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Potentate's Ball 2009: A Short Affair?!

By MARK STOUGHT

THIS year's Potentate's Ball was held at the Sheraton Tara in Framingham, in a repeat performance from last year. The facilities were top-notch, the food was excellent, and everyone looked up at Aleppo's 87th Potentate, Illustrious **Robert F. Smith**. The festivities actually kicked off Friday night at the hotel with a meal and some comedic entertainment from the Bob Darling Show, which was still the topic of positive discussion the following day. More than 170 Nobles, Ladies, and guests came together to roll over laughing in the aisles.

Saturday morning, 30 people boarded a bus and went to the Shriners Hospital for Children—Boston for a tour of the facility. Over 125 others came together for the Aleppo Casino where they gambled play money away.

The main event, however, was Saturday night's Potentate's Ball. The evening kicked off with a social hour, wherein there was plenty of opportunity to be social. Even the Divan was wandering around relatively unsupervised — **Jeff Arnold, Dennis Reebel, Peter Simmons, and Dave Raymond** could be found wandering around, and somebody let the (in his own words) "has-been Pote" **Stephen G. Eriksen**, out for socialization as well. We trust that he was returned relatively unharmed.

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THE ALEPPO DIVAN attempted to join Illustrious **Robert F. Smith's** new charter, Chapter of the International Short Shriners Club of North America, during the Potentate's Ball. They all donned shoes strapped to their knees so they could look up to the 2009 Potentate. From left to right are: **Harvey J. Waugh, Recorder Emeritus; Robert C. Keogh, Treasurer; Dennis E. Reebel, Oriental Guide; Richard A. Doherty, 1st Ceremonial Master; Robert F. Smith, Potentate; David J. Raymond, 2nd Ceremonial Master; John E. Grant, Jr., Assistant Rabban; Peter A. Simmons, Chief Rabban; and Peter K. Stone, Recorder.**

Illustrious Robert F. Smith Nothing Stops Him

By THOMAS FRIBERG

ALEPPO Shriners welcome its 87th Potentate, Illustrious **Robert F. Smith**, with open arms at the January 24, 2009 Ceremonial. The Ceremonial was no short affair either.

Illustrious Smith was born in Lowell and raised in Billerica, Massachusetts, where he has lived since, recently building a new house for him and his wife **Helen**, who have been happily married for fifty years. Bob and Helen have two sons, **Doug** and **Randy**, and a daughter, **Wanda**. They also have five grandchildren to spoil.

Bob is a self-proclaimed "quiet man who works behind the scenes," but he was a businessman who owned three service stations in Billerica, Burlington and Haverhill, MA. He is now retired, but still dabbles with some accounting in his spare time. He was also a part of Billerica politics with six years on the Finance Committee, and eight years as a Town Meeting Representative.

The Potentate began his Masonic career as a charter member of Billerica Chapter, Order of DeMolay and became Master Councillor in 1958. He was raised in 1965 at Thomas Talbot Lodge in Billerica, and created a Shriner on December 3, 1971. He immediately became active in the Motor Patrol and rose to the rank of Sergeant. An avid motorcyclist, he and two other Unit members formed the Aleppo Cycles Unit in 1981, where he went from its first Sergeant to Captain for two terms and then Captain Emeritus. Currently he drives a 1996 Shrine Special Edition Harley Davidson motorcycle which he had converted to a trike in 2004. So far he has logged many miles driving around the country to the Imperial Sessions: St. Louis, Dallas, San Diego, and Denver, to name a few. Some were on two wheels and some on three!

For 18 years, the Smiths hosted the Cycles Unit Children's Picnic. Patients from the Shriners Hospital for Children—Boston and their guardians came to their house where the Cycles Unit had a cookout for them. The Billerica Police and Fire Departments also joined in by bringing a couple of their emergency vehicles to the party. The Unit also gave the children rides on their motorcycles around the neighborhood as a special treat.

Bob would volunteer during the Shriners Rodeos and Circuses at the Aleppo Shrine Center. He also served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Northeast Motor



ILLUSTRIOUS ROBERT F. SMITH AND LADY HELEN

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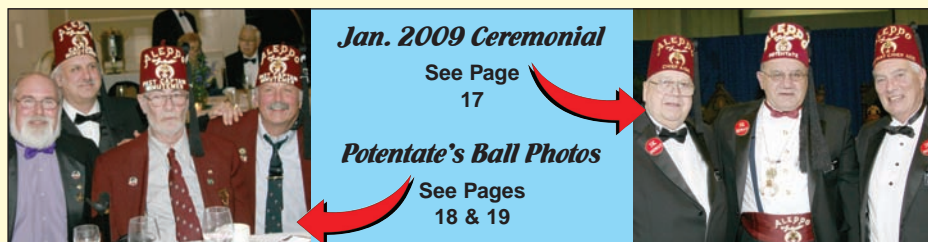
A Cymbal of Hope



ALEPPO'S SPECIAL GUEST for the January 24, 2009 Ceremonial was Noble **Dan Caro**. The day before the Ceremonial, Dan visited the Shriners Hospital for Children—Boston, a place he is very familiar with, having been a patient there for many years. A drum set was awaiting his arrival, as well as patients and their families and hospital staff. Dan sat down behind the drums and gave a great performance, even getting the onlookers involved with other instruments the hospital has on hand to help with physical rehabilitation. Dan took a break for a very inspirational speech about his experience at the Hospital and how they and the Shriners helped him in so many ways. See page 20 for more about Dan.

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