

The Small Town Texas Masons E-magazine

November 2014



Marfa, Texas

Small Town Texas Masons E-magazine

The Small Town Texas Mason's E-Magazine is not affiliated with any state Grand Lodge or individual Blue Lodge.

It was created to enlighten, educate and entertain Masons and non-Masons alike and as title suggests, it does try to feature a small town Texas Masonic Lodge and a story of Texas Masonic history in each issue. You may have noticed, the magazine is slowly changing, starting with new covers. I have almost exhausted the Small town Texas Masonic Lodge histories and pictures that are available on the internet. I only have 1 left and the monthly feature stories will become more toward Texas Masonic history and hero's stories.

You may have noticed, the magazine is slowly changing, hopefully for the better, starting with new covers, larger print, no more stories continued until next month, and a general mix of Masonic stories with a little humor and a few stories of general interest instead of separate sections.

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This month's cover photo is Marfa, Texas.

Blessing Masonic Lodge # 411 AF & AM

Editor's note; This month's issue was supposed to be the first issue in over 6 years that didn't feature a small town Texas Masonic Lodge because I have ran out of search results on the internet for them. 'We have to thank Past Master Steve Baylor of Blessing #411 and Old Ocean #1284 for putting me on the trail to find the Blessing Lodge's story.

The Blessing Masonic Lodge building is a two-story vernacular building that dates to 1875 and has been used continuously by the Masons. Originally named the Tres Palacios Masonic Lodge and located Deming's Bridge, it was moved to its present site in Blessing in 1907.

Several accounts describe the lodge building as originally constructed in 1875 in the small community of Deming's Bridge. Deming's Bridge, now known as Hawley, is located three miles

northeast of Blessing on the Tres Palacios River. The area was used by local settlers as early as 1850 and in 1854 land was deeded to Tres Palacios Baptist Church for a new church building and cemetery. Deming's Bridge got its name from a bridge built near the church in 1857 by Edwin A. Deming. A post office was established in 1858 with Deming as postmaster. In about 1865, after serving in the Civil War, Jonathan Edwards Pierce and his brother Abel Head (Shanghai) Pierce moved to the area. Jonathan purchased land adjacent to the Baptist church and built a large house known as Rancho Grande.



Jonathan Pierce established Tres Palacios Masonic Lodge in 1874. Its name would later be changed to Blessing Masonic Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Texas granted a Charter under Dispensation on January 29th, then a full charter and the number 411 on June 8 of 1874. Soon after the Lodge was chartered, the Masons built a new two-story lodge building on the grounds of the church and cemetery, near Pierce's land. It was completed by at least 1875, since sources say the Tres Palacios Baptist Church building was destroyed in the 1875 hurricane and the congregation met on the first floor of the new Masonic hall until their replacement

church was built in 1893.

After the Lodge was formed in 1874, Brother J. A. McIntyre was elected its first Worshipful Master, and Jonathan Pierce became Junior Warden. In the first few months after charter, the Lodge received several petitions for membership and visitors from other Lodges. Pierce became Worshipful Master in 1875, and held the position again in 1879, 1892, and 1903. He also served as Postmaster of the Deming's Bridge post office in 1876. The settlement of Deming's Bridge grew, with a population of 300 in 1884 and 500 by 1892, when it had seventeen businesses in addition to the Masonic lodge building and cemetery. In circa 1890 two traditional Masonic bronze

pillars, BOAZ and JACHIN, were given to the Tres Palacios Lodge by the Brothers of Indianola Lodge No. 84, who had lost their lodge building in the hurricane of 1886. The pillars still stand in the lodge room today and are used for their original purpose. In 1893 Jonathan Pierce donated land for the construction of a new multid denominational church and for the enlargement of the cemetery. The Masons were active in building projects in the area; in fact, the Tres Palacios Lodge laid the cornerstone of the Matagorda County Courthouse “with Masonic honors” in 1895.

An account in the Victoria Advocate from 1894 describes a grand picnic hosted by the Masons in Deming’s Bridge that year. The article, written by “a spectator,” states:

Upwards of three hundred people were on the grounds; Edna, Matagorda, Colorado River and Caranchua were represented, but the majority were people from the immediate neighborhood. Quite early in the morning the Masons repaired to their lodge from which they emerged later dressed in regalia and marching two by two, the Tyler with drawn sword at their head. The installation took place in the new church. The deep tones of the organ pealing forth a march, greeted their ears as they entered. [. . .] At the close of the address, the assembly with Masons in the van, marched out into the grove, where a magnificent dinner was in waiting. Beef, cooked a la cow driver style, on stakes before the fire, bread, white and light as seafoam, turkeys, chickens, cakes of every size, kind and description with numerous other good things comprised the menu.

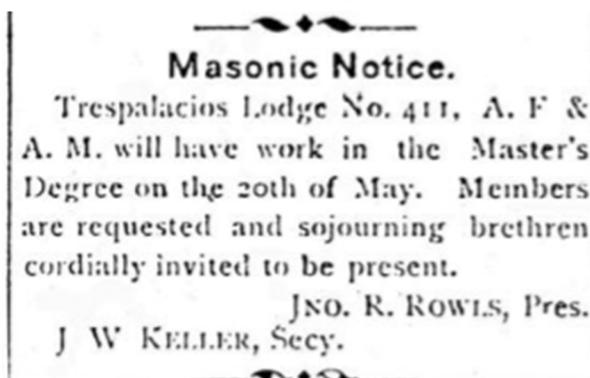
Of note in the passage is the differentiation between the lodge (“the Masons repaired to their lodge”) and the church building (“installation took place in the new church”). This further solidifies accounts that the lodge building was in existence at Deming’s Bridge.

Jonathan Pierce, lodge founder, was instrumental to the area’s history. Pierce and his brother Abel Head Pierce (later known as “Shanghai Pierce”) were born in Rhode Island and moved to Indianola, Texas some time between 1853 and 1860. Jonathan worked splitting rails at the Grimes Ranch on the Tres Palacios River, and bunked with Edwin Deming, with whom he would establish the friendship that later led him to Deming’s Bridge. Between 1861 and 1865

Jonathan served with the Confederate Army, then moved to Matagorda County and purchased land near the Deming’s Bridge community. With his brother Abel he established house and ranching operation called Rancho Grande. In 1874 he established the Tres Palacios Masonic Lodge, and in 1893 donated land for the new church building in Deming’s Bridge. In 1899 Pierce had the name of Deming’s Bridge changed Hawley by way of thanking his friend Robert

Bradley Hawley for securing a position in the Navy for Pierce’s son. In 1903 Jonathan Pierce established the town of Blessing on a portion of his land, then donated a right-of-way to the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway to ensure that the new settlement would thrive. A grateful Pierce named the town “Blessing” when the US Postal Department denied his original petition for the name “Thank God.” Both Jonathan and Abel Head Pierce are buried at Hawley Cemetery, several yards from where the Masonic lodge building once stood.

The settlement of Hawley declined after the railroad came through Blessing. By 1903 the Hawley Post Office was moved to Blessing, and in 1905 the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway was extended through Blessing to join the existing Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway. The Blessing Hotel was built by D. A. Wheeler soon after, and in September of 1907 the townsite was platted. By 1914 Blessing had 500 inhabitants. Hawley still had a one-room schoolhouse as late as 1904, but the church built in 1893 was torn down in 1937. , Rancho Grande,



a
to

the Pierce home, burned to the ground in 1902. The bridge over the Tres Palacios River known as Deming's Bridge was removed around 1930.

Accounts of the lodge building's move are described in the minutes of the Tres Palacios Lodge, and summarized in Darron Ross's in his article "The History of Blessing Lodge No. 411: A Lodge Rich in Heritage, Strong in Character." After the railroad was extended through Blessing and that town grew, the Masons met to discuss a potential move to Blessing. In June of 1906 a committee was appointed to request permission from the Baptist Church in Hawley to move the Lodge. The church granted permission, and in March of 1907 it was ordered for word to be sent to the District Deputy Grand Master to request permission for the move. A building committee was formed to plan the lodge building's move, and in June of 1907 the Brothers voted unanimously to move the Lodge and building. A lot in Blessing was donated to the Masons, and the firm of Nelson and Pybus was given the contract to move the building there. The Lodge took out a bank loan to finance the move. According to Darron Ross and the 1907 minutes of the Tres Palacios Lodge, the lodge building was "moved from Tres-Palacios to Blessing using mule teams and large logs for the building to rest and roll on. It is said that Nelson and Pybus carried out the contract during the months of October and November 1907. Contractor Pybus is listed in the minutes as a Brother Mason and member of the Lodge."



Organizational information of Lodge 411 in the Grand Lodge proceedings states that the Tres Palacios Lodge "met in the woods" prior to the move to Blessing; this has led to assumptions that no lodge building existed in Deming's Bridge. However, Lodge records clearly document the moving of the Lodge and the building to Blessing in 1907. Darron Ross's article explains that the misunderstanding is accounted for by a miscommunication between the Tres Palacios Lodge and the Grand Lodge. After the Lodge building was moved to Blessing in 1907, it was discovered that the Grand Master had not granted formal permission for the move. The Grand Lodge was not pleased at this infraction and considered arresting the Charter; since by 1908 the Tres

Palacios Lodge no longer had a building at Tres Palacios. However, in the end, Right Worshipful Master Brother L. Peine granted Dispensation and recommended that the name of the Lodge be changed to Blessing Masonic Lodge, since the building was now located there. The Lodge's Organizational Information on page 95 of the Grand Lodge proceedings states that in 1908 the name was changed from Tres Palacios to Blessing, and on page 15 states "Allowed to move to Blessing on R.R. original location four mield (sic) from Blessing name changed to blessing (sic)."

Shortly after the lodge building was moved to Blessing, it suffered minor damage in a storm. The Organizational Information for the Lodge summarizes page 27 of the 1909 Grand Lodge proceedings: "Some building damage. Damage done by Storm on July 21, 1909. It is unclear what damage was suffered, but building's integrity is outstanding and so presumably the damage was minimal. In 1909 and 1910 the lodge was used as Blessing's first school building. In a 1957 interview, Mrs. H.L. Brown, former teacher, states that "the Masonic Hall at that time was used for school, Sunday school, dances, banquets, Medicine Shows on the first floor; and the Masonic Lodge meetings held on the second floor."

Jonathan Pierce died in on March 29th of 1915. He was active in the Brotherhood for over 41 years and was the last of the original Lodge petitioners. He was laid to rest with Masonic honors

in Hawley Cemetery near the original Lodge site. In May of 1915 a Resolution of Respect was presented by the Masons, which began:

Whereas, on the 29th day of March, A.D. 1915, Brother Jonathan Edwards Pierce, one of our most beloved and honored members, answered the call of the Supreme Grand Master of The Universe and closed his long career of usefulness upon earth; whereas, it is fitting for this Lodge to put on record its high appreciation of his exalted worth and character; therefore be it resolved.

The Blessing Masonic Lodge No. 411 and its lodge building have experienced very few changes since the time of Jonathan Pierce. In circa 1920 a door was cut into its east façade to permit easy access from the parking lot to the lower floor community room. In 1947 a hurricane blew the building off its foundation blocks into the street, but the building remained intact and was restored shortly thereafter. In 1961 Hurricane Carla blew the roof off the building but the members were determined to maintain their perfect attendance record and chose to meet by candlelight. The lodge building became a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1965 and received a marker which states, "Hall built 1875 at Deming's Bridge, near Pierce Ranch, by John Pierce and Masonic brothers. First floor used as Baptist church and community hall. Moved about 1903 when town of Blessing was founded." The marker is incorrect in that the building was moved in 1907, not 1903.

Freemasonry has been present in Texas since the first immigrants arrived. Stephen F. Austin attempted to organize a Lodge in 1828, but failed after his petition to the Grand Lodge of Mexico was received with hostility. The first Lodge in Texas was established in 1835 in Brazoria, but this dissolved soon after charter during the Texas Revolution. Nonetheless, by 1837 three Lodges were chartered in the Republic of Texas, and President Sam Houston presided over the organization of the Grand Lodge of the Republic of Texas. The organization grew steadily until the Civil War, when the Grand Lodge suffered financial stress and membership took a temporary decline. By the 1880s, however, membership flourished again. The great majority of influential early Texans were members of a Masonic Lodge. In the Republic of Texas, Masons accounted for only 1.5% of the population but about 80% of public offices. After annexation, Masons continued to be prominent in the State of Texas, with five of the six governors between 1846 and 1861 members of the fraternity. Matagorda County was one of Texas's most prominent immigration points of entry, so some of the earliest documentation of Masonic activity in Texas is centered in Matagorda County. Many of the men that came through the county in the early years were Masons. The first Lodge in Matagorda County was Matagorda Lodge No. 7 which was formed in 1838.

Doctor "Red" Duke - A Masonic Did You Know

Editor's Note, A truly Outstanding Small Town Texas Mason.

James Henry "Red" Duke, Jr. was born November 16, 1928. He is a trauma surgeon and professor at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center. He has been working on-site since 1972. Duke was born in Ennis, Texas. He attended Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas where he served as a yell leader. He was the first person to deliver the poem "The Last Corps Trip" publicly.

Duke has had years of achievement in the field of medicine. He was instrumental in introducing Memorial Hermann's "Life Flight" and bringing a Level 1 Trauma Unit to Houston, both of which was first for Texas and Southeast Texas, respectively. Outside of Texas, he is probably most famous for running a nationally syndicated television spot called "Dr. Red Duke's Health Reports", which aired for fifteen years. The spot educated millions about various health-related topics, a different subject for each day. He is well-recognized for his distinctive Texan accent, ever-present large mustache and "Duke-isms" (like his popular segment sign-off "For your health!").

