

# **HISTORY OF THE SHRINE**

## **The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine Becomes Shriners International**

In August 1870 William J. Florence, a prominent American actor traveling in Europe, was enthralled by a magnificent pageant presented by a Counsel from Egypt in Marseilles, France. Mr. Florence related this experience to his personal friend, Dr. Walker M. Fleming, in New York. Dr. Fleming was a noted Masonic scholar, and he utilized this ability plus his knowledge of Arabian and Egyptian literature to contrive a ritual. This brilliant physician spaced mystery and enchantment through the manuscript and in submitting it to actor Florence and eleven other distinguished men, explained that it was his desire to form an order that would act to relax and appeal to the humoresque portion of human nature after being subjected to the continuous serious presentation of the Knight Templar Orders and Scottish Rite Degrees.

The prerequisite to join as members would be Master Masons of the Masonic fraternity. The first "Temple" was founded in New York on September 26, 1872 and named "Mecca." Through rapid growth, the National Order was founded June 6, 1876.

On June 25, 1888, Rameses Temple in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, was chartered and the Order became the "Shrine of North America." The name "Imperial" was adopted to signify the International Order.

In Kentucky, Temples were chartered as follows: Kosair in Louisville in 1886; El Hasa in Ashland in 1906; Oleika in Lexington in 1908; Rizpah in Madisonville in 1909.

The Shrine held annual conventions and for the first fifty years fun and fellowship were the only net results.

With the passing of World War I, the men who composed the membership of the Shrine geared their activities toward deeds of more exalted usefulness. At the Imperial Shrine Session held in Portland, Oregon in June 1920, the Shrine "found its soul." The representatives authorized the formation of the "Shriners' Hospitals for Crippled Children," to be supported by an annual assessment of each Noble. The first hospital for the treatment of orthopedically handicapped children was opened by the Shrine at Shreveport, Louisiana on September 16, 1922. The Lexington, Kentucky unit was opened November 1, 1926. The Shrine operates 19 Orthopedic Hospitals and three Burns Institutes, the first of which was opened in Galveston, Texas on March 20, 1966. Just as the Shrine has made America conscious of the crippled child, it is now performing the same humanitarian act in the fields of treatment and research of burned children.

At the 136<sup>th</sup> Imperial Session in Toronto, we became known as Shriners International. We adopted legislation to approve this during the Imperial Session. We are expanding to include two new temples into the Shrine fraternity; Mabuhay Temple in the Philippines and Al Rai'E Saleh Temple in Puerto Rico, growing to from 191 temples to 193. We have another prospect of adding a 194<sup>th</sup> temple, a temple under dispensation in Heidelberg, Germany next year.

The tremendous financial load of the Shriners Orthopedic and Burns programs of today must necessarily be supplemented by income in addition to the assessment of each Shriner. Football games, circuses, paper sales and other projects are conducted annually for this great charitable

undertaking. Wills, bequests and the “Living Trust” are earnestly solicited from all friends of mankind.

The Shriners Hospitals for Children have zealously earned and cautiously protect the proud title of “THE WORLDS’S GREATEST PHILANTHROPY.”

## **Shriners vs. Masons**

Becoming a Shriner isn’t as simple as walking into a Temple, paying dues and donning a fez. To become a Shriner, a man first must be a Master Mason.

The fraternity of Freemasonry is the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternity in the world. It’s impossible to Google the exact date Freemasonry began, but we do know it dates back hundreds of years to when stonemasons and other craftsmen gathered after work in shelter houses, or lodges. Over time, the men organized into Masonic guilds, and the tools of their trade – the square and compass – became the symbol of their brotherhood.

Time passed, and the need for Masons declined. So, Masonry evolved into an organization that began to accept members who weren’t craftsmen. Today, Masonry is built upon a foundation of improving character and strengthening communities, through the square and compass are still the symbols of the fraternal brotherhood.

