



Memories of a Gallant Knight

Charles Georg August von Dietrich Knighton

I first met Charles at one of our Lucia Fests, maybe fifteen or twenty years ago. He was on the glogg committee, an imposing figure in his big apron as he busily kept everyone's cups filled. After many years in hospital surgical areas with colleagues from every corner of the world, I thought I could pretty much tell where a person was from as soon as they opened their mouth, but not Charles. All my ears told me was that he was definitely not Scandinavian! Eventually, to my great surprise, I learned that Charles was born and raised in the Cincinnati area. The accent and archaic word choices were something he apparently developed, unique to himself.

I joined the Scandinavian Society's Scribblers group soon after I relocated to Kentucky in 2002. Here I got to know Charles a bit better, although he seemed always a bit shy and reticent. He was very proud of his German and British roots. He was a vegetarian since childhood, who brought home the meat from his school lunches for his cat.

Charles served in the military during the Korean War. He had been stationed in both Europe and in Asia. He loved to travel and visit friends abroad. Every fall he flew across the ocean to Great Britain and Germany to attend theatre, vaudeville and variety shows. He sometimes wrote about these trips, the shows, and the many old-time performers he so admired. Other times he offered us a list of jokes which he was never able to relate with a straight face. More Charles stories included tales of his ancestors, whose lives he researched by way of old newspapers and court records. Especially impressive was the one about a shoot-out in the courthouse between different branches of the family! From month to month you never knew what to expect from Charles, but he certainly entertained!

Charles did have a Scandinavian connection. As a young man he had worked for a time in Minnesota as an interior designer. I sometimes wondered what he thought of my skills in that area. He'd look around at my Viking and cat based décor, but made no comment, (unlike the one ballplayer moving in for the season who dropped his bags at the door and announced, "I don't eat lutfisk!")

One time Charles wrote about the annual celebration of "Sven Karna's Day in Minneapolis. I had never heard of Sven Karna or his celebration. It dawned on me much later that it was a Swedish celebration, "Svenskarnas Dag," (accent on the first, not the last syllable,) Swedish Day, for the Swedes, and not for a Mr. Sven Karna.

Charles had some difficulties recovering from knee surgery a few years ago. He hinted at other health problems when the Scribblers met this past February. He didn't specify, but said he was going into the hospital for tests for "everything." In March we learned that Charles was in the hospital and failing. He never returned home.

However, at the time of our Scandinavian Society's January Dinner Meeting, Charles seemed to be at his very best! One of my sons, his wife, their teenage daughter and I shared a table with Charles and three other friends. We had a delightful evening! Even Charles' hearing was good, maybe because we were at the periphery of the room. Charles was the refined cosmopolitan older gentleman at the head of the table, charming us with tall tales and jokes. He was in absolute top form that night. All went home happy! What a great way to remember you, dear Charles!

- JCW 8 May 2016