Duke was also the first surgeon to receive President John F. Kennedy after being shot and taken to Dallas Parkland Hospital, and attended to the wounds of then Texas Governor John Connally, who was shot at the same time John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Recently, the University of Texas Medical School at Houston Department of Surgery sponsored a scholarship fund in honor of Dr. "Red" Duke, aimed towards students wishing to research and train in the field of trauma. "Red" graduated from Hillsboro High School and later earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A & M University 1950. After a two-year tour of duty as a tank officer in the 2nd Armored Division of the U.S. Army, he went on to earn a divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1955. However, "Red's" lifelong desire to become a doctor prevailed and he enrolled in the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, from which he received his M.D. in 1960. Dr. Duke completed his internship in internal medicine and his residency in general surgery at Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital in 1965. Dr. Duke's academic career began in 1966 as an assistant professor of surgery at UT Southwestern Medical School and later at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. He also took some time to pursue graduate studies in chemical engineering, biochemistry and computer sciences at Columbia University under the auspices of an NIH Special Fellowship. While Dr. Duke was an assistant professor of surgery in New York, he had the opportunity to move his family and career to Jalalabad, Afghanistan as a visiting professor, and later chairman of surgery at Nangarhar University School of Medicine from 1970-1972. After returning from Afghanistan, Dr. Duke joined the faculty of the University of Texas Medical School at Houston where he is a professor of surgery. Among his many responsibilities, Dr. Duke has served as special assistant to the president of the UT Health Science Center and holds one of the distinguished professorships at the UT Medical School as the John B. Holmes Professor of Clinical Sciences. He established Houston's Hermann Hospital Life Flight operations in 1976 and remains the medical director of its trauma and emergency services. Dr. Duke is a founding member of the American Trauma Society and is an advanced trauma life support instructor for the American College of Surgeons. He was named "Surgeon of the Year" by the James F. Mitchell Foundation in 1988. Dr. Duke's extraordinary efforts to educate the public in health issues and tireless work as a crusader against trauma brought him into serious consideration for the position of Surgeon General of the United States in 1989.

Duke is also noted outside of the medical community. Not only did he attain the rank of Eagle Scout, but the Boy Scouts of America honored him with the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award. As founder and past president of the Texas Bighorn Society, Dr. Duke is a major supporter of many wildlife conservation groups. He has been the president of the Boone and Crockett Club, the oldest conservation organization in the United States, and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep. Dr. Duke is also one of the most recognized television personalities in his field, as determined by the Gallup Organization, Inc. He is the former host of the nationally syndicated Texas Health Reports and hosted the former PBS series "Bodywatch". Dr. Duke has been featured on such programs as PM Magazine, NBC Nightly News, The Today Show and the Buck James television series.

Brother James "Red" Duke, Jr. is a member of Hillsboro Lodge # 196, Hillsboro, Texas.

May We Meet Upon The _!_ Act By The ! And Part Upon The !_
W. Bro. Dwight D. Seals - Camden Lodge #159 - Camden, Ohio

Mirror Lodge

By Carl Claudy

From the Old Tiler's Talk - by Carl H. Claudy, The Temple Publishers

"How do you like it now you've been a member six months?" asked the Old Tiler.

"I am discouraged," was the dejected answer of the New Brother.

"Tell me about it," suggested the old tiler, leaning his sword against the wall and shifting in his chair.

"Maybe I expect too much. My dad was a Mason and he always thought a lot of it- he was a Past Master and a trustee. He talked much about the friends he made in lodge and the spirit of brotherhood there, and how Masons helped each other. I have found none of that. I come to the meetings and listen to the degrees, of course, but the rest is all talk so far as I can find. I don't know anyone in lodge. I am not really a part of it- I just play audience."

"You remind me of a story," grunted the Old tiler. "A chap came to a wise a man and said, 'I am not popular. People don't like me. They leave when I come around. I like people; I don't like to be unpopular. What's the matter with me?'"

"The wise man looked his inquirer over and then said, 'What do you do when you are alone?'"

"I don't do anything when I am alone,' was the answer, 'I am never alone. I hate to be alone. It bores me. I bore myself. I have to be with people to be happy.'"

"The wise man smiled and answered, 'How do you expect not to bore other people if you bore yourself? The man who has no resources to interest himself, cannot interest others. Go, read, think, reflect, get an idea, a personality, a smile, a story, an accomplishment - learn something, do something, be something, amuse yourself, please yourself, interest yourself, and you can please, interest and amuse others.!"

"You mean I find no brotherhood in lodge because I bring no brotherhood to it?"

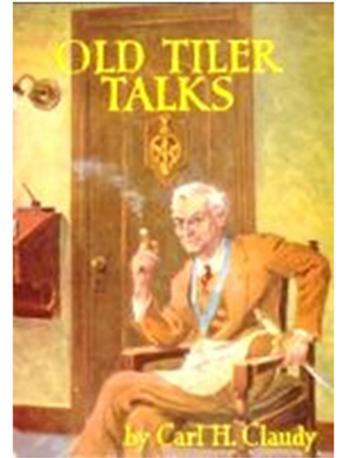
"You get it!" exclaimed the Old Tiler. "Masonry offers treasure for her children who take it. But it has to be taken. She doesn't stuff her treasures down your throat. Your father was a Past Master. That means he gave years of service to the lodge. He was a trustee - so he was well known, liked, trusted. Men do not get well known, liked and trusted by sitting in a corner listening. They get up and talk, get out and work, do something, serve their fellows, to be known and liked.

Your father brought rich treasures of service, interest, ability to his lodge. His lodge gave him back honor, respectability, respect, love. You sit on the benches and listen!

We made you a Master Mason but only you can make yourself a good one. We give you privileges - only you can enjoy them. We give you opportunities - only you can use them. We did all we could for you. Now you must prove yourself.

Many a man comes into lodge expecting a special reception committee, crowding around him at every meeting, saying how glad it is to have him there. Many a man is disappointed. You had our undivided attention as a candidate, as an initiate, as a Fellowcraft, and when we made you a Master Mason.

"Now it's your turn. We are through with your candidacy - you are now a part of the lodge. Every privilege has a duty attached. When you perform those duties, other privileges await you. If you never perform them, you will get no farther. The responsibility we assumed in approving you as a man worthy to be a Master Mason and sit with us must be shared by you.



Your responsibility is to be a good lodge member. There are good Masons who are poor lodge members, but they are not the beloved ones. The beloved lodge members, like your father, finds labor and service and takes his pay in the spirit of fraternity, in the love and admiration of other men, in the satisfaction which comes from playing his part."

"But what can I do- what is my first step?"

"You want to make friends in the lodge?"

"I surely do."

"Then be a friend! I am told that the Master read tonight that Brother Robinson is ill. Go and see him. Old Willis is back at work after being sick a year. Call him up and tell him you are glad. Hungerford just returned from the West. He is out of a job and wants help. Ask him to come and see you. Maybe you can help him, maybe you can't. But if a brother takes an interest in him, he will be heartened and given courage. Ask the Master for a job- he'll use you, never fear. A sister lodge comes to visit us next month. Offer your car to the chairman of the entertainment committee. Bob always has trouble getting enough for his personal column in the Trestleboard,; scout around, learn a few things, tell him them. I understand you play the piano. Offer your help to the choirmaster when he needs someone to take the organist's place. There are one thousand and one ways a chap can make himself known and liked in a lodge. All you have to do is look for them."

"I see..."

"Not yet, you don't! But you soon will. When your eyes are opened you'll see just what you are. And if the reflection is dejection, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, it is because those are you. When you look in the lodge and see yourself happy, busy, well liked, giving service and taking joy in brotherhood as a return, you will know that you are a real Mason, a real lodge member, a real son to a father who learned that the secret of Masonic joy is to give, that it may be given back to you."

"I'll begin now! Don't you want to get a smoke? I'll stay on the door until you come back!"

It's funny how these stories (lessons) that taught our Masonic grandfathers, are just as significant today as they were 80 years ago. The book with with 70 of the "Old Tiler Talks" stories and 2 other Carl Claudy Masonic books may still be purchased from Temple Books

The Lone Ranger, Freemasonry, and Texas Ranger Ethics

By James A. Marples, VII° ,
Life Member, Nebraska College, M.S.R.I.C.F.

In this technological age of the 21st Century, it is difficult for young people to relate to the fewer communication and entertainment avenues of the early 20th Century. Back then, it was Radio which provided news, programming and entertainment. Before television made it possible to convey images, radio-listeners had to create their own mental picture to blend-in and enhance the messages that they heard. Successful radio programs had to use correct language, as well as clear and vivid depictions to keep listeners spellbound. In 1933, a Detroit, Michigan man named George W. Trendle, created a radio program broadcast over radio station WXYZ. He wanted it to appeal to youth, yet be interesting and exciting for adults, too. The setting of the Old West in America provided an interesting theme in which to portray the hardships of the pioneers. Those hardships were deepened by burdens imposed by bad luck, bad choices, and bad men. With any big problem, people look for 'something' or 'someone' to help lift that burden and help make things right. As you might suppose, the hero would rescue the situation and happiness would prevail.

The program, which began on radio, was eventually brought to television. That is where my first recollections of it began.



The character would exhibit genuine virtue, honor, valor, wisdom, compassion and respect for Law. The person in this leading role would be a true gentleman, who sets a good example of clean living and clean speech. He would walk uprightly and promote Justice without regard for personal gain. He would come to the rescue when needed, and he wouldn't be afraid to enlist the help of his faithful companion or a group of citizens to work in concert with him to bring order out of chaos. Restoring the community's peace and harmony was his overriding concern.

This character had a past history as a lawman - as a Texas Ranger. He was shot down in an ambush, along with five other Texas Rangers. As he lay near death, an American Indian named "Tonto" came across the scene and observed that one Ranger was still breathing, brought him water, and nursed him back to health. Around the Ranger's neck was a necklace bearing a symbol that

Tonto had given a young white-boy years earlier. Tonto said, "You are kemo-sabe." (A Pottawatomie Indian word meaning "trusty scout" or "faithful friend.")

The Ranger, vaguely remembers his childhood nickname. He remembers Tonto and their memories of youth. The Ranger, John Reid, sees his brother (a fellow Texas Ranger) Dan Reid among the five dead Rangers. Together, Tonto and the Ranger dig six graves to make it appear to the outlaws that there were no survivors. As the sole survivor, Tonto makes the astute pronouncement to his friend: "You the Lone Ranger, now."

Before burying his fellow Texas Rangers, the surviving Ranger cut a strip of black fabric from his brother Dan's vest and fashioned it into a mask to put across his face and conceal his identity. As "The Lone Ranger," he vowed: First, to bring to Justice the members of the Cavendish Gang who did the dastardly deed. And, Second, to help bring Law and Order to the rugged American Frontier as well as a level of stability to its citizenry. The Lone Ranger had his trusty horse, Silver, and Tonto had his beautiful paint horse, Scout.

I can almost hear the sounds of the 'Cavalry Charge' finale of Gioacchino Rossini's William Tell Overture, and the booming baritone voice of the announcer, who said, "A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty 'Heigh-Yo, Silver!!' The Lone Ranger. 'Heigh-Yo, Silver, away!!' With his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early West. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. The Lone Ranger rides again. "

* * * * *

Like many people, I would classify "The Lone Ranger" as a true American hero.... a larger-than-life personality, worthy of emulation. Growing up, I knew several men who, if wrapped-up-together, would embody most of The Lone Ranger's admirable traits. Upon reaching adulthood and soon thereafter joining Masonry, I can see many of those desirable virtues inculcated in the various Masonic degrees. It is no co-incidence that Freemasonry helped influence the law enforcement agency, the Texas Rangers.

It was Bro.: Stephen F. Austin, a Mason, who had the fervent wish to organize a group of hardy men to protect his new colony (which later became Texas). In 1823, Bro.: Austin referred to that group as Rangers, because of their duties compelling them to 'range'

over the entire vast area. This select group gave rise to what is called now "Texas Rangers." Furthermore, many notable early Texas Rangers were Masons, including Jack Hays, John B. Jones, (who later became the presiding officer of Royal Arch Masonry in Texas) L.H. McNelly, James Gillett, and George W. Baylor (among many others). One of the most dynamic Texas Rangers of the 20th Century was Manuel Trazazas Gonzauillas. His career as a Texas Ranger was notable for his patrolling of the East Texas Oil Fields, near Kilgore, Texas. He was known by the nickname "Lone Wolf Gonzauillas," and he was the only Texas Ranger then of Spanish descent. He was also a Mason. Bro. Gonzauillas was involved in the control of gambling, boot-legging, bank robbery, riots, prostitution, narcotic trafficking, and general lawlessness from the Red River to the Rio Grande and from El Paso to the Sabine River during the 1920s and 1930s.

In September 2006, I was pleased to have Barry K. Caver, Captain of Texas Rangers - Company "E" tell me, "There was a time that most, if not all Texas Rangers, were Masons; however, I do not know their level of involvement." The battle of "Good" winning over "Evil," and the struggle from 'adversity and despair' to 'triumph and joy' is a hallmark of real-life adventures that have been memorialized by both works of fiction and non-fiction. In pioneer days, horses were the principal means of transportation.

For the rest of the story, please go to www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf

The Wayfarer

By John J. Robinson

The painting reproduced on the right is The Wayfarer, by the Flemish artist Hieronymus Bosch. Those familiar with Bosch's work have come to expect graphic portrayals of a wide range of hideous, distorted demons. The Wayfarer is different in that it depicts no demons or monsters, although it is packed with symbolism, much of it Masonic in nature.

Take a good look at the painting. The wayfarer has his left trouser leg pushed up to the knee. It might be pointed out that the trouser leg is up to accommodate a bandage, but no minor calf wound requires a slipper on one foot, with a shoe on the other.

The straps of the wayfarer's backpack are not over his shoulders, where they belong. Instead, Bosch has put a strap around his upper arms, binding him like a Masonic cable-tow. The feather we might expect to find in his hat is not there. Bosch has replaced it with a plumb bob, another Masonic symbol.

Why is the man carrying his hat in his hand, rather than conveniently wearing it on his head? Bosch may have wanted his hood ready to pull down over his face to "hoodwink" him, a word that suggests that this is the way a man was blindfolded in ancient Masonic initiation. It was a common practice at that time and was incorporated into the language for future ages in the expression "to pull the wool over his eyes."



Ahead of the traveler is a gate with a strange brace. Everyone who knows anything about wooden farm gates knows that the brace goes from one corner to the diagonally opposite corner, creating immovable triangles. The brace on Bosch's gate rises above the top rail, then comes back down to the corner. This produces a craftsman's square on top of the gate.

Now consider the painting as a whole. The traveling man is moving from left to right, or from west to east, leaving behind him a rude, crude world. A serving maid lounges in the doorway of a decrepit tavern, holding a pitcher, while a customer kisses her, holding his hand on her breast. Around the corner, a man is urinating against the wall. In the courtyard, pigs feed at a trough, while an angry dog with a spiked collar crouches, deciding whether or not to attack. With a few more steps the wayfarer will pass through the gate of the square and enter a land of peace and plenty, as symbolized by the placid milk cow. In the tree above his head is perched an owl, the medieval symbol for wisdom.

