

South Dakota



Jake Smith, State Editor
409 Kansas City Street
Rapid City, SD 57701
jake3404@yahoo.com



Jake Smith
Grand Commander

Sir Knights,

On my return trip home from Grand Session in Sioux Falls, I was pondering, "What should we do?" Every leader wants to have something to put their stamp on when they are gone as a lasting memento that they were there. But, I felt compelled to reflect on the past. Yes, I know last time I said we won't dwell on the past! However, we should remember it, so we can learn from it.

I came to realize that perhaps we have been going about this whole thing wrong. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "*Insanity is doing the same thing over & over again and expecting different results.*" I contemplated on that and began to apply it to what we are dealing with today in Commanderies all over South Dakota.

If I were to ask you, "What is the biggest problem you face in your Commandery?" I imagine I would hear about how there is no one around to help with degree work or to even do a proper opening. That's what I face in my own Commandery. And if I were to ask you, "What is your solution to that problem?" I have no doubt that many of you would say we need to get more people in, to help. And that answer is something that I prescribed to for many years. But remember what Dr Einstein said about insanity. Is the answer getting more recruits? This is the solution we have been using for decades.

It dawned on me that perhaps the problem isn't more recruits, but better soldiers! How many recruits have you brought into Knights Templar, and how many of them do you see at your Commandery

Meetings? Why do you think that is? Well, I learned a long time ago that if you present problems, you must also be ready to offer solutions, or you become part of the problem.

So here are my solutions. First and foremost, I intend to use the major advantage that we as Knights Templar have. Something that no other Masonic organization has. Its that pointy thing hanging on your left side. Your sword! How many of you have one? How many of you know how to use it? Over the past few years I have held sword training schools at Grand Session. They are well attended and there is an abundance of enthusiasm. I always end those sessions, imploring the attendees to take what they have learned, back to their Commanderies and teach others. But, it seems that doesn't always happen. In this thinking I was doing, I wondered why people were reluctant to teach others. Then it dawned on me, they were afraid. Afraid of the ridicule from others, "That isn't how I was taught." "You're not doing it right." Sound familiar?

In the next couple months, the Commanderies of South Dakota will be getting some videos of Sword Drill that I will be making with the assistance of others. I expect that each Commandery will review these videos and arrange time to practice what is contained in them. IT IS IMPORTANT! I will be checking on your progress and will offer assistance where ever I can. Moving forward, this is how we will be doing it. It does not matter how you learned it, this is how you will do it from now on.

Next, I have revised the 10-man opening that we have been using here in my Commandery and the one you see at the opening of Grand Commandery every year. I have made it more understandable and made sure every move and command is in it. I will be distributing it to my Grand Officers so they can practice this opening, because they are expected to do it next year. It is also my hope that their desire to practice will give you a chance to practice also.

See a theme here? Do stuff! I've given you two things to do. Do them. Don't worry about getting more recruits, worry about what you are doing to the Knights you currently have. Good luck!

Shawn "Jake" Smith
Grand Commander, Knights Templar of South Dakota