project we are looking at for our Commandery is creating Welcome Kits for new refugees that would contain much needed items such as toiletries, diapers, masks, games for young children, and so on. This program has started on Vancouver Island by Dame Susan Scott Gabe, who as many of you know, has moved to Vancouver Island.

CONGRATULATIONS AND OUR GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

Administrator, Sarah Turnbull

To our fantastic Administrator, Sarah Turnbull, who has moved to Victoria with her family and has demonstrated she can efficiently and effectively manage her work almost all virtually. For example, she did an amazing amount of work in the coordination of the Investiture and Gala, helping the Chairs and their Committees. Thank you, Sarah, for all you do for our Commandery, and now with your work for the International office.

Prelate The Venerable John Bailey

John was the lead on creating a very memorable St. John the Baptist Day Evensong Church Service. As our Commandery Council Chaplin, he is our spiritual leader. The service was most appreciated and helped frame the announcement of Promotions, which relate directly to assisting the Lord's sick, poor and marginalized. It also served as an introduction to the excellent presentation on the life of John the Baptist as depicted by art in the Cathedral in Malta given by Dame Robyn Woodward. John also was the primary officiant at the Investiture. His experience and thoughtfulness as well as suggestions enhanced the service.

Dame Teresa Mitchell-Banks

Teresa is our Marshal and together with her two Vice Marshals, Chevalier Don Foster and Chevalier Bill Rodgers, and very ably assisted by Chevalier Sir John Cave-Browne-Cave and other Committee Chairs and senior officers, delivered an excellent Investiture. The Investiture was truly a collaborative effort spearheaded by our tireless Teresa Mitchell Banks. What an amazing job with every one of the myriad details nailed down to produce what has been described by many as one of the best Investitures in memory (despite COVID).

Chevalier Dan Tidball

Special thanks to Dan for his revision and presentation of the Allocution at the Investiture.

Vice Commander Dame Heather Hamilton

Heather is Chair of the Social Committee, yet it seems she is also a stalwart member of every other Commandery Committee including the organising of the Investiture Gala. Working closely with the Pan Pacific and with the mastery of our Master of Ceremonies, Chevalier Christopher Gaze, and the stirring pipers of the Seaforth Highlanders Pipe Band, the evening was a smashing success. Despite COVID, despite the large numbers of Aspirants to be invested, despite understandable reluctance on the part of some of our members to attend the Gala, Heather delivered.

Chevalier Jack McGee

By the time the 2022 Sovereign Council Meeting has come on gone, Jack will have spent three years as Chair of the SCM Planning Committee. He has again recruited Dame Diana Barclay and Chevalier George Higgins, members with expertise in social media and advertising, who had previously served as part of the original SCM 2020 team. Their input and advice will ensure that the 2022 SCM, Investiture and Gala will receive great exposure that will enhance the public profile of the Sovereign Order as we welcome more of our Canadian members and International members to this special week-long event.

Chevalier George Higgins

George is Chair of the Membership Committee. Thanks to George and his committee for expediting the vetting process of our New Members. A stellar job was also performed by the committee on vetting the Aspirant Class of 2020.

Chevalier Steve Simpson

Steve is our Herald and is the gift to the Commandery that just keeps giving. Wherever there is a need to enhance communication within our Commandery events or internationally, Steve has the expertise and seemingly endless energy to get a first rate job done. We feature his accomplishments in the Promotions portion of the Investiture supplement to this newsletter. I would ask you to see what a truly committed member of the Order accomplishes while running or advising a half-dozen other businesses.

Dame Diana Barkley

Diana is Hospitaller Committee secretary and major contributor to our various projects. She will be leaving this committee in order to make time to meet other volunteer commitments. Diana will be continuing to provide her expertise in communications with the 2022 SCM Planning Committee. Thank you Diana, for your creativity and energy.

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Chevalier Terry Holland

As Chair of Finance for the Commandery and the Foundation, we owe a debt of gratitude to Terry for his many years of service and due diligence. His style of hard work is one of quietly working behind the scenes to ensure the finances of the Commandery are always on a rock solid foundation.