The final question is one of motivation. To have known the Masonic symbols before 1717 (if indeed they existed in his time). Bosch would have to have been a Masonic initiate. Is it likely that the artist would have been attracted to, and invited into, a secret society dedicated to protecting religious dissidents from the wrath of the Church? It is very probable. Bosch is known to have been a member of a religious fraternity frowned upon by the Church. His cynical portrayals of drunken, carousing monks and nuns indicate a man angry at the Church, especially in view of several condemnations of his work as heretical.

It is possible, of course, that the Masonic symbols in this painting are all merely coincidences. If so, this is the most incredible collection of Masonic coincidences that we may ever expect to see assembled in a single work. If, however, the symbols are not there coincidentally, then this painting provides the very first graphic evidence of the existence of Masonic symbolism about five hundred years ago, in the late fifteenth century. Hieronymus Bosch was born in 1450 and died in 1516. Within twelve months of his death, the great protestant religious movement in Europe was launched when the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, nailed his Theses to the great door of the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg.

"Jack the Ripper" Murders - How To Respond To Alleged Masonic Connections

Reprinted with permission from the Paul Bessel at <http://bessel.org/rippsrj.htm>

How would you or other Masons respond if someone told you the following facts found in books and films, including *Murder by Decree* and the current film *From Hell*, about the Jack the Ripper case?

Alleged evidence

Only five women were murdered, all within nine weeks, so this appears to have been a plot with a specific purpose.

All the victims had their throats cut, often from ear to ear. One victim's tongue had been torn out by its roots. One had her breast torn open, and her heart and vitals were taken out.

Four of the victims had their abdomens cut open and their intestines or bowels taken out and, in one case, burned to ashes.

One victim had skin removed from one knee, as if she would be kneeling on it. One of the victims had all her mineral and metal jewelry removed.

Near the body of one of the victims was a message on a wall indicating that the "Juwes" (a possible reference to three ruffians whose names all begin with the same two letters) could be blamed for these murders. The head of London's police at that time, a prominent Freemason, quickly erased this message despite the strong protests of other police investigating the case.

The murder of the final victim, in the most gruesome manner of all, was committed on the same evening as the quarterly meeting of Quatuor Coronati Lodge #2076, the premier lodge of research. The first Worshipful Master of that Lodge, who may have attended this particular meeting, not far from the murder scene, was the same head of the London police who had erased the "Juwes" message. He resigned as chief of police right after this final Ripper murder.

Could reasonable people conclude that there was a pattern and a specific reason for the Jack the Ripper murders? There is circumstantial evidence of possible Masonic involvement, so some say all that is needed is an explanation to connect these facts, or allegations.

Sir Charles Warren, head of the London police at the time of the Jack the Ripper murders, and also the first Worshipful Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge #2076, the premier research lodge in the world - which had its quarterly meeting in November 1888 on the same evening as the final murder in the Jack the Ripper series - Sir Charles resigned as London police chief right after that



Prince "Eddy" - the Duke of Clarence - grandson of Queen Victoria - 2nd in line for the British throne at the time of the Jack the Ripper murders.

Prince Eddy to the left of his brother, who became King George V in 1910 and led Great Britain during World War I

Some authors and films claim to have this explanation, and to have solved this case. They claim that Queen Victoria's grandson, who was known as Prince Eddy, then 24, secretly fathered a baby and married the mother, an illiterate Catholic "shop-girl" named Annie Crook. Supposedly, a friend of Prince Eddy hired a nanny who was a witness at the secret marriage, to care for the illegitimate royal baby. (This friend is important, because he supposedly later told the story to his son, who still later disclosed it.)

Britain was then in great political turmoil, and it is claimed that if word got out that the second in line to the throne had married and had a child with a low-class, illiterate, Catholic commoner, then the people might have toppled the monarchy, taking with it all those in power, particularly including Freemasons who were in influential government positions. According to this story, the nanny turned to prostitution and shared her information about Prince Eddy's marriage and child with three other prostitutes, who all threatened to go public with the story. The British Prime Minister or the Queen called on Sir William Gull, physician to the Queen and a Freemason, to eliminate this threat.

The story goes on to allege that Gull was mentally unbalanced and decided to kill the women, calling on some Masonic Brethren to assist him and using Masonic ritual in the murders. Supposedly, Masonic Brethren who realized what Gull was doing may not have agreed with his methods but allegedly covered up Gull's crimes because of Masonic oaths to protect each other.

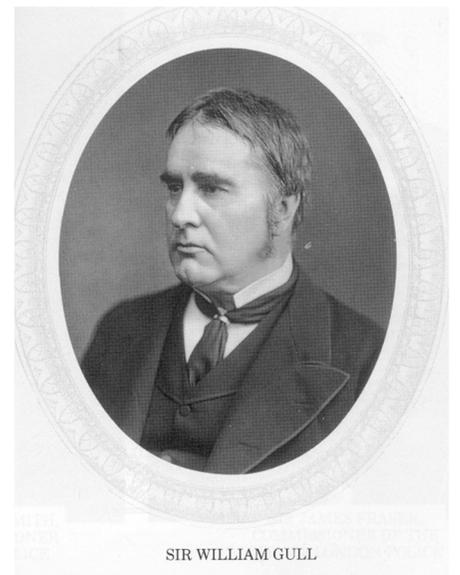
According to this theory, Gull identified the women who knew Prince Eddy's secret, offered them carriage rides (which they accepted, believing they were being hired for prostitution services), murdered them in the carriage, mutilated their bodies in ritualistic ways, and dropped the bodies in selected locations.

Supposedly, Walter Sickert, Prince Eddy's friend and witness as the marriage, told this story to his son Joseph, who later told it to the author Stephen Knight, who claimed to find additional supporting evidence. Others, including the authors of the graphic novel *From Hell* and the recent movie with this same title relied on Knight's story to claim that the Jack the Ripper murders were not random, but a careful plot to protect the English royal family and prominent Freemasons who supported them. They say the murders were committed by Freemasons acting upon the order of high Masonic officials.

The Real Facts

Every allegation of Masonic involvement in the Ripper murders is based entirely on a story that Stephen Knight claims he was told by Joseph Sickert. But in *The Sunday Times* of London, on June 18, 1978, Sickert said of this story: "It was a hoax; I made it all up" and it was "a whopping fib" and pure invention. All the evidence confirms this. "Those parts of Mr. Sickert's story which can be tested have been shown ... to be untrue." (See Rumbelow's *Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook*, pages 212, 213; and Begg, Fido, and Skinner's *The Jack the Ripper A to Z*, pages 411, 412)

Donald Rumbelow is one of the most respected researchers of the Ripper murders. Commenting on Stephen Knight's book that identifies the murders as a Masonic conspiracy, he said: "Where's the evidence?" The answer, of course, is that there isn't any. . . . The book becomes more and more



frustrating as one searches for hard facts. . . . Whichever way you look, there is not a shred of evidence to back up Knight's theory." (The Complete Casebook, pages 207, 209, 212)

Those who are familiar with Masonic ritual know that the mutilations of the Ripper murder victims' bodies do not reflect any Masonic practices, rules, ritual, or ceremonies. Any seeming similarity is only slight, inaccurate, and circumstantial. And, contrary to Knight's story, neither rings nor coins (minerals or metals) were removed from any of these murder victims.

Knight said Masonic penalties (which in any case are purely symbolic, not actual) mention having the heart removed and thrown over the left shoulder. But he admits it was the intestines, not heart, that were placed over some of the Ripper's victims' right shoulders. And it is questionable if Masonic ritual referred to any shoulder.

Whatever was meant by the "Juwes" message found on a wall near one of the murder scenes, that term has never been used in Masonic ritual or ceremonies, and the story of the three ruffians had been removed from Masonic ritual in England (but not in the United States) 70 years before the Ripper murders took place.

The erasure of the "Juwes" message near a murder site could have been a well-meaning attempt to prevent anti-Semitic mob violence against innocent people, since some were already thinking of blaming Jewish immigrants for these murders..

Even more significantly, the baby girl said to have been the child of Prince Eddy was born on April 18, 1885, so she had to have been conceived during a time when Prince Eddy was in Germany, while Annie Crook, the alleged mother, was in London.

Stephen Knight's story says that Eddy and Annie met in 1888 in Walter Sickert's studio. But that building had been demolished in 1886, and a hospital was built on the site in 1887.

Dr. Gull is supposed to have been the key man in the Ripper murders. But he was 72 at the time and had already suffered one heart attack and possible a stroke. Yet he is alleged to have brutally murdered five young and reasonably strong women in a carriage on public streets and discarded and mutilated their bodies in public areas, all without anything being seen or heard by the large number of Londoners who were looking and hoping to catch "Jack the Ripper."

British laws, then and now in effect, say that any marriage of a member of the royal family can be set aside by the monarch, and any who marry a Catholic cannot inherit the crown. So, no murders were necessary even if the story of Prince Eddy's marriage to Annie Crook were true. In any case, research shows that Annie Crook was not a Catholic. (Begg et al., The A to Z, page 95)

Stephen Knight's story is based on the theory that the British public would have been so scandalized by the story about Prince Eddy that they would have rebelled against the royal family and the British governing class. But worse royal scandals were widely known, none resulting in the overthrow of the government. To paraphrase a well-known quotation of the time, the British did not care what anyone did sexually, so long as they did not do it in the streets and frighten the horses.

The supposed police cover-up was probably simply due to lack of experience with murders such as these as well as some degree of police and government incompetence. Most likely, these factors, not a Masonic conspiracy, prevented the capture of "Jack the Ripper," whose identity will probably always remain unknown.

When carefully examined, there is not a single piece of solid historical evidence to support Stephen Knight's claims of Masonic involvement in the Ripper murders, a theme central to several books and films, including From Hell, the recent graphic novel and film by the same title. On the

contrary, there is considerable evidence refuting these allegations. Armed with the facts, Masons should have no difficulty responding to alleged Masonic connections to the Jack the Ripper crimes.

References (alphabetical order by title) comments about each book are from "Casebook: Jack the Ripper," the most detailed internet website that deals exclusively with all aspects of the Ripper murder cases — located at <http://www.casebook.org>

The Complete History of Jack the Ripper, by Philip Sugden (Caroll & Graf, New York, 1994). This is the most heralded book ever written on the Ripper murders. Required reading for anyone interested in the case.

From Hell, by Alan Moore, writer, and Eddie Campbell, artist (Eddie Campbell Comics, Australia, 1989)

The Jack the Ripper A to Z, by Paul Begg, Martin Fido, and Keith Skinner (Headline Book Publishing, London, 1991). This is a must-have book for anyone doing a serious study of the case. Highly recommended.

Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook, by Donald Rumbelow (Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1988). This as highly recommended for all students of the case, well-researched and intelligent, a wonderful introduction. Until recently it was the "bible" of Ripperologists, but it is now somewhat outdated.

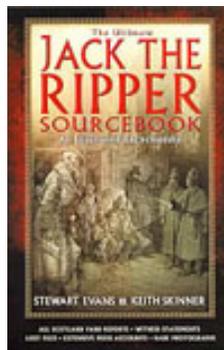
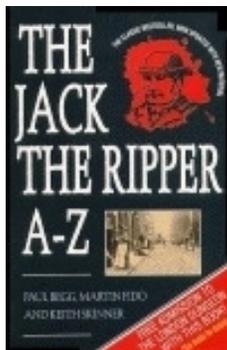
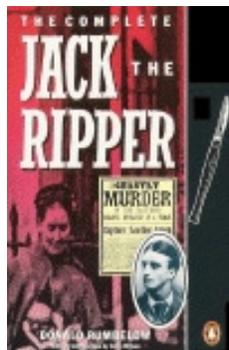
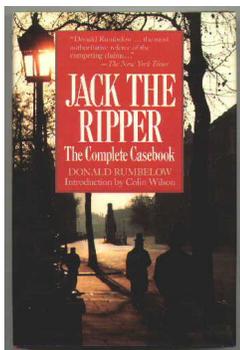
Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution, by Stephen Knight (George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1976). The conclusions in this book have been disproved numerous times, but it is still one of the most widely read books on the subject. "Recommended only to those interested in a good fictional read."

Jack The Ripper: Revealed and Revisited, by John Wilding

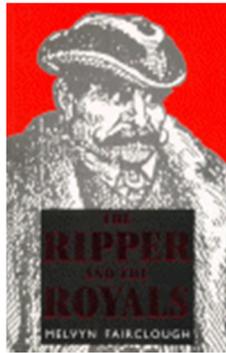
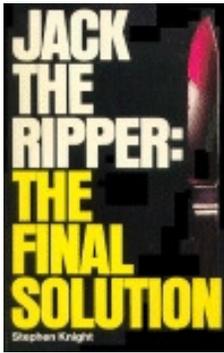
The Mammoth Book of Jack the Ripper, edited by Maxim Jakubowski and Nathan Braund (Carroll and Graf Publishers, New York, 1999)

The Ripper and the Royals, by Melvyn Fairclough (Duckworth, London, 1991). "Yet another Masonic Royal conspiracy theory, which even Fairclough himself (the author) has now disavowed. . . . Not recommended whatsoever." Some of the books about the Jack the Ripper murders

Below are pictures of the covers or useful books about Jack the Ripper



Below are pictures of the covers of books about Jack the Ripper that are NOT useful



"Judge's" Instructions

Jack the Ripper is the name applied to the murderer or murderers, never caught, of several prostitutes in London in 1888. There are many theories about this case, including some interesting aspects related to Freemasonry. It is useful for Masons to have the facts about it.

"Prosecutor's" Case

This is what a prosecutor might say to attempt to show that Freemasons were involved in the **Jack the Ripper murders** ---

1. Queen Victoria's son, later King Edward VII, was Grand Master of Masons in England in 1888. His son, Eddy, would have become King if his grandmother and father died before him. Eddy, 24 in 1888, aided by a carriage driver, made secret visits to a London artist named Walter Sickert and his friends. Eddy met and had a baby with an illiterate Catholic "shop-girl" named Annie and they were married secretly. Sickert hired a nanny for Eddy and Annie's baby daughter. The nanny was Mary (or Marie) Kelly, who, with Sickert, was a witness at Eddy's and Annie's wedding. Britain then was in great political turmoil, and if the country had found out that someone so close to the throne married someone like Annie it could have led to the end of the monarchy and all those who benefitted from the British political and social system, especially the Freemasons.

