

IN THE HOUSE!

House of Gordon USA, Newsletter Annual Edition

Volume 5 Issue 2

May 2011



"WORLD COMING TO END—STRANGE NEW PLANET RUSHING TOWARD EARTH—ONLY MIRACLE CAN SAVE US, SAYS SCIENCE." FLASH GORDON WAS THAT MIRACLE OF FICTION THAT FUELED OUR FUTURE!

- > **First West Coast AGM and The Chief is Coming!**
- > **AGM Agenda Proxy and Voting Information**
- > **Rhode Island's Infamous Gordon Past Revisited.**

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Please visit our website: houseofgordonusa.org for further information.

Articles and other materials appropriate for publication are encouraged. All matters submitted for printing are subject to the Editor’s approval, who reserves the right to edit prior to publication.

MEMBERSHIP in the **House of Gordon USA** is available to all who bear the surname Gordon, an Associated Family name or to one who has a sincere interest in the Gordons and all things Scottish.

Annual Dues of \$25 are payable annually. Remit to **House of Gordon USA**, 9654 Kessler Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311 or remit using Paypal (details on houseofgordonusa.org/Membership.html).

In The House!
Lois Todd, Editor

A Message From the Chief!



Dear Clansmen,

I am looking forward so much to coming to the Seaside Highland Games in October. It will be seven years since I came to Williamsburg and I have missed my many friends and contacts in

America. My last visit to California was in 1964 so perhaps it is time I came and had a look to see what you have all been up to since I was last there.

“I am looking forward so much to coming to the Seaside Highland Games in October.”

We certainly haven't been idle in Scotland in recent weeks. As you may know Scotland voted itself a majority Scottish Nationalist membership in the Scottish Parliament. It's all down to one brilliant politician. Alex Salmond. He has done an excellent job of offering the Scottish people what they want to hear. We will see whether he can deliver.

There is a pretty strong argument in favour of maintaining the Union and a large majority of those who are better informed don't believe it is a good thing to press for independence. We have been pretty safe and sound within the Union for the past 300 years and we would need a very good reason to

change things.

Having said this I have no doubt we will be asked to vote on independence within the next few years and it will remain to be seen whether Mr. Salmond can work his magic once more and persuade the Scottish people to wave good bye to England and erect a custom post at Gretna Green.

Not many of us in Aberdeenshire can remember a better Spring than we have had this year. Dare I suggest it could almost have been California.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in October.

Yours aye,

Huntly



President's Message



Greetings from the House! The festival season is well under way, and the **Gordons** are there!

My great appreciation and thanks to the many of you who work hard and long hours representing the House at the many Games and Scottish festivals around the nation. Your dedication and good will speak volumes about the proud Gordon name, and your efforts in membership growth is what makes the House stronger every year.

Please let us know if we can help in any way, our Convener kit is nearing completion, and we have a wealth of graphic images and documents that are available to you

I wish you a great season, and as always:

DO WELL AND LET THEM SAY:

GORDON!

With deep regards,

Kim William Gordon

Gordon NASCAR hot!

Don't discount Jeff Gordon as a hot NASCAR driver yet! At Pocono in early June, Jeff tied for 3rd place in ALL TIME WINS with Bobby Allison and Darryl Waltrip at 84 wins! As Waltrip put it, that is a BIG DEAL when you consider that only 5 drivers have reached that mark in the entire history of NASCAR.

Darryl had a few things to say about Jeff Gordon, and they were all good. Well ... mostly good. He starts with November 1992 in Atlanta with Richard Petty's last NASCAR race — and Jeff Gordon's first! When asked by Rick Hendrick for his opinion on Jeff in early 1993, Darryl said that while it was obvious he had talent, he had to reply, "I don't know if the kid will ever make it." But then Gordon was paired with crew chief Ray Evernham and it was magic — the perfect pairing and as Waltrip said the rest is history!

Waltrip writes: "Jeff and Ray set the NASCAR world on fire. It was a pleasure to watch Jeff mature through all the obstacles he faced. People used to boo him like crazy. He never got the full appreciation he deserved, at the time, for what he did behind the wheel of that No. 24 car. Trust me on this. After I retired, I have been in the NASCAR on FOX TV booth for the last 11 years and that has even heightened my appreciation for Jeff. These years up in the booth watching him has solidified for me that Jeff Gordon is one of the all-time greatest drivers to ever sit behind the wheel of a stock car.

"Jeff is a great driver. He is one of the few that has reached the ultimate height in our sport of not only winning the NASCAR championship, but doing it multiple times. More importantly, Jeff is an even better person. He is a great dad, a great husband and he is a great friend of mine. I am so proud of him.

I have seen all 84 of Jeff's wins. Rick Hendrick says he can win 100 races and seven championships. Jeff, go get it!"

What's Happening *In The House!* ... *Member News*

SOUTHWEST IS BUSY PLANNING FOR THE AGM IN OCTOBER! We are very pleased with the Chief's announcement that he will attend the Seaside Highland Games in Ventura, California this fall in conjunction with the first House of Gordon USA AGM on the west coast! Plans for this momentous visit are already in place and we hope you are setting aside time to make the trip west to join us. The Seaside Games are held on the second full weekend in October which this year will

**The
Chief
will be
at the
first
House
of
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AGM on
the
West
Coast!**

be October 8 & 9, 2011 on the Ventura County Fairgrounds. The lovely seaside village of Ventura is sixty miles north of Los Angeles easily accessible from U.S. Highway 101. Situated immediately on the Pacific Ocean, the area has easy access to mountains, desert and an amazing farm belt bustling with fresh fruit and vegetables being grown year round. A short drive up the coast is Santa Barbara with Monterey and San Francisco beyond. South is the mighty Los Angeles

Metropolis if you care to explore that urban wonderland!

It will be an absolutely awesome time with our Chief, the Most Hon. the Marquess of Huntly, "up close and personal" and he confirmed just this morning that he plans to attend every event scheduled--and we have his weekend filled to the brim with exciting activities! And, if **he** can attend,

so can you as Gordon Clan members! A quick rundown of the Chief's appearances will include Friday, October 7th's Single Malt Scotch Tasting followed by an event billed as "A Scottish Evening" which includes a delicious buffet supper, live entertainment and a Scottish Fashion Show with items from many Games' vendors--and beyond! Special tables will be set aside for the Gordons at this sell-out event.

