

George Pipes

From: Imperial Sir George Mitchell, Imperial Potentate [Imperial_Potentate@shrinenet.org]
Sent: Thursday, December 16, 2010 4:38 PM
To: gapipes@hughes.net
Subject: 2010 Year-end Message from the Imperial Potentate



Imperial Potentate George Mitchell
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Dear Fellow Nobles,

Isn't it great to be a Shriner? It's FEZTASTIC!

It's a tremendous honor to serve as your Imperial Potentate. It's hard to believe I was elected six months ago. I want to thank you again for this amazing opportunity and share with you some highlights from my recent travels.

In mid-November, I was honored to participate in the annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Several hundred members of the International Association of the Legions of Honor (IALOH), an organization comprised of Shriners who are also veterans or members of the armed forces, were on hand for this important event, including members from as far away as The Philippines.

Participating in this moving ceremony is an experience I will never forget. Joining me in laying the wreath on the tomb were IALOH Commander Butch Arnold; IALOH Chief of Staff Kenny Miller; and Ron Little, Commander Arnold's brother-in-law, who was representing Commander Arnold's father and father-in-law, who both served in the U.S. military.

We also laid a poppy, one of the traditional symbols of veterans, at the Canadian Cross of Sacrifice at the cemetery, which honors U.S. citizens who enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces during World War 1, and lost their lives.

I want to recognize and thank Commander Arnold for his continued commitment to remembering those who gave their lives to protect our way of life. I am proud that Shriners are so dedicated to honoring the efforts of our soldiers. The Association has been organizing this event for 28 years, for which I am very grateful.

Earlier in the month, I was a guest of Wa Wa Shriners in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Regina is the home of the training center for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the national police force of Canada. I had the honor

of reviewing the troops (known as the Sergeant Major's Parade). The soldiers were dressed in full uniform, and went through formations and a military inspection.

After the formal parade, a band marched into the reviewing hall and played for us. The band has an interesting tradition – when a new class of recruits comes to the training center four members of the class must join the band. If they are chosen to join the band, they must. If they don't already know how to play an instrument, it's just something else they have to learn. I have to say they all played very well. This year's band leader was only about 5 feet 1 inch high, and the tallest member of the band was 6 feet 5 inches. It was cute.

While in Regina, I also attended a Remembrance Day Ceremony honoring Canadian veterans, which was quite moving. While we remember and honor our veterans every November; I hope we remember them in our hearts every day. It is not possible to honor and thank them enough.

Another recent highlight was the ABATE (American Bikers Aimed Toward Education) Toy Run in the Melbourne – Merritt Island area of Florida. I, along with the local president of ABATE, led about 20,000 motorcyclists down U.S. 1 between Merritt Square Mall and Wickham Park in Melbourne – about a 30-mile stretch. Now, some say Florida in December is just too warm and green – and it's hard to catch the holiday spirit there. But, when you see truckloads of toys to benefit several local organizations – including Azan Shriners and Shriners Hospitals for Children® — Tampa – all generated by the toy run – it's easy to catch the spirit of the season, even without snow or cold temperatures.

While in the area, I also participated in the Merritt Island Christmas Parade, and, as the guest of the Brevard County Sheriff's Department, took a helicopter ride. I saw Cape Canaveral and manatees! I'll always remember that ride – and the fact that the helicopter did not have any doors!

We also went on an airboat ride through the marshy, swamp-like areas of Lake Washington. I'd never been on an airboat before – it was fun looking for alligators. I was invited to go alligator hunting someday.

I want to thank Noble Leo Cornelison, my Aide for the trip to Brevard County, Fla., and his Lady, Shirley, for such a wonderful time full of so many experiences, but especially for working with ABATE on the toy run, which brings so much joy to our kids.

While I was in the area, I met four Shriners who were renovating their newly-purchased clubhouse. I was very impressed when I learned that one of them was currently Master of his lodge and the other three going in as Masters of their respective lodges. What a great help that will be to membership! In fact, I met lots of Shriners in the Brevard County area – the fraternity has a great group of men there and is doing quite well. It's really encouraging to see people working together, and working hard for the cause we've all pledged to support.

As I think about good things happening for the fraternity, I also want to commend and congratulate Right Worshipful Grand Master Tom Sturgeon of Pennsylvania. Because of his aggressive, new 21st Century Renaissance program, he is expecting a membership gain of approximately 400 for 2010. It's the first net gain in 40 years in Pennsylvania. Isn't that exciting news?

In addition to attending these events on behalf of Shriners International, I have also visited several of our hospitals. I've been to Honolulu, our "newest", and to Mexico City, our "busiest." In addition, I've seen the great work being done on behalf of kids at our hospitals in Tampa and St. Louis. I also traveled to South Carolina for the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas. While there, I was able to visit our hospital in Greenville, where I said hello to Santa and visited with the children. My hospital tour guide was Maureena, a wonderful 9-year-old who is receiving care at the hospital. She did an outstanding job!

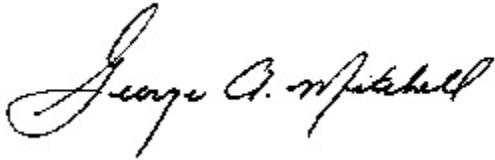
While every hospital is a little bit different, and has its own personality, the commitment and dedication to our cause and our kids is always the same – and it is always complete and total. I want to thank every employee and every volunteer for the commitment they bring to work every day.

As I criss-cross the country on behalf of Shriners International and Shriners Hospitals for Children, I emphasize membership wherever I go. We all know that increasing membership is one of the most important keys to the future of our great organizations. I try to shake as many hands as I can, and thank everyone for their efforts. By the way, a smile and a heart-felt “thank you” can really mean a lot to a person, and inspire them to keep trying. I encourage everyone to remember to say “thank you.”

As we come to the holiday season and the close of the calendar year, I want to thank each of you for your dedication to our great organization, and wish you a joy-filled holiday season.

As always, keep a positive and enthusiastic attitude, and remember: **Isn't it Great to be a Shriner? It's Feztastic!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George A. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George Mitchell
Imperial Potentate, Shriners International

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