

## Most Eminent Sir Knight William Henry Thornley, Jr., GCT, 1924-2010

December 21, 1924 – December 21, 2010



Every Grand Master of this Grand Encampment has come to the office with one thought in common. Each wished to leave his mark in some small way on Templary. All hope they are a success after the three years they serve. William Henry Thornley, Jr., Grand Master, 1991– 1994, was no exception. He was a man of vision, a man of ideals, and a man of action. While many contemplated, thought, and considered, Bill Thornley acted! Whatever detractors he had, he made by doing something.

His greatest legacies without a doubt are the Knight Commander of the Temple (KCT), Knight Grand Cross of the Temple (KGC), and Companion of the Temple honors. Those programs were part of a proposed “Concordat” introduced in Denver at the 1970 Triennial. The Concordat itself was not adopted and the KCT/KGC died with the legislation. One of the first things Bill did as Grand Master was to issue a Grand Master’s Decision adopting the program. Then he made sure that enough voting delegates held the KCT that they were bound to vote for adoption of his decision at the 1994 Triennial!

As Grand Master, Bill met regularly with his officers, kept them advised of his plans, and sought their input into decisions he made. He was a team player and made good use of his people. I always admired the devotion of his committees,

his Department Commanders, and those with whom he surrounded himself. As Grand Master he developed strong bonds with his supporters. He also had his share of detractors. Nobody was ever neutral about Bill Thornley, but nobody could deny that he made a difference as he passed our way.

Bill also knew how to graduate after leaving the office of Grand Master into becoming a valued senior statesman. He never interfered with the affairs of any organization once he left the helm, though he was always ready to share advice when asked. He left an example worthy of emulation.

Sir Knight Thornley had a very interesting life outside of our fraternity. He landed on D-Day in Normandy and was wounded in that action. He spent a lifetime working as an engineer having graduated from the Colorado School of Mines. Bill was married for forty-three years to the lovely and gracious Shirley Jane Ammon, and they had three children, Elizabeth, William, and Robert. He had three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. I will be forever grateful for his introduction to my wife and his daughter, Elizabeth.

Muhammed Ali once said, “The man who has no imagination has no wings.” Sir Knight Thornley was always thinking and challenging those around him to do the same. I thank God he sent Bill our way, and Templary is better for his service.

William H. Koon, II, GCT  
Past Grand Master