Saturday's schedule will be chockablock with activities--some already underway by the time you enter the gates at nine am. The Chief will be piped to the podium just before noon where he will review the Parade of Clans and Opening Ceremonies and will declare the Games "duly open!" The afternoon will be a busy time for the Chief to meet and greet our 80+ Clan contingencies and to visit the various venues covering Highland, Irish and Scottish Country Dancing, Scottish Heavy Athletics and Bagpipe & Band competitions plus our new and very fine fiddle competition. We will allow him a brief R&R and nourishment break as you, yourselves, will do as well! A massed bands event in late afternoon will grant some of the day's prizes and trophies and close out the field events for Saturday.

Saturday evening a Gala House of Gordon Dinner will be held in the penthouse ballroom of the nearby Crowne Plaza Hotel and we want you all to attend and to bring your special friends from other clans. The ones who will "fit in," of course.... Actually, invite them all--this beautiful and spacious room can accommodate us all--and more!! Music from talented Gordon Clansmen and a

"State of the Clan" message from the Chief himself.

Sunday will bring another full day of activities on the Field. An interdenominational Kirkin' o' the Tartans service is held at Center Stage for those who care to attend and all venues will be running full tilt until closing time. Closing Ceremonies late Sunday will echo the massed bands of Saturday's Close with many major awards being handed out to the very talented winners. The Chief will be on hand to help in these presentations and to receive our thanks for accepting the offer as Special Guest. House of Gordon USA President Kim Gordon and his Board are being most generous in helping bring the Chief from Scotland and it is the Seaside Games' pleasure to host him to all events during this all-too-brief weekend.

We hope this wee summary will entice you to attend our Festival. It is common for Clan groups to take an excursion or two while in the area in the hours before the Games are going full tilt. It is your choice as to what to see while in the Ventura area. Some popular tours have included a trip to one of the California Missions, a visit to a local winery, a harbor cruise or a trip to visit the Ronald Reagan Library in nearby Simi Valley. Please be thinking about these options and let us know what you feel might be best for you and your guests. A Registration Form will be sent to you in the weeks ahead and will ask for your preferences then.

Please give the trip to Seaside some serious consideration--whether it is a hop, skip and a jump for you or a major jaunt--make this part of your year's travel opportunities. Contact Nellie and me with your thoughts, questions and suggestions. Call 818-886-4968 or visit the

Games website at seaside-games.com. We look forward to hosting you right along with the Chief! Aye, John Lowry



The Japan earthquake and tsunami brought immediate concern for fellow Gordon clansman, Tei Gordon and his family. Following a quick email to inquire as to his safety we were re-

lieved when Tei replied the day of the earthquake:

"Thanks for checking on us. Pretty crazy in Tokyo.

Actually, I am back in Oregon, but all my neighbors appear to be in my place in Odaiba. The towers behind my building have cracks in the walls from the ground to 42nd floors, but my building is and only 5 stories and unscathed. They say another building in the neighborhood caught fire.

My sister is staying at my place, but says all is well.

Unbelievable."



Odaiba is a man-made island in the middle of Tokyo Bay across the Rainbow Bridge from Tokyo Center City. Pictures of the fire Tei mentions were widely publicized.

On April 9th Tei wrote:

"Thank you for thinking of me.

All is well. I have actually been back between Oregon and Hawaii since one week before the earthquake, Tsunami, and subsequent nuclear event. My sister was staying at my condo, right on the beach in the middle of Tokyo Bay, so it was scary for her, but she fortunately found a flight back to the west coast the day after.

It is tragic what is happening in northeast Japan and I am not yet sure how it will affect my business, but if any society can pull through in the face of adversity, it is the Japanese.”

Tei is currently back in Tokyo organizing a fund raiser for relief of the victims of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear events.



Congratulations to **Tori (Vee) Baker** (pictured left), daughter of Geof and Beverly Baker of Virginia, on her upcoming graduation from Cosby High School and on being accepted to VCU School of Arts for the 2011-2012 school year! Tori has also been awarded an academic scholarship toward her tuition at

VCU. We are SO proud of you, your hard work and admire your talent and dedication!

Congratulations to **Aaron Todd**, son of David and Lois Todd of Virginia, (pictured above right) on being named Company Honor Graduate of his MOS School in Chesapeake, Virginia in February with the USMC. Aaron was previ-



ously named Company Honor Graduate of India Company at MCRD Parris Island in September 2010 and received a meritorious mast at SOI. In February he was meritoriously promoted to

Lance Corporal. Ooh Rah! Aaron we are proud of your hard work and accomplishments.

Mid-Atlantic is happy to announce that House of Gordon will be the Honored Clan at this year’s Williamsburg Scottish Festival on October 1st and are planning a HUGE Gordon Grill to celebrate! All Gordons in the Mid-Atlantic and North Carolina area that are able to come are encouraged to attend, bring a dish to share if you like, and enjoy the famous Virginia Gordon hospitality!

Virginia is also planning a massive Halloween celebration at the Meadow Highland Games October 29-30th with the Ceilidh Corner that we always have each year at Richmond!

Donald Barnes, our convener in Hawaii reports that The Hawaii Scottish Festival, April 2 and 3, was a lot of fun. The House of Gordon was once again in attendance. I had many people visit the Gordon table. We had excellent weather for the two days and hope to see more of you next year.

Marcia Gordon McLaurin, our Commissioner for the Gulf States, reports a very full schedule for this year! With several festivals in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas already under her belt this year! Upcoming events are

the Texas Scottish Festival in Arlington June 3-5; Celtic Fest Mississippi in Jackson September 9-11; Oklahoma Scottish Festival in Tulsa September 16-18; Cowtown Celtic Festival in Fort Worth, TX October with an unconfirmed date of October 1-2; Salado Scottish Clan Gathering & Highland Games in Salado, TX November 11-13; and the Highlands and Islands Scottish Highland Games and Celtic Music Festival in Gulfport, Mississippi on November 12-13! WOW! Lots for Gordons in the Gulf area to do this year!

Marcia has recently moved to Mississippi from Louisiana and is looking for some help convening in Texas and Oklahoma! If any of you are interested in helping out at a game or two contact her!



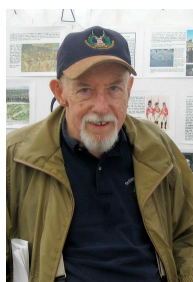
NY Convener Holly Warren, pictured above at the Tartan Day held at the Armory in Rochester, said it was a FUN event. She is now looking forward to the Games in Ithaca on June 25 -26th! Holly is doing a great job in New York and are sure our membership will grow with her at the helm.

