

HON. JOHN H. GRIFFIN, M.D., K.S.G., K.H.S.

FORMER SUPREME PHYSICIAN

May 19, 1914 – October 18, 1988)

(State Deputy 1960)



Born in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and receiving his early education in the parochial schools of Peabody and Salem, Dr. John H. Griffin matriculated at Boston College and was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1935. Four years later, he received his Doctor of Medicine degree from Tufts University. His first year of internship was spent at Maiden Hospital in Maiden, Massachusetts and his second year was spent in our nation's capital at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. The final year saw him specializing in obstetrics at Gallinger, later to be renamed the District of Columbia General Hospital.

It was during this time that he met the girl who was to share all of his hopes for the future in the person of Mary Louise McDonagh of Charles County, Maryland. Knowing full well that the United States would soon be forced into World War II, he sought out and obtained a commission in the United States Navy on March 17 (St. Patrick's Day), 1941.

In February 1942, he and Mary Louise were married and accepted the life that confronts married couples when the husband must serve his country in time of War. For six years, he served in the regular Navy Medical Corps and resigned his commission with the rank of Commander.

In 1947, he and Mary Louise took up residence in Hughesville, Maryland, where he engaged in the general practice of medicine and surgery. He was to become chief of the medical staff at Physicians' Hospital in LaPlata, President of both Charles County and the Southern Maryland Medical Societies and a Director of the Hughesville Bank. The air of Southern Maryland is healthy indeed, for in it, he and Mary Louise raised nine children (six sons and three daughters), and he became its most prominent country doctor.

It was only natural that he should be attracted to the Knights of Columbus, and became a member of Bryantown Council No. 2293 the very same year that he settled in Southern Maryland. He became Grand Knight of his council in 1954 and served for three successful years. In 1957, he was instrumental in the institution of St. Thomas Manor General Assembly of the Fourth Degree and became its first Faithful Navigator and again served for three terms.

His service to the Maryland State Council made him known and respected throughout all of our councils and assemblies. Whether it was in his official capacity as District Deputy, State Secretary or State Deputy, he was always ready and willing to assist and to counsel. At the Supreme Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1960, he was elected to the Supreme Board of Directors.

When Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart died in February, 1964, the Supreme Board met on Washington's Birthday in St. Louis, Missouri, and elected Dr. John W. McDevitt to the office of Supreme Knight. This left the office of Deputy Supreme Knight vacant and the Board of Directors unanimously chose the Supreme Director from Maryland, Dr. John H. Griffin.

While serving as Deputy Supreme Knight, he had the overall supervision of the Agency Department and personally ran down the problem cases that arose from time to time. He was also a member of the Executive and Finance Committee. On October 21, 1966, the Board of Directors elected him Supreme Physician, a natural for him, and in this position he served admirably until his retirement on May 31, 1984. He was at that time the Dean of the Supreme Board of Directors, having served on it longer than any man on the board at that time.

Always a fraternalist, he also served on the Board of Directors of the Fraternal Congress of America and was elected Vice President in 1974 and President in 1975. He personally met several Popes and was named a Knight of St. Gregory the Great by Pope Paul VI in 1966 for his outstanding devotion to Christian Ideals. Both he and Mary Louise were enrolled in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in 1978. He was an ideal family man, an exemplary Catholic man, a member of national and state medical societies, and community organizations such as the Holy Name Society, the Society of St. Vincent De Paul man, and the American Legion.

The Deputy Supreme Knight Award (later named the John H. Griffin Award) for Restoring Former Members was established by the Maryland State Council in 1965 and has been presented to a winning council at the State Convention ever since. The 1986 State Convention was named in honor of John Griffin and his family. At the 1988 State Convention, the first annual John H. Griffin Award for Outstanding Community Service was presented to Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley.

John Griffin died in the Connecticut Hospice in Branford, Connecticut. All of the Supreme Officers and the Staff of the Supreme Council attended his funeral mass in old St. Mary's Church, the birthplace of our Order, on October 22nd. His body was taken to Maryland and was placed in the Arehardt Funeral Home in LaPlata, Maryland. On Monday, October 24th, the State Officers, Past State Deputies and a host of State Council family paid their respects by reciting the rosary. A 4th Degree Honor Guard stood watch at his bier during the entire showing. He was buried from St. Ignatius Church in Chapel Point with a requiem mass on October 25th. Again the 4th Degree Honor Guard paid him their last farewell. He was buried in the soil of Southern Maryland, his adopted home, and the place to which he gave credit for his rise to such prominence in our honored Order.

The funeral services at St. Ignatius Church were attended by the Supreme Knight, the Deputy Supreme Knight and the Supreme Treasurer. He left behind his wife Mary Louise; his daughters Clare, Mary Louise & Kathryn; his sons John, Paul, Gerald, James, Peter & Christopher; and ten grandchildren.