

A Patriotic and Memorable Weekend, January 6th through the 8th, 2017

A Fourth or Patriotic Degree Exemplification was held in Tucson, AZ on January 7th, 2017. This was the first Exemplification planned and presented by our New Worthy Arizona District Master, SK Bryant Sayers, PSD. There were three Priests Candidates and sixty-four Third Degree Candidates that were exemplified by the John Kingsley Fourth Degree Team. The Team performed the Ceremonial well, in their usual professional and proficient manner. Approximately 100 Sir Knights witnessed the Exemplification.

There were two District Masters from the John H. Reddin Province. One is from the State of Utah, SK V J Simonelli, and one from the State of New Mexico, SK Richard Favela. They attended the weekend festivities and witnessed the Ceremonial. They appreciated attending this Exemplification and were impressed. They both said that they will never forget this weekend.

There were many highlights at the Banquet. Besides 67 New Sir Knights and their families attending the banquet, there were many guests and dignitaries. Those in attendance were: Father John Hannigan, who was the Faithful Friar in the Ceremonial and celebrated Mass; the New Arizona District Master, SK Bryant Sayers, PSD, and his wife, Connie; the Vice Supreme Master for the John H. Reddin Province, SK Michael Kingman, PSD, and his wife, Marcella; the Former Supreme Master, SK Larry Costanzo, PSD, and his wife, Sandra; all the State Officers including our State Deputy, SK Sean Halpain and his wife, Brenda. It was a very impressive showing of dignitaries.

The Host Assembly, The Father Anthony Rey Assembly No. 3617, which was chartered just last year, brought their own version of the POW/MIA Ceremonies to enhance the Banquet. The first two ceremonies were the explanation of the 'Battlefield-Cross' and the POW/MIA Flag. But the most powerful of all was the classic POW/MIA Table Ceremony. To enhance this ceremony even more, it was performed by five Midshipmen from the University of Arizona, Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). See the photo. Their precision was unequalled. The narrator, Retired Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army, SK Rick Riess, astounded everyone with his recitation. Especially striking was what happened after the reading of the word, "REMEMBER" after each line of direction that was said to the Midshipmen or the explanation of an action. An actual ship's bell would ring out after SK Rick would say the word, "REMEMBER." The ship's bell was rung by the youngest New Sir Knight exemplified on this day, SK William Barrett, IV.

The most impressive and emotional portion of the Banquet Program were the words spoken by our Class Honoree, Sir Knight Paul Kerchum. Prior to the Banquet, SK Paul, sat quietly in the District Masters Hospitality Suite. He talked to a few of us, but he was content just being there wearing his 'Ex-Prisoner of War' garrison cap. His cap was adorned with many, many pins and had that well-worn but cherished appearance. When he was asked how long his speech was going to be, he proudly and emphatically said thirty minutes and in the same breath, he said, "You want your money's worth, don't cha?" What a character! As he was talking all about; his gut wrenching military life as a Japanese POW during WWII, his twenty-one years after that, his Air Force retirement, his life after the military as a realtor, and his 67 years of marriage to his wife, Gloria, there was not a dry eye in the Banquet Room. I looked at the almost 300 people in the Banquet Room, and every one of them were mesmerized by the words spoken by SK Paul. I even saw the Hotel Food Servers listening to him and wiping away their tears. SK Paul's biography is at the end of this article. And by the way, his speech lasted 34 unforgettable minutes. See the photo.

Per tradition at a Fourth or Patriotic Degree Exemplification Banquet, the Class Honoree, SK Paul Kerchum, was presented with a folded American Flag. See the photo.

After the Banquet, I believe that everyone left with a warm feeling in their heart and proud sense of patriotism for our country, the United States of America!

There are many Brothers to thank and if I missed any, please let me know so I can rectify the problem. Thanks goes out to members of the; Archbishop Daniel J. Gerke Assembly No. 0016, the St. Frances of Assisi Assembly No. 2058, the Msgr. James T. Weber Assembly No. 2152, the St. Alphonsus Assembly No. 3470, and to the Host Assembly, The Father Anthony Rey Assembly No. 3617. Thanks to SK Jim Walsh, SK David Chapman, and our Worthy State Warden, SK Tom Kato for their assistance in the registration, Banquet Table scheduling, and the on-site working out the many registration and payment problems. To SK Ken Schwartz for stepping up and producing the Program Book so cost effectively and on time. All these brethren must be acknowledged for their assistance in making this Exemplification a great and memorable success! But one final name must be spoken, Worthy Arizona District Master, SK Bryant Sayers. For his part in producing his first Exemplification, SK Bryant was one cool, calm, and collected District Master! One down Bryant and, at a minimum, seven more to go!

by SK Ray Obral, Faithful Captain, The Father Anthony Rey Assembly No. 3617.



