



The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller Vancouver Commandery



Autumn 2007

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Letter from Commander Poul Hansen

Dear Dames and Knights,

Our new Editor, Chev. John Jennings, KSJ has produced his second well-presented newsletter for which we thank him.



The acquisition of land on the Westside is taking its time; Chev. Ken Mahon, KJSJ and other Members are working diligently on this matter. We cannot get on with the hospice project until the land is in place.

Our partners in the project, Vancouver Hospice Society had a very successful fundraising dinner on November 9th, celebrating the remarkable results from their thrift shop, the HOB, on Dunbar Street.

Watch out for a presentation of an updated Mission / Vision for the Commandery. Chev. Richard Mulcaster, KCSJ has headed a small committee. The result will become available for the AGM scheduled for April 24, 2008.

Please make use of the Commandery's web site at www.sosjvancouver.org It is very informative; for example, you can find the functions of other Commanderies elsewhere in the world, which are available to you.

I hope to see you at the Christmas lunch on December 6. Meantime, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours in St. John,

Poul Hansen KCSJS
Commander

2006/7 Aspirants' Reunion Lunch

On October 16th, Aspirants from both the 2006 and 2007 Investitures gathered for a reunion lunch in Vancouver. Only one member of the 2007 Aspirants was unable to attend; several of the 2006 Aspirants were also able to join the gathering.

The lunch was primarily a social affair, providing an opportunity for everyone to get together as a group for the first time since the Investiture in May, 2007. Four leaders of the Commandery (Commander Poul Hansen, Dame Susan Dickson, Chev. Dick Earthy, and Chev. Peter Hebb), were invited to celebrate along with the Aspirants and share instructive and welcome remarks about how new Aspirants can participate in Commandery work, activities and social events.

The lunch was generally regarded as a success, evidenced by encouragement to the Commandery leadership to consider establishing an annual "Aspirant's' Lunch" every autumn, and the plans for those in attendance to gather again in mid-December for a Christmas lunch.

The 2008 Investiture

Saturday, June 14th is the date of the 2008 Investiture and Gala!

Every Dame and Knight is encouraged to attend this most anticipated day in the Vancouver Commandery calendar.

Please join your fellow Dames and Knights in welcoming new Aspirants to the Commandery and celebrating the promotions of your fellow members.

Let's make June 14-2008 a day to remember with a record turnout of our Commandery's members!

Will We See You at the December 6th Lunch?

The Vancouver Commandery is holding its annual Christmas lunch at RVYC on December 6th.

Invitations were sent out recently and we look forward to seeing many of our Members and their spouses there.

If you haven't sent in your RSVP yet, please do so at your earliest convenience, and if you have misplaced your invitation, please contact the Commandery office at 604-682-2938) or email at jlucic@sosjvancouver.org.



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SOSJ at Foxglove Farms – September 15th

“Foxglove Farms”, the beautiful country home of Chev. Robert and Judith Trowbridge was the setting for our fall social event September 15th, 2007. Over 60 members of the order, prospective members and their spouses enjoyed a wonderful evening of friendship, food and beautiful entertainment in a wonderful, magical setting.

The reception portion of the evening provided entertainment by three talented musicians from the Vancouver Opera Company. Performances were given by Karen Ydenberg, soprano, Paul Ouellette, tenor and Anita Comba, on piano, much to the delight of the guests. A buffet dinner and refreshments were served in the beautiful garden of Foxglove Farms, after which we were further entertained by the performers.

My sincere thanks to all who made this magical event such a special one for our members and guests.

Dame Drinda Scott, DCSJ
Chair Events and Social Committee



Judith Trowbridge Welcomes Her Guests



A Distinguished Looking Group!



SOSJ at Foxglove Farms – *(continued)*



Guests Enjoy the Vancouver Opera Company Performance



Cher. Buz & Wendi Knott & Dame Drinda Scott



VOC's Anita Comba, Paul Ouellette, and Karen Ydenberg



The Day was Perfect for a Picnic



Thank You Again to Our Wonderful Hosts!



Hospice Volunteering – My Experience

I began to volunteer at Cottage Hospice near the Pacific Coliseum in February, 2006. For those with a rakish past, this is the old Juvenile Court after serious renovations.

Volunteering at the bedside of dying people sounds like a scary and demanding thing. The reality is that it isn't that tough and you get to feel good about yourself.

