

The Chivalry and Knighthood Information Center FAQ

This *Frequently Asked Questions List* has been prepared especially for those who are new to Chivalry and to the study of Nobility and Royalty. The questions are those which have been asked of Count Maxalla and many others down through the years. If you have a question that is not answered in this FAQ, you can have that question answered (see below).

What is Chivalry?

Chivalry is a system of discipline and social interaction that is derived from the warrior class of medieval times, especially and primarily the class of trained warriors who participated in the Crusades (12th - 14th centuries). Chivalry has a discipline because those ancient soldiers trained themselves daily through learning and practicing the arts of attack and self-defense. These arts gave rise to the idea of control of body, mind, and speech in the Knight. Further, the idea of social interaction developed because the Knight originally followed carefully the orders of his superiors who were interested only in battle with those who were eligible to fight--that is, civilians were not to be engaged in battle. From this idea of engaging only other Knights developed the idea of treating enemies and friends fairly and equally.

Men who excelled in battle were honored with Knighthood, an honor first granted by Knights only. Then, later, as the honor of being a Knight grew, both Monarchy and the Church (Eastern Orthodox as well as Roman Catholic) began to participate in the selection and creation of Knights.

While the ideals of Knighthood were often violated by the Knight warriors themselves, yet the ideals survived as Knighthood came to be thought of as an honor to be bestowed upon those who had proven themselves worthy. When the practice of the volunteer army and the need for Knights as warriors faded away, the concept of the honorable and self-disciplined Knight remained, and the rank and status of Knight began to take on aspects of a minor Nobility that one could achieve (rather than having to be born into).

As an honor and status that men sought, Knighthood became a valuable gift and boon for Kings and Church to grant, either individually as a "Knight Bachelor" or as membership in an Order of Chivalry (information about Orders of Chivalry is found in the next question, below.). Thus, Knighthood has survived into modern times as both an honor and as a way of life and code of conduct and belief. Those involved in modern Chivalry do not believe that it is "outdated," "quaint," or "old-fashioned." Rather, modern Knights see Chivalry and its practices of good behavior and good manners as a foundation for civilization.

What is the Purpose of Chivalry today?

In the words of Michael Moore, Ph.D.:

Chivalry sets a standard of conduct that transcends era or culture. It maintains a code of conduct that traditionally [upholds] a practical guide to living in a changing world, and it provides discipline within an undisciplined environment. Chivalry embraces a spiritual path of personal development that combines bravery and gentleness with a fierce compassion for the welfare of others. [The knight's] interest and goal in life [is] to protect those who cannot defend, be it physical, spiritual, or economical [and] to fulfill [a] desire for personal excellence.

What Do Modern Knights Do?

Many modern Knights don't do anything. The honor of Knighthood is invested in them, and then they continue on in their daily lives, except that, on occasion, such Knights will attend a dinner or banquet and wear their decorations. On the other hand, some Orders of Chivalry are considered to be "working" Orders with expectations that their Knights will participate in charity work, will attend the meetings and workshops of the Order, and will develop and live a life that expresses the tenets and beliefs of chivalry (and, for Religious Orders of Chivalry, the expectation is that the Knight will also live a religious and spiritual life).

What is an Order of Chivalry?

An "Order" of Chivalry is an organization of Knights, usually named after a Christian Patron Saint (such as the Order of St. John) or named after a place sacred to Christians (the Order of the Holy Sepulchre). Originally, there were no Orders of Chivalry; Knights were independent, and Knighthood was passed on from one Knight to a worthy man who had proved himself in battle, a practice which gave rise to the secular (non-religious) "Knight Bachelor" (which type of Knighthood still exists, as described below). However, as the King and Church began to recognize the value of Chivalry and Knighthood as marks of honor, the need developed to control the distribution and granting of the honor; therefore, Orders began to form, with the King or the high Church official granting Charters and sometimes acting as the head of the Order (the "Grand Master") who controlled and asserted authority over the honor. The individual Knights of an Order cannot themselves grant Knighthood, but rather, the Order itself (deriving its authority from its Charter and usually acting through its Grand Master) grants the rank and status of Knight to those who enter the Order.

Some Orders of Chivalry are "secular," meaning that they chartered by a government or that they are chartered by a monarch. Other Orders of Chivalry are "religious," meaning that they are chartered by a Church through a high Church official. The one who issues the Charter is called the *fons honorum* (see below to learn more about the "fons honorum").

