

# Watson News & Views 2014

Are we too grownup to feel a thrill  
As we light the Christmas tree:  
Are we immune to cookies,  
Christmas cards and Christmas glee?  
Are we too adult to "Ooh" and "Aah"  
At the Christmas candle's glow?  
Are we blasé about our gifts;  
Do we shun the mistletoe:

Are we too mature for carols,  
For merry or for jolly?  
Do the decorations leave us cold,  
The ornaments and holly?  
Fat chance! We'll never grow too old  
To love the Christmas magic.  
A year without a Christmas  
Would be boring, even tragic.  
So bring it on! The candy canes,  
The feasting and good cheer;  
O Christmas, lovely Christmas,  
You're the highlight of the year!



## A Whale of a Tale about Wales

by Marston Watson

Did you know that sheep outnumber fern and fauna in Wales, as well as the human population? It seems that sheep are raised in Wales primarily for their meat and very little for their wool.

**Kathy** and I, along with Templar friends **Dale** and **Stacey Starkes**, stayed at the Ruthin Castle Hotel in North Wales for our first two nights, which is nestled in acres of parkland beside the Clwydian Range. This hotel was built at the ruins of Ruthin Castle, which is first documented castle created in 1277 by Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Prince Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, for King Edward I of England (all of whom are Marston's ancestors). Ruthin Castle was owned for another five generations by the de Grey family of Ruthin, who are Marston's ancestors as well. It was a thrill to stay at this hotel and see the remaining ruins of the castle nearby.



Our five-day travel through Wales, including more castles and three narrow-gauge train rides, concluded with a three-day stay at the Craig Y Nos Hotel, which is well known for being the "Most Haunted Castle in Wales." This hotel was purchased in 1876 by the famed opera singer, **Adelina Patti**, who lived and sang there for over three decades. We see a return trip to Wales in our future.

## Bustin' Buttons

by Kathy Watson

Grandparents are always proud of the accomplishments of their grandchildren and we are no exception! With five grandchildren there is a lot to share for 2014.

**Michael Amador**, at 20, is the oldest and this year he found his passion. In September he began training as an EMT. So far he has passed all the technical education with great enthusiasm and the next step will see him begin to use the training in "ride-alongs". He is required to have so many hours with trained professionals before he can explore the job opportunities in his field.



**Sophia Amador**, now 17, is a senior at Carondelet High School. She is busy filling out applications for colleges. Much of her recent free time has been spent visiting campuses to help decide where to apply. This was a memorable year as she is now driving in her own car (the former Nissan Maxima licensed as KWATSON)!

Moving to Erik's children, **Haley Watson** started high school in September. She is attending Carondelet High School as a freshman. Haley continued her synchronized swimming with the Walnut Creek Aquanauts and was on the Silver Medal team of 13-15 age group. Balancing swimming and more difficult studies in high school keeps her very busy.



**Lexie Watson** is the youngest grandchild and, at 12, enjoys acting in stage productions both at her school and at the local Leshner Theater. We just saw her as one of Santa's reindeer in the *North Pole Revue* which is a Christmas play not to be missed. When she is not on stage, she enjoys straight A's and a busy social life with her friends.

**Xander Maniaci** started the eighth grade in September and will turn 14 before Christmas. He worked hard this year to receive a black belt in *Tae Kwon Do*. Xander enjoys playing Pokemon with friends. He just got the most current games Omega Ruby and Sapphire.



## Merry Christmas

## Watson's Knightly Activities

by Marston Watson

Most of our friends know about our ten-year association with the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (SMOTJ), as well as a number of our activities in that time. The year 2014 was no exception to our busy Templar life and travel schedule. Sir **Marston** was promoted in Pasadena to the Order's highest rank of Grand Croix (Grand Cross). He continues to be very involved with four west coast priories as Deputy Grand Prior.

Dame **Kathy** was surprised by a well-kept secret by her husband, when she learned hours before she received the Order's highest honor, that of Distinguished Service Award. She and Marston also received the Superior Service Award by the International Order (OSMTH).



The travel to Wales was preceded by five days in Bristol, England where they participated in the Magisterial Council meetings of the International Order. There was plenty of time to see the historic sites in Bristol and attend Sunday service at the St. Mary Redcliffe Anglican Church, with its cathedral-like architecture. The service and choir were outstanding.

## Leaf Peeping in Vermont

by Kathy Watson

Timing is everything when it comes to seeing the fall colors in New England. Our fall travel schedule put us in the right place at the right time to see the spectacular colors of autumn. Early October found us visiting with Dame **Susan Byrd**, a Templar sister, at her getaway Westover Farm close to Barnard, Vermont. Little did we know that "leaf peeping" was in full swing and any who were there to partake in the sport were not to be disappointed.

Susan was such a kind hostess by taking us to see our revolutionary war ancestor's graves which both reside in Vermont. Reported in a previous Watson News and Views both graves were marked. New this trip for us was to see the work of master grave stone cleaner and Templar brother,

**Tim Mabee**. Both headstones now look almost new. On the trip to Rutland and Middlebury, the colors were everywhere!

We left Susan and her four dogs Prissy, Bruiser, Lola and Lulu to continue the journey in Morgan with good friends **Stephanie** and **David Hockensmith**.

In addition to touring several covered bridges in the area, we stopped at Lake Willoughby to take this breathtaking picture. Leaf peeping 2014 was truly memorable.



## New Recipes for "Old" Cooks

by Marston Watson

It is never too late to teach new tricks in food preparation to "old" cooks. **Kathy** and I joined twenty-six other members and guests of my Sons in Retirement Branch 128 (lunch bunch group) at the Yankee Hill Cooking School in Columbia, located in the Sierra foothills near Sonora and Twain

Harte, California (named for **Mark Twain & Bret Harte**). **Marston's** children (**Karen & Erik**) own a beautiful cabin at Twain Harte, which turned our four-hour cooking class into two nights at the cabin with longtime friends, **Paul and Genny Jones**.



Norwegian born winemaker, chef and instructor, **Ron Erickson**, involved all of us in preparing

hors d'oeuvres, a magnificent chicken dish and warm chocolate lava cake. Ron owns the oldest winery in the Sierra Foothills. The food was delicious and fun to cook. Of course, we all were invited to partake of our own creations and many times a taste of his home-made wines. Thank goodness our drive to the cabin was a short trip.

Our newest Master Chef (**Kathy**, of course) decided to use Ron's recipes for our family Thanksgiving Dinner on Sunday, November 30. Children and grandchildren gave her efforts their big thumbs up!

## Twenty-one Years and Counting

by Kathy and Marston

What does the *Saluté e Vita Ristorante* in the Richmond Marina Bay have in common with **Marston** and **Kathy's** twenty-first wedding anniversary? Salute opened its doors on November 1, 1993 and welcomed our wedding rehearsal dinner on November 26, the day before we said our wedding vows before seventy-five family and friends at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Walnut Creek.

We celebrated our 21st wedding anniversary on November 27 (Thanksgiving Day) with dinner at *Saluté*. However, we began our celebration with a sumptuous dinner and an overnight stay at the Berkeley City Club the night before. This historic California landmark "was organized by women in 1927 to contribute to social, civic, and cultural progress. The building, constructed in 1929, is one of the outstanding works of noted California architect **Julia Morgan**, whose interpretation of Moorish and Gothic elements created a landmark of California design."



Happy New Year