

John Fitzgerald

THE KNIGHTLY NEWS

FITZGERALD COUNCIL 833
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
July 2026 Newsletter

"A Pioneer Catholic of Lincoln"



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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

"We are a Catholic fraternal order, whose principles are based on the vision of Father Michael J. McGivney, to extend to each and every eligible man our faith and opportunity to become a member of this great organization and to utilize his God given talents for the betterment of Church, Family, Youth, Community, and Council."

A Message from our Grand Knight:

Brother Knights,

I hope that you have enjoyed celebrating the 250th anniversary of our great nation's independence this past week-end. I would like to share a few reflections from a letter from his holiness, Pope Leo XIV, on this semi quincennial anniversary of our great nation. A link to the full text is included, and I would encourage all to read it in its entirety.

[Letter from his Holiness Pope Leo XIV](#)

For two and a half centuries, generations of Americans have worked together to carry the principles of life, liberty, equality, justice, the pursuit of happiness, and democratic self-government forward through their sacrifice, service, and civic participation. We should reflect that, as the sons and daughters of this great nation, we have the responsibility to bear and uphold these same principles to one another, and to the generations who will inherit the nation that is being shaped today. As faithful sons and daughters of the Church, Catholics are called to imbue every dimension of their existence with the charity of Christ, living out the Gospel in the circumstances of daily life.

(Continued on Page 2)

Co-Knights of the Month:

We have two Knights this month who are deserving of recognition.
Garrett Malan & Rick Kreikemeier, for stepping up to help at the Corpus Christi Procession. Thank you!

Knight Family of the Month:

Family of the month is the **Michael and Beth Ruhl** Family for hosting an altar in their yard for the Corpus Christi Procession. We appreciate your help!

Upcoming Events:

July 11th&12th: State Leadership Seminar
July 15th: General Mtg 7:30pm
July 25th: 4th Degree Steak Dinner
July 28th: Officer Mtg 7:30pm
August 8th&9th: Membership Drive
August 10th: Walk to End Hunger
August 15th: Altar Server Outing

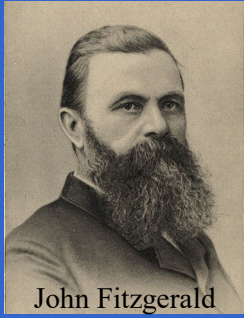
**Welcome Kevin Cowles as
our new Grand Knight!
See Inside.**

OFFICERS:

Chaplain:
Father Kipper
Grand Knight:
Kevin Cowles
Dep. Grand Knight:
Open
Financial Secretary:
Tony Schafers
Treasurer:
Philip Paitz
Recorder:
Randy Polak
Chancellor:
Open

Warden:
Ron Wortman
Advocate:
Open
Lecturer:
Mike Szatko
Inside Guard:
Cliff Henggeler
Outside Guard:
Reese Meyer
Trustees:
Mike Szatko
Ron Schinkel
Matt Schafers

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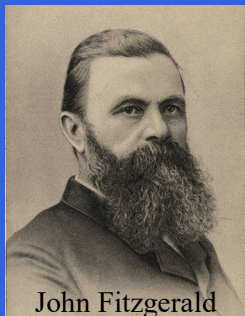
A Message from our Grand Knight, continued from Page 1

May this 250th anniversary milestone renew the shared commitment to the promise of freedom, justice, opportunity and democracy. May we also renew our commitment to safeguarding human life from its beginning at conception until natural death, and of building a society in which the vulnerable, the suffering, and the forgotten are always met with compassion, solidarity, and love. May we as Knights honor the courage and vision of those who came before them by strengthening our communities, respecting our differences and working together toward a more perfect union.

Vivat Jesus

Kevin Cowles
Grand Knight 833





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A Message from our Chaplain:

Dear Brother Knights,

We celebrate during this month of July the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. We celebrate this milestone with great joy, but also that we never forget how our country was established and who we are as a people.

The story of the United States of America is not a story of one ethnicity, race, or even religion—even though our country was founded on Judeo-Christian principles. Rather, we are a great melting pot of races, ethnicities, and even cultures that have come together to live by certain ideals and laws. These ideals are highlighted by our constitution and expressed in our Declaration of Independence.