Finally, the Knight Bachelor belongs to an Association, not an Order. The Knight Bachelor is the modern descendent of the original and ancient battlefield knighthood

conferred immediately before or after a battle. The Knight Bachelor is always secular. In modern times, the Knight Bachelor traces the lineage of his knighthood to one of two sources: (a) the monarch of England or (b) to His Majesty King Peter II of the Dynasty of the Karadjordjevic, exiled former monarch of Yugoslavia, who created the Knight Bachelor to honor those who served the exiled Royal House. As a battlefield honor, the Knight Bachelor (whether British or Slavic) is not given to women.

Can only the Queen of England Make Knights?

The Monarch of England makes Knights, but any sovereign royal holds the right to create Knights. The Queen of England is "regnant," but not all Royals are "regnant," which means currently ruling a country. A non-regnant (non-ruling) Royal can make Knights if the Royal is the Head and Chief of Arms of a Royal House which was once sovereign and regnant and which did not relinquish its sovereignty and regnancy (even in cases where the former lands were confiscated or overrun by force of arms). Furthermore, the religious Orders of Chivalry (both the affiliated and independent ones) can also make Knights. Finally, there are independent Orders of Chivalry, not affiliated with a particular government and not associated with a Church, and operating under their own Charters (issued from a "fons honorum"). The members of independent Orders are also Knights.

English (British) Knights are usually the best-known of the Knights, primarily because the Queen makes Knights of actors and artists who are famous. Further, many in the field of Chivalry consider the exclusive British Order of the Garter to be the premier Order of Chivalry.

Can a United States Citizen Become a Knight?

Yes, United States citizens can accept a Knighthood. There is no law preventing the granting of Knighthood to a citizen of the United States of America, nor does the Constitution of the United States prevent the Investiture of a man or woman as a Knight (the Constitution does prevent the United States itself from granting a knightly title). Great Britain, through its Queen, has often granted Knighthoods on famous Americans such as General Westmoreland, Generals Norman Schwarzkopt and Colin Powell, and former Presidents Bush and Reagan. The Queen of England grants Knighthoods to U.S Citizens as "honorary," meaning that the Knights are not subject to the British Crown and that the Knights are not expected to use a "prenominal" (see below). However, from time to time, other governments (Belgium, for example) confer actual (not "honorary") Knighthoods on Americans.

American citizens can also hold valid and legitimate titles of Nobility and even Royalty. No law forbids a citizen of the USA from holding a royal or noble title.

Can Women be Knights?

The original Crusader Orders never admitted women. However, females began to be accepted into Orders of Knighthood as early as the 1600s, primarily because many women who were powerful nobles in their own right sought admission to the prestigious Orders of Chivalry. Several modern Orders of Chivalry accept women as Knights, but, again, the practice is not universal. Even in Orders that Invest women as

Knights, the sword is not used in the "dubbing," following the tradition and historical practice that women were not battlefield warriors.

What is the Title a Knight Holds?

The "title" of a Knight is called the "Prenominal," since it comes before the Knight's name. Most are familiar with other "prenominals" such as "Doctor," "Professor," or "Reverend." In Great Britain, the title for a male Knight is "Sir," whether he is a Knight Bachelor (a secular Knight who does not belong to an Order) or whether he is a member of a British Order of Chivalry. The prenominal "Sir" is used with the Knight's first name, not the last name, meaning that John Smith (if he is a British Knight) is addressed as "Sir John," not "Sir Smith."

In countries other than Great Britain, Knights of all Orders of Chivalry use the title "Chevalier," (pronounced "shuh-**vahl**-yay") a title derived from the French word for "horse" ("cheval"). Chivalry, or horsemanship, is "chevalerie." "Chevalierie" (with a grave accent on the next-to-last "e") is the word for "signet ring." Presumably this refers to the armigerous status of knights and anyone capable of owning a horse. Horse ownership was formerly required of those who were to be Knighted; thus, the title "Chevalier" means "rider/owner of a horse." The title is used with either the first name or the last name, as, for example, if John Smith is a Knight, he is addressed as "Chevalier John" or "Chevalier Smith," or sometimes simply as "Chevalier."

A special usage case is the Knight Bachelor of any country who always uses the prenominal "Sir" with the first name (but not the last).

On occasion, one finds a non-British, non-Bachelor Knight of a Chivalric Order who should be using "Chevalier," but who is instead using the title "Sir." This usage by a non-British, non-Bachelor Knight of a Chivalric Order is nonstandard and would be considered by many scholars of Chivalry to be incorrect.