Flowers of the Forest



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of one of the House of Gordon's most cherished members. **Major James C. Ledy, U.S. Army (Retired) passed away June 19,**

2010. A memorial service was held in mid-September at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona.



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of **Arthur Gordon of Annandale, VA** on April 28, 2010 from congestive heart failure. He was 84 years old. He was unable to attend the Scottish Games for the past three

years, but he went for many years in the past, and enjoyed the hospitality of the Gordon Clan.



Ralph Tignal Moore, 79, died peacefully in his own home in Beaumont, CA on March 22, 2011. Ralph served in the United States Air Force during the Korean War, which ignited his love of world traveling. A tireless worker

for Clan Gordon and the Seaside Highland Games he will be greatly missed.

Our condolences to Roger Mills on the passing of his brother, **Richard Thomas (Dick) Mills** (age 66) of Davis, CA on January 26, 2011.

DNA Project Report

Jim Gordon Co-Administrator

This has been an eventful year for the Project. Tei has teamed up with Bill Howard a post-Doctoral researcher from Harvard University to co-author a paper *The Evolution of the Gordon Surname: New Insight From Y-DNA Correlations and Genealogical Pedigrees* for the International Society of Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG) Journal. The paper introduces a new analytical tool for genealogy using DNA called "clustering." This new technique shows remarkable relationships among pedigrees, cluster and sub cluster membership, geographical location, and their evolution has become apparent through this study. The appearance of surname sub clusters within a surname cluster can indicate a strong, confirmable tie to pedigrees when they are available for members of a sub cluster.

Tei and Bill have uncovered correlations between recent historical activity and the formation of sub clusters. The times when Gordon family clusters first appeared, and when the most recent common ancestors of Gordon inter-clusters lived, are compared with the chronology of the Gordon surname and events in European and Scottish history to provide additional insight into the history of the Gordon surname and possible origins from 2500 BCE to the present. The earliest most recent common Gordon ancestors who were located in pairs of different haplogroups date to about 17,500 BCE, just after the European glaciers in the most recent ice age began to recede.

In the R1b1 haplogroup, the ISOGG time estimates, the Revised Correlation Coefficient (RCC) [A mathematical concept] time scale, the Y-DNA evidence and our

results are consistent with an origin of the Gordon surname in areas near modern Turkey and Greece. Comparison of the ISOGG dates with those determined using the RCC time scale shows good agreement and no inconsistency between the RCC - and ISOGG-derived estimates. The times derived from the RCC matrix for the early migrations of the I1 haplogroup into the British Isles from Scandinavia and from Western Europe agree well with the history of the area derived from archaeological excavations, genetics and anthropologic studies.

Bill Howard has gone on to author several more papers using this paper as a basis and has also collaborated with colleagues on using these new concepts.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This is an important study and gives our Gordon DNA Project credibility in both scientific and genealogical circles. It is interesting to see that our DNA study does support ancient origins mentioned in historical records and by earlier researchers with connections to Normandy, and even more ancient Gordinia (Turkey) and Gordonia (Macedonia) where previously these were merely assumptions based on a similarity of name alone! The possibilities of sorting the various connections the origin of our clan of surnames as Swinton and Seton and Geurdon/Gourdon through future testing of men of known pedigree of various surname with possible historical ties to the clan are exciting. The more we can include in our project, the more we will understand of our origins.

Thanks For The Scholarship from Illinois!



Thanks to Clan Gordon for awarding me the generous scholarship, which I used towards one of my best summers ever!

Dance camp kicked off with the Mid West Highland Dance Association Camp on the beautiful Lake

Itasca near Summerside, Michigan. During the day, we have workshops in log cabins or under cabanas down by the lake. In the evenings, I attended optional technique, turnout, and strength classes. Then it was straight to Ohio for the Ohio Scottish Games, where I competed in the highland, choreography, and championship competitions, and then the Ohio School of Scottish Arts School! This week-long camp is taught by highland dance instructors from all around the world and is held at Oberlin College. Fun doesn't even begin to describe getting to attend day-long dance workshops with friends from across the country on a college campus for a whole week! I definitely wish it was longer. Once OSAS was over, we were off to Minneapolis, North Carolina for the School of Scottish Arts. You couldn't get any reception up there between all those huge mountains, but it was definitely worth it! This camp was also a week long and, as always, we got to attend highland dance workshops for about six hours a day, but my favorite time was after lunch and dinner when you could come in class early and get one-on-one time with the teacher, which was so helpful and exciting! Once dance

camp sadly came to a close, my mother and I headed to the nearby Grandfather Mountain (where we camped!) where I participated in the Atlantic International Highland Dance Championship on Saturday, and the Nationals Competition on Sunday.

My final dance camp of the year was the Ann Milne summer dance camp in Owen Sound, Ontario. Not only was this my first dance camp in Canada, but we were taught by a four-time World Champion for six hours a day! Before the camp, my father took me to the Glengarry (Maxville) Highland Games, where I competed in the Nationals Competition on Friday and the Championship on Saturday, and also the Montreal Highland Games on the Sunday. Right after camp came the United States Inter-Regional Highland Dance Championship. I participated in the Choreography and Nationals Competition on Friday, the actual USIR on Saturday, and the North American Championship on Sunday, and getting to watch and hang out with other dancers from across North America was a blast!

My last big competition of the year was the World Highland Dancing Championships in Cowal, Dunoon, Scotland. I first had to qualify in the preliminary round on Friday to be able to dance in the actual Championship on Saturday. The experience and the atmosphere at Worlds really is just as awesome and unique as all the things I've heard about it - and the overall quality of dancing there is unlike anything I've ever seen!

Thanks again Clan Gordon for awarding me the scholarship!

Jean Stein

Charles O. Gordon Scholarship



We are pleased to announce the first recipient of the Charles O. Gordon Memorial Scholarship for the Celtic Arts in 2011 is Azure Davis of Richmond, Virginia.

Azure began her studies of Highland Dance in the fall of 2007 and has steadily progressed through the Beginner and Novice Levels to the Intermediate Level. She is an academically gifted student and exhibits the drive to be successful in all she does. Her love of the dance is evident in her hard work and dedication as she strives to perfect the movements of each dance to make her performance crisper. She is always willing to help other dancers master a difficult technique, and it is this combination of hard work, dedication and esprit de corps which has made her a winning competitor.