These ideals include the fact that we are all endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, which is the source of our dignity, and why each one of us deserves respect.

It includes the freedom to pursue happiness in our lives and to serve the common good.

These principles, not a common ethnicity, are what unite us.

We are very blessed to live in this land of the free, where we can worship God and live out our Catholic faith. Let us celebrate our country and never forget the sacrifices that allow us to live with this freedom.

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Kipper



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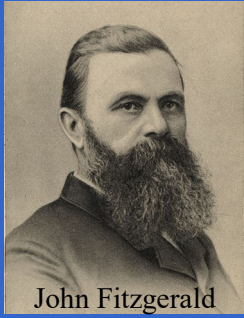
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Changing of the Guard.....

This past month, Matt Schafers finished his term and Kevin Cowles was installed as our new Council 833 Grand Knight.

We would like to thank Matt for his service these past few years and look forward to Kevin leading the way into the 2026-2027 Knights Year.



Matt Schafers

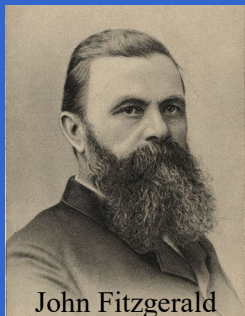


Kevin Cowles



Grand Knights Jewel

THE GRAND KNIGHT — The Anchor, indicative of Columbus, the Mariner. The anchor has also been a variant form of the Cross for centuries.



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Meet our new Grand Knight - Kevin Cowles

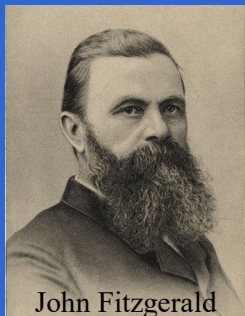
I was born in Lincoln and grew up near Seward, NE where I attended Elementary and Jr. High School. My family moved to Elk River, Minnesota where I went to high school. I attended North Dakota State University and graduated with a BS Degree in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in Polymer Chemistry. I started my professional career as an engineer with General Motors in Flint, Michigan where I worked in several different areas of Product and High Volume Manufacturing Equipment Design.

To move back closer to family, I changed jobs to designing computer hard disk components for Hutchinson Technology in central Minnesota for a few years before I wound up in Fargo, ND working for what became John Deere Electronic Solutions until 2020 and then moved to Ankeny, Iowa years until I retired in June of 2024 after 26 years with John Deere. We moved to Lincoln in 2025

I met my future wife, Marsha, at NDSU and we were married a little over a year after I started at General Motors. We will be celebrating our 41st wedding anniversary next month. We have four daughters, Theresa Vidmar and Elizabeth Ruhl who are parishioners at St Teresa's with their families, Dr. Mary Hashcke and her family who are parishioners at NAM parish and our youngest daughter, Angela Soderlund and her family who live in Mankato, MN. We have nineteen grandchildren with number twenty on the way and are very blessed to be near to so many of them.

I have been in the Knights of Columbus for over 40 years now and have been actively engaged over that time. I could not even begin to count the number of pancakes or pieces of fish I have cooked over the years. I enjoy woodworking, fishing, and just puttering around in my garage or workshop. I have come to really enjoy time spent with my grandchildren and their activities.





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Tony, our Financial Secretary sent a heartfelt email on July 2nd to all the Knights and families of our council that have helped with the Fireworks Tent since 2013. A tribute to an era below:

The Grand Finale

A Message from our Financial Secretary, from July 2nd email:

Today would have been the day that we set up a fireworks tent, and you may be wondering why Fitzgerald Council 833 of the Knights of Columbus, are not doing fireworks this year. So, let us start off with a little background, we started hosting a fireworks tent in 2013 when Sir Knight Ron Schinkel was Grand Knight. We did this in partnership with Joe Vinton Enterprises, now Curbside Fireworks out of Cortland NE. Joe is a Knight in Council 14320 Saint James and we sold fireworks for Joe for 5 years from 2013-2017. Joe had about 13 tents in the Lincoln metro area. Our tent location varied over the years, from various locations on West O Street to Piedmont and back to West O Street. In the beginning even though it was a lot of work we liked how it gave us a bigger budget for our charity work.