Dame Susan Scott Gabe and Chevalier John Jennings

This dynamic duo co-chair the Almoner Committee and their work speaks for itself. This committee has recently produced a superb draft of The Almoner Committee Manual. It explains all aspects of the functioning of this committee. As mentioned previously in this report, it will be shared with other Commanderies throughout Canada as well as internationally. Thank you Susan and John, for your initiative, hard work and forward thinking.

Senior/Senior Officers

Chevalier Howie Charters, Solicitor General Chevalier John Norton, Registrar Chevalier Dennis Magrega, Prior Anne Rowland, Grand Prior Stewart Johnston, Grand Marshall Richard Earthy and Grand Commander Ian Reid are our senior/senior officers. In spite of their broader role in the SOSJ organization, they all continue to be very involved with our Vancouver Commandery, keeping your Commander on track. We are most fortunate to have their experience, knowledge and passion for the Sovereign Order.

We are very pleased to welcome our new Registrar, recently invested Chevalier Kirk Hamilton and thank him for taking on this role. I would also like to especially thank Dame Vivian Reid, our former Registrar and Chevalier Dennis Magrega, our current Registrar, for helping Kirk become familiarized with this demanding role.

Thank you very much All!

There are many other members contributing and supporting the Commandery, and for their service, I am very grateful. I am working through our members list and hope to be in touch with all members by phone in the next few weeks.

LOOKING AHEAD

Despite COVID and the flu, I am hopeful we can forge ahead with planning and projects to support our mission for ongoing minor, medium and major projects.

I am passionate to achieve the following:

1) To engage in sustained fund raising initiatives to meet the increasing demands for our Almoner Grant Program across the province as advised by our Chair of Finance, Chevalier Terry Holland and our Chair of the Foundation, Chevalier Howie Charters. To this end, several members who have indicated their willingness to sit on our Commandery Fund Raising

Committee will be tasked to set Terms of Reference, nominate a Chair person, and formulate a Fund Raising Strategy.

2) To pursue the concept of a partnership in creating a Hospice on the DTES which still has traction. I have proposed, with the Commandery Council's Support, to set up a sub-committee to detail whether a Future Hospice Project is feasible.

3) To more fully engage our membership in Hospitaller Committee Volunteer Activity in our St. John Hospice and in the Vancouver community.

4) To encourage a large turnout for our Christmas Lunch and 35th Anniversary Celebration at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club on Wednesday Dec. 8, 2021 through ensuring appropriate COVID in our planning.

5) To set up a ZOOM meeting of the Vancouver Commandery Liaison Group with a representative of each year's Aspirant Classes, planned for late October 2021, to assess the pulse of members, hear their concerns and suggestions for the Commandery going forward to 2022 and beyond.

IN CLOSING

Be thankful and have gratitude in your heart. If you do, there will be no room for anger, malice or frustration.

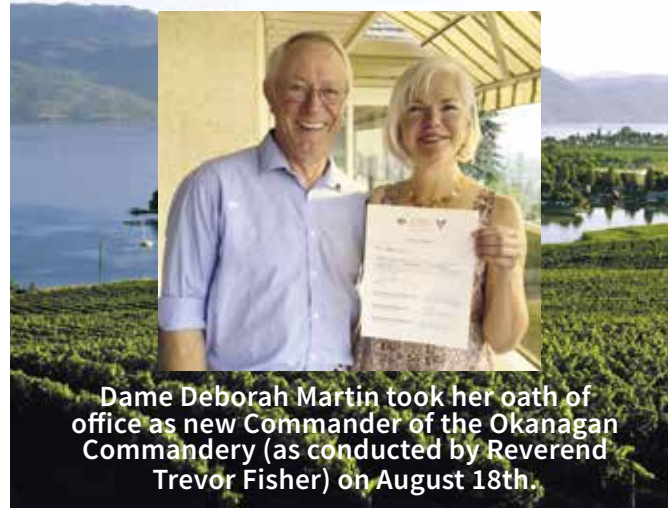
If you are struggling and would benefit from a call or if you are aware of members who would benefit from a call from me or have the Order arrange some particular support, please let me know. My number is in the membership directory. Our lines are always open.

Warm regards to you and your families.



