

# Texas Grand Commander's Message

Grand Commander's Message — April 2005

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## To the Sir Knights of Texas:

**York Rite Festivals: Tyler:** Chap/Coun/Cdry on Fri-Sat. **Apr 1-2** — Contact John E. Andrews ((903) 566-1163 or Ray Burcham ((903) 565-4855. **Fort Worth:** Chap Degrees Only on **May 7** — Ridglea #485, 3605 Ramona Dr. — Brkfst at 7AM; work at 8AM. Contact Jim Manley, ((817) 512-4814. **Greenville:** Chap/Coun/Cdry on Fri-Sat. **May 27-28** — Contact James Clark ((903) 527-3541; Charles Mize ((903) 455-9742). **Courtesy candidates welcome.**

**We launched our celebration of the Sesquicentennial in San Antonio on March 5** and I'm happy to report that we had 128 people at our dinner, including the Grand Master of Texas Masons, Elmer Murphey, III and his wife, Judy, and the Grand Master of the Grand Encampment, Ken Fischer, and his wife, Arlene, along with the Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas, J. Weldon Clampitte, and his wife, Laura. Brother and Senator Jeff Wentworth presented our two Grand Masters (Fischer and Murphey) with commissions by Governor Rick Perry as Admirals in the Texas Navy and our Grand Recorder Chuck Neumann, who is still recovering from his stroke last year, was commissioned as an Honorary Texan in absentia. Those in attendance also signed a Get Well card that was delivered to him as well. We await eagerly his recovery, so that he can revisit his new "second" home. Special thanks goes to S.O.O.B. member Mary Brogan, who prepared all of the table decorations for the event, even though she couldn't attend because of an out of state work conference! Following addresses by GM Murphey, me and GM Fischer, Sir Knight Gordon Downing of San Antonio Commandery #7 entertained us with his wit and music. Reports I have received have been that a good time was had by all, but as I announced at the conclusion of the evening, the best is yet to come!

**Choir at Grand Conclave:** If you haven't already, let **Mrs. Harry S. (Phyllis) Rogers (14416 Aldine-Westfield, Houston, Texas 77039; (281) 449-5660)** know that you want to be in our choir. She has the music and is disseminating it as I write this column. She will have had a rehearsal in Houston for those who have already signed up and can attend, as well as a rehearsal on Friday, April 15 and one Sat., April 16. I am excited about the prospect of the enhanced worship experience our choir will bring to our Memorial and Christian Worship Service.

I am also looking forward to the message our Grand Prelate, Jim Sonneborn, an Episcopal lay leader in his church, will bring us.

**Membership:** Our membership efforts are continuing to bear fruit. Arlington's Festival netted 12 new Knights; San Antonio's Festival resulted in 27 new Texas Knights, 1 for Minnesota and 9 for Mexico. I continue to believe we can end the year in the black (not counting deaths); your continued support, however, is imperative. Thank you for all you have done to make this happen.

**Sesquicentennial Grand Conclave:** By the time you read this article, we will be in high gear completing plans laid years ago for our Sesquicentennial Grand Conclave in San Antonio.

I know that not all who read this will be able to attend, but we welcome your prayers for safe travel for all Sir Knights and companions who will make the journey. Unlike our forebearers, they won't have to travel several hundred miles by horseback through treacherous territory to gather in conclave, but they still do so at considerable expense of time, talents and finances.

In San Antonio and District 4, the Sir Knights and their wives have worked with much diligence to make our Sesquicentennial Grand Conclave a success. It has been an overwhelming effort for many of them, and some, such as our General Chairman Harry J. "Moose" Moosegian, and our Grand Prelate, Jim Sonneborn, have faced serious health issues, but still kept going. To them and their patient and understanding wives, I owe a debt of gratitude that I can never repay.

The Grand Conclave planning committee, in addition to Moose and Jim, has included Joe Estlack, Kent Crickard, Neil Winslow, Gene and Tinie Riggs, Joe Paez, Lorraine Jennings, Mary Brogan, Diane Beckley, Al Machts, Clint McKenzie, Tony Meyer, Gerald Nowotny and others I am probably forgetting at this writing. They've spent hours in meetings and countless hours behind the scenes, and will spend many more hours before we all see the fruits of our labors. Undoubtedly, there will be unforeseen circumstances and minor crises that will arise, but they won't be for lack of planning. All who have planned major events such as this can appreciate the efforts that go into just making it happen, not to mention making it happen smoothly. I hope never to be among the naysayers who gripe at how the future Grand Conclaves are planned and executed, now that I've walked in their shoes.

Speaking of walking in their shoes, my deep appreciation goes to giants in our Grand Commandery who have been so helpful to me. I especially appreciate the help and mentorship of Jimmy Willson, Paul Warren, Leonard Pierce, Graham Childress, Mike Shively, Loyd and Scoot Chance and many, many others. The week before the Sesquicentennial Banquet, we in San Antonio lost a good friend and faithful Sir Knight: Louis E. Herrick. He, too, along with Frank E. Draper, Sr., also now deceased, as well as their wives, were such strong encouragers and supporters of Barbara and me during my tenure in the Grand Line, and we will miss them deeply. I will especially miss their not physically being here to see the fruits of their efforts and support as I preside at the Sesquicentennial Grand Conclave, but I know they are watching, nevertheless.

I discussed some of the history of our Grand Commandery at the March 5 Banquet, and we'll present a bit more in the commemorative program prepared for the Awards Banquet on April 16. Neil Winslow and my wife Barbara have spent a great deal of time creating something that we think you will want to keep, and we're still trying to get a history written for the last 50 years of our Grand Commandery, but one that will embrace its entire 150 year history.

I want to again thank the many of you who have shown Barbara and me many, many kindnesses throughout my time as a line officer. We visited many of the towns together and made many new friends. Your hospitalities were much appreciated.

As much as I believe the best is now, I know that the best is yet to come. Future Grand Commanders will continue the efforts of our past great leaders, but the work is in the trenches. Good leaders arise out of good Commanderies. A record of the past is important, but a plan for our future is imperative. Keep the faith, encourage all Christian Masons to become Knights Templar, and remember we give our utmost for His highest.

***See you in San Antonio for our Fiesta at Grand Conclave! Viva San Antonio! Viva Grand Commandery!***

OUR UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST,

James N. (Jim) Higdon  
Grand Commander

Visit your website at [www.texasYorkrite.org/grcommandery](http://www.texasYorkrite.org/grcommandery).

**P.S.** Please contact me this year at one of the following: 10122 N. Manton Lane, San Antonio, Texas 78213-1948; O: (210) 349-9933; H: (210) 344-4309; F: (210) 349-9988; Email: [jnh.kt@hbzlaw.com](mailto:jnh.kt@hbzlaw.com).