Just as Shriners have Temples, Masonry has a basic organizational unit called the Blue Lodge or Craft Lodge. (Groups of Lodges are organized under governing bodies known as Grand Lodges.) Members of the Lodges are required to read up on their fraternity and earn a series of Masonic degrees. Once they’ve completed the third and final degree, members are titled Master Masons. Of course, for those men wishing delve deeper into Freemasonry – in essence, continuing their Masonic education – there are additional courses of study, known as the Scottish Rite and York Rite.

Once a Mason earns the Master Mason title, he can join the Shriners fraternity. In short, all Shriners are Masons...but not all Masons are Shriners.

## **Shriners Terms and Titles**

Non-Shriners often have a hard time wrapping their heads around some of the rituals, symbols and terminology used in the Shriners fraternity. What’s an Imperial Potentate? How about a Divan? And what’s up with the fezzes?

### **Fez-iquette**

Let’s start with the fez – the rhombus-shaped, tasseled, red hat most commonly associated with Shriners. The fez was adopted as the official headgear of Shriners in 1872. Named after the town of Fez, Morocco, where it originated, the hat seemed to portray the Near East theme the original founders of the fraternity was looking for.

Today, the fez is worn at Shriners functions and in parades and outings as an effective way of gaining exposure for the fraternity. It’s not unlike wearing a baseball cap to support your favorite

team. Only, in this case, the fez draws attention to the fraternity, helps recruit new members and spreads the word about the Shriners' Philanthropy, Shriners Hospitals for Children.

There are strict rules when it comes to the fez, though. Only certain ranking Shriners may have their titles on their fez, and the tassel can only be secured with two pins or clasps on the left side of the fez. Additional pins or adornments are off-limits!

## **The Emblem**

Just like the Mercedes-Benz is known for its three-pointed-star symbol, the Shriners fraternity is known for its Crescent, or "Jewel of the Order." Carrying on the Near East theme, the emblem is composed of the claws of the tiger, united in the middle with the head of a sphinx. On the back of the emblem are a pyramid, urn and star. Additionally, the emblem bears the motto "Robur et Furor," which means "Strength and Fury." The Crescent hangs from a scimitar, while a five-pointed star dangles from the sphinx.

Just as Mercedes' star represents something – domination of land, sea and air – so does the Shriners emblem. The scimitar stands for the backbone of the fraternity, its members. The two claws are the Shriners fraternity and its philanthropy, Shriners Hospital for Children. The sphinx is representative of the governing body of the Shriners, while the star hanging beneath it represents the thousands of children helped by the philanthropy every year.

## **Greetings and Salutations**

Since 1872, Shriners have used the salutation "Es Selamu Aleikum, "Arabic for "Peace be with you!" The response "Aleikium Es Selamu," or "With you be peace".

## **The Chain of Command**

Now, on to the Shriner hierarchy.

To better understand it all, it helps to begin at the local chapter level. The group of elected officers who run the chapter is called the Divan. Granted, the number one definition of divan is a long, backless sofa, but a Divan also refers to a government bureau.

The top dog in the Divan is known as the Potentate, defined as "one who has the power and position to rule over others." The second in command is called the Chief Rabban.

Within each chapter there can be any number of "clubs" or "units" formed for a certain purpose. The best-known examples are the units of clowns and motor patrols (the "little-car" guys), often the most visible in the community. There are also clubs and units for people with various other interests as well. From golfing and boating, to classic cars and motorcycles - there truly is something for everyone.

Just like the countries of North America are governed by representative bodies, so are the various chapters of the Shrine. The group of representatives, called the Imperial Council, convenes once a year to make policy, decisions and legislation regarding the fraternity and philanthropy.

Representatives strive to become one of the 13 members of the Imperial Divan, Shriners International governing body. The chief executive officer of Shriners of North America is the Imperial Potentate who serves a one year term.