We are pleased to announce the final recipient of the Charles O. Gordon Memorial Scholarship for the Celtic Arts in 2011 is Maria Taylor of Farmington, Michigan.

Maria is a talented young lady who is pursuing her passion of Highland Dance through her involvement with the Alma College Kiltie Dancers as well as individual competition and through teaching! At the age of nine she promptly traded her ballet shoes for a pair of ghillies after attending the Highland games and it was a decision she has never regretted!

She has already taken the Associate's and Member's Exams and is currently working on more advanced qualifications and hopes to inspire future generations through teaching.

This Fictional GORDON Fueled the Future!

By Lois Todd

He was in part responsible for my husband and me falling in love, and we can never hear his name without a smile and a laugh. Thirty years together hasn't changed that, and I don't suppose thirty more will either. If that was the only future that this Gordon inspired it would still be momentous because a family was created from it — a whole new future. Our little family is most likely the least important future fueled by him though, and so, Queen and I sing the praises of FLASH GORDON to you.

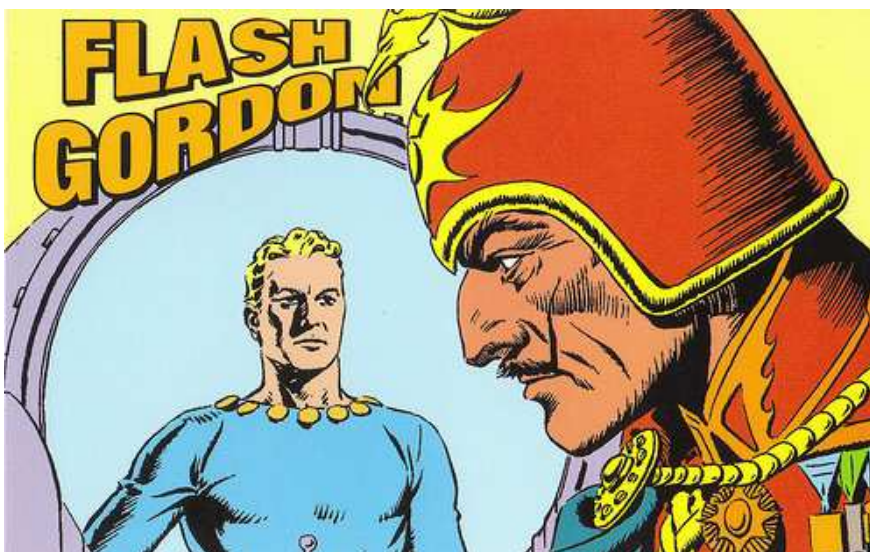
Headlines Screamed "WORLD COMING TO END—STRANGE NEW PLANET RUSHING TOWARD EARTH—ONLY MIRACLE CAN SAVE US, SAYS SCIENCE." So the story of Flash Gordon began on January 7, 1934. Alex Raymond's space fantasy with his wonderful art and style captured the imagination of America in the depths of the Great Depression. A Yale man and internationally renowned polo player, Flash Gordon was the ideal blonde, blue-eyed All American man; smart, athletic, brave and resourceful, he made Americans feel good about being American when things were on the

down and out all around them. Flash Gordon was the miracle.

The Flash Gordon comic strip continued with new adventures and continuities for an astonishing run of over 69 years from its debut in 1934 to its last new Sunday strip on March 16, 2003, when it went into reruns. It inspired three movie serials starring Olympian swimming legend Buster Crabbe as Flash, and Charles Middleton as Ming the Merciless; two radio serials starring Gale Gordon as Flash Gordon!; three animated series; three live action series; numerous comic books; a magazine; several novels, a whole futuristic exhibit-ride at the 1939 World's Fair; a 1980 Cult Classic film full of campy fun and a FANTASTIC sound track by QUEEN; and it inspired George Lucas influencing the style, look, feel and story of his Star Wars series.

Flash Gordon introduces the quintessential American story to the space sci-fi genre, that of a noble and heroic rebellion fighting against an evil tyrannical and illegitimate empire — the story of our own revolution against British oppression — a story which was largely influenced

by the Scottish struggle for independence and freedom from English oppression. Gordon was the perfect surname for a hero embodying the traits needed to "Conquer the Universe." After all, the Gordons are known for their overwhelming nature pushing all obstacles out of the way of their objective. With



Adam Gordon who championed the Scottish Freedom movement acting as ambassador for Robert the Bruce to the Pope in presenting the Declaration of Arbroath as an example, what better family to put forth the hero of the earth and universe?



Flash Gordon as portrayed by Buster Crabbe

The Flash Gordon Movie Serials starring Buster Crabbe (Flash Gordon: Space Soldiers 1936, Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars 1938, and Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe 1940) were the most expensive serials ever made, and were so popular that they were generally advertised *above* the main feature — a movie history first and last!

George Lucas originally wanted to do a remake of these serials, but could not negotiate the rights with King Features, and made the momentous decision to create his own Gordon inspired story. Star Wars is filled with the style, feel and plot inspired twists of the 1930's Flash Gordon Movie Serials, beginning with the Star Wars signature text-crawl at the start of each episode — taken right out of the Flash Gordon serials. Other influences readily noticed are found in the soft wipes be-



tween scenes, the underwater city with manta ray- shaped submarines, the cloud city, the forest kingdom of Arboria inspired the Wookiee tree houses of Kashyyk and later the look of Endor, while the swampy part of Arboria inspired Dagobah. The cave kingdom of Kira brought us Geonosis; Queen Fria's icy kingdom of Frigia inspired Hoth, and the jungle kingdom of Tropica inspired Yavin IV. Oh! And don't forget that the blonde, blue-eyed looks of hero Luke Skywalker come from Flash himself, while Leia's infamous buns come from Queen Fria's hairstyle from the Sunday comics!



Flash overran the American imagination and fueled speculation on future technology in many instances presaging developments in science, or maybe more truthfully, inspiring many young future scientists (and even 1930's contemporary scientists) to bring to life the scientific wonders of the Flash Gordon cartoon. I have often wondered if future Disney Imagineer and originator of audio-animatronics, Lee Adams, was one of those inspired by the 1939 World's Fair Flash Gordon Ride/Exhibit that was featured in Popular Science. Taking 150

people at a time on a rocket ride complete with vibrating seats immersed in a simulated movie screen trip to Venus where they could then get out and explore. The exhibit included a Venusian jungle inhabited by mechanical dinosaurs, and a Martian headquarters where “weirdly costumed Martians and mechanically animated models of giant beasts” acted out episodes from the adventures of Flash Gordon. Flash Gordon beat Disney to the World’s Fair with mechanically animated creatures by 25 years!



the name “The Rocket Raiders” and Raymond designed their patch. Just one more influence on my three Marine sons!