2. Word of all this got to Queen Victoria, who ordered her Prime Minister, the Marquess of Salisbury, to "fix" it. Salisbury, a prominent Freemason, arranged to have Annie placed in an insane asylum where she died 32 years later. Their daughter later became Sickert's mistress, had a son with him, and died in 1950. Sickert died in 1942. Eddy died in 1892.

3. Marie Kelly became a drunken prostitute and shared her information with three fellow prostitutes, who threatened to expose Eddy's actions. Prime Minister Salisbury decided this threat had to be ended. He called on his high ranking Masonic brethren, particularly Sir William Gull, physician to the Queen, the doctor who certified Annie as insane. Besides being a doctor, politically well-connected, and a high level Freemason, Gull was mentally unbalanced.

5. Gull decided to kill the women according to Masonic ritual. When Prime Minister Salisbury and other Masons in the government and police recognized what Gull was doing, even though they did not agree with his methods they arranged a coverup because they were required to keep the secrets of a Freemason, and appreciated what Gull was accomplishing. Gull convinced Netley the carriage driver and Sickert the painter to assist him to identify the 4 prostitutes. Then one by one they offered them lifts in their carriage, murdered the women and mutilated their bodies as prescribed in Masonic rituals. They then dropped the bodies in selected locations.

6. Gull killed the victims in the following manner: (a) On Aug. 31, 1888, Mary Ann (Polly) Nichols' throat was cut very deeply, starting at one ear and circling her throat, and her abdomen was cut open (b) On Sept. 8, 1888, Annie Chapman's throat was "ferociously" severed from one side to the other, her tongue protruded between her teeth and was swollen, her abdomen was

entirely opened, all of her small intestines were removed and placed above her right shoulder but still attached, part of her stomach and "pubes" cut out and placed above her left shoulder, her uterus, womb, portion of vagina and most of the bladder removed. Her jewelry and coins were removed and two brass rings were placed at her feet. (c) On Sept. 30, 1888, Elizabeth (Liz) Stride's throat was cut from one jaw to the other. (d) On Sept. 30, 1888, Gull thought he was killing the last and most important victim, Marie Kelly, but he mistakenly murdered Catherine (Kate) Eddowes (who lived with a man named "Kelly," and used the name Mary Ann Kelly). Her throat was cut "from ear to ear," nose completely cut off, part of right ear cut off, severe cutting of other parts of her face in the shape of triangles, abdomen all exposed, intestines drawn out and placed over her right shoulder, a 2 foot piece removed and placed between her body and left arm in a careful manner. Her left kidney and part of her womb had been cut out and taken away. Nearby, police found a piece of her cut apron which fit exactly with the part still on her body. It was wet with blood, and just above it a message was found in white chalk on black bricks saying: "The Juwes are The men That Will not be Blamed for nothing." (e) After discovering the mistake with Eddowes, on Nov. 9, 1888, Gull and his allies murdered the real Mary Kelly in her apartment. Her throat was cut with the tissue severed "all around," whole surface of abdomen and thighs removed and abdominal cavity emptied, breasts cut off, arms mutilated, face hacked beyond recognition. Her uterus, kidneys, and one breast were under her head, the other breast by her right foot, liver between her feet, intestines by her right side, and spleen by her left side. Skin removed from her abdomen and thighs was on a bedside table. Part of one lung was missing, as was her heart. It appeared that the fireplace there had been used.

7. If these were ordinary murders the mutilations would have placed the murderer in danger of being caught. (Stride escaped mutilation because she refused the carriage ride and had to be killed quickly in the street.) The only reason for the specific types of mutilations was to inflict Masonic penalties. We should note the way the throats were cut, removal of the heart, removal of intestines (bowels), triangular cuts, cutting and removal of part of a victim's apron, divesting of minerals and metals with brass rings looking like the pillars at Solomon's temple placed at the feet. Eddowes, who was thought to be Kelly and thus the last victim, was left in "Mitre Square." The mitre and square are Masonic tools and Mitre Tavern was a well known Masonic meeting place. When the "Juwes" message was found on the wall, Sir Charles Warren, the head of the police and a Freemason, personally went to the scene to order it to be washed off, even though he had never before gone to the scene of a murder. He did this because the "Juwes" was too clear a reference to the ruffians who in Masonic legend murdered Hiram Abiff.

8. Freemasons have murdered those whose actions angered them, including Mozart and William Morgan. The Protocols published in England in 1920 show that 33rd degree Masons crave absolute power and are willing to use murder, although low level Freemasons are ordinary, law-abiding citizens.

9. Dr. Gull was said to have died in 1890, but he really was put into an insane asylum under the name "Thomas Mason" and died years later.

10. Sickert told the true story of the Jack the Ripper murders to his son Joseph (with Eddy and Annie's daughter). Joseph told the story to Stephen Knight, who found evidence to support it, especially the part about Masonic control of the police, judiciary, and government in Britain.

"Defense" statement

This is how a defense attorney might respond to the statements made above ---

1. Joseph Sickert in 1978 described Stephen Knight's 1976 story of the Jack the Ripper murders, which Knight said came from Joseph, as "a hoax ... a whopping fib." Philip Sugden, an expert on the "Jack the Ripper" murders, said, "The falsehoods and absurdities in this [Knight's] yarn have been exposed in many books and there is no need to repeat them His

[Knight's] research is now known to have uncovered evidence which proved that the story was untrue. Yet he shamelessly chose to suppress it." For example, neither rings nor coins were found at Annie Chapman's murder site.

2. There is no evidence that the murder victims were killed in a carriage, and no witnesses mentioned seeing or hearing one. The small amount of blood at the murder scenes can be ascribed to the manner in which their blood was soaked up by their clothing.

3. Knight alleged that Masonic penalties mention having the heart and other body parts removed and thrown over the left shoulder. This is questionable, and Chapman's and Eddowes' intestines, not heart, were placed over their right shoulders. Mary Kelly's heart was removed, but other body parts were left in the room and not burned. Sugden concluded, "Only by a shameless selection of evidence can the Masonic theory be invested with apparent credibility Knight's theory, in sum, was a colossus built on sand." Sugden also ridiculed Melvyn Fairclough's attempt in 1991 to support Knight's theory by saying skin was removed from Mary Kelly's right thigh as a reminder of the "naked" knee in Masonic initiations.

5. Sugden said Knight's analysis of the "Juwes" message is wrong, since the ritual of three murderers of Hiram Abif had been removed from English Masonry 70 years earlier, and in neither England or the U.S. had they ever been referred to collectively as the "Juwes." Begg, another "Ripperologist," wrote, "It is a mystery why anyone ever thought that 'Juwes' was a Masonic word."

6. Sugden believes the evidence shows the Jack the Ripper murder victims were killed where they were found, by a sexual psychopath, and there are many other theories about who Jack the Ripper was that are more likely to be true than Stephen Knight's. The allegations of a Masonic conspiracy in the police and government to cover up the true nature of the Ripper murders are untrue. It was lack of experience with murders such as this, and some degree of police and government

Why The Blue Lodge

Reprinted with permission from Brother Blake Bowden's "My Freemasonry"

Why have we adopted blue into the lodge name? Where does it come from? What does it represent and mean? I'm glad you asked!

The mother of all Freemasonry. The place where every man begins his journey into the Ancient Craft of Free and Accepted Masons. "The Blue Lodge" - It has been here in America that the term "Blue Lodge" has become popularized and so widely used. Originally, it was frowned upon, and Lodges were called, Craft Lodges or Ancient Craft Lodges, some were even called a St. Johns Lodge.



According to Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, there may be a number of reasons why symbolic lodges are called Blue Lodges. Since ancient times, the color blue has been associated with immortality, eternity, and fidelity. References to the color blue in the Bible emphasize the special place blue has as a color symbolizing goodness and immortality. The Druids also honored the color while the ancient Egyptians used the color to represent Amun, one of their most important gods. The ancient Babylonians associated the color blue with the gods. In Medieval times, Christians saw blue as the symbol of perfection and hope, and well as of immortality and fidelity. It is not known when blue first came to be associated with Freemasonry, although some historians think that initially the color was used in Craft Masonry to represent the sky. Today, blue for Masons symbolizes brotherhood and symbolizes the fact that Masons should seek out virtues as extensive as the blue dome of heaven.

Albert Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry under "Blue" has further light to share. He says "Blue is emphatically the color of Masonry. It is the appropriate tincture of the Ancient Craft degrees.

The Hebrew word for blue when referring to spiritual matters is tekhelet התכלת derived from a root word meaning perfection.

It is well known that among the ancients, initiation into the mysteries and "perfection" are synonymous terms and this is why blue is the appropriate color for the greatest of all the systems of initiation the world has ever known, The Ancient Blue Lodge Craft."

Beyond the allegory and symbolism of the color blue, there is the reality of millions of men who have experienced things beyond themselves, transformed and evolved into their highest potentials, reached even further to give the same to other men, while standing in and being a member of a Blue Lodge.

It is said over and over again, "There is no other degree "higher" than the third degree and being a Master Mason. There is no higher distinction in our entire institutional Fraternity! " With that being said, we all should remember, support and love our Blue Lodges, where we began as good men and through the motherly love of our Ancient Craft Lodge, we were brought into the world anew....literally brought from the dark to the light, to rise as GREAT MEN!

Source: Sotoyome-Curtis Masonic Lodge t incompetence and lack of ingenuity that prevented the capture of Jack the Ripper.

Who Is Brother Blake Bowden and What Is "My Freemasonry"

Editor's Note; I had started to write a story to let my readers know about friend and Brother Blake and his online "MyMasonry" website, but in my research I discovered that another friend and Brother g Stewart of "Freemason Information" had already done an outstanding job of it. So I borrowed his interview. Why reinvent the wheel?

eMasonry and the Invisible Grand Lodge of the World Wide Web with Brother Blake Bowden February 22, 2014 by Greg Stewart.

MyFreemasonry administrator, Texas Internet Masonry (or better called eMasonry) has grown in epic proportions in contrast to its brick and mortar real world counterpart of lodge Masonry. Why is this one may wonder outside of the usual distractions of modern life? One answer could be in the virtual life Masonic, the online world where grand lodge boundaries blur and disappear while social interaction takes place between flashing pixels hastily entered keystrokes. Is this online collective the future of Freemasonry? In this installment of the Sojourners, I talk to Blake Bowden who is the Founder and Site Administrator of the online community My Freemasonry, one of the up-and coming online forums for Masons to discuss all things Freemasonry. The forum

is a Mecca of discussion on current and past events and a safe forum for discussing new ideas about the ancient fraternity. Formerly the “Masons of Texas” forum, the Lone Star state site has grown beyond its already broad borders to encompass a bigger landscape of Masonic study and interactivity, much of which stemming from the keyboard and computer of Brother Blake Bowden.

Greg Stewart (GS) -Tell me about yourself, who is Blake Bowden?

Blake Bowden (BB) – It all started back in June 20, 1975, in a dusty west Texas town called Odessa. After enjoying the picturesque scenery of dust and tumbleweeds for five years, my family decided to relocate us to Gonzales, Texas, where I spent most of my time during my adolescence. There weren’t many activities for young kids in Gonzales, so I spent much of my time tinkering with computers and electronics. I remember the excitement I experienced the very first time I logged online. This wasn’t the Internet, but a dial-up BBS. My cutting edge 300 Kbps modem beeped squealed and even though call-waiting would kill the connection, it provided me a link to another world. Since then I’ve joined the Craft and now have the privilege of being the Administrator of My Freemasonry.

GS – How long have you been in Masonry, what bodies, groups or orgs do you belong to within the craft? Which do you spend the most time in?

BB – I was initiated December 2007 and recently finished up my term as Worshipful Master of Gonzales Masonic Lodge No. 30 A.F. & A.M. I’m also a member of the York Rite and Scottish Rite, however Blue Lodge is where I spend the majority of my “Masonic” time.

GS – What first drew you to Masonry?

BB – Growing up I remember my Mother describing what a wonderful man my Great Grandfather was. One day I was going through a little chest and ran across a funny looking coin. When I asked her what it was, she replied that it was his “Masons” coin. As time progressed, movies such as National Treasure caught my eye, but Masonry was still on the back-burner. It wasn’t until 2007 that I decided to take the first step in becoming a Mason.

GS – Did your first impression prove to be true or did it change? How so?

BB – The teachings of Freemasonry have not only met my expectations, but also surpassed them. What did change is my opinion of Grand Lodge. For some members, especially those in the hierarchy, Freemasonry is nothing more than a political game.

GS – How did you find your way into eMasonry and what led to the creation of the original Masons of Texas forum?

BB – Before I petitioned for the degrees of Masonry, I scoured message boards and watched YouTube channels for hours on end but the problem I discovered was that most of the information was anti-Masonic. I had to filter through the usual nonsense like Freemasons are devil worshipers or members of the Illuminati so I decided to do something about it. We started as a YouTube video promoting Freemasonry in Texas, then a district wide discussion forum using phpbb. After that I launched Masons of Texas and went statewide.

GS – So, the forum originally starting as Texas Mason, how did it evolve?

BB – One of the biggest issues I’ve encountered has been with the Grand Lodge of Texas A.F. & A.M. Back in 2007, their website was archaic, hard to use and offered next to nothing for those seeking to become a Mason. That’s where we stepped in. If you had a question about a particular law we had someone available to answer it. If you needed assistance finding a Lodge in your area, someone would be there for you as well. We were an independent website – not a mouthpiece which made the Grand Lodge nervous. For the first time Texas Masons were discussing taboo topics such as extending relations with Prince Hall Masons, dealing with racism within a Lodge or if it were possible for a homosexual to become a Mason, etc.

I’ll never forget being forwarded an email from our Grand Secretary who labeled our site “Anti-Grand Lodge”. I won’t detail my response, but I did receive an apology directly from

Grand Lodge.

GS – Was that the reason to change to My Freemasonry?

BB – I wanted to bring the success we had with the Masons of Te5xas website to more Masons. I also felt that we'd hit a cap in both participation and membership so Masons of Texas was retired. My Freemasonry will continue to grow, but keep a lookout for Masons of Texas to be reborn later this year.

GS – Forum participants can be hotly protective about their home on the web, was there any internal discussion in the forum about the change?

BB – We actually changed our name a couple of years ago to “Freemason Connect” and it flopped. Most of our members were from Texas and preferred that it remained a site focused on Texas Masonry. Since then our membership has become more diverse so last year I decided to re-launch as My Freemasonry and so far the response has been phenomenal.

GS – With the forum in mind, do you think eMasonry has changed the landscape of how we view fraternal interactions? Was it for the better or the worse?