*Yours in St. John,
Commander David Hunt
KJSJ*

News From The Okanagan Commandery



Dame Deborah Martin took her oath of office as new Commander of the Okanagan Commandery (as conducted by Reverend Trevor Fisher) on August 18th.

On The Social Scene and Commandery Activities

Virtual Hike For Hospice – An Overwhelming Success

The first ever Virtual Hike for Hospice (April 15 – May 15, 2021) surpassed all expectations – raising more than \$30,000 in just 30 days. The Hospitaller Committee, that spearheaded this special fund raiser, exceeded their initial goal of \$20,000 thanks to the outstanding generosity of the Vancouver Commandery.

And the giving was not limited to the Order as many friends, relatives and colleagues of the 14 Hike for Hospice participants, who signed up to hike, walk, run, skate, swim, bike, ride horses and even mow lawns, were most generous in their donations.

Commander David Hunt, who chaired the Hospitaller Committee (in addition to his other commitments), commented that “the beauty of this virtual event was that participants didn’t have to necessarily ‘hike’ to participate. The participants defined the activity – whether it was a walk around the block, their time on the treadmill or a round of golf.”

Hike participants as well as major donors, received a special Hike for Hospice medal in recognition of their support. Special thanks to Chevalier Bill MacLagan and Jana Maclagan who donated \$2,000 to cover the cost of medals.

All the funds raised will be donated to our own St. John Hospice at UBC.

Our Hike for Hospice was part of a national virtual event as hundreds of Canadians came together to raise funds and awareness in their community for Hospice Palliative Care. The Hospitaller committee looks forward to 2022 for the next Hike for Hospice – hopefully an in-person event!

*Yours in St. John,
Dame Diana Barkley, DGSJ,*

Update on Renovations at the UBC Hospice

Since its opening in 2013, the St. John Hospice at UBC has provided a home-like setting for residents and visitors.

The Vancouver Commandery and the Order of St. John Palliative Care Foundation, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Providence Health Care and UBC, established the building, furnishings and landscaping. The university provided the Society a long-term lease of the land, while individual donors contributed \$4.4 million and the Province’s B.C. Housing added a \$1 million grant.

This year a renovation project was undertaken to upgrade and refurbish the Hospice. We are pleased to report the HVAC system has been fully replaced and main refurbishments are now done. As a result, the Hospice was reopened to patients a few weeks ago after volunteers from our Commandery worked to return the furnishings.

Next step will be replacement of sofa beds in patient rooms and dining tables and refinishing of dining chairs. It will take another few months to get the place looking perfect again. We will be setting up a volunteer team (Hospitaller) to assist long term with the maintenance of the front end of the facility ensuring the furnishings and general decor are cared for.



*Yours in St. John,
H.E. Bailiff Prior Anne Rowland, GCSJ, MMSJ*

Musings of the Class Rep of 2020 Aspirants

Back in April 2021, Commander David Hunt had a great idea (one of many). He selected representatives for Aspirant Classes to fulfill a need: a system to bring SOSJ information quickly to/from members and a way to keep Aspirant Class members connected to one another. When David reached out to me, I gladly accepted his request to be the 2020 Class Representative. Some of our class had already met one another, socially distanced, at the Aspirants' Reception June 30, 2020, hosted by Heather and Kirk Hamilton in their lovely back garden, but it had been months since we'd connected as COVID-19 prevented our investiture from happening in September 2020.

So on June 15, we hosted our first Class of 2020 "Sip and Share" zoom social gathering as a meet and greet which, by all accounts was a huge success. It gave us a chance to share a bit about ourselves and talk about possibilities we see for us in terms of fitting into the Sovereign Order; in fact, some of us are doing so already. As a group, we decided to maintain this connection quarterly. Meeting again for a second Aspirants' Reception, this time with aspirants from the class of 2021 in another lovely garden at the home of Teresa Mitchell-Banks and her husband Paul Hoskins, was delightful and a way to forge new friendships, re-connect with others and share interests. Although our "Sip and Share" for August was preempted by our Aspirants' Orientation meeting, our next one via zoom will be later in October 2021.