Most of us have had the wonderful experience of having the help of someone who radiated caring, concern and compassion when we were going through a personal crisis. These warm and empathetic people illuminate other's lives.

Personally, I'm not particularly empathetic. I come from a military family and went to a boarding school, both environments where complaints of emotional stress usually resulted in advice such as "take a cold shower and get on with it man" (Gerald McGavin take note). Subsequently, I spent time as a naval officer cadet, where it was recognized to be theoretically possible, but never proven, that the officers, chiefs and petty officers training us might have some slight trace of humanity. Finally, my business career was in software, not a hotbed of warmth or sympathy.

So, I'm not Mother Theresa and nor are most volunteers. But we are still able to help. In one respect, limited empathy is an asset since a volunteer in a palliative care residence is going to lose virtually every resident and emotional involvement can be very draining. This is just good medical practice 101 but as volunteers, we do need to be reminded of it. This is much easier with people whose time has come than it is with kids at Canuck Place.

Every volunteer gets involved for his or her own reasons though most have had a personal experience in helping a dying friend or family member. In my case, my first experience was with an old friend and his family. He was at home and at the palliative care centre in Lions Gate Hospital. Now, my time is spent at Cottage, a community hospice. It has a wonderful location in the middle of a park, splendid views, slightly too small bedrooms for family to sleep in and a magnificent living room.

The volunteering process started with a criminal record check and blood test, followed by a grossly inadequate 7 hour training session. While the standard training of 30 hours may be too long, 7 hours was much too short. A fascinating exercise during training was the writing of our own obituary – forcing us to face our own mortality.

Following training, there were two shifts with an experienced volunteer. Since then I've been on my own. The first two months were a bit rocky but confidence grows and soon you find yourself arriving relaxed and consequently do a better job.

One image that volunteers need to get rid of is the romantic idea that you will be gently holding hands with someone dying in the light of guttering candles with the sweet smell of incense. Putting the candles aside, this could happen but hasn't in my two years. There are three reasons. First, even the most heartless family shows up towards the end. Second, I take an afternoon shift. Most deaths are in the evening or night. Finally, the professional staff are more than likely there while you hold the fort elsewhere.

The time spent is largely unstructured and responsive to the needs of the individual residents that day and no two days are alike. A typical volunteer schedule is two to four hours once a week on a usually fixed schedule. It can be morning, afternoon or evenings.

My experience is fairly typical overall but each will vary in detail as we have individual strengths, interests and commitment. It is an emotionally rewarding way of helping people and, as is often said, on most days, one gets more out of it than one puts in. I highly recommend it!

Yours in St. John,
Chev. Ian Reid, KGSJ

Ian's List of Practical Help for Hospice Volunteers

- Chatting with the resident. Not always easy, but I try to find common ground from the nurses' update before each shift. Also, I ask standard open-ended questions like "How has Vancouver changed since you came here?"
- Helping residents eat and ensure they have juice, water, coffee or whatever where they want it
- Pushing residents about in their wheelchairs
- Responding to room calls. Sometimes the volunteer can provide the help needed; at the very least, the volunteer can get the proper help and turn off the damned buzzer!
- Help set or clean the table
- Chat with family or friends taking a break
- Helping with activities
- Helping residents have a smoke since many can no longer handle a cigarette or lighter
- Procuring cigarettes & beer (with their money). While many volunteers don't, my view is that residents have few enough pleasures left to enjoy as it is. Besides, it's always been my ambition to be known as the old dope dealer
- Doing whatever else seems helpful!



The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller

Vancouver Commandery



Hospitaller's Report

It has been a quiet period for the Committee with summer holidays and the usual gap in activities in the fall. Having said that, there has been real progress on the St John Hospice that Chev. Ken Mahon covers in his report (see the accompanying article).

The Governance rules between the Commandery, the Foundation and our operating partner Vancouver Hospice Society (VHS) have been agreed to. The Commandery will maintain control of the lease or land while VHS operates the facility and maintains the building.

The VHS had a sold-out fundraising dinner on November 9th. They have been very successful in financing their current and future operating activities through "Hikes for Hospice", the HOB slightly used store, major gifts and the Dinner, so we can be assured of a stable partner.