BB – Absolutely! For example I have numerous Prince Hall Masons with whom I interact with on a daily basis. Chances are that wouldn't happen without Freemasonry being on the Internet. Bridges are being built, misconceptions are being addressed, and thoughts and ideas are being shared across all spectrums of the Craft.

GS – As the forum founder, administrator and moderator in chief for one of the larger Masonic messages boards on the web, what are your observations about eMasonry? How has evolved?

BB – I've noticed that Lodges and Grand Lodges are finally moving away from their circa 1999 GeoCities-class websites and developing quality ones.

GS – One of the trends with forums has always been freshness. What do you do to keep things fresh for returning visitors?

BB – This is the number one issue facing Masonic sites. If you don't offer your visitors fresh content, they won't come back. That's why many of the early Masonic websites are stagnant in both content and membership. To keep things fresh I solicit articles from our members and once approved, they are promoted to our homepage. I also have our site pull RSS feeds from other Masonic websites, which not only brings new content to ours, but also sends traffic to theirs. Another is making the site personal. Whether you're looking for a recipe, seeking family advice, discussing the latest movie, or even requesting a simple prayer for something you're going through, we're there.

My Freemasonry isn't just about Masonry, but the Mason.

GS – This may get into the speculative realm, but how do you see the online world of eMasonry juxtaposed to the real world of lodge masonry? Do you think the former can operate or function in the same capacity as the latter? Why or why not?

BB – When it comes to Masonic Education, nothing beats eMasonry. I've learned more about the Craft being online than I ever would in Lodge. So many Masons are content with the business as usual mentality, which is why many Jurisdictions continue to see a decline in membership. Lodge meetings shouldn't be just about paying bills or passing out fundraiser signup sheets and until Lodges start teaching Freemasonry and not going for the record of having the shortest meeting times, their memberships will continue to decline. That being said, nothing beats a handshake and a friendly smile that you receive when attending a Lodge meeting.

GS – Would it be to the fraternity's advantage if it did embrace eMasonry?

BB – Yes, as they should compliment each other.

GS – Given your proximity to so many web-masons, do you get any feeling of a common theme or resonance from them by way of trends, questions, or movements?

BB – I believe that many Masonic websites and those who administrate them have become burned out. One could spend years building up a website yet gain just as many users in two weeks with a Facebook page. Is Facebook the same as a full-blown website? Of course not, however people are already checking on their Facebook and/or Google + so why not take advantage of it? I consider social networking an essential tool for our site, not a replacement. For example, every post on our site can be “Liked” and visitors can skip the registration process using their Facebook accounts. If something doesn’t drive traffic to our site, I kill it and move on.

As far as trends, I see eMasons branching out and utilizing social media more vs. launching full websites.

Most users don’t realize the time and effort required to run a successful website. Not only do you have to provide fresh content but fight off spam bots, update software, deal with hosting providers, communicate with developers, install plug-ins, test mobile app compatibility, pay developer fees, sign app certificates, fix broken links, copy articles across social media, admin social media comments not to mention the hundreds of emails we receive each week. I wouldn’t trade it for anything though.

GS – Do you see the interactions of eMasonry as building blocks to more lodge interaction or another distraction/detractor to an active lodge life? Is there a point of balance between the two or an enhancement that you think could be made out both?

BB – I believe it’s possible that the younger generation could become distracted as they may get more out of Masonry online than what their Lodge offers. The younger generation is hungry for knowledge and Masonic education but it’s becoming increasingly difficult to find a Lodge that provides it. I recommend using eMasonry as a tool to improve your Lodge. For example, I encourage all of our members to find an article, essay, poem or even some trivia and share it at their stated meetings.

GS – With the booming social media trends, how do you see My Freemasonry in that mix? Does it have much interaction beyond the occasional mention or link?

BB – My Freemasonry has a Facebook, Google +, Newsstand, Twitter and YouTube channel and their sole purpose is to drive traffic to the site. If I have an article, I post an excerpt with a link back. We also have mobile apps that keep our users connected while on the go. The key to a successful site, namely a Masonic one, is content and utilizing numerous methods to deliver it.

GS – Who or what gives you the inspiration to do what you do? What is the driving force behind your work?

BB – Making a difference. It brings a smile to my face when I receive an email from someone needing help to petition a Lodge and months later they’re sharing their initiation date. Just a couple of years ago the communication between Prince Hall and “Mainstream” Masons in Texas was virtually non-existent, now the floodgates are wide open. My Freemasonry isn’t successful because of me, but the thousands of blogs and posts created by our members.

Blake, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me and share your thoughts. I definitely appreciate it and I know many reading it will appreciate the resources you’ve created for them on the web.

You can join the conversation on the web by visiting MyFreemasonry and interacting with the many conversations taking place about all aspects of the life Masonic.

Union Pacific, Freemasonry and Nebraska

From the SOCIETAS ROSICRUCIANA IN CIVITATIBUS FOEDERATIS NEBRASKA COLLEGE

By Frater James A. Marples, VIII^o

Life Member, Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.

A portion of an old Union Pacific stock certificate

The Union Pacific Railroad since its inception has had a strong tie to the State of Nebraska; and many of its employees (past and present) have been dedicated Freemasons.

The presentation is not intended to be all-encompassing. Such a task would be impossible.

This presentation is intended only to give a sampling of some of the highlights which knit Union Pacific, Freemasonry, and Nebraska together.

A gentleman named Oakes Ames, who served in Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives representation the State of Massachusetts is credited with being the single most important person in the building of the Union Pacific leg of the transcontinental railroad. The towns of Ames, Iowa and Ames, Nebraska are named in his honor.

Significantly, the upper-level of "Oakes Ames Memorial Hall" houses a Masonic Lodge in the north part of Easton, Massachusetts. Oakes Ames was nicknamed "the King of Spades" since he and his brother established the firm "Oliver Ames & Sons," which produced shovels and tools, mainly for the building of railroad track but also produced swords during the U.S. Civil War. Oakes Ames' brother, Oliver Ames (1831-1895) was a Freemason. His date of initiation is unknown, but he was awarded an honorary membership in Columbian Masonic Lodge in Boston.

Harry Porter Deuel (1836-1914) worked for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroads. He once was an agent for the Kansas City, St. Joseph and Council Bluffs Railroad. Later, he became the Omaha passenger agent for the Union Pacific Railroad. He was a Freemason for more than 50 years, rising to become R.E.: Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Nebraska, as well as being elevated to a 33rd Degree in Scottish Rite Masonry. Additionally, he was an active Shriner and also a

member of the Elks Lodge. Deuel Chapter 11, RAM, of Grand Island, Nebraska was named in his honor.

Nebraska also provided a good share of the lumber, metal, and fittings used in the making of box-cars, rail-cars and later flatbed carriers used on the Union Pacific Railroad.

My own Great Grandfather, George White, 33^o and a Knight Templar, worked as a doctor, veterinarian and farmer; and in the 1890s and early 1900s worked as a carpenter building boxcars for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. Business was so lucrative that some of the work was "farmed out" to competitors and it filled Union Pacific's needs; as well as boxcars needed by The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, which had as one of its founders Right Worshipful Bro. Cyrus K. Holliday (1826-1900) Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Kansas. Bro. Holliday was trained as a lawyer, but he used his skills to be the first President of the A.T. & S.F. Railroad. He was a member of Topeka Lodge #17 and was instrumental in establishing the city of Topeka as a city, and also instrumental in moving the State Capitol to that City. He was slated to become "Grand Master" of Masons in Kansas; but he declined advancement due to his duties to his family and his job at the Railroad. The Santa Fe Railroad grew to be a formidable corporation. In recent years, it merged with The Burlington Northern, and is now know by the combined name of Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF).

Jerry R. Davis became Chief Operating Officer and later Chairman of Union Pacific Railroad in the modern era of the 1990s. When I authored an article in "The Scottish Rite Journal" in March 1998, entitled "Edmund G. Ross, a Masonic Profile in Courage," Bro.: Jerry Davis wrote me a postal letter complimenting me on the article. In it, I quoted Bro. Edmund G. Ross: "True courage is an attribute mustered by individuals during moments of crisis. A courageous act is made without weighing its popularity or unpopularity. Instead, it relies solely on the belief that the act must be done because it is the right thing to do. In all cases, courage is being brave enough to take a stand, regardless of the outcome, regardless of potential praise or criticism."

Bro. Davis said he was a native of Sylvan Grove, Kansas, and was an Alfred P. Sloan Fellow at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning a Master of Science Degree in Management. Bro. Davis began his career at Union Pacific and served there until 1989.

Bro. Davis then served as President of CSX Rail Transport. In 1995, he joined Southern Pacific as its President and Chief Executive Officer, where he served until 1996.

The New York Times newspaper made a banner mention in its issue of November 7, 1996, when it noted that Jerry Davis was named President and Chief Operating Officer of Union Pacific. Bro. Davis served as the Chairman of the Board of Pacific Fruit Express Company Inc. He served as Vice Chairman of Union Pacific Railroad. He has been a Director of Progress Rail Services since March 2006 and its subsidiary, Progress Rail Holdings since June 2005.

For his exemplary efforts, the Union Pacific corporation decided to rename the Roseville Yard northeast of Sacramento, California (the largest rail facility on the west coast) as "The J.R. Davis

Yard" in May 1999 in honor of Bro. Jerry Davis.

Although not literally connected to Union Pacific, a man named Leland Stanford, the President of the Central Pacific Railroad, was a member of Prometheus Masonic Lodge #17 in Port Washington, Wisconsin as well as later joining the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge in California). Bro. Stanford was instrumental in making the LITERAL CONNECTION between his Central Pacific Railroad with the Union Pacific tracks at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869, which fully established a genuine Transcontinental Railroad. He was encouraged in his efforts to accomplish that "Golden Spike" meetingpoint in Utah by Bro. Brigham Young, who joined Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, in Nauvoo, Illinois in April 1842.

It is well-known that William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody (a member of North Platte Masonic Lodge #32 and the North Platte York Rite Bodies and Tangier Shrine in Omaha; while later receiving the 4th-32nd degrees of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite, in New York) was hired to furnish buffalo meat to the hundreds of laborers constructing the Kansas-Pacific Railroad.

As "The West" became more civilized, by the latter 1800's and early 1900's: being "punctual" and "on-time" was considered a Virtue. Consequently, many Railroaders and many Masons carried gold pocket watches. Having an accurate clock was not just a fashion-statement, but a practical "must have" for any man of that era. A 21-Jewel Railroad watch was a coveted item. Many Lodges prided themselves by "starting Lodge meetings on-the-dot." Members would pull their fancy watches from their vest-pockets and often their Masonic "watch fobs" were conversation-pieces inside and outside of the Lodge Hall itself. In similar fashion, many Railroaders pulled-out their watches and equally prized themselves with arrivals and departures that were "on-the-dot." I, personally, have a couple old (written) "Union Pacific Railroad timetable" booklets...with maps describing the various "routes" with even the smallest town or hamlet mentioned with its corresponding "mile-markers." Included are notes about "maximum speed-limits," as well as "track geometry" grades, bridge conditions, restrictions on the use of the emergency-horn (whistle) and precautions to guard against overheating of "the Hot Box." (In the old-days the Hot Box was essentially bearings surmounted by flammable rags or cushions soaked in oil so the wheel-bearings would run smoothly.) Sadly, these were often prone to fires. Consequently, back then, the main personnel of a train were the Engineer,

Conductor, Firemen, Brakemen, and (if applicable) Porters.

The Union Pacific's "Bailey Yard" at North Platte, Nebraska is the largest railroad yard in the World. Some 10,000 rail cars pass through the site daily. It is a repair-center as well as a command-center with the latest computerized control systems. Prior to this, it had a "watch tower" to serve similar functions. Currently, 23 U.S. States are served directly by the Union Pacific system. One aspect about the old "Railroad Timetable booklets" that I like are useful

guidelines (which could almost be adapted to guidelines for Masonic Lodges in having a smooth & successful year). For instance:

--- Review the work or task to be accomplished.

--- Determine the tool, equipment, and material you will need.

--- Consider how work-assignments will be made (i.e. some group-assignments; some individual assignments).

Then, the pivotal categories:

--- Explain WHAT is to be done.

--- Explain WHY it is to be done.

--- Explain WHEN & WHERE it is to be done.

--- Explain HOW it is to be done and WHO is to do each segment. Lastly, are two criteria I seldom hear:

--- Brief only a portion of the job.

--- Give additional briefing as the job progresses.

In a way, that is good "common-sense", so people won't be overwhelmed by too much information. Nor will they be tempted to shy-away, if it seems like an avalanche of data they cannot visualize (at first). With Union Pacific, they do things step-by-step. In Freemasonry: We do things Degree-by-Degree.

Bro. William P. Kennedy (member of Minnehaha Lodge #165 in Minneapolis, Minn) was President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. He began as a "news-butcher" on the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad in 1909. A "news-butcher" was typically a young man who walked up and down the aisles of passenger-trains, attempting to sell newspapers, magazines, candy, and chewing gum to passengers.

This article cannot fully describe in detail all of the railways (past and present) which have served Nebraska. To do so, would take many volumes. Suffice it to say that NEBRASKA RAILROADS have been a pivotal in transporting wheat, milo, corn, soybeans, coal, automobiles, and general freight. In bygone times, trains even delivered the bulk of U.S. Mail traveling long distances, and trains still deliver flatbeds loaded with U.P.S. semi-trailer boxes. In their heyday, trains hauled numerous passengers (and in a few select areas such as those served by AMTRAK, they still do). Decades ago, contingents of Knights Templar Drill-Teams and/or Shrine Units (especially the 'Patrol' or 'Band') would "charter" a whole train bound for a national convention. Trains continue to transport crude oil, vegetable oil, chemicals and various other sundry items needed by manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers throughout the United States, and in the rest of the world. Union Pacific, in particular remains headquartered in Nebraska. Its payroll sustains many Nebraskans, and many of their employees are Masons (along with employees of "service industries" who serve employees of the UP) are Masons themselves.

This ripple-effect benefits Masons and their family-members who prosper due to their employment or their investment in the Union Pacific or in related Industries. A considerable number of Lodge members are able to sustain themselves financially and pay yearly dues; many Blue Lodges and Allied Bodies are likewise kept in good financial stead. In short: the bonds between Union Pacific, Freemasonry, and Nebraska... are long and deep. We are fortunate that the ties that bind -- are still strong and ongoing.

Pat & Bill had been Lodge Brothers for many years.