Personally, having had these wonderful opportunities to meet face-to-face electronically and in person have given me a closer and more informal way of getting to know some amazing folk who seem to me to be living out The Order's motto, "For Faith, For Service to Humanity". It all culminated into a beautifully solemn Investiture followed by a joyful Gala Dinner and evening on September 11, 2021. We, the class of 2020 eagerly look forward to growing together into the work of this ancient organization with its chivalric principles of "putting others before self".

*Yours in St. John,
Dame Reverend Christine Magrega*



Getting To Know Chevalier George Higgins

This is the fourth in the series of interviews with members of your Vancouver Commandery Council. In this issue Herald, Chevalier Stephen Simpson interviews Chevalier George Higgins, Chair of our Membership Committee.



SS: Good morning, George. Thank you for granting us time to be the next in our series of ‘Getting To Know’ series. Can you start us off with a bit of background of the Higgins family, starting with your mom and dad?

George: Sure. The Higgins side of the family is multigenerational, from the west side Vancouver. I’m a fourth generation Vancouverite, my son Logan is a fifth generation Vancouverite. Dad went to Magee High School. My grandmother was a public health nurse. My grandfather worked for a small company called TCA, which later became Air Canada. My father met my mother in South America, in Ecuador, in the late sixties and got married in about 1967 or ‘68.

Justine, my partner, is also multigenerational British Columbian. She was born in Vancouver, but was brought up mostly on the island, Denman Island, Courtney area. We have a son, Logan, who is 17, in Grade 12 at West Point Grey Academy. He is the captain of the swim team, on the BC sailing team and has spent the last two summers as a children’s sailing coach at Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. He’s looking forward to possibly going back to Tokyo to do the Harvard Model United Nations program just after Christmas.

He’s looking at UBC, Calgary, Western, University of Toronto and Queens . He’s also looking a couple of stretch universities, Stanford and Dartmouth, and investigating the international relations programs.

SS: I’m sorry to hear he’s a slow starter. It must be tough having to push him to keep him motivated...(laughs). So you’re a lifelong Vancouver west sider... where did you go to school?

George: Pre-school at Canadian Memorial, and then Carnarvon Elementary. Because my dad was a civil engineer he travelled a fair bit. We were living in Africa when I was in grade seven and I did correspondence in Ethiopia for a year. Back in Canada I went to boarding school at St. George’s. Then after that Prince of Wales, then Langara College for a couple of years. I did my undergrad at Carleton University and my graduate work at Royal Roads.

SS: Why were you in Ethiopia?

George: My father was a civil engineer and he worked on a project with the Canadian International Development Agency to provide water during the famine. So I was there in the mid-80s, about ‘84-’85, and right smack in the middle of the famine.

SS: In reading your biography, your life has followed three distinct paths. One is an earlier life in politics and, concurrently, a significant amount of time spent in community service. Now you’ve traded political life for that of a communicator and consultant. Can you fill us in on this journey?

George: I’ll take politics first. It started with Kim Campbell in 1988. I was one of the youngest volunteers to work on her campaign. I was in Grade 10, I think. So Kim Campbell was where I got my start.

By 1992, I was working for MP Mary Collins in Ottawa. I was at Carleton University and was the youth president for Carleton University’s PC Youth during the ‘93 leadership. We had the largest riding association in the country with just over 3000 members.

When I came back to Vancouver, I started working for Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals doing provincial voter ID programs and other election activities. Then I moved on to doing municipal work with the NPA.

I was with the NPA in ‘95 or ‘96 when we swept the tables. So we took all the park board, school board, council and the mayor’s seat. It was pretty awesome. Over the years, I’ve worked most of the by-elections for the B.C. Liberal Party and wound up in Victoria working for a couple of MLAs.

More recently I was the regional organizer for the Conservative Party doing the merger between the Alliance and the PC’s. I was Peter Mackay’s last hire. That was a very interesting and fun time. But as fun as politics can be, it is not a career that could provide for my family, so I levered my communications skills and progressed into private practice as a consultant, after an 20-month stint working for Sam Sullivan when he was the Mayor of Vancouver.

Actually, if you remember Steve, it was you who got me into consulting full-time doing lobbying work specifically with the taxi industry. And that has grown on to all sorts of different groups, including the Coalition of BC Businesses. I'm also running a pretty recent startup called the Executive Health and Safety Council of British Columbia, which is mostly C-suite (CEOs), focusing on networking on safety issues, talking about their experiences and learning and sharing from each other.