But my favorite Flash Gordon influence will always be the campy 1980 film with the Queen soundtrack that convinced me David’s humor meshed well with mine! There were at least 50 in our group that night all yelling out “FLASH AH-AH!” “He’ll Save Every One of US!” *Oh! the memories!*

So much has been influenced by the Flash Gordon comics over the years that there is no way to catalog it all. My eldest son was a huge fan as a child of the Thundercats— Lion-o must surely be a descendant of Prince Thun of the Lion men. I am grateful for Thun’s positive influence.

Flash’s creator, Alex Raymond, was a patriot and so Flash came back to earth in 1941 to fight against evil for the USA. In 1944, Raymond joined the Marine Corps and fought in the Pacific on the USS Gilbert Islands alongside my father’s ship in Admiral Halsey’s task group. He was designated an honorary member of the VTMB-143 who adopted



Rhode Island's Infamous Gordon Past Revisited!

Governor Chafee asked to posthumously pardon last man executed in Rhode Island

01:00 AM EST on Monday, January 31, 2011

Providence Journal

By Katie Mulvaney

Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — It's a story passed down through generations in Rhode Island, the tale of John Gordon, an Irish immigrant whose execution by hanging spurred the state to do away with the death penalty.

As the tale is widely told, Gordon was wrongfully convicted of murdering a wealthy Yankee mill owner after a trial that was rife with prejudice against Irish Catholics and pitted the upper class against the immigrant class. The evidence was circumstantial, as told, and the judge biased. Gordon was hanged on Valentine's Day in 1845 after his appeal failed before the same judges who heard his trial. Discontent about his death would lead Rhode Island to become one of the first states in the nation to abolish the death penalty seven years later.

And now, a state lawmaker has submitted legislation some view as an opportunity to right a wrong. Rep. Peter F. Martin, D-Newport, has sponsored a measure calling for Governor Chafee to posthumously pardon Gordon for the murder of Cranston industrialist Amasa Sprague.

"I expect him to love to do this pardon," Martin said, noting Chafee's Yankee roots. "We want a statement that says the evidence was such that we think he

was never guilty."

Martin was asked to submit the bill by Ken Dooley, the author of a play now showing in Cranston that details Gordon's trial, he said. After learning more about the case than his father had told him as a child growing up in Newport's Fifth Ward, Martin said he became convinced a pardon was the only way to fix a grave injustice.

"The State of Rhode Island created this problem," he said. "The State of Rhode Island has the responsibility to remedy it."

The measure has the backing of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, long a foe of capital punishment, and Office of the Public Defender.

"I think it rights a wrong," said the Rev. Bernard A. Healy, the diocese governmental liaison who plans to lobby on behalf of the pardon. The diocese, he says, views it as a teachable moment about "innocent people getting killed by the death penalty" and attitudes toward immigrants. The Irish, at the time, were economic refugees seeking a better life in the United States after being hit by the potato famine, not unlike immigrants of today, he said. "The same thing could happen today."

The public defender's office, too, plans to add its voice to the cause. "The entire process was very problematic," said Michael DiLauro, assistant public defender.

DiLauro, who's long held a fascination with Gordon's case, acknowledges he might not be able to prove that Gordon didn't kill Sprague near his Cranston mansion.

“Given the age of the case and the nature of the evidence, the kind of certainty that you would get today in a post-conviction DNA-exoneration case is not possible,” DiLauro said. “But if you look at the record in the case, the proof that found this guy guilty was not only minimal, but was, at best, circumstantial and, at worst, unreliable.”

That perplexes some historians. The Rhode Island Historical Society doesn’t have a position on the pardon request, but welcomes an examination of the crime and an exploration of the issues it raises about the state and its values, said Morgan Grefe, the director of education and public program at the Historical Society.

“The question is, as a historian, is there enough evidence to prove innocence, or just that there wasn’t a fair trial?” Grefe said.

“We certainly always support looking into the past and bringing to light as best they can what happened in 1845,” she said. “Sometimes that’s easier said than done.”

In Cranston, historians are more convinced. “[Gordon] had nothing to do with it,” said Lydia Rapoza, president of the Cranston Historical Society. “He was drunk somewhere.”

The state’s chief law-enforcement officer, whose office is responsible for prosecuting most crimes in the state, refrained from taking a stance.

“The attorney general believes the decision should be based on law and the facts, not emotion and historical accounts which over decades can change and shift,” said Amy Kempe, spokeswoman for Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin.

Mill owner Amasa Sprague was shot and beaten to death on the banks of the Pocasset River on New Year’s Eve 1843. Suspicion soon fixed on the Gordon family, Roman Catholic immigrants from Ireland. Sprague had had several clashes with John’s brother, Nicholas, about his workers coming to the mill drunk after buying liquor at Nicholas’ store. Sprague, the brother of U.S. Sen. William Sprague, convinced city officials to suspend Gordon’s liquor license.

Soon after Sprague’s murder, authorities arrested John, his two brothers, mother and even Nicholas’s dog because tracks indicated a dog had accompanied the suspect. The Providence Journal, criticized for its biased accounts, reported the evidence against the Gordons was so strong “it is now settled opinion that they are the guilty parties.”

The Gordons’ trial in 1844 came at a time of anti-immigrant hysteria against Irish Roman Catholics, the first group to immigrate in large numbers threatening the hold of Yankee Protestants. A total of 102 witnesses testified over nine days, giving at times confusing and contradictory testimony. A judge was said to have instructed the jurors to give greater weight to Yankee witnesses than Irish witnesses.

The jury returned shortly, acquitting William and finding John guilty of murder. Another jury came back hung at Nicholas’ trial. John’s appeal was rejected by the same judges that oversaw his trial.

John Gordon was hanged before 60 prominent Rhode Islanders at a prison yard that is now home to the Providence Place mall. His body was buried in a pauper’s grave in the North Burial Ground after a funeral procession that drew thousands. His body was then se-

cretly moved to an unmarked grave at a consecrated cemetery at St. Mary's Church in Pawtucket. Once a year, the Irish Society holds a ceremony there, said Father William J. Ledoux, church pastor.