They had promised each other long ago that the first to go to the Grand Lodge above would return to tell the other whether there really were Lodges in Heaven and what

they were like.

By and by, it came to pass that Bill went first.

One day shortly after, Pat was working in his garden when he heard a whispered voice, "Pssst Pat!" He looked around but saw nothing.

A few moments later he heard, now quite clearly "Pat! It's me, Bill!"

"Bill" Pat exclaimed, "Are you in Heaven?"

"Indeed I am" said Bill.

Pat paused for a while to get over the shock and then said "Well, Bill, are there Lodges up there in Heaven?"

"There certainly are, Pat. There are Lodges all over and they are quite magnificent, equal or better to Great Queen Street. The meetings are well attended, the ritual is word perfect, the festive board fantastic and the spirit of Masonic Fellowship is all pervasive."

"My goodness, Bill," said Pat, "It certainly sounds very impressive but for all that you seem rather sad.

"Tell me old friend, what is the matter."

"Well, Pat, you are right. I have some good news and some bad."

"OK, What's the good news?"

"The good news is that we are doing a Master Mason degree this coming Wednesday"

"Great," said Pat, "what's the bad news then?"

"You're going to be the Senior Deacon!"

Brother Wilfrid Reid "Wop" May

A Masonic "Did U Know" from Brother Dwight Seals

Wilfrid Reid "Wop" May was born March 20, 1896 and passed away June 21, 1952. He was a Canadian flying ace in the First World War and a leading post-war aviator. He was the final allied pilot to be pursued by Manfred von Richthofen before the German ace was shot down on the Western Front in 1918. After the war, May returned to Canada pioneering the role of a bush pilot while working for Canadian Airways in Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. May was born in Carberry, Manitoba, son of a carriage maker. His family moved to Edmonton in 1902, and while on the way they stayed with family and friends, and his two-year-old cousin, Mary Lumsden, could not pronounce Wilfrid and called him "Woppie". This gave him his nickname "Wop". He attended Victoria School (now Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts) while in Edmonton, Canada.

May joined the Army in February 1916 during the First World War. He rose through the enlisted ranks to sergeant, and spent most of 1916 as a gunnery instructor. In 1917, his battalion, the 202nd Battalion C.E.F. (Edmonton Sportsmen), was shipped to England, where he and his friend Ray Ross applied to join the Royal Flying Corps. His first flight resulted in the destruction of both his own and another aircraft; nevertheless, the RFC accepted his applications and May resigned from the Canadian Army. After initial training in London in October, he was moved to a fighter training squadron and graduated in February 1918. On April 9, 1918, Lieutenant May was transferred to No. 209 Squadron of the newly created Royal Air Force (the squadron being a unit of the Royal

On Naval Air Service until April 1, when the RAF was created). The squadron was commanded by another Canadian, May's former school friend Roy Brown, who had never lost a subordinate pilot. May spent Oilmost of April getting used to his Sopwith Camel. April 20, 1918, May fought his first aerial combat. The German Fokker Triplane crashed of its own accord during the brief fight.

After returning to Edmonton at the end of the war, May and his brother rented a Curtiss JN-4 Jenny and started May Airplanes Ltd., opening Canada's first airfield (or aeroport) in a rented pasture in the neighborhood now known as Mayfield. They appeared at various functions during 1919, and would now be considered to be one of the first barnstorming companies in the world.

In September 1919, May Aeroplanes was hired by Edmonton Police Chief Hill during their manhunt for John Larson, wanted on two counts of murder and a break-in. May flew Edmonton Police Detective James Campbell to the small town of Edson, and Larson was caught soon thereafter. They were soon joined by George Gorman to become May-Gorman Airplanes Ltd. and took delivery of another Jenny (built by Standard Aircraft) in which George delivered the Edmonton Journal newspaper to Wetaskiwin, 45 miles south of Edmonton. May and Gorman were hired by Imperial Oil Limited to fly two Junkers airplanes, equipped with skis, from New York to Edmonton in early 1921. Imperial Oil planned to fly these planes into the Northwest Territories to service its proposed oil developments along the Mackenzie River at what later became known as Norman Wells. In March, Gorman and Elmer Fullerton flew these two planes across the 60th parallel (the first ever flight into the NWT) into the Canadian sub arctic proving that aircraft could operate in sub-zero temperatures. This was the start of aerial exploration in the most distant parts of Canada.

In 1924 the business failed, and May married Violet "Vi" Bode in November. He decided to get a "real" job, joining National Cash Register(NCR) in Dayton, Ohio where he went for training. While working on a lathe he was hit in the eye by a shard of steel, and from then until 1938 he began slowly going blind. Convinced that flying really was his calling, he formed the Edmonton and North Alberta Flying Club in 1927, and became a flight instructor.

With the start of the Second World War, it was decided that Canada would become the major place of training for pilots in the RAF joining from countries in the British Commonwealth. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan set up airfields across Canada, and May became the commander of the No.2 Air Observer School in Edmonton, as well as supervisor of all the western schools.

While this was going on the United States was also ferrying huge numbers of aircraft to the Soviet Union, flying through Edmonton on their way. A number of these

crashed due to mechanical problems, in which case there was no way for an injured pilot to get out of the "back country" when this happened. The idea came up that a team of parachute jumpers should be formed that could be dropped in on the crash sites to stabilize the injuries and start moving the pilots out of the bush. Early efforts were comical but dangerous, but the US trained a number of jumpers at a smokejumper school in Montana, and it was not long before the Para-Rescue team was in service. Several additional Para-Rescue teams were set up during the war, and by the time the war ended the value of these teams was recognized. They

were soon re-organized into their own command within the Canadian military, Search and Rescue. For his work in Search and Rescue, May was awarded the Medal of Freedom, with Bronze Palm in 1947 by the USAAF.

Wop May died while on vacation on June 21st, 1952 at the age of 56 of a stroke while hiking with his son Denny at Timpanagos Cave National Monument in Utah.

Brother Wop May was a very active Freemason. He was raised in 1921 and was affiliated with Unity Lodge No. 51, Ivanhoe Lodge No. 142, and a charter member of Yellowknife Lodge No. 162.

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A dietitian was once addressing a large audience in Chicago.

“The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us years ago.

Red meat is awful, Soft drinks erode your stomach lining.

Chinese food is loaded with MSG. Vegetables can be disastrous and none of us realize the long term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water.”

But there is one thing that is most dangerous of all, and we all have or will eat it.

Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it???

A 75 year old man in the front row stood and said Wedding Cake!!!!

The Decline in Masonic Membership It's Not Completely Our Fault.

Reprinted **with permission** from the Internet Lodge No. 9659 at - <http://internet.lodge.org.uk/>
By: James W. Hogg

Preface:

This article details the thoughts and perceptions of the author, who grew up in the 1960's and 1970's, as a member of the baby boom generation. It is not meant to assert that there is only one way of viewing the events leading up to the present. Necessarily, some generalizations have been made in presenting this material. Any good lawyer will acknowledge that, for the most part, there is an exception to every rule. Where reference is made to a "liberal" view, this describes a philosophical theory or belief-- not a political commentary. The author has attempted to write in a politically neutral style. "Liberalism" is known to transcend both of the political parties in our two party system of politics in the United States. Members of both of these parties hold liberal beliefs to various extents. There are many different ways to look at things. The purpose of this article is to provoke serious thinking, brought to your attention by a member of one group Masonry would like to target for future membership growth. This article merely advances some of these viewpoints as perceived by the author.

Agenda of social engineers of the 60's

Society has changed dramatically since the heyday of Freemasonry after World War II. These were the days of unprecedented growth in America's economy, bringing with it prosperity and a wide variety of well paying jobs. During these years, it was possible for the average wage earner to raise a family on one income. We were rebuilding our economy in the wake of the war with many new manufacturing jobs. Back in those years, America was the innovator and virtually all

the well made products came from the industrialized countries, such as the United States, Germany, and Great Britain. "Made in the U. S. A." became a mark of quality. Then came the 1960's. What changed? We had a new liberal focus on the way things should be for a better future. Along with this came the civil rights protests in the South, resulting in new laws being passed by the legislature in Washington guaranteeing civil rights to everyone. This conjures up images of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I have a dream" speech. No longer would segregated schools and racial discrimination in this great land of ours be tolerated. Now, there were laws on the books to prevent this type of discrimination against others because of their race. Today, these laws are also being applied with respect to gender. Recent developments in the law provide that one cannot discriminate against an individual because she happens to be a woman. Examples of this are the U. S. armed forces and the B. P. O. Elks. Today, both must accept women among their ranks. This new outlook was to have a profound influence on not only Freemasonry, but other fraternal organizations and private clubs throughout the United States.

Results of this change - tax code, public accommodation laws, disdain for private groups

The social engineers of the 60's saw this as an opportunity to re-mold our society and change things to dismantle the old ways of doing business. This was the beginning of a new attitude toward private groups and fraternal organizations. These groups were seen as hotbeds of racial discrimination and no longer of use to a civilized society where everyone was supposed to be equal. It was thought that because these groups selected those with whom they wanted to be associated with by ballot of the membership, this was tantamount to discrimination. It was also a well known fact that membership in certain of these organizations benefitted the members in their business endeavors. Frequently, business meetings were held within the rooms of private clubs. Thus, the social engineers asked, "why should members of private clubs be permitted to use their memberships in these clubs to benefit themselves financially?" They saw this as the epitome of an "old boy's" network, to which those who were not white male Caucasians were excluded from participation.

With this general analysis as a base, new laws were promulgated. The result is the familiar rubric of Internal Revenue tax code regulations concerning what a tax exempt organization can and cannot do with respect to retaining its tax exempt status. Also, the public accommodation laws on the federal level came into being, severely restricting what a private group could do if it wished to remain private and keep its Constitutional First Amendment right of freedom of association. To quote from coverage of the General Governor's report contained in the August/September 1997 issue of Moose Magazine, which is the international publication of the Loyal Order of Moose: "The Private Policy, which essentially states that only members of the Loyal Order of Moose and the Women of the Moose may enjoy full Social Quarters privileges within our Lodges, was emphasized throughout the General Governor's report [to the 109th International Convention]. He noted that in the U. S., the Internal Revenue Service has recently stiffened enforcement and penalties against fraternal and veterans' organizations that sell merchandise to non-members. 'Sales to non-members threaten a Lodge's right to privacy and its not-for-profit status,' said [David A.] Chambers [the out-going General Governor]. 'The rule is simple; you are either a member or a guest, but you cannot be both. Non-members cannot make purchases in our Lodges. In other words, non-members cannot spend one penny.' Moose Magazine, p. 14. [emphasis in original]. From all of this, it is very clear that our Federal Government has a complete disdain for private organizations for many of the reasons outlined above.

Case in point: Judge David B. Sentelle.

President Reagan nominated Judge Sentelle on February 2, 1987, to be a U. S. circuit judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia circuit.

Judge Sentelle happens to be a prominent Mason from North Carolina, having been unanimously confirmed by the U. S. Senate on October 16, 1985, to be a U. S. District Court Judge for the Western District of North Carolina. It seems that this time, his membership in the Masonic fraternity became of issue during the nomination and confirmation process in the Senate. The issue raised there should be very familiar to everyone by now: invidious racial discrimination. After a lengthy discourse about what the fraternity represents, a tally of present and past U. S. Presidents and legislators as being Masons, and a reference to our own Sovereign Grand Commander advising that Freemasonry does not discriminate based on race, color or creed, Judge Sentelle was confirmed. Freemasonry was under attack in the United States Senate of all places! I recommend as required reading the Senate proceeding, which contains the details of this account. It can be found in the 100th Congress, First Session, p. S-11868 to 11870, which was re-printed in Transactions, The American Lodge of Research, F. & A. M., Vol. XV, No. 3 - 1983. [Note to editor: "1983" is not a typo!]

Government being the answer to everything

The liberal view of government also embraced the concept that government was the answer to everything. No matter what the problem was, it could be solved by establishing another government agency on the federal level. All we had to do was give this new agency money to address whatever happened to be the problem of the day. A perfect solution would be found and implemented by the agency and all would be well with the world. This attitude began with Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" era, later to be refined during Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society". Indeed, government also grew in latter years during George Bush's administration with tax increases and more government regulation imposed on the people. It was not until the late 60's where we finally achieved deficit spending on the federal level on a recurring basis. The belief was, and still is today, that we can spend and tax our way out of all the problems facing us. High taxes are necessary to maintain a large and strong central government. This is one reason why it takes two incomes to accomplish today what one income could do in the 1950's. The general public is generally thought to have insufficient knowledge to know what is best for them. Thus, the need for a large and strong central government. After all, someone needs to protect the people from themselves.

Vietnam era protests, anti-establishment views

The protest movement surrounding the Vietnam War added fire to this new liberal view of government. The post World War II baby boomers growing up in the 50's and 60's did not want to fight in this unpopular war in Southeast Asia. Many asked: just what was the U. S. really doing there in the first place? These young people saw those running our country as the establishment and they wanted change. Many saw versions of socialism as the answer to all of our problems. Not coincidentally, the belief was that private groups and clubs, such as Freemasonry, were part of the establishment. In the eyes of these baby boomers, this was considered bad. We had a big central government now to take care of all our needs. Private groups and clubs were no longer considered relevant in this newly re-engineered society. Another thing that did not set well with these baby boomers was the way in which our returning Vietnam Veterans were generally treated by our society. They were openly criticized and, for the most part, not welcomed back after serving in the armed forces. This was quite a stark contrast from the welcome that awaited those returning from military service after World War II. It is interesting to note that today, many of these baby boomers are now running our country. It is no small wonder that they feel the way they do about private organizations such as ours!

The Re-engineering of our Educational system.