## **Shriners Hospitals for Children**

As membership in the Shriners fraternity grew in the early 1900's, so did the call for establishing an official charity. In 1919, the Imperial Potentate-elect pitched the idea of establishing a hospital to provide free care for children with orthopaedic problems. The idea was mulled over and, in 1920, a committee was established to explore the idea. This committee concluded that there shouldn't just be one hospital there should be a network of hospitals throughout North America that provide medical care at no charge. It was an idea that appealed to Shriners, who, as we know, like to do things in a big way. The first hospital opened in Shreveport, La., in 1922.

### **Orthopaedic, Burn, Spinal Cord Injury, and Cleft Lip and Palate Treatment**

Today, there are 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children, 18 of which specialize in orthopaedic care, treating injuries and problems of the bones, joints and muscles, as well as complicated conditions, such as brittle bone disease, spinal bifida and cerebral palsy.

Additionally, four hospitals specialize in providing medical care to kids with burn injuries. Shriners entered the field of burn care in the 1960's after recognizing a lack of medical expertise in the field. Shriners Hospitals treats children with acute, fresh burns; conducts reconstructive and restorative surgeries on kids with healed burns; treats children with severe scarring that limits mobility; and also helps kids with scarring or facial deformities caused by burns.

Spinal cord rehabilitation units are located within three Shriners Hospitals. These units provide long-term rehabilitation and intensive physical, occupational and recreational therapies for children with spinal cord injuries.

One of the hospitals, located in Sacramento, California provides care for children with orthopaedic conditions, burns and spinal cord injuries.

Moreover, Shriners Hospitals for Children established a cleft lip and palate program in 2005. This program provides lip and palate repair, nasal reconstruction, facial work and dental procedures, as well as audiological, speech, and psychological services.

### **Outstanding Research**

"Today's research is tomorrow's patient care" is a well-known saying at Shriners Hospitals. In 2007, \$37 million was budgeted for research projects. Since Shriners Hospitals began a formal research program more than 40 years ago, more than \$515 million has been invested in research projects.

While eight Shriners Hospitals are specifically designated as research centers of excellence, all 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children are involved in some form of research. Shriners Hospitals have research affiliations with major universities. Generally, these investigations focus on improving and expanding treatments for severe burns, understanding complex musculoskeletal disorders, and improving techniques used to treat both mobility problems and spinal cord injuries.

## **Teaching Opportunities**

Shriners Hospitals take an active role in medical education. Over the past 20 years, more than 8,000 physicians have received residency education or postgraduate fellowship education at Shriners Hospitals. Most of our hospitals have residency or teaching affiliations with other hospitals or universities. Shriners Hospitals also provide training in other medical areas, including nursing, physical and occupational therapy, and orthotics and prosthetics.

While there are many elements to Shriners Hospitals for Children, there is only one purpose to improve the lives of children.

## **No Barriers to Care**

The total budget for the 22 Shriners Hospitals is \$721 million in 2007, but that money doesn't come from the pockets of patients or their families.

Thanks to the generosity of the Shriners and the general public; ability to pay or insurance coverage is never an issue. All care at Shriners Hospitals is provided at absolutely no charge to the patient, family or legal guardian.

The hospitals are substantially funded through the Shriners Hospitals for Children endowment fund, maintained through gifts, bequests and contributions. Additional income is provided by an annual hospital assessment paid by every Shriner as well as fundraising events.

## **Admission**

Admission to a Shriners Hospital is based on medical need. All children, up to the age of 18, are eligible for admission if they can benefit from the specialized services available at Shriners Hospitals. Application forms are available from your local Shriners, on-line at [www.shrinershospitals.org](http://www.shrinershospitals.org) or by calling toll-free (800) 237-5055 in the United States.

## **How Can You Help**

Shriners Hospitals for Children needs your help! Learn more about making a one-time gift, recurring gift or a planned gift by visiting [www.shrinershospitals.org](http://www.shrinershospitals.org) or by calling (800) 241-GIFT.