Under the state Constitution, the governor can grant a pardon with the advice and consent of the Senate. Governors receive 10 to 15 requests for pardons each year, some written on slips of paper, according to Claire Richards, Governor Chafee's chief legal officer. The governor's staff asks the person seeking the pardon to provide detailed information about his or her criminal record, sentence and conduct while serving time. Only one or two people fulfill that request, and the governor's legal counsel then makes a judgment call based on the information they provided, Richards said.

Richards was not aware that a pardon had ever been granted in Rhode Island. She declined to give specifics about people who requested pardons during her tenures with Governors Lincoln Almond and Donald Carcieri.

If the House of Representatives back the legislation, lawmakers would be expected to provide the governor with detailed evidence supporting the pardon request, said Michael Trainor, Chafee's spokesman.

"The governor understands the spirit with which this resolution is being offered. He's sympathetic to that," Trainor said. "He still has to follow the rules. ... He'll look at the evidence and he'll have to make a determination."

Sprague descendants are reluctant to weigh in.

"I defer to the historians," said Robert Cocroft, a copy editor at The Providence

Journal who descends from William Sprague, Amasa's brother, a former U.S. senator and Rhode Island governor. "I don't know what happened. I wasn't there."

UPDATE! 11 MAY 2011

The House voted 65 to 0 to pass the measure sponsored by Rep. Peter Martin, D-Newport, asking Chafee to pardon John Gordon, whose hanging on Valentine's Day in 1845 spurred the state to do away with the death penalty.

The resolution will now work its way through the Senate, beginning with the committee on Special Legislation and Veterans' Affairs.

The resolution has been embraced as a chance to right a grave injustice by disparate interests that include Assistant Public Defender Michael DiLauro, historians, the Rhode Island Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence. Under the state Constitution, the governor can grant a pardon with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Martin said Wednesday's vote didn't signal that lawmakers believed in Gordon's innocence, but rather that the evidence wasn't enough to prove his guilt. "They certainly today would have done more investigating," Martin said.

The Irish Times is also reporting on this story and has quoted Rep. Peter Martin as saying, "I was brought up understanding two things, that the Irish endured prejudice here, and that a young man hanged for a murder he did not commit." The resolution is expected to pass in the Senate as well, and Rep. Martin expects Governor Chafee to sign Gordon's pardon "within weeks, not months".

2010 AGM Minutes

House of Gordon USA Annual General Meeting

**Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in
Linville, NC**

July 10, 2010, 3:00 p.m.

Call to Order: The annual House of Gordon meeting (AGM) was called to order at 2:57 pm, by Kim Gordon, President. The meeting started with the piping of the "Cock of the North." Scholarship Chair Lois Todd presented Zoe Shell, a young highland drummer with the Grandfather Mountain Highlanders, with a big check as one of this year's Charles O. Gordon Scholarship recipients. Also present was this year's Grade 4 Junior Piper of the Day, 9-year old Liam MacDonald, who was presented with the Charles O. Gordon crystal obelisk trophy and certificate as the first annual recipient of this award at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

There were 23 members present who signed the sign-in sheet. We had 15 mailed in "proxy votes".

Kim Gordon read the Chief's Greeting/Message.

Barbara Wray, secretary, read the 2009 AGM Minutes held October 24, 2009 at the Meadow Highland Games in Doswell. David Whiteside made a motion to accept the minutes as read and Geof Baker seconded. All voted aye. A copy of the minutes will be posted on the National website and will also be filed for audit.

Reports:

President's Report - Kim Gordon read his report on the progress made since last October regarding goals set out at the AGM in 2009. He indicated that he'd like to see us triple our membership within 18 months. Kim touched on points such as New membership systems, Conveners and Regional Commis-

sioner Expansion, adding a newly appointed Quartermaster, John Gordon of southern Illinois, new financial and budgeting systems, increased communications with our International partners, newsletters and mailings and Facebook and Website applications. David Whiteside made a motion to accept the President's report as read. David Todd seconded it. All voted "aye".

Treasurer's Report – Nellie Lowry who could not attend this year's meeting provided her treasurer's report. Total income for the period from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 was \$7,268.82. Total expenses were \$10,903.00. An increase due to the cost of printing and mailing the May annual for \$4,085.85 (600 copies); the allocation of Charles O. Gordon Scholarship Fund for \$2000.00; and increasing the donation to the Gordon Highlanders Museum to \$2000.00. Our remaining operating balance is \$15,158.78. A copy of Nellie's report was provided at the meeting for review. Lois Todd made a motion to accept the financial report as read and Ginny Gordon seconded it. All voted "aye".

Membership Report – Arlene Adams indicated in her report that many organizations find it hard to retain members, yet the renewing members are most important for us to encourage to continue with their support. New membership will help expand the House. Currently we have 765 new, active and inactive members. Lu Gordon made a motion to accept the membership report as read and David Todd seconded it. All voted "aye".

Vice President/Convener's Chair Report – Geof Baker welcomed everyone for coming to the meeting. He welcomed new conveners, Michael Hilden and Julie Bowman, co-conveners for Minnesota and John Gordon, convener for southern Illinois & Missouri. John as also graciously accepted the newly created position of House of Gordon Store Quartermaster. This is a new position and

we now have 9 Board members.

He discussed monies from the Heritage fund creating standardized "Conveners Kits" to help new conveners and developing a "Brand Standard" for clan tents for festivals and games, i.e. making all our tents readily recognizable at a distance as GORDON. He also discussed conveners collecting dues for their states but not reporting to National. This goes against our 501(c)(3) non profit status and could potentially lead to loss of our status if not complied to.

He also indicated that guidelines for duties for commissioners and conveners would be developed soon to clear up any misunderstandings of the roles.

National (Geof and Lois) would be attending the Central New York Highland Games and Celtic Festival in August in an effort to bring a convener on board in that region.

We have made a commitment to increase our membership by 25% this year. Barbara, Lois and Morris attended the Greenville, SC games and have already received a few new memberships generated from those games.

Communications Report – Lois Todd read her communications report to everyone. Highlights were amount of hits to our website are down this year by 3.32%. We are seeing a rise in hits from our fellow Gordon's in Russia. Valeria Morris has started the House of Gordon in Russia. Our Facebook House of Gordon USA Group now has 319 members and is growing. We currently have 76 videos in our House of Gordon Playlist on YouTube. One of the biggest challenges we have is contacting our members. Email addresses and home addresses change and we don't get the updates. Another challenge is the cost of communication. Most is done electronically, however the cost for the annual newsletter is approximately \$6.30 each and that is 63% of the national portion of the dues of \$10.00. We are looking at ways to streamline these expenses. Barbara Wray made a motion to accept the communications report as read and Ern Malcolm sec-

onded it. All voted "aye".