Women Knights, whether British or otherwise, use the prenominal "Dame." In Britain, "Dame" is used only with the first name, but elsewhere the practice is to use "Dame" with either the first or last name. The prenominal "Dame" is very rarely used by itself.

The Knight also has a "postnominal," abbreviations after the name that indicate rank and Order membership. We are most familiar with the educational postnominals, "Ph.D." and "M.D." which holders of those degrees place after their names. Likewise the Knight also places abbreviations after his/her name to show rank and membership. A Knight of St. John at the rank of Companion (the lowest rank) might place "C.S.J." after his name. A Holy Sepulchre Knight at the rank of Officer (the second rank) would place "K.O.H.S." after his/her name. And so on. Some persons belong to more than one Order, so the list of postnominals can become rather long. In most situations, Knights usually use only a few postnominals, since a long list of postnominal letters gives a silly appearance. In practice, prenominals are spoken while postnominals are written.

How Do I Become a Knight?

Knighthoods associated with governments are usually political and are made to reward governmental support. Sometimes the appointments are made in recognition of artistic or other merit. Generally, however, governmental appointments to Knighthood are reserved to the citizen of the country. Often, the Church-affiliated Religious Knighthood is restricted to a member of that Faith.

One has a better chance to become a Knight by approaching one of the independent secular or Religious Orders of Chivalry; even then, such Orders accept as Knights usually those who have achieved a level of distinction or accomplishment in their careers or in some humanitarian work. Rarely are minors accepted as Knights in independent Orders. The Knights of an independent Order often are military persons, clergy, educators, health professionals, and the like. However, independent Orders are always interested in persons who have a genuine call to serve in Chivalry, so if one is interested, one should investigate applying to an independent Order.

What Are Some Marks of Authenticity?

The first (and some say the *only*) mark of authenticity for an Order of Chivalry is that the *fons honorum* must be proper and authentic. The term *fons honorum* is Latin and means *source of honor*. That is, the person who authorized (who Chartered) the Order of Chivalry must hold the authority and right to so authorize. Arguments about whether an Order of Chivalry is valid always focus on the right of the Order's *fons honorum* to found an Order. Generally, the *fons honorum* must be a regnant (ruling) Monarch or a Royal Person who is the head of a Royal House that was once regnant (that is, the Royal House once held authority over a geographical region, whether that was an empire, a kingdom, or a principality). The Head of a State which has a tradition of Knighthood can also act as a *fons honorum* (thus, the exiled Head of State of Poland could--and did--form an Order of Chivalry...but the Head of State of the United States could not because Knighthood is not in the USA tradition--and is also not permitted by the USA Constitution).

Or, the *fons honorum* must be a high Church Official who traditionally (by historical right) holds the authority to found or Charter an Order of Chivalry. The national Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs (Greek, Russian, Coptic, and so on) hold such right, as does the Latin Church Patriarch (that is, the Roman Catholic Pope). In the Eastern Byzantine tradition, Abbot-Bishops of established and functioning monasteries also hold the right because, to the Orthodox, monasteries are considered "Cities of God" very much like the old city-states of ancient Greece.

A pastime of select individuals in the field of Chivalry is to participate in heated arguments about who is and who is not a proper *fons honorum*. Some argue that only a regnant monarch can create Knights (and noble titles), while others point out that such an idea is not historically supported either in practice or in international law. Usually, the question is not settled, with one side saying "no" and the other side saying "yes," with the listener (if there is one) having to decide which side to come down on. In addition to the *fons honorum*, some authorities also examine the structure and practice of the Order of Chivalry to help determine validity. The "validity" arguments, while engaged in only by a few, nevertheless constitute a sort of "side show" in the

field of Chivalry.

A second mark of authenticity (after the *fons*) is the **form** the Order takes. That is, does it consider itself an Order of Chivalry, rather than a fraternal order (a club). Additionally, does the Order maintain the practice of Chivalry and Chivalric Orders by receiving Knights traditionally, adhering to uniform (dress) codes, making Arms and knightly appurtenances available, and training its Postulants and Knights in the ancient code and arts of Chivalry (while expecting its Knights to practice those ancient codes)?

A third mark of authenticity is the traditional practice of annual (or biannual or triannual) meetings for training, fellowship, and Investiture. An Order of Chivalry must hold actual meetings and Investitures where Knights gather for the express purpose of chivalric activities.

Can I Really Buy a Knighthood from Some Internet Web Sites?