As is tradition at a Fourth or Patriotic Degree Exemplification, Worthy District Marshal, SK Drew Mansager, is presenting to the January 2017, Exemplification Class Honoree, SK Paul Kerchum, PGK, a folded American Flag. The Master of Ceremonies, SK Rich Tracy, PFN, observes the presentation.



Here the five Midshipmen from the University of Arizona ROTC Program are performing the POW/MIA Table Ceremony at the January 2017 Exemplification Banquet.



SK Larry Costanzo, Former Supreme Master and Past State Deputy, with his wife, Sandra, pose with SK Paul Kerchum, PGK, who is the January 2017, Exemplification Class Honoree.

January, 2017 Class Honoree – Sir Knight Paul Kerchum



Private Kerchum,

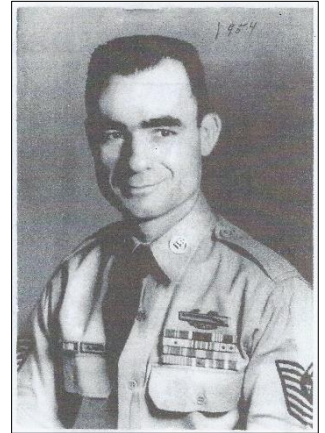
My name is Paul Kerchum and I am a survivor.

I was born on January 25, 1920 in Youngstown, Ohio and spent my childhood in McKees Rock, PA. I moved to Benson, AZ in 1966 where I reside today.

On January 6, 1938 I joined the Army. In those days, you joined. I served 2½ years in the infantry in Hawaii. I re-enlisted and joined an infantry company in Manila, Philippines in September, 1940. I participated in three battles, was wounded twice but not seriously, and achieved the rank of Corporal.

I was caught up in the invasion of the Philippines by the Japanese. I survived the Bataan Death March and 3½ years in various Japanese POW Camps. I spent the last year of the war working in a lead mine, Mitsubishi Mine #11, in Northern Japan.

I meet my wife, Gloria, after WWII and we have been married 69 years as of March 13th, 2016.



MSgt Kerchum, 1954

I enlisted in what was then the Army Air Corps. I served in Japan and Korea, from June 1952 thru November 1954 during the Korean War. I retired August 1st, 1966 as a Chief Master Sargent with 29 years of military service, 8 years Infantry and 21 years Air Force.



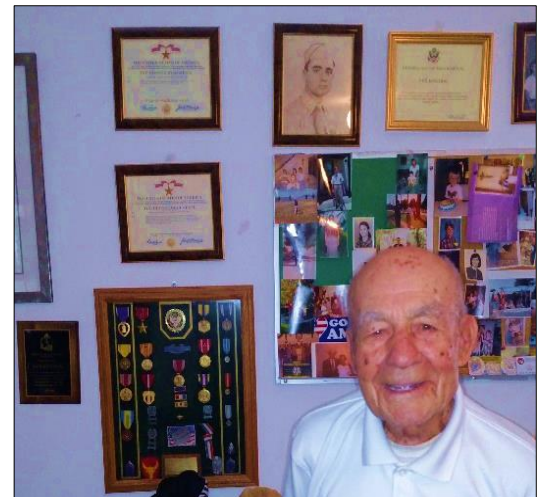
CMSgt Kerchum awarded Air Force Commendation Medal at his Retirement

After retirement, I started a Real Estate Business and spent 20 years working out of my home. When called upon, I do speak to students and organizations about World War II.

I am active at Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church in Benson, AZ. I am a Past Grand Knight and a Charter member of

the Logan de Rosier Council No.7521 out of Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

I will be 97 years young on January 25th, 2017!



This is a recent photograph of Paul Kerchum with his many awards in a shadow box and many certificates behind him on the wall in his home in Benson, AZ.