Scholarship Report – Lois Todd read her report. This year we voted to sponsor 3 scholarships of \$500.00 each. This year's winners were Miss Jean Stein of Elgin, Illinois, Miss Zoe Shell of Elizabethton, Tennessee and Mr. Marshall C. German of Corona, California. We had also voted to begin an annual award to the Grade 4 Junior Piper of the Day at Grandfather Mountain Highland Games to be a trophy and one week scholarship at the piping summer school of choice for the following summer. David Whiteside made a motion to accept the scholarship report as read and Brandie Bartos seconded it.

DNA Project – Lois Todd read this report. This report is presented by Lois Todd, Jim Gordon and Tei Gordon. Tei Gordon is now working on a new project with an astrophysicist. To date we have helped 4 applicants. The House of Gordon USA has donated \$1000.00 to help finance the cost of testing. Morris Gordon made a motion to accept the report as read and Bonnie Linse seconded it. All voted "aye".

Items of Business:

Article 4, section 2 of the Bylaws proposed change to restrict the board and officers to non family affiliated members: Discussion revolved around the bylaws provision for voting members of no more than 11 but no less than 4 officers on the executive board, and the possibility of a conflict of interest occurring when members of the Board of Directors being directly related or marital partners (i.e. Father and son, man and wife). Concerns of the membership were that one family could direct the course of the clan society by having a "voting block" within the executive board, and balancing that with the need to take volunteers where we have them. After much debate and questions David Whiteside made a motion to accept the changes as read with a proviso grandfathering in any conflicts within the current board members in their jobs until such time

the membership should deem it needed for a replacement to be voted for said positions, and John Ruplenas seconded it. All voted "aye".

Charities – Geof Baker suggested we have more charities and not just the Gordon Highlander Museum. Turpin Ballard mentioned a conservation organization for endangered birds in Scotland. He will provide more info on this. Morris Gordon asked would we continue to support the museum each year. The answer would be that we would vote year to year which charities to sponsor. We have previously created a Heritage Fund and feel this is a good way to tell who we are and attract more young people. We also want to be careful how we move funds into the Heritage Fund. Lois Todd discussed how Virginia has celebrated our military and how we donate time with the USO and our volunteering with one of the local JROTC units and the Cancer Society's Relay for Life. She also indicated that we could post suggestions on our website and the board could review further. We want to encourage suggestions from our members on ways we can through our individual efforts bring an awareness of the House of Gordon in our charitable works in the community. Jim Drouillard, a member in Texas, headed up a care package day in his community and wore his Gordon kilt and used the opportunity to tell people about our military history and 4 pages of Medal of Honor recipients!

DNA – Family Tree DNA. We have money in the fund that sits there until Jim, Tei and Lois direct where the kits are to go. It was proposed that we change this to holding the money in our treasury and when Jim, Tei and Lois have a need for a kit to be funded then we write the check to Family Tree DNA. This was passed by the members.

AGM for 2011 – the AGM is scheduled to be at the Seaside Games on Oct 8th. It is suggested that we tie the election years to the AGMs held at Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. The next AGM at GMHG will be in 2012.

In The House!

Kim asked for volunteers to be on the next election. He would like to see 3 board members each from east, west and central states.

Goals for 2011:

Kim indicated several goals for 2011. We want to increase membership, have more automation, and he wants conveners to know who their members are. Also, to grow our membership, communication is paramount. Maybe we will have a quarterly telecom with conveners.

Kim opened up discussion on the floor for new ideas. Can dues be paid though pay pal? Answer is yes. One suggestion was to have a cell phone "H of G Hotline", which can have the newsletter read to members. This suggestion came from John Ruplenas.

We are working on a new membership form and sign-in sheets for national which can be used throughout the US.

Bonnie Kovach in Wisconsin will provide info on funding top 5 regional libraries.

In summary, Kim thanked everyone for attending and encouraged us to continue to grow as we put more operations into place. He wants to hear from everyone. Also, he wants to see everyone back at 6:00 for our annual picnic being held at the Gordon Ceilidh Corner Camp site.

Jim Gordon made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Brandie Bartos seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 pm.

All reports, the Chief's message, meeting sign-in sheet, proxy letters and proposed Bylaws change will be attached with the minutes and a copy of the minutes will be filed for audit.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gordon Wray, Secretary
House of Gordon USA

Membership Report

2011 AGM AGENDA

We have 577 members on roster, 284 have paid due so far. Welcome to our new members in 2010!

Arkansas

Dwain Gordon

Arizona

Beth Ballisrea
Roger Lee Gordon

California

Peter Gordon
Pamela La Rue
Caleb Manookin
Linda Muir
Janelle Smith Ozeran
Michael & Lyndi Perkinson
Shauna Pickett-Gordon
Fred M. Whitaker
James E. Wren

Colorado

Fred Andersen

Connecticut

Aaron F. Atwood

Delaware

Mark Todd

Georgia

James Atkins
George A. Burtz
Tim & Michelle Edwards
Sheila Gordon Ennis
Donald Gordon
John & Alice Gordon
Carol Hayes
Linda McPherson
Jesse Todd

Hawaii

Louis Hopt

Idaho

Douglas R. Adams

Louisiana

Kennith Gordon

Maine

Geoffrey H. Sprague

Maryland

Kym Craig
Meryle Page Gordon Wilkerson

Massachusetts

Joan Bannerman

Nevada

Craig Robert Moir
Leah Stapp

New York

MSgt. Michael J. Adams
David J. Gordon
Samuel Gordon
Charles & Sharon
Bob McNeill

North Carolina

Dollie Bailey
Mike & Jeanna McIntyre
Harold E. Proctor
Gregory Neil Todd

Ohio

Greg Funk

Pennsylvania

Robert H. Etchison

South Carolina

Gayle Gordon Estes
Hugh & Linda Gordon
Bonnie G. Linse

Tennessee

William B. Gordon III

Texas

Suzanne Batesla
Michael & Nora Fellows
Barbara Wink

Virginia

Tim & Lora Adams
Timothy Adams
Terryl Aitken
Margaret Muir Belanus
Heather Chapman
Paul Craig

Jeanne T. Eichelberger

John-Mark Gardner

William Graham Gardner

CDR Scott S. Gordon

Scott Gordon

Ron King

Rolo & Angie Nash

Aaron Todd

David McDanald Troup

Michael Turner

Washington

Mary Elizabeth Ridpath-Kovich

West Virginia

Kim Stuart

BC, Canada

Celestino & Jean Cargnelli

• Call to Order

• Reports:

◆ President’s Report by Kim Gordon on the progress made since last July regarding goals set out at the AGM in 2010.