Concerning perceptions gained by our youth regarding fraternal organizations, there is one other dynamic that comes into play and that concerns how our children have been educated in the recent past. The social engineers also were able to influence our institutions of higher learning, convincing educators that the new liberal view of government was good for the country and would vastly improve the standard of living for everyone -- particularly those who were poor or disadvantaged. The siren call was irresistible. Who could possibly be against helping the poor and enhancing educational and occupational opportunities for the disadvantaged? Opposing these ideals would be un-American! Thus, we instituted a socially responsible curriculum in America's schools and colleges. Those of us who grew up under this new system were taught all about the evils of race discrimination and how the government was there to help us, doing many great things for the people. We were also taught that collective bargaining was good for America and that, generally, big business was greedy and had no interest in its workers' well being. We were also taught that the Keynesian theory of economics was the universal and accepted way of studying business and economic cycles in America. Let us not forget the concept of new math -- also a product of the 60's. None of our educational materials ever mentioned Freemasonry, the Moose, Elks, the American Legion, V. F. W., or the many other worthy organizations in existence at the time. Only one time do I recall a passing reference to the Grange and its relationship to farming being mentioned in connection with a social studies course I had in grade school. None of the schools I attended ever had any programs where groups such as these ever conducted a program or presentation for the students. I had never heard of Freemasonry until I was a junior in high school and then I happened upon it only because I was a stamp collector. To make matters worse, I could find nothing in my high school or university libraries that would tell me what Freemasonry was! (Note: I grew up in the Northeast.) This raises an interesting question: How can fraternal organizations encourage people to join them if prospective members have no clue as to what a fraternal organization does and has to offer? Put another way, people will not enter a store unless they perceive that there is something within that store which they can obtain to fulfill a need. Remember, however, that one major reason for this lack of available information was that private groups were seen as being part of what was wrong with America!

Change in corporate culture and financial rewards to employees.

The gradual shift in the moral perception of society is reflected in the new corporate culture in existence today. In the years that my father pursued his career, loyalty and hard work were usually rewarded by promotions and the ability to climb the corporate ladder to success. This made career planning relatively easy. Also, many companies shared their profits with the employees because, after all, they were the ones who made the wheels turn generating corporate earnings. When the company did well, so did the workers. Profit sharing today, generally, is now relegated to the top corporate executives and the shareholders of a corporation. When the workers do get profit sharing, it is not as generous as the way it was in the old days. A case in point is this: A neighbor who lived across the street from me while I was growing up received a profit sharing bonus in the early 1950's amounting to \$30,000 from her employer. (Note: that is \$30,000 in early 1950's dollars. Think about what that would be worth today.) At the time, she was an executive secretary for a mining firm that mined Molybdenum, a mineral used in the steel making process. The company she worked for was a predecessor to another company, which is known today as Amerax. She informed me that everyone in the firm received bonuses like this that particular year, according to position and years of service. When she received her bonus, she was called into the President's office, made to feel comfortable, and told that the firm was grateful for her services as an employee. It was at that time she was handed the envelope containing the \$30,000 check. In the years following, the bonuses were smaller, more typically amounting to anywhere from one half

to 100% of her salary for the previous year. The story nowadays is different. While profit sharing does exist today, it rarely reaches heights such as in this example just described. There are, of course, exceptions -- such as securities firms on Wall Street after an extraordinarily successful bull market year. As for wages in general, it should be noted that the relationship between a top executive's pay and the average worker's pay today continues to grow in disproportionate ways. This is a matter of public record. Just pick up a proxy statement for almost any public corporation and this fact becomes very evident.

Loyalty generally goes unrewarded, employment security suffers.

Today, we are in an era of mergers and acquisitions, resulting in a constant re-engineering of a company's reason for existence. This generally means that downsizing for competitiveness is in order. This includes layoffs to make way for productivity advances through the use of technology and automation. Loyalty is generally no longer a part of the equation. An employee's loyalty to company A is meaningless when company B steps in and acquires company A. There is no longer employment security, especially after a merger has taken place or when an economic recession grips the economy. This is evidenced by the sheer number of workers who job hop regularly. The economic fortunes of a company are more tenuous today as well. For example, look at the Hudson Foods scare, where E. Coli bacteria was found in meat processed by this firm. This resulted in an expensive recall of processed meat, ultimately resulting in the company being sold to another corporation. One can only wonder if the owners of Hudson Foods received a fair price for their company! Consider also the number of jobs that were lost after Wells Fargo Corporation acquired First Interstate Bank Corp. and the former began downsizing the product of the two combined organizations. These are just two of many examples one could cite.

Civility in business is lacking.

Civility in competition between business existed in the 60's when I was growing up. Rarely did one see a business deprecating its competition in advertisements during that era. Today, one hears it on a daily basis. A case in point is the current burger war between McDonald's and Burger King. The latter introduced a burger that is very similar to one marketed by McDonald's and has been advertising that "the Big King is better than the Big Mac because it's bigger and more tasty." Back then, this was just not done. The competitor was simply referred to as "brand X."

Freemasonry in prospective.

As Masons, we are all aware of what Freemasonry represents and what it teaches. I need not reiterate them here. Our ceremonies are beautiful and the lessons taught in them are great. There is no doubt about this. However, look at modern life today. We have experienced a decline in civility, increase in crime, and a general lack of concern for others. Would this condition exist today if our fraternity were as powerful and influential as it was years ago? That, unfortunately, is a question that none of us can really answer. We would all hope that the answer is a resounding "no." We must all attempt to find a way to make Freemasonry relevant and applicable to our fellow man in today's society. Failure to do this will mean Freemasonry's eventual extinction in future years.

Masonic Renewal. Success is a journey, not a destination

A lot has changed in the United States in the last 40 years. Unfortunately, we in the Masonic Fraternity were not paying attention to these changes over those many years. One of the great things we have established in the fraternity, which is long overdue, is a Masonic Renewal Plan. We are attempting to define Freemasonry as it applies to society today. No longer is it possible for us to continue doing things as they have been done in the past. Today, we must identify benefits that we can confer on our new members, find new ways to satisfy their needs

for associating with their fellow men, and new ways to benefit new Masons' families and their communities. Do we know what these needs are and how to fulfill them? After all, isn't this what we are really "selling" in our Masonic "store"? The only way we will be able to restore Masonry to its former position of respect in society is through hard work, good public relations, and providing solutions to the needs of today's society. We have some very capable brothers behind this effort, along with some very talented professionals to help us implement the plans. My prayers are that these efforts will pay off. However, the results will be hard won and will certainly come slowly. We must remember that true success is a journey and not a destination. There is no such thing as instant success in any field. We all must do the best we can if we want to preserve the rich heritage of our fraternity for those who will follow us in the years to come.

James W. Hogg is an attorney in Fort Myers, Florida, having recently graduated from law school and passed the Florida bar. Before attending law school, he owned his own mortgage banking firm for 12 years in the Fort Myers area. He is also a Perpetual Member of the Scottish Rite Valley of Fort Myers, a Past Master and Perpetual Member of Fort Myers Beach Lodge No. 362, F. & A. M., Past District Deputy Grand Master of the 29th Masonic District for the Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Florida, and past presiding officer of all the Fort Myers York Rite Bodies. He has also earned the rank of Knight York Cross of Honour.

The Profound Pontifications of Brother John Deacon

By PM Chris Williams - c-williams@sbcglobal.net

John called me on Friday to tell me he would be coming through town on Sunday and wanted to have our usual lunch... as in "free lunch" for him. I told him I wouldn't be in town on Sunday because I was at the Wardens Retreat and it ended Sunday at noon and I still had to drive back. My first mistake was that I told him where I was... the second was to agree to meet him before I drove back home.

Predictably, he showed up just as we were packing up to leave the retreat. It had been a great retreat as usual and I had actually forgotten that he was coming. Larry and Brad from our Education Committee and Tim from the Membership committee, and I had decided to have some lunch before we all headed our different directions back home. I looked up and saw his immenseness...er...John making his way through the crowd towards me and realized I needed to warn the others and make sure they were ok with him coming to lunch with us. I quickly asked them and each one, being regular readers of this article, had only one problem with his lunching with us. They told me unequivocally that they were not contributing to the money pit that is John Deacon's daily food bill. I make a mental note to remember to say something derogatory about all three of them in a future article and turned to greet the big guy. I introduced the guys to John and told him that we were all going to have lunch together.

He seemed really excited about that and said, "It's not every day that one of us little guys gets to rub elbows with such important Brothers." The absurdity of the term "little guys" was not lost on the other guys and they assured him that he was not gaining any stature at all by hanging out



with us. That obviously didn't faze him as he happily piled in his big black truck he calls "Blackie" and followed us to the restaurant.

Larry had picked McAlister's Deli (why he picked it is a long story I will tell you another time) and when we walked into the already busy restaurant, the employees took one look at Big John and I could see them wondering if they had enough food to feed him. We all ordered separately except for John and I. Somehow he made the case that I still owed him lunch for some obscure reason that I chose not to argue about since I was really hungry. I paid the bill without looking. I figured it was easier worrying about the amount when Pam asked me about it instead of looking now and having to be aggravated twice. At McAlister's you order at the counter and they give you a number which you slide into a wire holder at your table. John had reached across me and grabbed the number and his drink and gone to look for the others. I found him and the rest of the guys sitting at a bigger table than we really needed... (probably a good move considering how much John had ordered). I glanced at the wire holder and saw four numbers fanned out like a hand of playing cards in the holder. We all began to critique the retreat ... the goods and the not so goods. It was a great conversation, ideas flowing and talking about the strength of the content how we can make the program better... how we can help the Lodges do better for their Brethren and the

Fraternity... and I didn't realize that John was just sitting there... listening. One by one the server brought out one of the other guy's lunch and would take the corresponding number tag out of the holder. All of a sudden I realized that Larry, Tim and Brad were already eating and John and I didn't have ours yet. And one of the reasons he was so quiet was because he was getting antsy watching everyone else eat. I noticed there were three servers kind of wandering around the dining room looking at the numbers on the stands. I could hear John mumbling next to me and I stopped one of the servers walking by and told her we hadn't gotten our food yet and she glanced at our stand and said, "we are looking for number 99"... should be a table of three cause it's all this stuff, motioning to the two other servers still wandering around. I looked up at our number and saw it was 66. I pulled the receipt out of my pocket and nearly fainted at the total and there at the bottom was number '99'. I looked at John and shook my head and reached up and turned the number upside down to show that it was really 99. John's face turned red and the rest of the guys burst out laughing...which got the attention of the servers who were skeptical at first but then quickly sat the plates down when they saw the look in John's eyes. Even though they all knew the depth of John's appetite, everyone at the table were shocked at the two sandwiches with all the fixins...chips, pickles, etc... two baked potatoes... (large), one with Broccoli and Cheese all over it and the other with chili and cheese with onions, and a large slice of pecan pie (which looked awful good and I wished I had thought to get one) that was John's lunch. We weren't the only ones staring either... the diners at several of the closest tables were gawking also. But John was oblivious as he systematically began to consume the contents of one plate after another. With the initial shock past we resumed our evaluation of the retreat eventually focusing on the Strategic Plan theme of our presentations. All of us at the table had been part of a five year strategic plan in our Lodges although we didn't exactly call it that while we were living it. Larry and Tim talked about the negative attitudes and resistance that they had received at first. Brad and I talked about the indifference and the "we already tried that and it will never work" attitudes we received. But the commonality was that we had all gotten the buy in of the top 4 or 5 Brothers in the Officer line and others who wanted real positive change and had agreed on where we were and where we wanted to be. We divided up the responsibilities between the Brothers and went to work focusing the majority of our efforts on the top priority or priorities of the Lodge. And little by little over the course of 3 or 4 years we had re-energized and refocused our Lodges. The result for each was a busy, happy, and harmonious Lodge. We found that even though our two Lodges were never in communication with each other, we had followed a very similar blueprint to

bring our Lodges from being stuck in a never ending rut of “no, no, no because that’s the way we have always done it” to “let’s try it”, “let’s do it”, “we can do it” and “let’s make it happen”.

“Danged if that don’t sound like the right way to do it”, came a voice from the end of the table that startled the four of us. We had all but forgotten our nutritionally unrestrained Brother John sitting surrounded by four large... and totally empty plates. He had a satisfied grin on his face and looked at each of us and said, “I am really liking what y’all are saying.”

“You actually heard everything;” I asked surprised? I thought your ears shut down when you eat.”

He gave me a John Deacon glare and growled, “What you don’t know is that I can do more than one thing at a time....I just choose to focus on only one thing at a time usually.” He looked at Larry and asked, “Just how do you accomplish this “buy in” with the Brothers when most of them are totally against change...even though they know things are not right?”

Well if there is one thing about Brother Larry, it’s that if you ask him a question you’d better be ready to get the long answer instead of the short... heck as I remember it he still owes a certain Past Grand Master about 15 minutes... but that’s another story altogether. “It’s not necessarily that easy,” he began. “But it starts with talking to the Brothers of your Lodge and getting to know where they stand on certain issues and tossing out ideas and see who is on the same page and who is receptive to any change. Then you can start to form a consensus among the group. You will be surprised to find there are probably several Brothers, if not more, who share a common opinion as to where the Lodge is and where it needs to be and especially what needs to be done to get there. I believe that deep in the heart of every Mason is the desire to do whatever is necessary to further their Lodge and the Fraternity... but many have lost energy and are satisfied with the status quo, many have lost perspective and are literally living in the past and fail to recognize that change is inevitable and must happen if we are to grow, and many more are just afraid to try and to cover that fear say things like “that’s not the way we do it here” or “you can’t do it, it will never work”. Establishing “buy in” is the answer because once the process is started, and those on the fence see the little things starting to get better they will fall in line one by one. Watching your Lodge grow and prosper and the Brethren begin to come back to Lodge and the resulting harmony in the Lodge will be as satisfying as anything you have ever experienced in Freemasonry.”

“Wow, that’s really something,” exclaimed John and looking at Brad he asked, “Is that what happened in your Lodge too?”

“It is exactly what happened,” he nodded glancing at Larry and back at John. “We all agreed on where we wanted to be, which was to make our Lodge known as one committed to Masonic Education in all its aspects, philosophical, historical, and ritualistic and to accomplish our goal we knew we were going to have to try new things and we did. The level of our excellence in the ritual began to go up and everyone wanted to participate in the rituals. All of a sudden we had Brethren studying for and getting their teaching certificates, and at the same time we began to give educational programs at every meeting. The result 5 years later is amazing.”

“And you,” John said looking at Tim, “You are the Membership guy. How does that tie in with that there Strategic Plan thing?”

“Well Brother John,” he replied with a smile. “Membership is what this whole thing is about. It’s about each and every Brother in this Fraternity as well as every good man who will ever ask the question “What is Freemasonry”. If you believe that Masonry is dedicated to the benefit of mankind and that we have an obligation to fulfill that obligation then it is imperative that we, and I mean all Masons, be able to communicate not only our purpose but who and what Masons really are. We have miscommunicated for too long our mysterious cloak of secrecy and instead of properly explaining its meaning and purpose we have happily wallowed in its confusion. It’s time we made some changes... and the way to do it is to educate our

Brethren... all of them, so that they can properly convey our message of Brotherhood to the public as well as who we are and why we do what we do. And we can accomplish this without changing or revealing anything we do ritualistically in our Lodges. We have a large number of younger men who are drawn to our Fraternity by what Masonry offers and we must be able to not only give them what we promise but do the things necessary to keep them as members and that is where we need to make changes. And we must also change the public's perception of Masonry by educating the membership and then making ourselves more visible in the community, including introducing the Fraternity to the public using different forms of media. It is time that our Fraternity introduce itself to the world... and we can do it without disrupting or changing those things we hold private and personal."