SS: So let's move on to your community work.

George: When I was in high school at St George's, they had a program for doing community outreach, and I can remember playing bingo with seniors at UBC and that sort of stuff. So it's just always been in my blood.

I also went through the whole Scouts movement in Scouts Canada starting as a Beaver, then a Cub and a Scout, at St. Chad's Church, which is where I went to church as a kid. I always believed in community service. Later on, after meeting up with Richard Earthy, I got re-involved with Scouts Canada and became the co-chair and then chair of the Camp Byng Breakfast. Before long, I became the Deputy Council Commissioner for Communications and Outreach for Scouts Canada for British Columbia, which was mostly fund raising to put youth into camp.

I now I focus most of my volunteer work towards the Sovereign Order.

SS: You and I both have had the pleasure of working under the direction of Jack McGee bringing the Sovereign Council Meeting to Vancouver in 2022, but you have also taken on the role of heading the Membership Committee as a member the Vancouver Commandery Council. Tell us your approach to this important role.

George: I was asked by John Rogers and David Hunt to fill the role because John moved on to a different role within the organization. I was filling some big shoes. One of the objectives is to continue to not only set the bar high by finding the best candidates possible, but to also put a focus on younger candidates standing out in the community. Matthew Casey has offered to serve as deputy of the committee and we are gearing up for the 2022 investiture now.

Diversity is also an important focus. Of note, I have been talking with Tamara Vrooman, who has a few people that she thinks would make great members to further diversify our ranks. On top of these objectives, our team has recognized some gaps regarding our need for specific skills or backgrounds to continue to support the work of our Commandery. Without getting into the specifics, some of the types of talent we are looking for involve more contemporary areas of communications and technology that add to our strong Vancouver Commandery team.

SS: In preparing for this interview I couldn't help but notice that you've been many times awarded for your community work. The Centennial Medal and the Medal for Good Service from Scouts Canada, the Difference Maker Medal from the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Val Anderson Humanitarian Award from the BC Liberal Party. We are honoured to have you now applying 'your' time and talents to the Sovereign Order.

So as we draw this interview to a close I would be remiss if I didn't ask you to tell us more about the person you draw your strength from, Justine. Bring us into the story.

George: We met through a mutual friend when we were in college. Thirty years ago in December. I was studying political science at the time and we just connected. Part of it was that it's a bit of opposites attract. I come from a very free enterprise background, and she from a much more left leaning family. So obviously our political lives are very different, and yet our relationship survives and survives well.

She's currently working with startups in the biotech industry, for the most part. She recently finished working with a biotech company that was doing oncology research. Now she's working with another startup based at UBC that is so new that I don't even know its name. She's only been with them for about two or three months, and thoroughly enjoying the work. She is also now getting her certificate in organizational coaching at UBC. We live in Kerrisdale, so it's not that far of a drive for her. The big problem we have is our 17-year-old now drives and she has to compete with him for the car.

SS: Thank you very much George. This has been fascinating hour. I really appreciate the time you've taken on a Saturday morning for sharing your life and letting us get to know you a little better.

We will continue the 'Getting To Know' series in the next issue

My First Hand Experience of Camp Kerry

- A Short Story by
Commander David Hunt

Chapter One - Background

As Commandery members, we are comforted to know all grants of support through our Sovereign Order are thoroughly vetted. They first undergo a thorough and rigorous review by our Almoner Committee. A second review is performed by the Commandery Council and a third and final review by the Directors of our Foundation. As a consequence of this comprehensive review, we are comfortable with our giving. However, to my knowledge few Commandery members have the opportunity to be directly engaged in the programs and initiatives we support.

In our province, as well as the rest of Canada, there has been a dearth of facilities and trained staff to provide Palliative Care, Hospice and End-of Life Services. National statistics show only 20% of Canadians are able to receive this help. With our Almoner Committee initiatives over the last 5 years, our Vancouver Commandery has been making major gains in Palliative and Hospice Care in our support ranging from small organizations on the ground through to much larger national projects.