◆ VP’s report on Commissioners and Conveners.

◆ Treasurer’s Report by Nellie Lowry on the funds received, paid-out and financial state of the organization.

◆ Membership Report by Arlene

◆ Communications, Scholarship and DNA Project Reports by Lois Todd

• Items of Business:

◆ Proposed Slate of Officers for 2011-2013 presented for discussion, additional nominations and vote. Proposed Slate to be:

⇒ President — Kim Gordon

⇒ Vice President — Geof Baker

⇒ Treasurer — Nellie Lowry

⇒ Secretary — Barbara Gordon Wray

⇒ Directors at Large:

Lucretia Gordon

John Lowry

◆ Confirm appointment of three Officers

• Call for any other new business to be discussed and motions to their disposition as it may pertain.

• Installation of newly elected officers.

• Meeting Adjourned.

Proxy Ballot
House of Gordon USA Annual General Meeting
Seaside Highland Games, Ventura CA October 8, 2011

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- (1) To elect six new officers and directors and confirm the appointment of two officers.
- (2) To designate our Scottish charity(ies).
- (3) To discuss such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

VOTING BY PROXY Please submit the Proxy as soon as possible so that your opinions may be voiced at the meeting in accordance with your instructions. The Proxy must be received by September 24, 2011 at the address shown below. You may submit your Proxy (1) by mail, or (2) over the internet (by attaching a signed .pdf Proxy to webmaster@houseofgordonusa.org).

Election of Officers and Directors	_____	Vote FOR all nominees (except as marked)
President: Kim Gordon		
Vice-President: Geof K. Baker		
Secretary: Bill Salamone	_____	Vote WITHHELD from all nominees
Treasurer: Nellie Lowry		
Director: John Lowry		
Director: Lucretia Gordon		

Instructions:

- 1. To withhold authority to vote for any indicated nominee, write the name(s) of the nominee (s) on the line provided to the right.

- 2. I instruct my Proxy, _____, to use their best judgment on all matters which properly come before the membership at the AGM.

This Proxy must be signed and received by September 24, 2011.

Date _____ Signature _____

Membership Number (if known) _____

Mail to: House of Gordon USA 1811 Aeronca Ave. Henrico, VA 23228-1328

House of Gordon USA

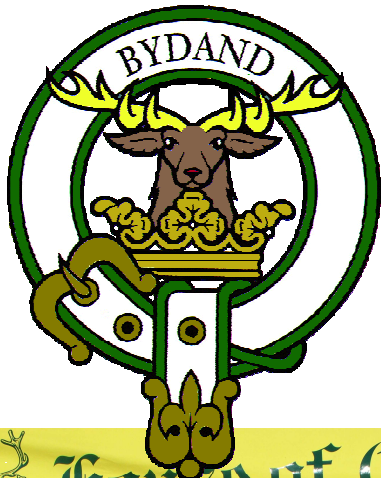
President -	Kim Gordon, Missouri	president@houseofgordonusa.org
Vice President-	Geof Baker, Virginia	vp@houseofgordonusa.org
Secretary-	Barbara Gordon Wray, SC	secretary@houseofgordonusa.org
Treasurer-	Nellie Lowry, California	treasurer@houseofgordonusa.org
Directors at Large-	Lucretia Gordon , Tennessee	Lucretia@houseofgordonusa.org
	John Lowry, California	john@houseofgordonusa.org
Membership Secretary-	Arlene Adams, California	membeship@houseofgordonusa.org
Communications Chair-	Lois Todd, Virginia	webmaster@houseofgordonusa.org
Quartermaster	John Gordon, Illinois	john.gordon@steaknshake.com

Commissioners:

Gulf States	Marcia Gordon McLaurin	mgordonm@hotmail.com
Northeast	Morris Gordon	sirknightmg@hotmail.com
Southwest	Tom Adams	taadams.scotland@sbcglobal.net

State Conveners:

Arizona	Patrick & Jodi Gordon	ladyjodster@yahoo.com
No. California	Ken & Heather Gardner	soshoran@hotmail.com
So. California	Christine Adams	cnadams.scotland@netzero.com
Colorado	Sean Gordon	sgordon42@comcast.net
Georgia	Turpin Ballard	turp4846@gmail.com
Florida	Norval Marr	arutland@tampabay.rr.com
Hawaii	Donald G. Barnes	dgbhi@msn.com
Idaho	Joel Mills	convener@idahogordons.org
No. Illinois/Iowa	David Whiteside	davidlwhiteside@hotmail.com
So. Illinois/Missouri	John Gordon	john.gordon@steaknshake.com
Maine	Merle Gordon	merrill515@yahoo.com
Michigan/ N. Indiana	Garth Gordon	garthmgordon@aol.com
Minnesota	Julie Bowman & Michael Hilden	MythJulie@aol.com
Nevada	Woody & Lynne Gordon	sfgscotland@hotmail.com
New England	David Gordon	dgordon1949@yahoo.com
New Mexico	David & Debra Melcher	dndmelcher@msn.com
New York	Holly Warren	holly.warren.rn@gmail.com
North Carolina	Tom & Sarah Gardenhire	ncgordons@hotmail.com
Ohio	Lori Neidert	neidertgordonoh@yahoo.com
Pennsylvania	Micah Wentzel	mwentzel@mail.com
South Carolina	David Nichols	nichols_d@bellsouth.net
Virginia/Maryland	David Todd	drummerdavid@comcast.net
West Virginia	Jerry Vandenberg	vandege@live.com
Wisconsin	Laurence Whitten	LorcantheCelt@aol.com



House of Gordon USA, Newsletter Annual Edition

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Pin-up Angels honor Aaron Todd (on boot leave) at the Gordon Tent . Gordon's show support of Troops at GMHG. CNY Games sees installation of new convener, Holly Warren. New annual scholarship established at GMHG. Jim Drouillard heads up goody boxes for troops. Prince Edward visits SC. Big Check Ceremony at AGM for scholarship recipient, Zoe Shell.