"My oh my oh my oh my," grinned John shaking his head. He looked at me and said, "Brother Chris now I know why you hang around with wise and learned Brothers like this. It surely makes you look a whole lot smarter."

While the others had a nice laugh I reminded John of who was on his way to the poor house always having to buy his lunch. "And the truth is that you are right," I admitted honestly. "These guys do make me look a whole lot smarter. Sitting here bouncing ideas and opinions around is something I look forward to."

"Well I can't argue that," John replied with a trace of admiration in his voice. But how do we go about educating all the Brethren? There is a lot of older Brothers out there who are going to be hard to change."

"I have something to say about that John," I said quickly, knowing that I wasn't the only one at the table who could talk long and hard on this subject. I truly believe that every Mason out there would love to shout out to the world exactly what Masonry is... but most just don't know how or what to say. One of the hardest things about being a Mason is wanting to share it with other good men, but being restricted in what or how you can share it. And we all know that there are some things that cannot be said... however there is much that can... and should. We as a Fraternity have done a poor job in not only educating our Masonic Brethren in general but also in properly conveying to family, friends, and the public the things we want them to know. It's the great contradiction that our purpose is to make good men good Masons without telling them anything about Masonry unless they ask... including not even telling them that they have to ask before we can tell them anything. The result is that there are a great multitude of good men out there who have not had and will never have the opportunity to become one of us because of this. This has to change if we are to survive... and education is the answer."

Abruptly, John got up and said, "I'll be right back," and disappeared around the end of the dining room. We all sat there looking at each other wondering what was going on since it was obvious that he wasn't going to the restroom since it was in the opposite direction. I told them that if the bill hadn't been paid already that normally he would be driving out of the parking lot right about now but this was surely strange on his part. All of a sudden he appeared carrying a tray and sat a generous slice of pecan pie down in front of each of us. "Wow, John," I said surprised. "This is the nicest thing you have ever done." "Well, don't get used to it," he growled. You Brothers just fired me up and I can't wait to get back to Lodge next week and start putting our Strategic Plan into place."

"Heck Brother John," Larry said between bites. "You just got a complete overview of the Wardens Retreat and all you had to pay for it was 5 slices of.....er make that 6 slices (noting that John had gotten 2 slices for himself) of Pecan Pie. Not a bad deal. And the Strategic Plan is the top of the Grand Master's agenda for the year for the Grand Lodge as well."

"This is a message that all of the Brothers need to hear, not just the top officers at the Wardens Retreat. Brother Chris, this needs to be your article for this month. I will

save what I had to say for next month. And you have my permission to change the name of your article for this month to the Profound Pontifications of Brothers Larry, Brad, Tim, and Chris.”

I was about to inform him that I didn't need his permission to change anything but he was already on his soapbox... “I think you Brothers do a great job in stating your message and I hope that this Strategic Plan is seen and taught to every Lodge. And I agree that education is the answer because everything begins with education. This has been a great lunch.” He got up and shook all of our hands and thanked us again and just like that, he was gone. The rest of us continued our discussion for another hour before we realized that we had a long way to drive. I couldn't stop thinking on the drive home how great it is to talk Masonry with a group of Brothers of the same mind. Like I said... it was a good retreat. So here it is... the first and only installment of the Profound Pontifications of Bros Larry, Brad, Tim and Chris. Hope you liked it. Have a great month.

Why Did You Become A Freemason?

Editor's Note; A few years ago Rt. Wor. Gary L. Dryfoos started a new section on his website titled “Why Did You Become A Freemasonry?” I was number 15 to post my story. Now there are 109 postings. I thought some of them would make an interesting series for the magazine..

From: "John Carroll" jgcarroll@ozemail.com.au

Although it has many imitators, the Fraternity of Masons remains unique.

Although not a religion (or a substitute for religion), it absolutely insists that a Candidate believe in a Godhead. How an individual perceives the Godhead is his own affair, but he must believe wholeheartedly that he was created for a purpose, and that the implicit belief in a Supreme Being reinforces that concept.

Having acknowledged that a Supreme Being has put him on Earth for a purpose great or small, the astute individual instinctively looks for that purpose: few of us are able or willing to become contemplative scholars or hermits, indeed this kind of withdrawal from society might spoil a lifetime rather than enrich it. The Search for Meaning could be more useful all around if the searcher remained in the worldly sphere, making a practical contribution to it.

To me, that is where Masonry comes into the picture. A candidate for initiation is asked point-blank whether he has a genuine wish to "be more extensively serviceable to his fellow creatures". At that point, he might, or might not, know exactly how he can do it, but (without going into detail) the initiation ceremony will help him to appreciate that wish more closely than other clubs or fraternities with charitable intentions can. A Mason has passed a test of his genuine intent and does so on a pledge of his honour as a man and a believer in One greater than himself.

Because Masonry is not a religion, it has no doctrines or dogmas. The rituals don't tell you what to believe, or what must be believed. If you are accepted as a candidate, you already have the basic beliefs that make you acceptable. The purpose of the rituals is to reinforce those basic beliefs, in a way that suits you best --- and in a way that helps you to use them in a practical way.

So, how does an apparent remnant of a medieval builder's union achieve this? By metaphor, and by example.

Great structures are not built haphazardly. Poorly built structures won't last for centuries. A structure that lasts requires many skills --- a quarrymaster who chooses and extracts the best available material; skilled workers to shape up the rough material from the quarry; sculptors to carve the embellishments; engineers to bring the building into line with the physical laws of nature; builders to cement the pieces together; tilers, plasterers, painters and others to provide the finishes --- and above all, a skilled architect to design the work and see it through to completion.

This symbolic building doesn't just need competent workers. It needs materials of good quality, too. You can be one of the solid stones in the building; you can be the cement that holds them together. You can be anything, as long as it contributes to the whole. In the Craft, you can be either a thinker, a doer or both, but hopefully, both. As a Mason, you'll recognise how important you can be to a diverse, but cohesive organisation --- and to the rest of society --- because the symbols tell you something about yourself as well. You can build your own character within yourself and become a Man in Three Dimensions.

Just as the combination of qualities in skills and materials results in a lasting structure, we aim in our Lodges to work together towards a common goal of friendship among ourselves and usefulness to our communities. We reinforce the spirit of friendship by forbidding discussions of religion and politics in our gatherings, because these are the most common causes of strife and discord among males. We also try to leave another masculine trait--competitiveness--outside our lodge-room doors. Thus we aim to come together, and part, in Peace, Love and Harmony. From there, we aim to carry our ideals into the community at large.

Masons come from all walks of life and all age groups. A Lodge that has a mix of members is a blessing to everyone in it. The older members, especially, are still there! They're the proof that the ideals of Masonry still have meaning, because they haven't given up. Also, Masonry has kept them active after retirement. Decades of experience have convinced them that Masonry is worth holding on to. It's kept their minds and spirits alive. They're waiting and willing to share their knowledge--and the wisdom which experience and perseverance brings. Far from being "spent old farts", the older Brethren in your Lodge can be mentors and an inspiration in your life, as well as in the Craft.

And, most importantly, Masonry is a Brotherhood of all men. As long as a man has the basic beliefs and agrees with the ideals, he is eligible. Race, religion or other considerations are simply NOT an issue. If a man --- ANY man --- is worthy of being a Brother Mason, he need only "Ask 1 2B 1" and the door will be opened.

In summary, Masonry augments our individual religious beliefs and, by mutual support and encouragement, strengthens our inclinations towards morality and virtue. It does this by reinforcing our existing belief in the Godhead; giving us symbols we can relate to; helping us to understand our duties to God and Mankind via those symbols; giving us an opportunity to meet, and work together, with like-minded men in Peace, Love and Harmony; giving us role models to carry the good work forward; refusing to discriminate against any man who genuinely seeks admission, unless he is an atheist, an agnostic or morally unworthy.

That, my Brethren and friends, is why I am a Mason.

Sincerely & Fraternaly,

Bro John Carroll

JW, Lodge Fire Brigades #940, UGL of New South Wales, Australia

Surviving The Big Ones

By John "Corky" Daut

The "Big Ones" for me started with growing up during that period between the Great Depression and World War II. The "Big Ones" and continued with the just plain old getting by for 77 years.

As I said in the last column, I am still trying to make order of some of the old columns and dredging up more memories to add to them as I work. Here are some new ones.

Walking wasn't something we were afraid to do. I remember a couple of times when we walked

out to Herman Park, which was about 4 miles from our Settegast Park neighborhood. The zoo was still free back then. We really didn't know the streets in that part of Houston so we walked along a railroad track that passed a couple of blocks from Herman Park. I particularly remember one Sunday morning as we were passing through what was called the colored section. There was a black church close to the railroad and since it was summer all of the windows were open. The preacher was preaching the sermon in a way none of us had ever heard before. It was more like he was singing the sermon rather than preaching. If any of the parishioners had happened to look out the window they would have seen about 6 young white boys sitting in a line on the railroad track fascinated by the black preacher and the beauty of his service.

One of the things that I loved to watch downtown was the sidewalk elevators. All three of the major five and dime stores and almost all other buildings whose basements extended out under the sidewalks to the curb line had what was called a sidewalk elevator. There would be two pieces of steel set into the sidewalk making a square about 5 feet square. The long sides were hinged along the outside edges creating 2 doors in the sidewalk that opened upward. When the store accepted a delivery or took the trash out at night one man would come out on the sidewalk and stand on the steel doors. When he could see that no one would be close for a couple of minutes, he would stomp on the steel doors a couple of times and step to one side. The doors would start to push up and another man would rise up through the hole, standing on a platform. The platform had a horseshoe shaped steel beam up one side, over the man's head and down the other side. The beam pushed the doors up and held them open until the elevator started down again. Then they would load or unload the elevator and the operator and elevator would sink back down into the hole letting the doors close and the walk was clear again.

Another thing I remember about downtown was the sidewalk photographers. Every so often as you walked along the downtown sidewalks on Main Street, a man with a camera would step out in front of you and take your picture as you walked toward him. I would assume now, that he would pick out the better dressed or more prosperous looking people to photograph. Anyway, he would hand you a card with the name of the photo studio and the number of your photo. After a couple of days you could contact the photographic studio and purchase one or more copies of your photo.

We also had photo booths in most of the five and dime stores, bus and train stations and penny arcades. You went into a little booth, sat down on the bench and pulled the curtain across the doorway. There was a mirror on the wall in front of you. There was also a small hole for the camera and a money slot. You could primp or come your hair using the mirror to make sure how you would look in the picture. When you were ready you put a quarter in the money slot and in a few seconds you would see a warning light then in 3 or 4 seconds the flash would go off. You changed your position or expression and a few seconds later you would see the warning light again and then the flash. It would do that four times. After some strange whirling sounds and clicks a little strip with 4 pictures would poke out of a slot

A lot of boys and some men needing a little bit of small change for bus fare or whatever would walk along the downtown streets looking in the coin slot of each parking meter as they passed. In those days you dropped a nickel in the slot and then turned a little lever that dropped the nickel in the coin box and reset the meter.

A lot of people who didn't go downtown very often and didn't know to, or remember to turn the lever. They just dropped their nickel into the slot and it just stayed there. There was also the more optimistic customer, who after getting an hour on the meter, they would put an extra nickel in the slot hoping the meter maid would be nice and turn the lever instead of writing a ticket if the meter ran out of time

If there was a nickel in the slot the boy would stop and lean on the meter to rest a few minutes. After causally looking around to make sure no one was paying attention, he would slap the meter on the opposite side from the coin slot with on hand and the nickel would jump out into your other hand. At least that's what some of the boys told me.

The boys figured it really wasn't stealing because the nickels hadn't actually gone into the coin box and since the customer hadn't actually received anything of value from the city, the city didn't deserve it. And since the customer didn't know how to get it back, it was fair game.

Of course the City of Houston had a slightly different viewpoint. Every once in a while, one of the boys would be caught and an officer would take him to the police station to put a little fear into him. That would usually put the fear in the boy and he would be much more careful when he did it in the future.

A Monster In Our Homes?

From The Lodge Tawhiri 166, of New Zealand, October 2014 newsletter.

It is everywhere, seeking to swallow us up.

It shouts so loudly we can barely hear ourselves think. In many cases, it makes no sense. But the countless options, flavors, and infinite opportunities crash into our lives.

If you are more than 50 years old, you probably recall a time when there were only two TV channels. There was a time at night when a voice came on the television to say: "This ends tonight's programming." After that announcement, the TV went blank.

Today, if you are under 30, you can't imagine a world without scores of channels available 24-hours-a-day providing cooking shows, shopping networks, sports, movies, situation comedies, children's programming, "reality" shows, religious shows, news, sex shows, and programs about virtually anything you can imagine.

You can sit down to relax and watch a half hour of TV and spend the entire time wading through the sea of options, never settling on something entertaining or relaxing.

Suppose you wanted to learn about fly-fishing. Years ago, you'd find someone who loved the sport and have a conversation with him or her. You might borrow a book about fly-fishing from the local library. If you were really motivated, you could go out and watch an actual person artistically dance a fly across the waters of a stream.

But today, if you want to get an introduction to fly-fishing, all you have to do is a Google search. Within a fraction of a second, you will have at your disposal more than 90,000,000 online articles, videos, sales promotions, pictures, and perspectives on this one topic.

Is this a reason why many groups and service organizations—like Freemasons, Rotary, and Lions—now sometimes struggle to attract new members?

When TV began, we thought it was wonderful. Now some people are starting to wonder if it is a monster.

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"Flattering as it may be to the human mind, and truly honorable as it is to receive from our fellow citizens testimonies of approbation for exertions to promote the public welfare, it is not less pleasing to know that the milder virtues of the heart are highly respected by a Society whose liberal principles must be founded in the immutable laws of truth and justice. To enlarge the sphere of social happiness is worthy of the benevolent design of a Masonic institution; and it is most fervently to be wished that the conduct of every member of the Fraternity, as well as those publications that discover the principles which actuate them, may tend to convince mankind that the great object of Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race. [GEORGE WASHINGTON]"