But what I find disturbing, in addition to the low percentage of Canadians who are able to receive comprehensive Palliative care, is the major lack of Grief and Bereavement Support. Research has shown that unremitting grief that is not adequately processed, in both youth and adults can often lead to very significant mental health problems, family dysfunction and detrimental social behaviours. In a concerted effort to correct this imbalance, your Vancouver Commandery has made a concerted effort to seek out and support these much needed services.

One such organization, a leader in the field of Grief and Bereavement Support, is the Camp Kerry, operated by the recently rebranded Lumara Grief and Bereavement Care Society. Lumara means "bringing light to grief and sorrow". Camp Kerry is spear-headed by Dr. Heather Mohan, a very experienced Palliative Care professional.

Through personal and family experience, we attended the Camp Kerry Camp for grieving families, held recently at the Young Life Campus at RockRidge, near Princeton BC. In more normal times, the camp would accommodate up to 50 families, but because of COVID restrictions the program has had to reduce the number of grieving families to 25. My son Simon and his two daughters Emily, 16 and Madeline, 14, lost their wife and mother, Pauline, after an eleven year illness with ALS. Through blessed fortune, ours was one of the 25 families able to attend. So Simon, Emily, Madeline and I packed up and headed to Camp Kerry .

Chapter Two - Our Personal Journey

Camp Kerry is a very special retreat whose program runs over four days. People, who are raw with grief as a consequence of recent loss or distant loss of a family member, be it husband, wife, significant other or child, come to find solace and perhaps some closure. There they find a very busy schedule of fun family or peer group activities including group therapy aimed to help people address their loss and move on in their lives.

When you arrive at the RockRidge site, rented from Young Life, you are greeted warmly. Once the appropriate COVID protocols are reviewed, and you confirm your double vaccination status, you are given an easily understandable program of the weekend and assisted to your accommodation. Each family has its own Dormitory. With a little time on your hands, you acclimatize to your surroundings, and quickly realize what a great facility it is.

There is strict adherence to all the required COVID protocols. On arrival and each morning before breakfast, all attendees are screened for symptoms according to the Provincial Guidelines. Masks must be worn for all indoor events and efforts are made to hold group activities outdoors. In the large eating hall, all attendees are encouraged to wear masks when getting up to get food or beverages and to not mingle when doing so. As a physician, I was very pleased to see the rigid adherence to the protocols.

The campus is many acres of groomed space situated on a lake. It features an Olympic sized swimming pool kept warm with insulated matts, a state of the art basketball court, a soccer field, a full on waterfront with fishing , boating, kayaking, canoeing, and a scenic float houseboat platform to take guests out on the lake. The boat's skipper has an amazing music playlist.

There is early morning fishing for rainbow trout off the dock, a thrilling zip line that takes adventurers from a great heights to zooming down over the lake. Other activities include archery, great hikes of varying difficulty, mountain biking, a challenging 40 foot climbing pole with small



platform to stand on at the top. And yes, climbers are harnessed up for this. And there are crafts to satisfy even the craftiest types such as myself.

The purpose of introducing fun into family activities is to promote connection amongst peers and help adults and children feel comfortable in Counsellor/Peer led group sessions. Groups are formed for different ages and adults are into divided groups according to whether the loved one lost was an adult or child.

Each group has counsellors and peer support members. There are three sessions, each two hours long with the same members in each group. Attendees have the advantage of professional counsellors as facilitators and receive stories and wisdom of the group. I witnessed several major breakthroughs in my group, which is a testament to the effectiveness of this type of counselling.



Music usually plays an important part in the weekend with group singing, and a one hour drumming session with all attendees given small, bongo-type drums to follow along with the beats set by a master drummer. Even dancing is part of the music program with the groove set by a local DJ. Unfortunately, because of COVID, all group singing and meeting in spaces without proper distancing was cancelled. However, the Camp Kerry coordinators worked around this restriction very effectively by creating more time for small informal chats with other families. Teenagers quickly bonded with their peers. This was also true for younger children. This is why many families continue to benefit from sessions by returning to Camp Kerry as volunteers. I met people who have been returning to the camp for more than a dozen years.

