



Let Us Keep Christmas

Whatever else be lost
among the years,
Let us keep Christmas
still a shining thing;
Whatever doubts as-
sail us, or what fears,
Let us hold close one
day, remembering
It's poignant meaning
for the hearts of men.
Let us get back our child-
like faith again.

Grace Noll Crowell

What's Up with Family

by Kathy Watson

Where to begin? Perhaps going from the oldest grandchild to the youngest—a very logical approach for reporting what's up with family.

Michael Amador began his senior year at De La Salle High School in the fall. Over the summer, **Marston** taught him how to drive - really scary because now he'd be more independent. He had been saving his money and was able, with some help from his parents, to buy a car. He's shown here right before his junior prom - can't wait for the senior prom picture.



Sophia Amador became a high school student at Carondelet which is across the street from De La Salle where her brother goes. She attended the homecoming dance with some of her friends. Sophia was able to attend a wonderful drama class in the summer at the Leshner Theater in Walnut Creek. She was in a production of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" continuing with her acting interest.



Haley Watson, a talented synchronized swimmer, made the National team representing "The Aquanauts". She is pictured here at the awards night where she received three gold medals and her monogrammed towel in recognition of her selection. This year she graduated to middle school. Haley announced recently that she is proud of her straight A report card.



Alexander Maniaci is now in fifth grade, his last year at Apple Blossom school in Sebastopol. He is proud of the medal he won at the Boy Scout pinewood derby race at the division level. Xander still enjoys gymnastics but has added tae kwon do and playing the flute to his repertoire.



Alexia Watson, fourth grader in Walnut Creek and sister to **Haley** is interested in drama and acting just like her cousin **Sophia**. In fact, today I must suspend

working on the newsletter for us to go see **Lexie** in a production of "The North Pole Revue". During the summer she was on the swim team and is pictured mastering the long board in Hawaii.

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium

by Kathy Watson

Late April found us leaving For Brussels to attend an OS-MTH (Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani) international meeting and Flemish tour. The beginning of the vacation was troublesome as one of us left their passport in the car. Quick thinking to switch flights for one of us and the next day we were together with friends in Mechelen, Belgium.

We met for two days providing us a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and become closer to our international Templar brothers and sisters.

The Templar Order was founded on the principles first adopted by the original Templar Knights in France in the Year 1118 and carried out in those early days from their



home in the Temple of Solomon in the Holy City of Jerusalem, provided for them by then King of Jerusalem Baldwin, the Second. In these modern times, OSMTM is international in nature with members from over 40 nations, ecumenical Christian in our religious beliefs welcoming Members of all Christian religions, and focused on matters of human rights, political and religious freedom, and humanitarian aid to the world's less fortunate.

The Flemish excursion took us on a walking tour of Mechelen, then by bus for four days to Waterloo, Brussels, Ypres, Dixmude, Bruges and Ghent. The best visit was to Ypres, a significant battlefield for World War I. In those four days we made new Templar friends for life.

The "Americanization" of Alexander, Duke of Mecklenburg

By Marston Watson

It all began with a conversation between Grand Master **Patrick Rea** and **Borwin**, Duke of Mecklenburg, in which his son **Alexander** was invited to spend six weeks of his summer vacation as a guest in Rea's home in Tinley Park, Illinois. His well-appointed residence includes a number of oil portraits by Grand Chancellor **Thomas Curtis**, which Rea has added to his impressive art collection and valuable antiques.

Little did I know that the turnaround cruise last October of the *USS Constitution* with Grand Master Rea, and other distinguished guests would make Alexander's birthday (July 17) weekend even more special for Kathy and me. Readers may not be aware that Rea has served some forty years as an elected official of the Village of Tinley Park. It is in his current capacity as Village Clerk that he arranged a "Constitution Day" event on Saturday, July 16, at which

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"Americanization" of The Duke...from page 1

celebration I was invited to be the guest speaker. Duke Alexander, Grand Prior **Keith Larson**, HSH Princess **Renate**, Grand Webmaster Kathy and members of the Priory of St. Norbert joined village dignitaries and citizens for the unveiling of a Constitution print and the reading of the Village Proclamation in honor of the historic "Old Ironsides" which served this nation well in the War of 1812.