The VHS Caregiver training program we help to support has run into a roadblock in terms of demand as they changed the schedule and did not get sufficient attendees to put it on. It will be rescheduled and tried again in the spring. Our support is by way of a small seed money donation (under \$1000) and seed money is always at risk.

The BC Palliative Care and Hospice Association, which is the main beneficiary of our financial support, is continuing to grow. They are currently looking for an Executive Director to take them to the next level.

Hospice activity in the community is increasing. Within the Vancouver Coastal Health Region, Lions Gate has started a campaign to build a 15-bed hospice closely connected to the Hospital. In the Fraser Health Authority Region, Delta has started their campaign for both a 10-bed hospice and a separate building for day support, the structures to be on hospital land. Both campaigns are substantially more expensive than ours at nearly \$8 and \$10 million, respectively. We are next up for operational funding from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

Yours in St. John,

Chev. Ian Reid, KGSJ
Hospitaller

Hospice Project

We are still working on acquiring free land at UBC and are making slow, but steady progress. Our request has been submitted to the UBC Executive which consists of the UBC President and his six Vice Presidents. The Executive has asked us to meet with the Faculty of Medicine to discuss how the Faculty might be involved as an academic connection with a facility. We continue to be optimistic that our request will eventually be successful and that we will, along with The Vancouver Hospice Society and Vancouver Coastal Health, have a 12-bed hospice at UBC. These are exciting times for our Commandery.

Yours in St. John,

Chev. Ken Mahon, KJSJ
Chairman – Fundraising Committee

Palliative Care Education Workshops

With considerable regret, we were obliged to cancel our palliative care education course scheduled for October 20th due to lack of attendees. This was a disappointment for the Committee, the resources we had organized, and those Members who had signed up for the course.

The Committee will be arranging another course to be held in February, 2008. However, the course may be held on two consecutive evenings mid week rather than a weekend, as this seems to have been an impediment to better attendance for the October course. Given the importance of palliative education to the Commandery, the Committee will be exploring options to encourage attendance, particularly among more recent Aspirants.

Notwithstanding this setback, the Commandery will still beat its stated objective of having 10% of the Members completing a palliative care education workshop by the end of 2007..

Yours in St. John,

Dame Susan Dickson, DGSJ
Chair, Palliative Care Volunteer Committee



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Vancouver Commandery



Events for Your Calendar

Vancouver Commandery

DECEMBER 6, 2007 at noon

Vancouver Commandery's Christmas Lunch
Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, Vancouver

APRIL 24, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

AGM's of the Commandery & the Foundation
Shaughnessy Golf & Country Club, Vancouver

JUNE 14, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

Investiture of 2008 Aspirants and Promotions
Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver

JUNE 14, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.

Reception and Gala Dinner
Vancouver Club, Vancouver

Other Events

DECEMBER 1, 2007

San Francisco Commandery - The Christmas Ball
Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco

MARCH 29, 2008

Priory of the Western USA – The Investiture Service
Grace Cathedral & Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco

JUNE 21, 2008

Commandery of the Sierras – The Investiture Service
Trinity Episcopal Church, Reno, NV

SEPTEMBER 26 – 27, 2008

2008 Sovereign Council Meeting
Washington, D.C.

Kudos & Other News

No news was received for this section.

*The Editor is pleased to include your "Kudos & Other News".
Please send submissions to John Jennings (john.jennings@cibc.com or
john@jennings.ca).*

Welcome to SOSJ's New Administrative Assistant

In October, the Vancouver Commandery welcomed Suzana Lucic as our new Administrative Assistant.

Suzana's office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9:00 and 5:00.

She can be reached by phone (604-682-2938) or email at jlucic@sosjvancouver.org.

Passings

We regret to inform the Commandery that Chev. Gerald Churley, CD, KSJ passed away in August, 2007. Born on July 7, 1922 in Saint John, New Brunswick, Chev. Churley was invested in the Vancouver Commandery in June 1994.

Chev. Churley enlisted as a Boy Soldier in the Canadian Army in June 1939 and served with the Infantry in Canada, England and North-West Europe from 1939 until his discharge on January 24, 1946. He later re-enlisted in the Canadian Army Reserve in 1953 and retired with the rank of Captain when his regiment was disbanded in 1966.

He continued in various capacities with the Irish Fusiliers of Canada and other service organizations following his retirement.