The weekend ended with a special memorial ceremony that took place in a cosy auditorium, enhanced by soft cobalt blue lighting. We were greeted by a quartet of music therapists singing harmony. The music and songs chosen were soothing. There were no seats. Only wide, carpeted, shallow steps, looking toward a long row of tables along the front of the stage. Each table was lined with candles and photos of all the love ones who had passed. In the front of each photo was an unlit candle. Families sat in small groups throughout the auditorium and were called up one by one to light a taper and then light the candle in front of the photo of their loved one. Each family then spent a little time in reflection at their lit candle.

It was a very powerful, moving, emotional, and releasing experience. Many tears were shed. No wonder each family participant was given a small package of tissues as they entered the auditorium.

Chapter Three - In Conclusion

We started the weekend as individuals and ended with being 'embraced' in a COVID safe manner, by the other families as well as the volunteers, wrapped in the emotional blanket as members of a new, and very supportive, community. These relationships will often go on for years.

By the end of the experience, I was aware of a healthy transformation in my family as well as myself. Although there were many tears, there was also lots of laughter which in itself is healing

The strength of community is at the heart of Lumara. Grief is often dark and isolating for those who have lost a loved one. But when we surround those who are grieving with a community of caring and compassion, we light the path for each person to respond with courage and to uncover their own resilience. This is the Lumara community.

Camp Kerry has grown from the first small bereavement camp in B.C. thirteen years ago to a Canada-wide community of care that supports thousands of people each year. It now has a breadth of services that includes virtual and in-person support groups, counselling, expressive arts therapies, retreats, education and outreach. Not only do they provide face to face programs in BC, Ontario and the Maritimes, but as the result of COVID, they have also produced four-day virtual programs as well as weekly virtual programming serving a wide range of ages and special needs.

The Vancouver Commandery has contributed significantly to Camp Kerry's growth as we have been providing grants to the organization for many of those years. I am most pleased that our Commandery supports not only Hospice and Palliative Care projects, but also Grief and Bereavement Care programs like Lumara's Camp Kerry and other programs.





Upcoming Events, Vancouver, Victoria & Okanagan

November 26, 2021
Victoria Commandery Chapter General Meeting & Christmas Luncheon

December 8, 2021
Vancouver Commandery Christmas Luncheon & 35th Anniversary Celebration

Christmas Cheer For Charity 2021
Date to be determined

April 22, 2022 - April 23, 2022
Victoria Commandery Investiture & Gala

Upcoming Events, Worldwide

October 16, 2021
Commandery of the Sierras Visit to Victory Ranch

October 22, 2021 - October 23, 2021
Priories of Western United States and San Francisco Area Investiture

November 1, 2021
Commandery of the Sierras Chapter General Meeting

December 4, 2021
Commandery of the Sierras Christmas Dinner
(Date to be Confirmed)

January 10, 2022 - January 16, 2022
Commandery of the Sierras Excursion to Puerto Vallarta MX

January 13, 2022
Commandery of the Sierras Chapter General Dinner Meeting

January 14, 2022
Commandery of the Sierras Cocktail Party

June 18, 2022
Dagmar Commandery of Denmark Investiture

September 12, 2022 - September 18, 2022
Sovereign Council Meeting 2022

Vancouver Commandery Council

Commander

Commander David Hunt, KJSJ

Vice Commander, Chair of Social and Events Committee

Dame Heather Hamilton, DJSJ

Sovereign Council Meeting 2020/2022

Chevalier Jack McGee, CD, KCJSJ

Almoner

Dame Susan Scott Gabe, DCSJ, MMSJ

Chevalier John Jennings, KCSJ

Foundation

Chevalier Howard Charters, KCJSJ, MMSJ

Herald

Chevalier Stephen Simpson, KGSJ

Chevalier Hans-Christian Behm, KSJ

Hospitaller

Commander David Hunt, KJSJ (Interim)

Marshal

Dame Teresa Mitchell-Banks, DCSJ

Membership

Chevalier George Higgins, KGSJ

Receiver General

Chevalier Terry Holland, KGSJ

Solicitor General/ Governance

Chevalier John Norton, KCJSJ, MMSJ

Secretary

Chevalier Glen Mitchell, KSJ



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