The purchase (or the receipt) of a "Knighthood" from a "chivalry shop" on the internet cannot be recommended. These sites are essentially businesses that sell artwork to be used as wall decoration. What you can buy from such a site are nicely printed documents suitable for framing, but not suitable for claims to Knighthood. No legitimate Order of Chivalry offers its memberships and ranks as though they were items on sale in a department store, nor would a legitimate Order of Chivalry permit a mail-order "Knight" to wear decorations at a function. Even when the receipt of the documents is freely given from or through a "chivalry shop," use of the documents for any purpose cannot be recommended.

Why Do Some Chivalry Web Sites Have Negative Information and Personal Attacks?

Persons who are new to the field of Chivalry are usually shocked to find these hate web sites where Orders are attacked and individual Knights (usually Order Officers) are ridiculed, but the fact is that every worthwhile endeavor attracts hate sites. For example, every Religion, both large and small, suffers from the presence of attack web sites. Anti-Catholic web sites abound, as do sites attacking Eastern Orthodox Churches, Protestant Churches, and even Christianity itself. Furthermore, fraternal and religious organizations are regularly attacked on the internet. Finding anti-Masonic and anti-Knights of Columbus sites is easy. There are even sites that attack the Boy Scouts of America. Therefore, that Orders of Chivalry also attract attacks and hate is to be expected.

Chivalry hate sites are managed by persons known in the field as **Order Assassins** and **Order Grumps**, a few of whom are very well-known in the Chivalric community for their snobbery and nasty dispositions. Assassins and Grumps usually belong to at least one Order of Chivalry (usually a British Order) and cannot stand the idea that there are other Orders of Chivalry as valid as their own. While the Assassins and Grumps believe that they are doing a great service by "guarding the gates" of Chivalry and that they are protecting the public from "charlatans," the truth is that they are self-styled guardians--that is, nobody has asked them to perform this "service," and, in view of

the ill-will they create, no one of any authority is likely to ask them. The Assassin and the Grump believe that people aren't smart enough to recognize the counterfeits in Chivalry (and there are counterfeits, most of whom sell their honors for cash or credit card), so, of course, the Assassin and the Grump "help" the poor, foolish public by providing information that can be biased, slanted, and (sometimes) simply made up. The problem with the Assassin or the Grump is that, in their zeal, they either can't or won't distinguish between a counterfeit and the genuine article.

Count Michael Subritzky-Kusza (of the ancient Noble House of Kusza) writes:

I think it is best summed up by a very good friend of mine, a member of the Romanov family, who recently read the articles [attacking the Order of St. Stanislaus] and remarked: "Michael, I have never been attacked by a member of my own Class."

Are there "counterfeits" in Chivalry?

Yes. The "counterfeit" exists to meet the needs of the "gong collector," a person who delights in joining numerous Orders of Chivalry for the purpose of obtaining and wearing medals, stars, and collars of those Orders. Since these "gong collectors" constitute a lucrative market for sales, there are persons who will masquerade as Royalty or who will masquerade as a Grand Master of a non-existent Order, all for the purpose of satisfying the ballooning egos of the gong collectors who happily buy "knighthoods" and decorations.

But it isn't just the "gong collector" who interests the counterfeiter. Other prime targets for fleecing by the counterfeiter include...

- the person who really doesn't qualify for Knighthood, yet who is desperate to enter an Order under any circumstances and is willing to part with money to get in.
- the lazy person who would like to be a Knight, but who doesn't want to be bothered with qualifying or with attending an Investiture and who doesn't mind parting with cash to avoid the annoyance.
- the person who believes that his self-esteem and position in society can be readily enhanced by a purchased knighthood.

Sadly, these persons are ready-made for victimizing by a counterfeiter. To satisfy the eager expectations of those who should know better, some counterfeit Royals or Grand Masters will even claim to represent famous Orders (such as the Spanish Order of the Golden Fleece, a most distinguished knighthood) and will provide to anyone who has the money a counterfeit document of membership in that Order. Inevitably, the holder of a counterfeit knighthood and documents live to regret the loss of their money and their reputations.

The purpose of the counterfeiter is to make money while satisfying the egos of adult persons who should know better (since when would the King of Spain commission someone to admit you to a famous and distinguished Order just on the payment of a

fee?).

To recognize a "counterfeit," all that is needed are common sense and a few important questions:

- Can a Knighthood be worth anything if anyone can simply purchase it (especially with a credit card)?
- Can a Knighthood be worth anything if it is offered without any qualification from the recipient (just fill out and submit your name and address)?
- Can a Knighthood be genuine if you can buy it, sight unseen and without a sponsor, through the mail?
- Can an Order be genuine if it never meets and has "mail-order" Investitures?
- Can an Order be genuine and worthwhile if it has no expectations of its Knights?