Birthday Celebration and Tea Recital

Duke Alexander would leave his teenage years behind him the next day, in time to celebrate his twentieth birthday at Princess Renate's magnificent Chicago residence. She and Grand Prior Larson coshosted this festive celebration, which featured renowned pianist, **Michael Pecak**, who graciously played the birthday song for Alex, his newfound and special friend. The voices of mostly Templar members would share their varied singing talents in this birthday tribute to Alex.

Noted genealogist and Templar member, **Anthony Hoskins** of Chicago and California, enlightened the guests with Duke Alexander's impressive German family origins, as well as his descent from **Carlos III**, King of Spain who provided financial aid to the Americans in their bid for independence during the Revolutionary War of 1775-1783. Hoskins noted that King George III's wife, **Charlotte** of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818), was Duke Alexander's 5th great-grandaunt. She was a patroness of the arts, known to Johann Christian Back and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, among others.

The weekend celebration continued on Monday with a splendid afternoon tea recital by Michael Pecak, a Chicago native of Polish descent who began playing the piano at age five. Michael graduated in 2008 from Northwestern University where he earned his Bachelor of Music degree specializing in both Piano Performance and Orchestral Conducting. His favorite composers are Chopin and Bach, "Chopin to play and Bach to listen and try to play reasonably well."

Perhaps nothing is more American than seeing Alex astride



a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, which must be the dream of twenty-something's around the world. Regrettably, Alex will not be taking one home with him on this trip. However, if this American tradition is not to be, then the joy of seeing

him buy a laptop computer at Best Buy in Chicago may be the beginning of the "Americanization" of the duke.

Small News

by Kathy Watson

Just after Christmas 2010, Marston's doctor diagnosed him with Diabetes. The prescription: monitor his blood sugar and lose weight. We were not overjoyed with the news, however, we re-



alized that both of us could stand to weigh less. This was a project that both of us believed in and thus began working together to count calories.

Success happened! It was not overnight, but Marston lost nearly 50 lbs and I lost 25 lbs since last December. His loss netted him a new wardrobe, including being able to wear his wedding suit (worn eighteen years ago!). Counting calories was not all

that we tried for we both hit a plateau. The real miracle happened with the Dukan diet. Do some research: if we can do it, Dukan do it!

What Happens in Atlanta, Stays in Atlanta

by Kathy Watson

June 2011 found us heading to Atlanta, Georgia for the Grand Convent (Sovereign Military Order, Temple of Jerusalem). I left for Georgia early because it was an opportunity to visit with my aunt **Carol** who lives in Bowdon, Georgia (about 45 miles west of Atlanta).

What a fabulous relaxing two day visit we had which included a tour of a house in town that was being restored and the Bowdon Area Historical Society (my aunt is President!) meeting house. Cousin **Linda** resides in Bowdon as well, so there was a family dinner one night with the most scrumptious lemon prawn pasta a la Carol, a recipe I have tried at home.

After the meetings were over in Atlanta, we planned a brunch with Carol's Atlanta based children: my cousins **Marc** and **Annette** with their extended family. The only cousin I missed seeing this time was **Doreen**, however, her daughter **Christine** (my 1st cousin once removed) was there with daughter **Adriana**.



The Four Panthers

by Marston Watson

This year marks the 59th anniversary of Marston's friendship with his three "Panther" mates from Burlingame High School: **Angelo Cortopassi**, **Don Mingst** and **Bob Wilkinson**. Their frequent "reunion" lunches together may not set any records but they do not lack for conversation, especially about their aches and pains and getting to their 75th birthdays this year (except Marston who turned 76 years old in November). They plan to continue their reunion lunches in 2012. Happy New Year!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year