In 2018 under the advice of one of our Brother Knight, Mike Szatko, we decided to switch to Patriot Pete's, a company run by some local Lincoln Christian men. There was no animosity with Vinton, it was just that this new company was set up with Square checkouts which made check out and sales reporting so much easier. They also did more of the set-up and inventory work which means we put in less time setting up and tearing down which was advantageous for us. They also had about 13 tents in the Lincoln metro area including a couple Hy-Vee locations. They wanted to open a new stand at 50th and O Street Hy-Vee and the store manager asked that an organization from Saint Teresa run this new tent, so we volunteered and we enjoyed working with them for 6 years as they felt like family to us.

At the end of 2023 Patriot Pete's sold their operations to Wild Willy's out of Springfield NE, so in both 2024 and 2025 we sold for Wild Willy's. This company has around 125 tents in a multi-state region, so they are quite large and have a more corporate feeling. Brother James McCarville continued to be our lead contact with Wild Willy's as he was for Patriot Pete's and did an awesome job for us. One thing they had requested was for us to provide a letter stating what charities the money we raised is used for. A couple of times BK James brought it up at business meetings and it was never followed up on. As a group, we had never had to do this before, so we were a little concerned about why they were asking for it and in the end it did not get done.



2014 Pictures

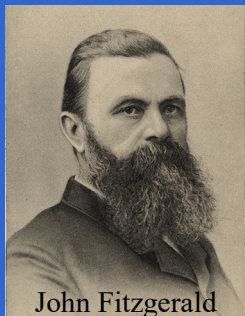


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After the 2024 season, our first with WW's we had several discussions about whether we continue selling fireworks or not. We had some Knights strongly object because of all the time and effort it takes with always the same small crew. At the end of the discussions, we were split 50/50 or maybe 48/52 or even 45/55 as to whether we should continue or not. We ended up taking a vote and letting Wild Willy's know that we would continue for another year. For the 2025 year we were once again understaffed and over-worked. During teardown one Knight got called away for a family emergency and another Knight was taken to the hospital with a sliced finger and so we had to make some calls for additional help. Our goal every year was to be all closed up on the fourth by 10:00 unlike some years past when we were there until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

2015 Pictures



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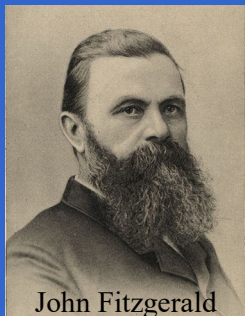


I had a discussion with our Wild Willy's contact about our concerns, and he informed me of theirs, the main one being the letter indicating where the money we raised goes. I told him I would once again bring it up to our group. After talking to some Brother Knights, it was our thought that they would use it to move on from us. When we switched over from Patriot Pete's to Wild Willy's they had someone else in line to operate the tent at this location. Rob Reif, the store manager of Hy-Vee told them that he wanted us to continue to run the tent. Eventually Wild Willy's went over his head to Hy-Vee corporate and we suspect they are the ones that demanded the letter. After talking with my Brother Knights, we concluded that WW wanted to go in a different direction.

We sold fireworks for a total of 13 consecutive years, a baker's dozen. I have worked twelve of those thirteen years that we had a fireworks stand. The one year that I missed we had a tent at Piedmont and that year my wife and I were at Mount Rushmore for the fourth and it was magnificent and memorable to say the least, (Rushmore not Piedmont). Which brings me to my point. For thirteen years several of us have put our 4th of July celebrations and families on hold to make the tent successful. The number of hours put in by those that headed it up is astonishing. We had a lot of great help but in the end we needed more workers and cashiers to cover all shifts. While we did a lot of good with the money we raised, the effort to raise it took a toll on a few of these families.