A rule of thumb to recognize the counterfeit is this: **The easier to get, the less likely to be genuine.**

(Note: The "gong collector" should *not* be confused with the medal collector, a hobbyist whose interest is in medals, stars, and collars of Chivalry. The medal collector does not wear his collection and does not pretend to belong to the Orders whose medals he owns. Furthermore, the "gong collector" should *not* be confused with the worthy Knight who, because of his merit and service, has been honored with membership by more than one valid Order of Chivalry. The honored Knight has not sought his memberships and is worthy to wear his decorations. Finally, high Officers of Orders usually belong to several other Orders whose memberships have been conferred as a sign of friendship and cooperation. Obviously, these high Officers are not "gong collectors.")

How do Knights dress?

In ancient times, Knights wore battle uniforms--the armor and chain mail, sometimes covered with a mantle. In modern times, the mantle survives as the knightly cloak worn over evening dress--the tuxedo for men and evening gowns for women. Knights also wear decorations that indicate the various ranks held in the Order: for rank one, the chest medallion; for rank two, the neck medallion; for ranks three or four, silver or gold breast stars, respectively; for the fifth rank, the broad ribbon often called the "baldrick"; and, finally, for the highest rank, the metallic collar. (These are general descriptions; decorations vary.)

Does a Knight Need a Coat of Arms?

Yes, a Knight should own a Coat of Arms.

How Can I Find My Family's Coat of Arms

You can't. A "family Coat of Arms" does not exist...anywhere. A Coat of Arms is

always issued to an individual, not to a family. If the individual is the head of a family, then he (or, sometimes, she) becomes the "Chief of Arms" of the family, and the Chief's Arms can then be found on items such as the carriage, the fireplace mantle, stationery, and the like. When members of the family use these items, the appearance is that the Arms displayed also belong to them...but that is not the case. The Arms show ownership of the items being used, not that the users own the Arms! There is no "family" Coat of Arms for anyone, anywhere--so you shouldn't bother looking for one.

Some persons have the idea that if their family name is the same as one in, for example, *Burke's Peerage*, then they have a right to the Coat of Arms of the listed family. However, that idea is wrong. Having the same last name as someone who is "Armigerous" does **not** grant the right to take that person's Arms. Thus, there are commercial enterprises that will offer to sell you artwork of "your family's" Coat of Arms, but no family has a Coat of Arms. Anyone who buys Arms from such companies is "borrowing" goods that does not belong to him.

Can I Obtain an Authentic Coat of Arms?

Yes. First, Arms are "heritable" property based on male primogeniture, meaning that if you are the first-born son of a father who is armigerous (he has Arms), then you will inherit those Arms. If you are not a first-born son, you will not inherit, nor can you inherit Arms through a female line.

If you do not inherit, then you may seek a Grant of Arms. Great Britain and Ireland will issue Arms to their own citizens (usually, one must qualify; holding a University degree will qualify). Also, Great Britain and Ireland will issue Arms to those who can show descent from a citizen of these countries. If you are interested in obtaining Arms from either Great Britain or Ireland, you should contact the respective embassies near you.

Certain private organizations also issue Arms, but you may prefer to seek a grant of Arms from a College of Heraldry associated with a Royal House. The head of a College of Arms is called the "King of Arms." The King of Arms isn't a King--the title is an ancient one that means "leader" or "head." A reliable source of accurate and beautiful Arms is the College of Arms of the Royal House of Alabona-Ostrogojsk at www.SwanOrder.org .

If I wanted to read just one book about Chivalry, what should it be?

There are many excellent books about Knights and Chivalry, but probably the one to read first is Sir Maurice Keen's fascinating, readable, and accurate *Chivalry*. After that, Richard Barber's *The Knight and Chivalry* is a must. Finally, Frances Gies' *The Knight in History* rounds out the reading. Of course, there are many, many more.

• CHIVALRY

Maurice Keen/ppr/1986

"This is a must-have essential for every knight's personal library. Keen's work is considered a classic."

- **THE KNIGHT AND CHIVALRY**

Richard Barber/hb/1995

"The other must-have essential for every knight's personal library. Barber's work is considered a classic."

- **THE KNIGHT IN HISTORY**

Frances Gies/ppr/1987

"Another classic must-have, Gies provides clear and accurate information."

Unanswered Question?

If you have a question which does not appear above, we invite you to submit your question by using the contact form. The answer to your question will be promptly sent to you via eMail.

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