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Speaking of families, I would like to give kudos to the leaders that made these events happen in the most recent years. To start off with James McCarville our point man, Randy and Rosie Polak POS (Point Of Sale) managers, Ron Schinkel and Ron Wortman, overnight security team leaders, Mike Szatko, Milt Bayer, Philip Paitz, Clarence Waldman, Dan Weslowski, Marv Burbach, Barry Butler and Mike Ruhl, teardown diehards, and last but not least Tony and Kim Schafers. I would also like to thank the knights and families that helped staff the tent for setup, sales, and teardown, too many to mention here but we could not have done this without all of you. The men were always adamant about making sure the Wahl boys could help because they are such great workers and bought a lot of fireworks.

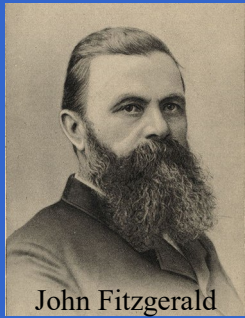
The issue was not having enough workers to properly cover every shift especially on the fourth, this is where the leaders had to fill spots to keep the tent going. Once I found out that WW was moving on from us and that we would not be having a fireworks stand, a big rush of relief came over me, and I've heard the same sentiment from other Knights. Having a chance to spend the 4th of July 2026 with our families and to be able to celebrate the 250th was a huge weight off our shoulders. As our Grand Knight stated at one of our meetings, in the end we can see it as a Godsend, and we all tend to agree. While the money was good for three days' worth of work, it also was very taxing to say the least to some of our Brother Knights and their families.

So, with this being the 250th anniversary of our beloved country, we can all go out and celebrate it the way it should be, with our families. For America's 250th anniversary, the official national motto is "**America250: America at 250**" with the guiding theme, "The next chapter of our

American story starts now". America250's mission is to celebrate and commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, marking America's Semiquincentennial. With that we can say the same thing, our next chapter starts now, and our motto is and has always been, "**In Service To One, In Service To All**". Thank you for supporting our fireworks stand over the years, now go out and protect, Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness. **God Bless America!**

2016 Pictures





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FIREWORKS STAND OVER THE YEARS

2017 Pictures

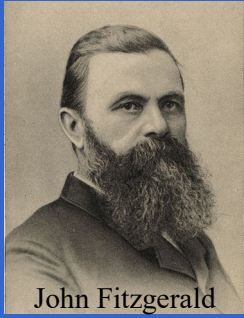


2018 Pictures



2019 Pictures





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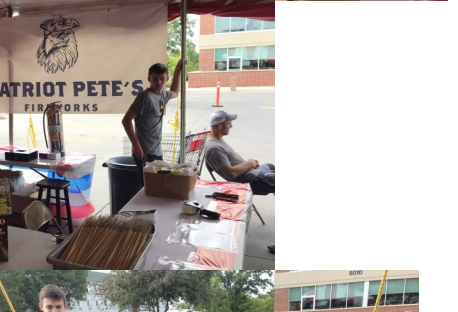
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FIREWORKS STAND OVER THE YEARS

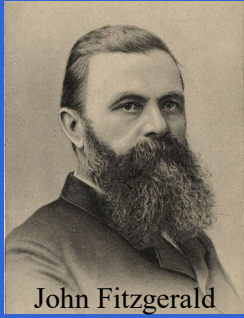
2020 Pictures



2021-2022 Pictures



2023 Picture



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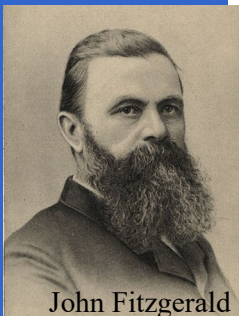
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FIREWORKS STAND OVER THE YEARS

2024-2025 Pictures





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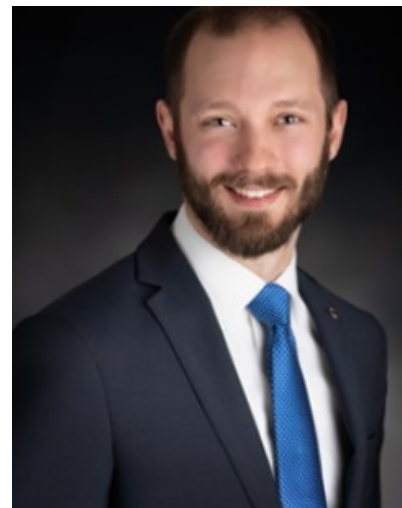


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